OPERAS-P

Future of scholarly writing in SSH

The Future of Scholarly Communication – OPERASLab

26 February 2021

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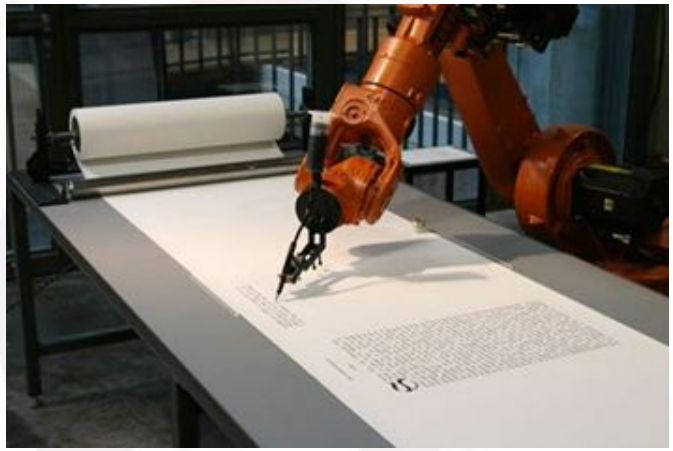
OPERAS Lab

- **to explore current writing practices**
- **to prototype new solutions**
- **to propose new OPERAS services**



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Does writing have a future?

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*The new signs that appear on computer or television screens are no longer traces engraved in objects; they are no longer "typographic". **The kind of thought that is producing the new information is no longer typographic, typifying kind of thought.***

...

The informatic revolution makes print, the alphabet, and this kind of thought superfluous. It leads to a new mode of thought that can be anticipated but not yet perceived.

*That sounds like an assertion, but it is really **a concerned and hopeful question directed toward the future**.*

Vilém Flusser [1987] 2011:52-53

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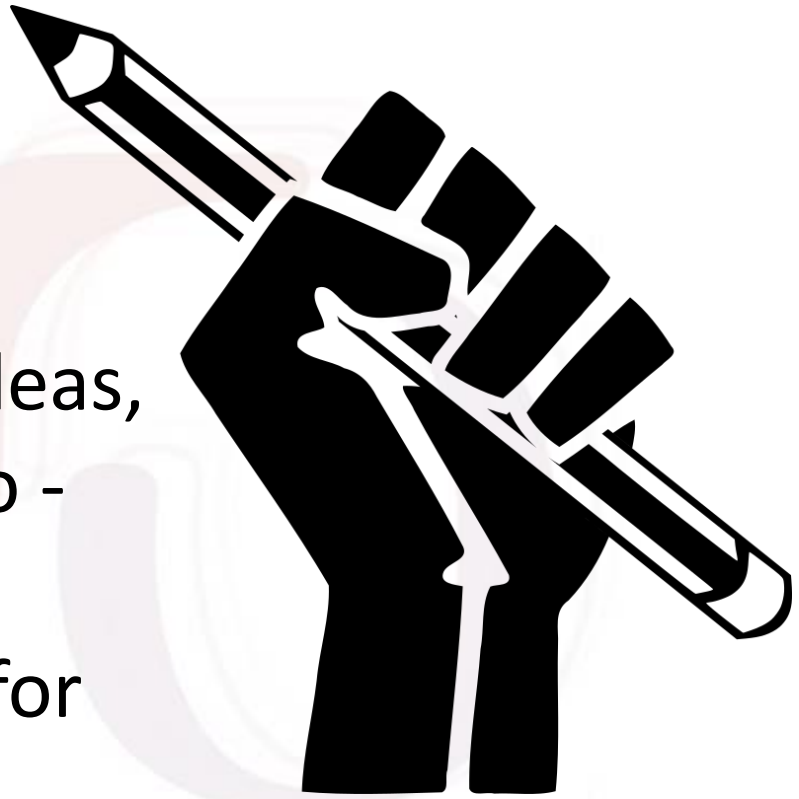
Scholarly writing



Practices regarding the communication of scholarly ideas, focused on - but not limited to - practices, competences, frameworks and tools crucial for creating scholarly works.

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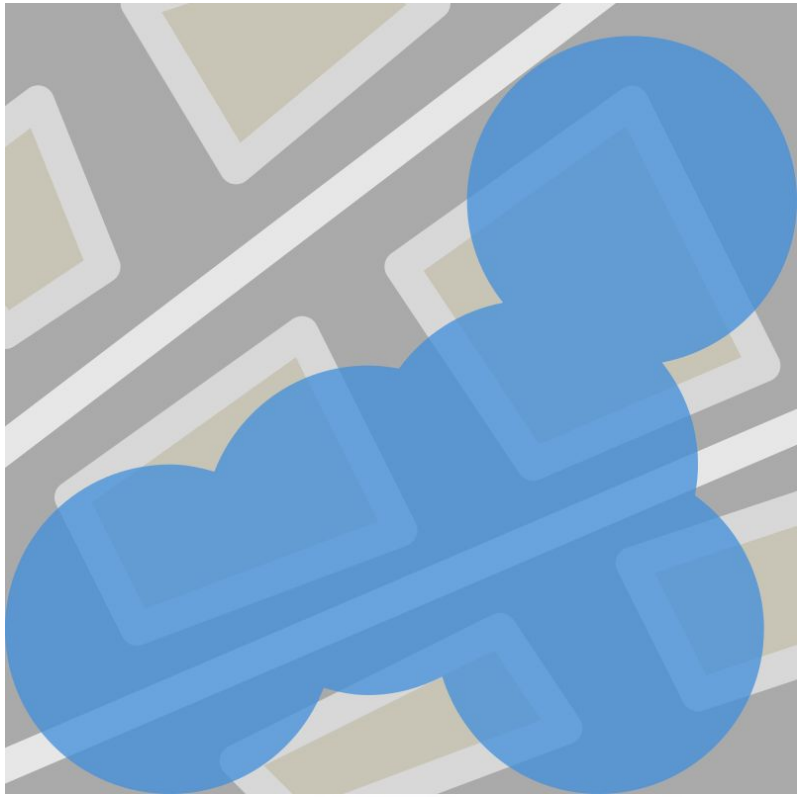
KEY AREAS

- Specificity of SSH
- Writing processes
- Publishing processes
- Innovative vs. traditional forms and genres
- Prestige and power structures
- Open access
- Evaluation
- Research Data
- Peer review practices
- Tools
- Collaboration
- Audiences



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Methodology

- **Literature review**
- **Case studies**
- **Interviews**

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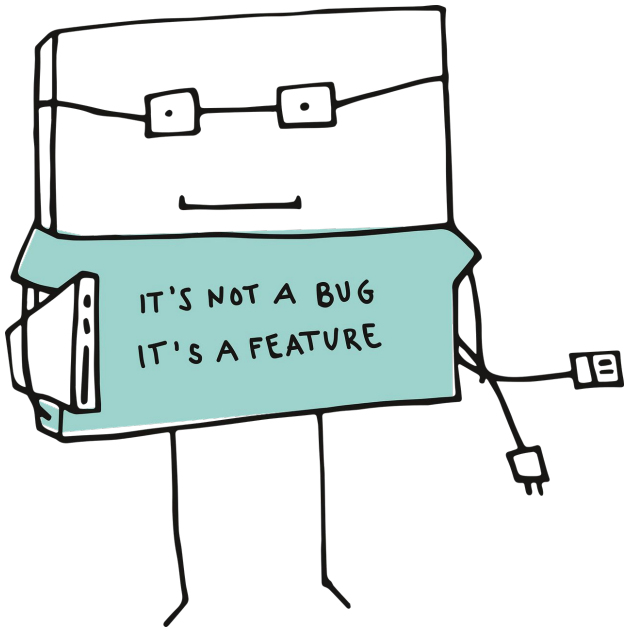

CASE STUDIES

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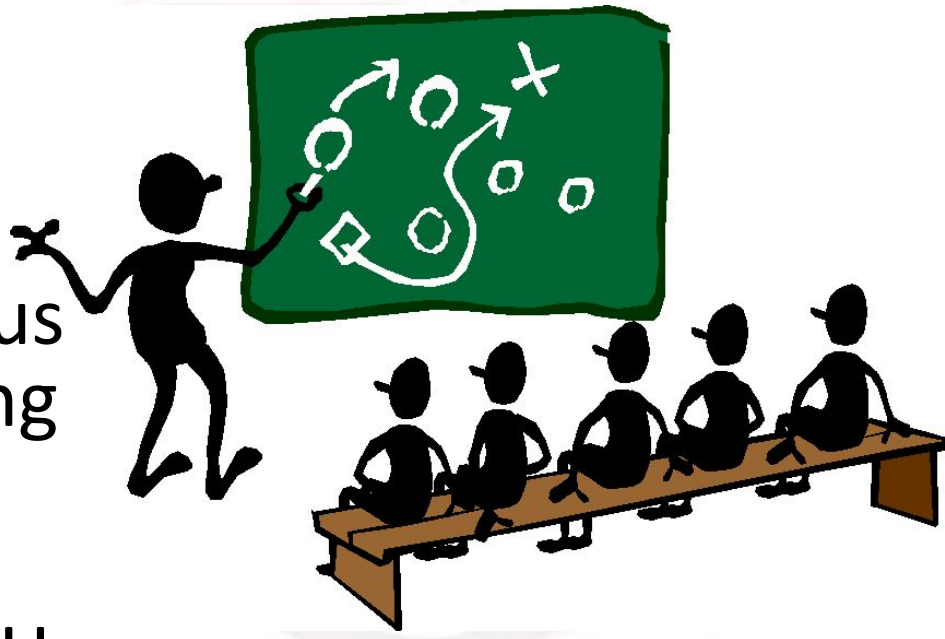
Case studies

- 55 cases analysed
- detailed case questionnaire
- 2 main researchers plus collaborators (including trainees)
- defining *innovation* in scholarly writing in SSH



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Sampling

- **tools**
- **services**
- **projects**
- **digital editions**

snowball sampling & sample saturation

(we looked for diversity not representativeness)

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Dimensions of analysis

- Users and their needs
- Data and technology
- Affiliation, Authorship, Workflow
- Availability and Accessibility
- Sustainability
- Evaluation, Trust and Authority
- Impact

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Detailed questions

Availability and Accessibility

– What are the entry requirements to use it? Do you need to set up an account, show your affiliation to use it?
– Is the access free of charge (if not - what are the payment options)?
– Is the tool accessible via an existing platform? Or does it need to be installed and operated by the user's organisation?
– Is the website accessible to the visually impaired users, persons with disabilities? (If not, no need to discuss this)
– Is it possible to use the case in different ways (based on different user needs, adaptation to different operational systems, mobile devices etc.)? Compatibility with different devices and systems.
– Is it compatible with different browsers: Chrome, Firefox, Edge, Safari, mobile devices?

Sustainability

– Business model.
– Is it funded? What's the source of funding?
– What's the sustainability model (including the technical maintenance, including hosting)?
– It the sustainability model linked to the national context (e.g. in the USA or in the UK it is likely to be a more commercial model and non-commercial in EU countries)?
– What are the security measures e.g. data encryption? (This may appear in 'Data and Technology').
– Are there persistent identifiers?

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The role of the user

User is not perceived as a mere “observator”, but (ideally) as an active contributor to the tool or service

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SSH Open Marketplace BETA
Social Sciences and Humanities Open Marketplace

Report an issue

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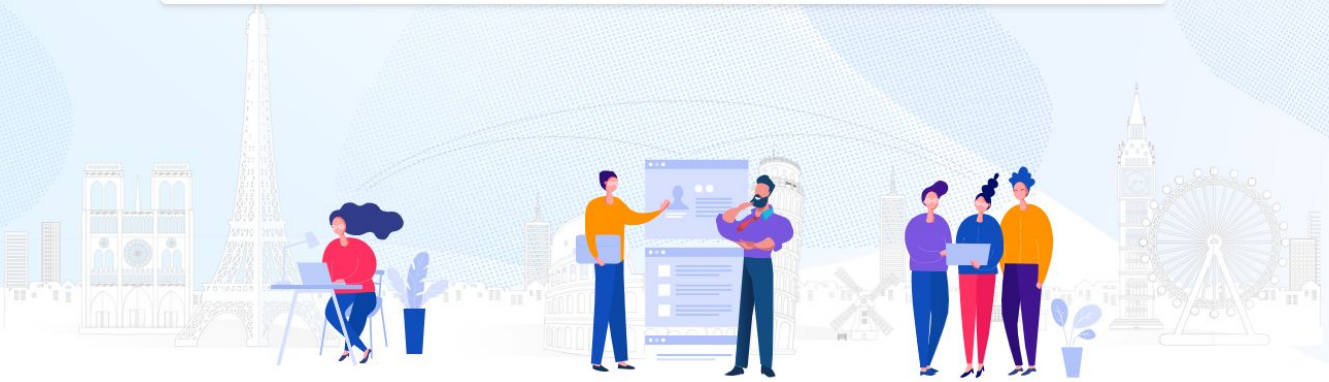
Social Sciences & Humanities Open Marketplace

Discover new and contextualised resources for your research in Social Sciences and Humanities: tools, services, training materials, workflows and datasets. Read more...

The SSH Open Marketplace is under development and the current content is subject to change. Final release is planned for December 2021.

All categories | Search | Search



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Various types of contribution

- “Contributions may include code, code review, infrastructure work, mailing list and chat participation, community help/building, education and outreach, fundraising, branding, marketing, inclusion and diversity, UX design and research, etc.” (Jupyter)
- “If you hold this book, you are a part of our community” (Editoria)
- “A periodical is a lightweight virtual journal with you as the Editor-in-chief, giving you complete freedom in setting editorial policy to select the most interesting and useful manuscripts for your readers.” (Peeriodicals.com)

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Competences

One does not have to be a tech-savvy researcher to use these tools

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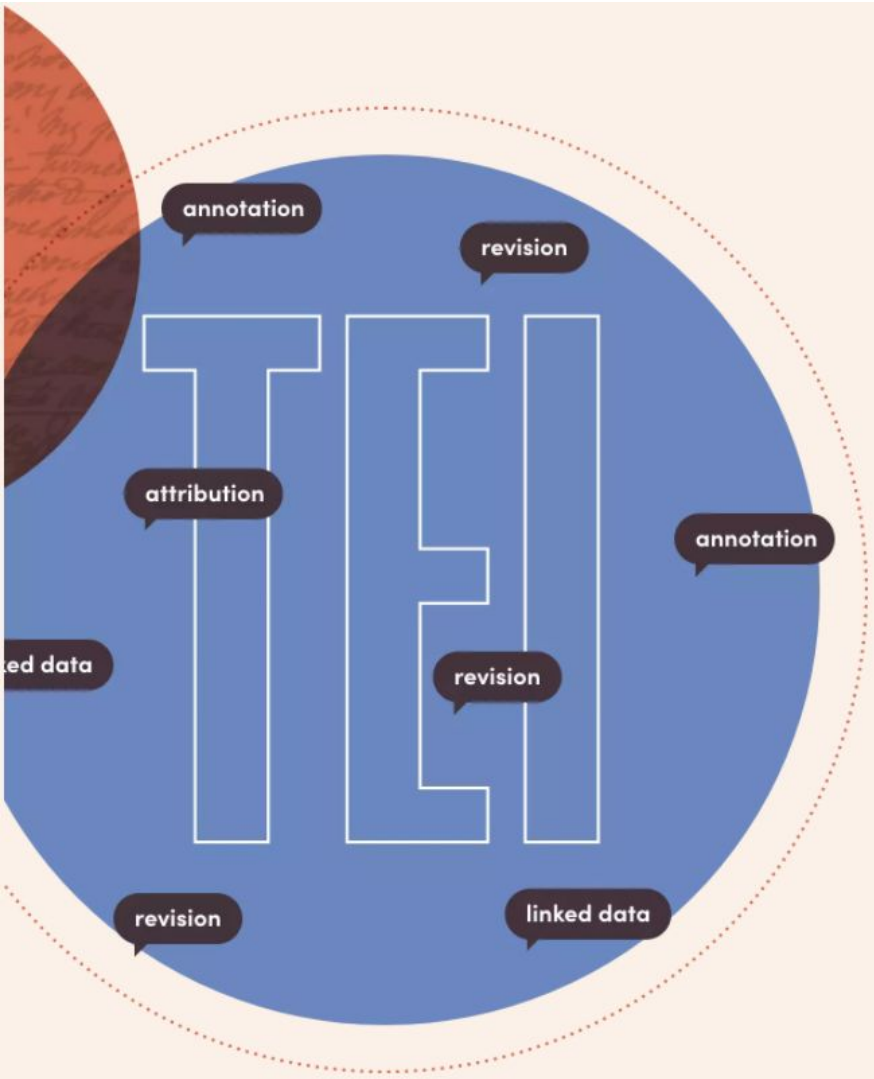

Transcribing isn't just for XML experts anymore.

The internationally accepted "Guidelines for Electronic Text Encoding and Interchange" or "TEI" for short, are a powerful XML code created specifically for transcribing primary sources.

TEI allows for mark up of revisions, attributions, linked data, and annotations, as well as the structural features of printed documents and manuscripts.

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Competences

- TEI Vanilla – a scoop of TEI for everyone (the continuation of TEI Simple)
- “Transcribing isn’t just for XML experts anymore.” (FairCopy Editor)
- “To work with Muruca, no technical skills are needed.” (Muruca)
- “We want our platforms to be accessible and exciting for the public. We want the books our community creates to be shared and used and adapted in the public sphere.” (Rebus Ink)

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INTERVIEWS

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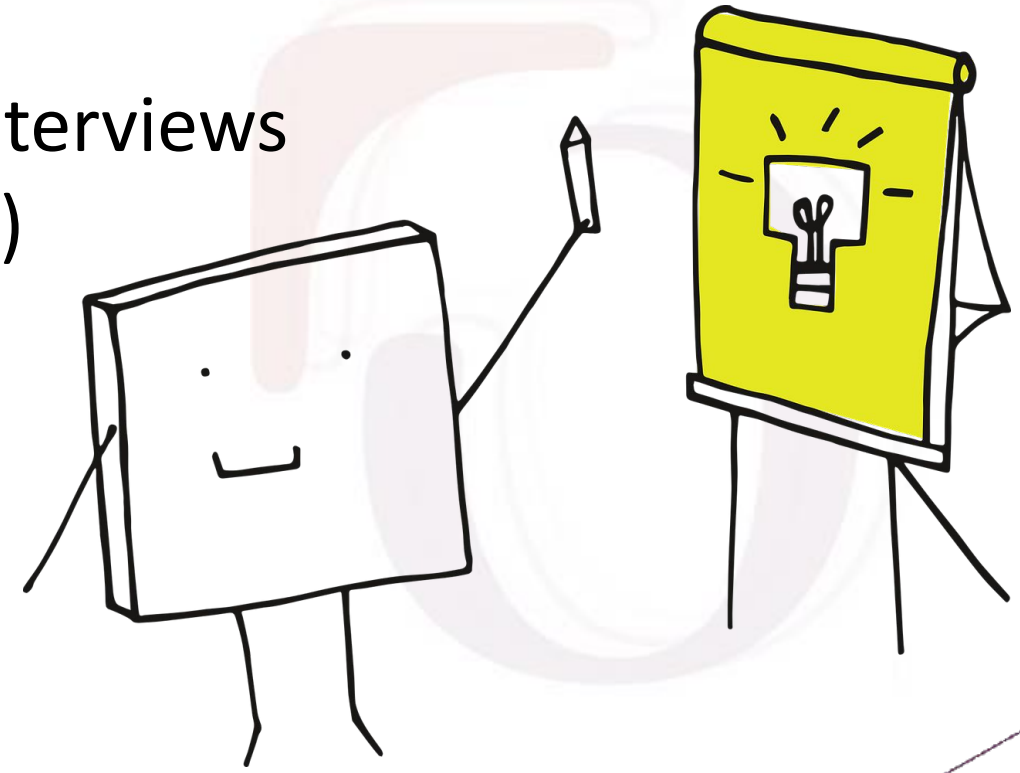
Interview workflow

1. Preparation
2. Conducting the interviews
3. Coding (MAXQDA)
4. Analysis



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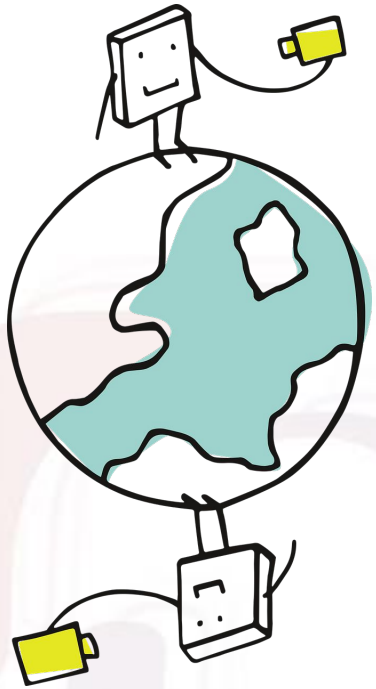
Our interviewees



32 full transcripts - **33 interviewees**

Gender: 19 Male, 14 Female

Disciplines represented: Arts and Media, Biblical/Religious Studies, Cultural Studies, Digital Humanities, Education/Computer Sciences, English Studies, History, Information and Communication Science, Linguistics, Literature and Literary Anthropology, Philosophy, Psychology, Science Studies, Sociology, Other SSH

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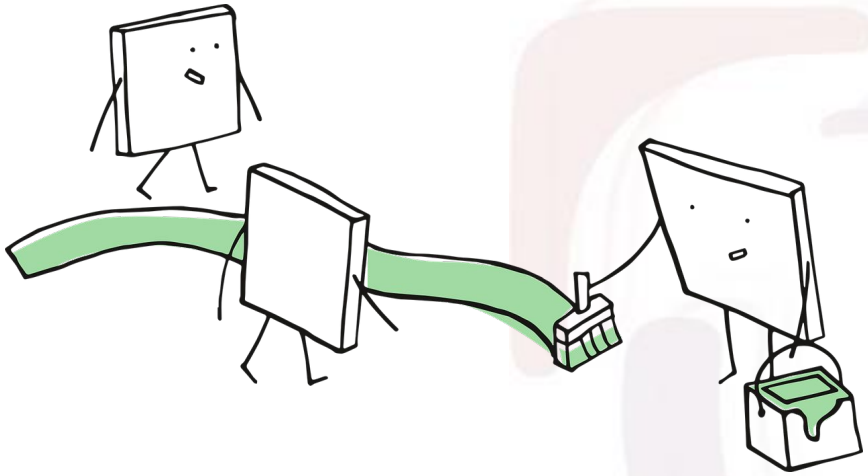
Our interviewees

Career stage: PhD candidate (5), ECR/Post-doc (11), Senior (13), Other (4)



Countries: Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, the UK, the USA

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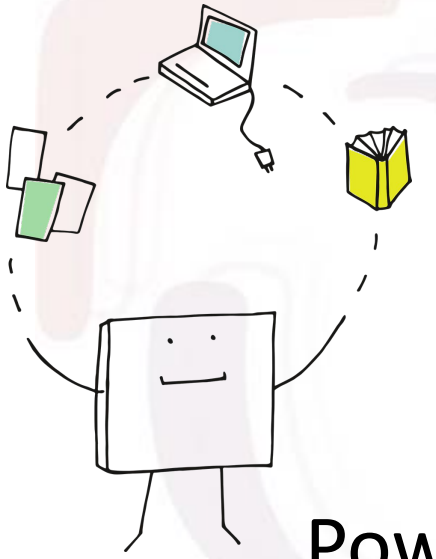
Areas of interest

Innovative forms

Digital tools

Choosing a publication type



Prestige

Incentives and rewards

Audiences

Openness

Power structures

Publishing

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Innovative forms and genres

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Innovative forms: understandings

What is innovation?

- **access** (OA, shadow libraries)
- **multimedia** (using different media in one work)
- **linking or embedding external texts** (data, blog v. twitter, “double” publication)
- **collaboration** (patchwork)
- **distribution** (using popular formats to reach the audience)

I'd like to see more powerful and intelligent ways of connecting research findings and research claims with evidence... I would like to see publication genres that use digital formats, not just as a way to disseminate more broadly but as a way to enhance the process of "reading", (M, Senior, Digital Heritage)

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Innovative forms

- **blogs**
- **web-book**, computational essay, living book
- **podcast**
- **videos**, visual commentary
- **slides**
- **social media** (twitter)
- **collaborative text** (e.g. ‘Frankensteinian monograph’)

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Tools

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start
publication
lot
find
article
year
Word
digital
make
research
text
learn
Google
idea
process
Zotero
time
journal
paper
publish
tool
people
read
sort
project
editor
platform
work
write

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Digital tools and services used by SSH researchers

- **Writing** – Microsoft Word, Atom, Open Office, Google Docs, Scrivener, Pandoc, LibreOffice, Markdown, StackEdit, Jupyter Notebook, iA Writer, Overleaf
- **Data storage and sharing** – Google Drive, Scrivener, Dropbox, Microsoft SharePoint, Next Cloud, OneDrive
- **Presenting results** – Microsoft PowerPoint, Adobe Connect, yEd Graph Editor, Miro, Adobe Acrobat, Padlet
- **Reference and citation management** – Zotero, EndNote, JabRef, Citavi
- **Panning and monitoring** – Asana, Trello, Google Calendar
- **Managing notes** – Evernote, OneNote, Reminders

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Digital tools used by SSH scientists in their work

- **Managing and sharing articles** – Mendeley, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Scopus, Web of Science, SciHub
- **Typesetting tool** – LaTex
- **Data processing and analysis tools** – SPSS, Microsoft Excel, nVivo, MaxQda, Atlas.ti, Stylo, CLARIN tools
- **Communication tools** – Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, Google Meets, WhatsApp
- **Programming tools** – GitHub, Python, RStudio, JavaScript, Eclipse, Visual Studio Code
- **Online translation tools** – Google Translate, Dictionarycambridge.org

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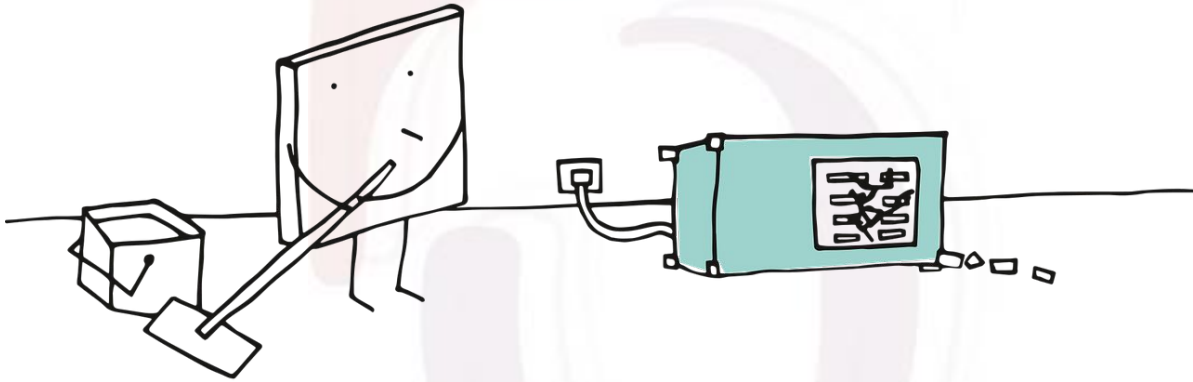
Criteria for choosing the tools

Skills and competencies:

self-learning; learning from research team colleagues,
within a project, a university/research unit;
trainings organised by universities and the Ministry

Licences are crucial!



Ideas for transferring knowledge about tools:

ad-hoc seminars, including them in the curriculum, podcasts

The digital tools that facilitate work aren't for everyone, the learning process is difficult, especially for more senior researchers.

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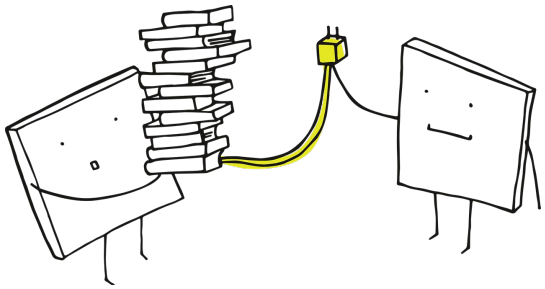

Choosing a publication type

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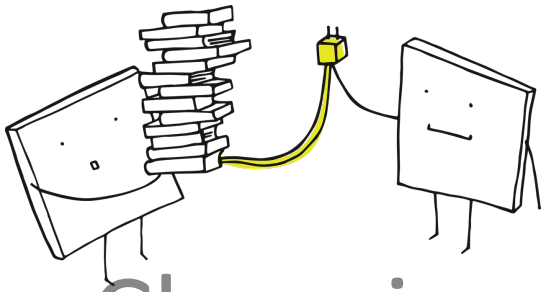

Choosing a publication type

- Authors have to make several decisions:
  - to publish in print or digital (or parallel)?
  - to opt (and sometimes pay) for Open Access?
  - which format/genre to go for?

- What to consider when making the decision? What are the motives, incentives to choose a particular form or publishing venue?

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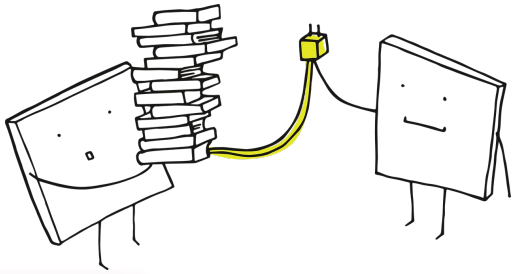
Choosing a publication type



- **Appropriateness** of the form to the content:
  - *"we could have written you know, three or four journal articles. But actually, it was nicer to package it together within a single narrative space of a book" (M, ECR, Literature);*
  - *"I think that new formats are liberating and they allow you to express yourself in ways that standard formats cannot allow you to express yourself" (M, ECR, Psychology)*

- **Community (and thematic) relevance and status** - for instance, the difference in the perceived status of edited volumes vs. conference proceedings vs. journals:
  - *"there's a perception that the book chapters are of less importance than journal articles are. I tend to think that's a little misguided in part because I think that edited volumes frequently have a really important impact on their fields" (F, Senior, English Studies)*

- Expected future **discoverability and visibility** (because they will determine the size of the readership):
  - *"not everything is indexed in every possible platform and therefore journals that might not be indexed in the major databases like Scopus or Web of Science. Those will be problematic in terms of like how much of a reach it will have in the scholarly community" (M, ECR, Cultural Studies);*

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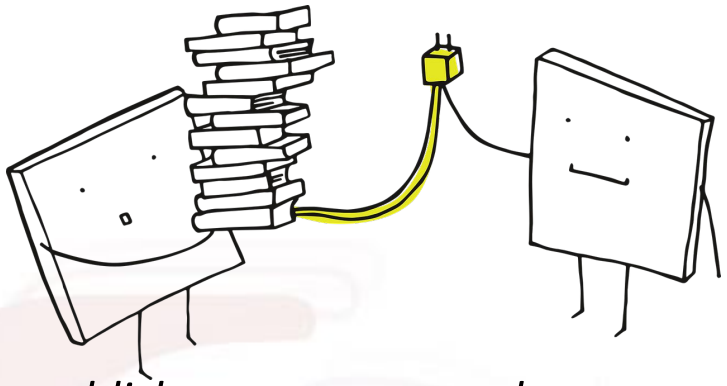
Choosing a publication type



- The **economy** of publishing
  - *“It's definitely a problem if you want to publish open access and you don't have a grant and you don't have funding in the grant that is specified for article process in charge, then of course your choices are limited.“* (M, ECR, Science Studies)

- **Bibliometric indicators** (often imposed by the formal assessment criteria)
  - *“I normally aim for the highest ranked journal in my disciplinary topical area.”* (F, ECR, Digital Humanities)*;*
  - *“increasingly for the past couple of years, those metrics which have been used for natural sciences have been adopted by and adapted to the humanities and social sciences.”* (F, Senior, Cultural Memory Studies)

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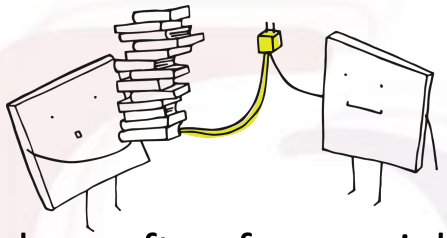
Choosing a publication type

Publisher reputation -
"the good series, of course, are also with the good publishing houses."
(M, Senior, Early Modern History)



Favouring **Open Access**

Invitation by editors - especially for senior scholars, often for special issues

"now I usually get invited to write things, which was not the case doing my PhD" (F, ECR, Linguistics)

Different situation of **early career vs. senior scholars** -
"The younger our co-author - which is understandable to us - the more he needs a publication with an impact factor." (M, ECR, Philosophy)

Others: peer networks, acquaintances, past experiences, speed of publication, **language** (in relation to intended audience), pure coincidence!

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Publishing

- **Mostly traditional** publications: journals, monographs, edited volumes
- Popular **publishers**: Palgrave Macmillan, Elsevier, de Gruyter, Routledge Publishing, Cambridge University Press, Wright Publishing Company, Language Science Press, Punctum Books, Z1 Press, Emerald…
- Popular **publishing platforms**: Open Edition, Cairn
- Prestigious publishers:
  - "The way it is valued for our existence, it forces us to mostly send papers in high ranking scientific journals. Because this is what counts. This is the main criteria and whatever else I do, I simply will not exist anymore; I would be rejected for funding and even my salary if I don't have a certain number of papers published in high ranking scientific journals. A high ranking means the first two quartiles of the ranking in the specific field." (M, Senior, Electronic Systems and Information Processing, Education)

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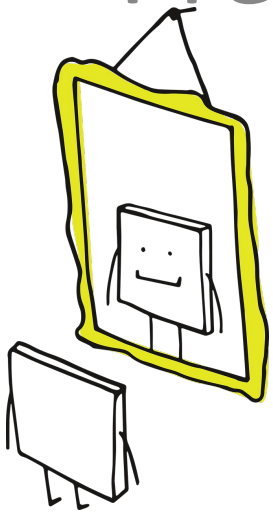
Prestige



publish
publication
people
open
access
researcher
paper
early
field
peer
book
academic
publisher
journal
editor
good
review
author
research
important
science
write
article
career
work
prestige
talk
time
scientific
scholar

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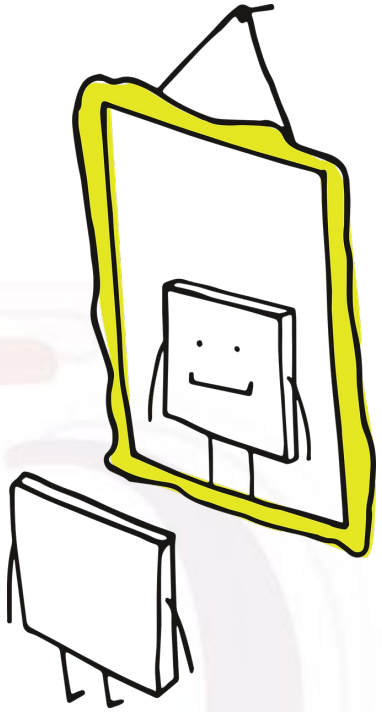
Prestige



Understanding of **what is prestigious** varies.

Monograph is still the queen/king of the SSH:
"*...regardless of the type of scholarship,*
the output is still the monograph
and the journal article"
(M, ECR, Biblical Studies)

Many decisions are made in strict consideration of the **evaluation process**, even sometimes resulting with a move made against one's own values.

Yet, prestige is **more than 'academic points'**.

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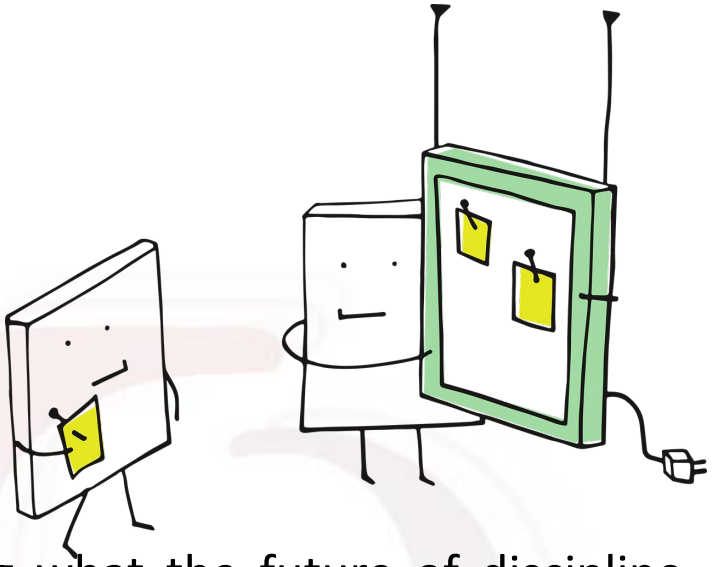
Power structures



Power structures play
a crucial role
in scholarly communication.

Diverse understandings on which group
'holds the most power'
in the academic publishing landscape:

"What funder used to fund is key in shaping what the future of discipline looks like. But that is determined by researchers who conduct the peer review. And they conduct that at different stages in their career, facing different pressures at different points. I think, you know, in some disciplines, there are editors at particular book series, who have huge influence on what is published and shaped the discipline in that space. In other disciplines, it's a journal peer review process that really doesn't have that single point of editorial acquisition or oversight." (M, ECR, Literature)

Early career researchers are defined as the **most vulnerable**.

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Incentives

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Incentives and rewards: the need for a broader concept of the prestige

Peer review – more visibility (OPR) for increased motivation

"If my review would be published along with the paper. And if there would be some mechanisms for other people to comment both on the paper and on my review. That would encourage me to do it more often and more vigorously."

(M, Senior, Electronic Systems and Information Processing, Education)

Writing for non-scholarly audience

Programming

"*I absolutely connect prestige with creators of certain software packages, creators of different modules or plug-ins for a different software, especially if they are distributing that as an open-source solution. We need to take a broader perspective when considering prestige.*"
(M, Senior, Information Sciences)

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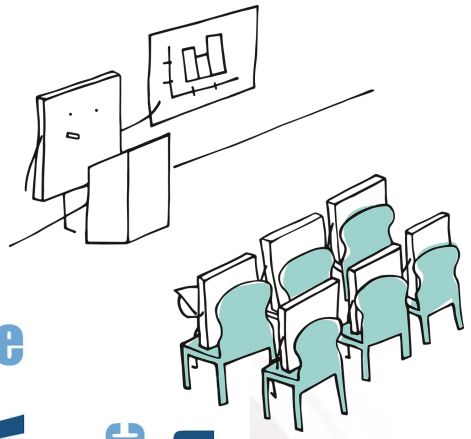
Q: Have you ever been rewarded for the reviewing activity?

A: No. (M, Senior, Electronic Systems and Information Processing, Education)

Audiences



audience
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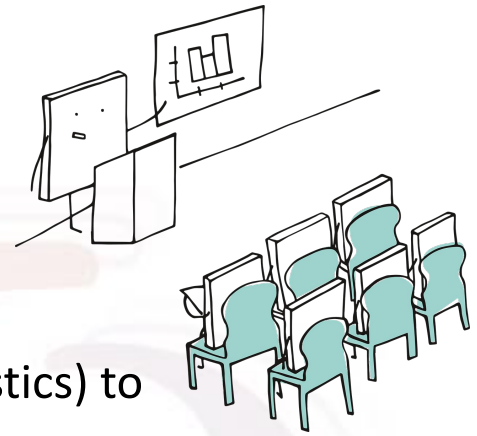
Audiences

Closely related to the issues of **visibility** and **discoverability**, but also to issues of the **nature of text** and **content in SSH**



Opinions vary from:

"*scholarly text is "for scholars, by scholars*" (F, ECR, Linguistics) to

"*it is becoming increasingly important within an academic context to write for a non-scholarly audience. I think there are a lot of scholars who are beginning to recognize that publishing in more public venues can actually bring a greater readership and it can bring greater attention*" (F, Senior, English Studies)

Broader audience (and societal impact) often **contrasted to scholarly audience**: *"bibliometrics is important - but I would say, at a certain stage, what counts more is the place measured by non-parametric prestige, the resonance in the environment - where it is really worth being, where it is worth publishing"* (M, ECR, Philosophy)

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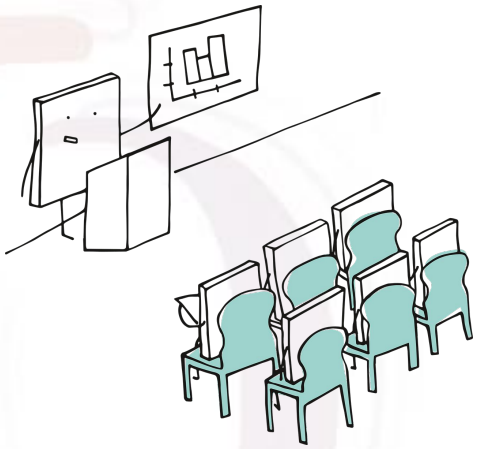
Audiences

Publication language and the size of the audience

Importance of **outreach, popularization and marketing activities**, (but popularity doesn't have to overlap with academic value!)

Relation of **audience reach with socio-economic context**:



"And then when you start to take the book out of the marketplace or take scholarship out of the marketplace, then you realize that the audiences can be whoever you want it to be."
(M, ECR, Information Studies)

Potential of **innovative forms in reaching new audiences**:

"Scholarship in the traditional sense, I think, is a dying art. So I think one of the great goals of the innovative scholarship is to grow an audience and to demonstrate the relevance of the work for the non-academic audience."
(M, ECR, Biblical Studies)

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Openness

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Openness

„Everything should be Open Access, by the way. Why do I have to pay for articles that are paid for already by the government? I don't get." (M, Senior, Digital Humanities)

- **Undoubted support**

  "*And the general idea, at least for the [national] research financing, is that all research should be done in Open Access whenever possible.*" (M, ECR, Cultural Studies)

  "*But because doing my PhD,*
  I published only in Open Access, actually.
  And this was a very conscious move." (F, ECR, Linguistics)

- **Skepticism when it comes to careers and employment**

  "*We might have a major shift in how academia works. We might have a change in the publication schedule. You might have a change in more transparent Open Access policies. But what we might not have is a change in hiring practices, and that matters even more for a regular scholar than anything because the scholars are happy to publish their article wherever.*" (M, ECR, Cultural Studies)

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Openness

- **Openness and COVID-19 crisis**

"There is one thing which is really cool right now for COVID related research, but basically I don't think they really check, they offer you a free subscription. Oh, so I mean, like unlimited access"
(F, ECR, Linguistics)

- **High OA charges**

"So my book has been accepted, so it's not a real publication yet, it's only a manuscript, but it will be next year. And it's a traditional publisher and I wanted to publish it Open Access and it's six thousand euros... seven thousand something with VAT" (F, ECR, Linguistics)

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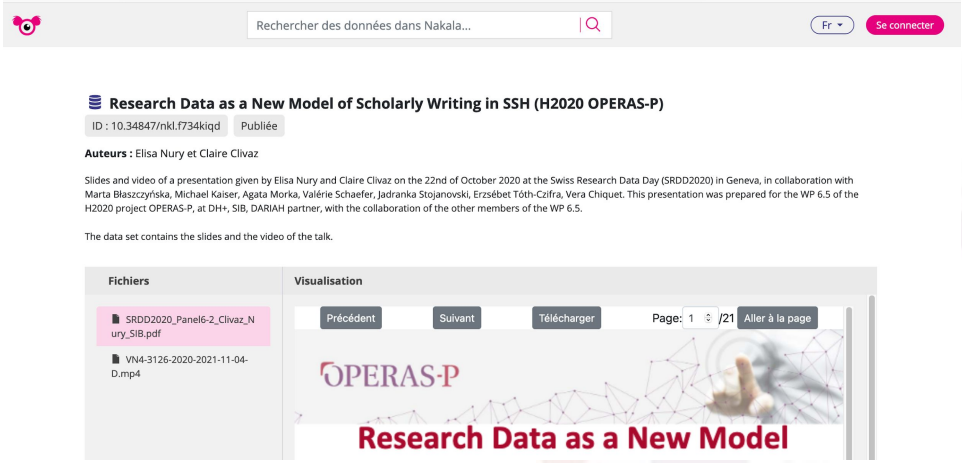
Open Research Data and Innovative Scholarly Writing: OPERAS highlights



SRDD Presentation

https://doi.org/10.34847/nkl.f734kiqd

Interviews

https://nakala.fr/collection/11280/37ad0404

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Research data as new scholarly model of writing - Obstacles and conditions

“Social” Challenges

- reward structure in academia
- copyrights and privacy
- temporalities

Technical Issues

- infrastructures for storing/accessing data
- linking research outputs
- maintenance

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