



Centre for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society, Brussels

- Academic Workshops Series -

Virtual Research Environments and Research Portals in the field of Digital Humanities

- 17 June 2013 – Brussels –

Workshop organized by CEGESOMA in cooperation with the IAP Research Network 'Justice and Populations', EHRI and DARIAH-VL

General outline

The field of Digital Humanities has quickly become a new essential domain that holds many promises for new kinds of research strategies and collection management for researchers within the humanities and social sciences. Because of the institutional diversity, the data and metadata provided often follow different standards. Opening up these (meta-)data to a research community, let alone a broader public, is a very complex undertaking. What are the needs within the research community itself? How can we connect metadata from different sources in a sustainable way? Can we learn from existing best practices?

This workshop wishes to discuss these issues, with a focus on the journey from data, over metadata to online research portal. This will be a conversation between the VRE (Virtual Research Environment) data providers (archives, museums, and libraries), the developers (IT) and the content-selectors of the VRE (humanities scholars) and the VRE users (from the broader academic and research community). Our primary target audience and focus are the **historic profession and historical research**.

Program (10:30 a.m. – 16:00 p.m.)

10:30 a.m. – Welcome by **Rudi Van Doorslaer** (director CEGESOMA) and general introduction by **Veerle Vanden Daelen** (CEGESOMA, EHRI) and **Tobias Blanke** (Centre for e-research King's College London, EHRI)

10:45-12:00 a.m. – **Session 1: VRE from the historic researcher's point of view**

Chair: Mathieu Roeges (CEGESOMA, ULB)

Does everyone mean the same thing when using the concept Virtual Research Environments? Are we talking about collection- and data management or research strategy- and network-management? What different focal points could exist, what are the needs within researcher communities themselves; what do they hope to gain and how do they intend to use these VRE? This first session explores the tension between the technological possibilities and the practical needs; the demands from users and the strategies of providers. One of the issues at stake, is the difficult transition from 'classic' closed digital systems that still exist within a lot of institutions today, towards new and interconnected systems and future VRE. This session will also contain case-related elaborations by **Margo De Koster** on current developments within the **IAP Research Network 'Justice and Populations'**.

12:00-13:00 p.m. – Lunch Break

13:00-14:00 p.m. – Session 2: Multiple agent collection-management: benefits and challenges

Chair: *Veerle Vanden Daelen (CEGESOMA, EHRI)*

Illustrated by the identification work of EHRI, this session will discuss the occurrence of a collection being described by multiple agents (the archive itself, a finding aid, a research guide, or a copy-holding institution) in multiple languages, each of the descriptions bringing in useful and relevant information for the researchers. We seek to explore ways of representing these descriptions in a single digital research portal, and to examine the benefits and challenges.

14:00-14:15 p.m. – Coffee break

14:15-15:15 p.m. – Session 3: Large scale digital infrastructures as a dead end for digital humanities?

Chair: *Christophe Verbruggen (Ghent University, DARIAH-VLA)*

Large scale infrastructures such as DARIAH have been described as a dead end for the development of digital humanities. But how do we conceptualize “infrastructures”? Starting from experiences to set up a (transnational) VRE, we will discuss the ambition of DARIAH to create some of the many missing links between data providers and universities and to match the right tools with the right resources, in Belgium and beyond.

15:15-16:00 p.m.: Final plenary discussion: wrapping up and closing remarks

Chair: *Tobias Blanke (Centre for e-research King's College London, EHRI)*

Format of the workshop + output

As the second in a series of academic workshops of CEGESOMA, this is a closed session (personal invitation only) for a small and selected group of experts. The focal point of the workshop is on discussion and active participation. Presentations and content-technical experiences will be taken from different projects. As such, all participants are invited to bring in their own set of experiences. The discussion will focus on challenges concrete projects have encountered, which potential solutions they explored (or did not explore and why) and whether or not these solutions filled the needs. All confirmed participants will receive a small number of pre-circulated preparatory texts.

Each session will assume the shape of a roundtable debate. Each session leader will moderate this discussion, but she/he will also kick off the discussion with a brief introduction.

The workshop will lead to a (brief) final e-report, highlighting the main issues/questions raised during the workshop but also recommendations for further steps and initiatives.

Practical information

Organisation & contact (info, subscription): Nico Wouters (nico.wouters@cegesoma.be)

SUBSCRIPTION IS FREE OF CHARGE BUT MANDATORY ; WE CAN ONLY ALLOW A MAX. NUMBER OF 25 PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE !

LOCATION: CEGESOMA Conference Room
Luchtvaartsquare, 29 – Square de l'Aviation, 29
1070 Brussels
Tel : 02 / 556 92 11 / Fax : 02 / 556 92 00
www.cegesoma.be

Organizing partner websites:

PAI research network Justice and Populations: <http://www.just-his.be/just-his/>

EHRI: <http://www.ehri-project.eu/>

DARIAH-VL: http://www.gcdh.ugent.be/?page_id=348

The workshop language is **English**
