

2023 DCS Scenario Lab with UNHCR Global Data Service

In 2022, Associate Professor Sebastian Kaempf (Political Science and International Studies) responded to a call for ideas for the DCS Community and Industry Collaboration Fund. The aim of the Fund was *to support community engagement and industry partnerships by driving mutually beneficial and sustained relationships with HASS*. The goal was to identify partnerships with communities and industry that would lead to a range of collaborations and activities, with a view to identifying ways to enrich and sustain ongoing collaboration. Seb's successful proposal identified a unique opportunity to work with Volker Schimmel, the Director of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Global Data Service, to explore how digital capabilities are transforming the global humanitarian sector and its operations.

Concurrently, Seb met and began working with Dr Helen Marshall (Communication and Arts) through the UQ SPARK program. Led by the Office of DVC Research and Innovation, the Training Program was designed to develop the industry engagement skills of academics. Helen provides unique expertise through her leadership on [WhatIf Lab](#). The Lab offers an innovative and immersive alternative to more conventional analytical tools for bringing researchers from different disciplines together to think about possibilities, potentials, and the future.

The DCS Scenario Lab enabled Seb to develop the partnership that had matured over time with Volker and the UNHCR Global Data Service. During the visit to UQ we hosted a number of activities including:

- Public talk at 308 Queen Street
- Meetings with researchers across UQ
- Marketplace of Ideas
- 2 Day Scenario Lab

Marketplace of Ideas, two virtual events held in May. The first event provided Volker the opportunity to introduce the research work that was animating the UNHCR Global Data Service (GDS) to all interested UQ researchers. The UQ researchers' goal was to listen to, and get a broad sense of, the work/research of the GDS. The second session provided UQ researchers the chance to express ideas on GDS' work, possible approaches that can be taken, and how individual expertise could be of interest to Voker's team.

Scenario Lab, the flagship event developed with Volker and the framework created by Seb, Helen, Nic Carah (DCS Director) and Andrew Dougall (DCS). Held in September, the Lab was designed as a thought experiment, aimed at anticipating and addressing how, over the next 20 years, these new sets of technologies will be transforming the work of UNHCR and the world within which it will have to operate. Volker Schimmel and his core team came to UQ for the 2-day Lab. The Scenario Lab was professionally facilitated by Helen's ['What If Lab'](#) and brought together a select group of academics (from all disciplines), UNHCR staff, humanitarian aid workers, science fiction writers, hackers, militaries, and artists.

DCS Digital Storyteller, Casey Fung captured the approach and significance of the Lab in this video.



The Lab was part of a week long program of activity centred around [Volker's visit to UQ](#). During that time, he also provided a Public Lecture (at the UQ downtown site) and met with key researchers, central Research Office staff and UQ senior leaders to identify opportunities to embed UQ and UNHCR Global Data Service partnership into the future. The Scenario Lab and visit generated ongoing partnerships and projects with UQ researchers.

Background and Guidelines

Approach

The EOI will seek to capture ideas from HASS Researchers and facilitate a discussion with the Director. Following individual discussions, the Director will select a HASS Researcher as the 2024 Scenario Lab lead. The identified HASS researcher will work with their industry partner to deliver mutually beneficially agreed activity. Funding will be available to provide engagement and travel for the industry partner. Logistics support and funding for event delivery will be provided by DCS. The budget will be discussed and agreed with the HASS Researcher and approved by the Director.

Application Process and Timeline

13 February: EOI Opens

DCS launches EOI via email, DCS website and HASS FRO Fortnightly newsletter.



13 Feb - 11 March: EOI submission

Applicant submits proposal to digitalcultures@hass.uq.edu.au by due date of Monday 11 March at 5pm.



11 March - 31 March: EOI Discussion with Director

Director identifies EOIs to progress further.

Following a meeting with EOIs identified the Director identifies the 2024 Scenario Lab Lead.

Confirmation with identified HASS research to lead 2024 Scenario Lab and agreed to scope of activities, timeline and budget.



31 March - 31 December: Preparation and Delivery of 2024 Scenario Lab

HASS Researcher develops and delivers 2024 Scenario Lab activities with support of DCS

Further Information and Contact

Information available on the [DCS Website](#). Please contact DCS at digitalcultures@hass.uq.edu.au.