

Preparing the DARIAH e-Infrastructure

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With this poster, we would like to lay out our vision for DARIAH and first steps towards its realization. DARIAH (Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities; <http://www.dariah.eu>) is a European project funded under the ESFRI programme (<http://cordis.europa.eu/esfri/>), which aims to conceptualise and afterwards build a virtual bridge between different humanities and arts resources across Europe. DARIAH is currently in its preparatory phase, which will design the infrastructure and build a sound business and governmental model. From 2011, DARIAH will begin its construction phase.

DARIAH starts off with the observation that just like astronomers require a virtual observatory to study the stars and other distant objects in the galaxy, researchers in the arts and humanities need a digital infrastructure to bring together and collaboratively work with dispersed scholarly resources (e.g. digital content, services, methodologies). DARIAH will be such an infrastructure with a European dimension. Its aim is to bring together various national infrastructures, such as the UK's arts and humanities e-Science initiative projects (<http://www.ahessc.ac.uk/>) and the German e-Humanities infrastructure TextGrid (<http://www.textgrid.de>). DARIAH has also helped to found the Coalition of Humanities and Arts Infrastructures and Networks (CHAIN), an international group of arts and humanities infrastructure initiatives.

DARIAH will be an infrastructure to promote, support, and advance research in the digital humanities. Digital humanities is a long-established research field, with its origins in the Forties of the last century. Over the

past 60 years it has progressed and a large variety of digital humanities centres and related organizations have developed. However, we do not perceive the digital humanities to be a closed field of existing centres but rather an open and developing research environment. Everybody interested in using digital means for arts and humanities research is part of the DARIAH community of practice. In this view, the DARIAH infrastructure would be a connected network of people, information, tools and methodologies for investigating, exploring and supporting work across the broad spectrum of the digital humanities.

The DARIAH network will be designed to be as decentralised as possible, empowering individual contributors (e.g. individual researchers; national centers; specialised, thematic centers) to work with and within the DARIAH community and shape its features as to their needs. Each contribution of each contributor builds DARIAH, linked together in DARIAH's architecture of participation. At the same time, however, collaboration across the borders of individual centers requires the usage of common technologies e.g. for authentication or federation of archive contents.

DARIAH is about the (*re-*)use of digital research resources by anybody and anywhere. By providing data for anybody's use, it is an e-Research environment. With regard to standards to foster interoperability of content and compatibility of tools, DARIAH will not prescribe but encourage. Researchers do not *have to* support interoperability and openness, but they *may want* to support and benefit from opportunities such as collaboration and re-usability facilitated by interoperability and openness. DARIAH provides community-driven recommendations and fosters interoperability and collaboration through incentives. This approach means less central control over what DARIAH contains and provides.

When DARIAH is operational after the construction phase, technical products by DARIAH will be manifold:

- technological services and tutorials that help existing humanities data archives to link their systems into the DARIAH network
- a package of software and consultancy/training, which supports emerging data

centres in establishing their own technology environment quickly

- an interoperability layer that will connect data centres
- means of linking into DARIAH for those countries / disciplines that do not yet have e-Humanities infrastructure and cannot afford it in the near future
- best practices and guidelines for individual researchers that foster data interoperability and preservation across the DARIAH network

We imagine DARIAH therefore to be not one large infrastructure but more a means of linking up people, services and data for research in arts and humanities. Most likely, DARIAH will not be one technical solution but many, according to community needs and willingness to collaborate. And it is in this context that engaging with the active and vibrant community of international digital humanists is high on DARIAH's list of priorities. DARIAH is engaged in important, in-depth work in modelling research needs and behaviours, the results of which will inform the further development of DARIAH.

We think that the definition in the DuraSpace midterm report on what is a repository also fits DARIAH: “trusted intermediary that makes content (...) usable with a menu of added-value services”. Of course DARIAH will not be one large repository, but otherwise the idea of a trusted intermediary fits well.

DARIAH will make an important contribution towards e-humanities, providing additional services to analyse, annotate and share arts and humanities research activities. DARIAH will stimulate and provide expertise on all aspects of e-humanities, from best practices for digitisation to metadata standards and advice on analysis methods and systems.