
How the notion of access guides the organization of a European research infrastructure: the example of DARIAH

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DARIAH (Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities) is, as the name implies, an infrastructure dedicated to research in digital arts and humanities. Developed under the auspices of the European Commission, it aims to organize communities in those fields, to develop interdisciplinary projects, promoting in particular the digital dimension of humanities and arts research by disseminating good practices, and providing tools and services. In legal terms, it is what is called an ERIC, that is to say a European Research Infrastructure Consortium, which is composed of national members that have come together to promote common objectives and serve common communities. Several ERICs have been created since 2009 in Europe, mostly based on a disciplinary approach, membership by several European countries, and the pooling of services.

DARIAH had already a long existence as an unofficial structure since 2005, but it became fully established as an ERIC in 2014. It brings together 17 countries in Europe which makes it the biggest ERIC in terms of members, but it is also distinct because it serves a very wide community consisting of the whole of Arts and Humanities research. This breadth poses real questions regarding the notion of access. The role of all ERICs is to share tools, services, human resources, projects, software, etc. to enrich research. Doing so for a community as broad as DARIAH's creates particular challenges.

Through this presentation, we wish to give an account of the specificities of this infrastructure by presenting the issues related to the notion of access that contribute to the structuring of DARIAH. Many of our pre-existing understandings of how access impacts upon humanities and arts research date from the days of the library collection, and it is common to limit the

notion of access to research data. But within the framework of a research infrastructure consortium, the notion of access is made more complex. We will evidence this different paradigm here with five examples, which we will develop in turn by explaining both the constraints and the solutions that are envisaged to solve the problems encountered.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "access" has two kinds of meanings: the first one concerns "the method or possibility of getting near a place or a person" and the second one "the right or opportunity to use or look at something". Both meanings are interesting in terms of creating an expanded understanding of access in field of Digital Humanities. Even if we mostly think about the second one (open access, open data, and so on), the first one shows the necessity of being near our community and highlights the fact that thanks to digital tools we are nearer and nearer despite the distance and we are able to work together being in different places.

DARIAH positions itself to support an emerging research culture in ways that invoke both of these meanings, as the examples below illustrate.

Managing interdisciplinarity

When one addresses a community as broad as that encompassed by the expression "Arts and Humanities", itself vague regarding the disciplines that it covers, one implicitly raises the question of what access by these Communities to this hyper-infrastructure represented by DARIAH will mean.

This implies first and foremost the need to define, more or less precisely, what is meant by the expression "Arts and Humanities", and in particular the expression "Humanities", which varies across European languages and across places and times. For example, are the social sciences included or not? And on what grounds can you bring together researchers from communities as diverse as literature, history, philosophy, cinema studies and perhaps even geography and linguistics? To be useful, DARIAH needs to develop a common language with common services and tools which can be used by people in those different fields. In this case, access concerns the way DARIAH communicates with its communities and the projects it launches, to encourage interdisciplinarity without seeming intrusive. Indeed, this infrastructure has as one of its objectives to contribute to organizing a gigantic network of specialists in those fields. To do that, it is necessary to think about how to create such a network, to animate

it and to make it last. Several initiatives are being developed, both thematic and national, which we will present as responses to this challenge.

Managing tensions between national and international perspectives

Access also has a political dimension. When the same tool is developed in parallel in two different countries, how can we know how to assign credit for the development? Which should be valued by DARIAH? There is thus a problem of selection, and therefore a possibility of bias, in the choice to favor promoting the access to one tool rather than another. To resolve this tension, the DARIAH community is coordinated around National Representatives who are engaged in complementary, rather than competitive, work. This work is based in particular on the dissemination of information about the activities of the national teams and the projects in which they are involved.

On the other hand, some teams may wish to retain the rights or control of their tools and may not wish to make them accessible to other communities without compensation. We will see how this constraint contributes in turn to the structuring of the DARIAH ERIC.

The question of access thus raises political and diplomatic problems that may interfere with more neutral criteria of quality of the tool, its durability, its usefulness.

Speaking to whom?

The role of DARIAH is also very broad insofar as this European consortium has an ancillary mission for the development of new communities. But this mandate is very vague. Do we mean fields of research? Specific countries? Or people inside? In this section, we would like to focus on people. Toward this end, DARIAH has specific functions in terms of teaching digital practices, not only within the current network but also beyond it, with the goal of opening and expanding it to encompass researchers (including under and postgraduate students) who may or may not have any competences in digital tools but who are interested in them. In this way DARIAH acts as a facilitator to help people to use digital tools and services.

One question that we must ask, however, is whether we can or should open our community to, for example, private companies, which would help in the development of tools and / or which would benefit, once again, from inclusion. The wider the access, the less control there is. And what would DARIAH mean and how would it act if the infrastructure became open to all

without distinction of disciplines, places, people? Conversely, what would be its meaning, if by privileging shared access to knowledge and tools, it decided to close the door to some? Imperatives toward democratizing the benefits DARIAH can bring come at such junctures into conflict with the possibility that too much access could dilute the infrastructure's effectiveness, distort its scale or divert its mission. Again, this is an aspect related to the question of access to which the infrastructure must respond and on which we shall give a few quick lines of reflection.

Managing tools

This point is particularly well recognised within the DH community, since it questions the interoperability of tools. For DARIAH, questions regarding managing access to tools arises in terms of languages, content, formats and, of course, sustainability. Within DARIAH, the issue of interoperability is paramount, to leverage our large scale, but also to enable disciplinary practices usage models; given that the research questions posed at the origin of these uses will vary so considerably.

Specific attention is therefore paid to this aspect and in particular to data hosting. One of the first tasks that DARIAH has set itself is to work on long-term data hosting. To do this, it has, for example, relied on national hosts able to also integrate data from multiple countries. These include the CNR in Italy (via the PARTHENOS project) and Huma-Num in France.

This perspective on access reflects as well the importance of the trust that must be established between the partner countries, in particular with regard to intellectual property, as suggested in the next and final point.

Building collaborative tools

DARIAH is an infrastructure that brings together 17 countries and a range of diverse disciplinary communities. In this sense, it involves collaborative work that relies mainly on the use of digital tools. But one problem remains: the too easy access to collaborative tools developed by companies that do not share the same conception of intellectual property and data security. Tools such as Google doc and Google drive, etc. are unavoidable in the context of collaboration between researchers, but the access in this case is so easy that their existence prevents the development of alternative tools that correspond more closely to the specificities of scientific exchanges. It is now important to de-

velop virtual working environments conducive to scientific exchanges and the needs of researchers, particularly in the communities concerned.

To enhance its ability to navigate the many requirements of access, DARIAH has recently launched a far-reaching 3-year program of actions, which will be presented as well as an example of how a holistic approach to access can be manifested in an institutional strategy. By explaining how the document has been formulated and how community support for it has been developed, the presentation will give a worked example of how access can be negotiated across countries and disciplines.

The notion of access lies at the heart of the issues dealt with by infrastructures such as DARIAH, as they seek to structure and facilitate coordination and exchange of tools, and the development of research. Questions of access, which are too often reduced to the management of the data, imply each time a positioning; And that even when the stated objective is to be open to all, it is nonetheless subject to a form of choice.

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