Research Infrastructures for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Introduction

Research infrastructures (RIs) are meant to support scholars at various stages of the research workflow. Humanities and Social Sciences have a long history of infrastructures like archives, libraries, or galleries. Currently RIs serve as platforms strengthening interdisciplinary dialogue within and between research communities.

Keywords

Infrastructure, research, support, sustainability, training, AHSS

Summary

The digital transformation has allowed research infrastructures (RI) to adapt modern scholarly needs, enabling them to provide various types of support for scholarly needs such as access to materials and services, training and education or even advocacy among funders and policy makers for community-relevant issues.

The main difference between RIs and e-infrastructures (e.g. large repositories) lies in the former's situatedness in a particular research community of practice, meaning that they can respond to the needs of particular disciplines. Thus RIs serve as an interdisciplinary meeting platform for researchers from different disciplines, archivist, librarians, ICT professionals, who all work towards addressing their research questions with the support of modern technology.

The European Commission defines RIs broadly as "facilities, resources and related services that are used by the scientific community to conduct top-level research in their respective fields". To ensure better alignment of such infrastructures with the key research needs and to streamline the cooperation between smaller, national entities, EC created ERICs (European Research Infrastructure Consortia), international legal entities active in the European Research Area.

ERICs aim at supporting particular international scholarly community. For instance DARIAH maintains focus on digital use of research data generated by various AHSS disciplines, whereas CLARIN provides resources, tools and services for language-based research. ERIC is thus a larger, often federated RI, which serves the same purpose, yet on a larger scale.

The key feature of all RIs is that they need to serve their users as their mission (as well as funding) depends on it. Hence RIs conduct regular surveys in order to better understand the needs of communities they serve and stress user-involvement activities. Researchers in need for guidance, know-how, tools or resources should feel encouraged to approach RIs and ask for their help in interdisciplinary endeavours.

https://www.shapeid.eu

Further Resources

- SHAPE-ID Case Study: DARIAH

- SHAPE-ID Case Study: CLARIN

- SHAPE-ID webinar Infrastructures for Interdisciplinary Engagement: Lessons from the Digital Humanities (18 Feb 2021)

- European Commission: Legal Framework for a European Research Infrastructure Consortium : ERIC : Practical Guidelines.' Website Brussels: Publications Office of the European Union. 2010.

- Moulin C, Nyhan J, Ciula A, et al.: Research Infrastructures in the Humanities. Science Policy Briefing. Strasbourg: European Science Foundation. 2011.

- Duşa, Adrian, Dietrich Nelle, Günter Stock, and Gert G. Wagner, eds. Facing the Future: European Research Infrastructures for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Berlin: Scivero. 2014.

- Main ERICs in AHSS:
  - DARIAH (Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities)
  - CLARIN (Common Language Resources & Technology Infrastructure)
  - CESSDA (The Consortium of European Social Science data Archives)
  - ESS (The European Social Survey)

- Relevant RIs applying to become ERICs:
  - E-RIHS (European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science)
  - OPERAS (Open Scholarly Communication in European Research Area for the Social Sciences and Humanities)
  - ReIReS (Research Infrastructure on Religious Studies)

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