

DARIAH-EU VCC2 Workshop

“Are we there yet? Functionalities, synergies and pitfalls of major digital humanities infrastructures”

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Proposed title: Where is the researcher? Research practices, digital scholarship and community engagement in creating a Humanities e-infrastructure: the DARIAH-GR case.

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Abstract

The DARIAH GR project aims to create a first-level digital infrastructure for the Greek Arts & Humanities research community by providing a coherent model of best practices and metadata standards which enhances the accessibility and interoperability of the primary resources, and by creating new facilities for pioneering research such as ontologies and structured vocabularies both for research data and practices (Benardou et al.: 2013). Given the lack of an established institutional framework for the coordination and support of digital scholarship as well as the frequent reluctance of Greek researchers and stakeholders to enhance their research and workflow with digital practices (Katsiadakis & Kouriat: 2009), the emerging infrastructure initiative in Greece has to articulate its central goal: to place the researcher in the very epicentre of its structure.

Above and beyond the infrastructure, to what extent are the Greek researchers aware of the epistemological shifts that information technology is about to introduce to their current scholarship? Additionally, how could we ensure that the designed DARIAH resources and services will be in reciprocal liaison with the Greek research and education communities, thus ensuring that research activities and practices are directly embedded in the infrastructure, in a way that will reinforce and catalyse the existing research landscape (Anderson & Blanke: 2012)? Furthermore, in a critical reflection on the Digital Humanities landscape and scholarship (Svensson: 2010), how could we elaborate and promote a strategy that will combine digital literacy, fruitful research awareness and community building?

This paper will argue that while the DARIAH initiative is designed by researchers for researchers, in the case of Greece a community-based strategy parallel to the main project deliverables must also be developed and implemented. Having in mind that Humanities researchers are the core part of the DARIAH ecosystem, we strongly encourage considering the above-mentioned community not only as the starting point for the observation and documentation of research practices, or as the end-users of digital tools and services, but also as active participants and co-creators of the newly-born Greek Digital Humanities community, as envisioned through the DYAS network.

Within this community-based strategy, the familiarization of the Humanities researchers with the central notions, technologies and tools of Digital Humanities scholarship is much needed. Through a series of workshops and other community engagement activities (think tanks, blog, DH newsletter, THAT CAMP events), DARIAH-GR should perform a digital ambassador's role in order to promote a vast spectrum of digital technologies and to support their implementation and dissemination in research, teaching and publishing.

Among others, grassroots synergies between e-infrastructures- e.g. DARIAH and the scholarly practice-based taxonomy of digital tools proposed by Bamboo DiRT- is strongly encouraged. As a result, Humanities scholars will develop a higher degree of research practice self-awareness and will realize its transformation into the digital paradigm.

We strongly suggest that a community-driven strategy will ensure a robust compatibility and sustainability framework and will add value to the services and tools created within the DARIAH GR plan.

References

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Svensson, P. 2010. "The Landscape of Digital Humanities". *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 4:1. <http://digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/4/1/000080/000080.html> (last accessed 30/04/2014).