

Identifying communities

or: How the DARIAH Community Engagement Working Group Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Fuzziness

Engage with us!

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Let us introduce ourselves!

We are the DARIAH Community Engagement Working Group, part of the VCC2 since 2013, with the remit to build relationships and engage with communities based on practice or career level about research and education.

What have we aimed to do?

Initially set up as a means of disseminating activities on Research and Education within DARIAH, our research interests and role have changed since then from an internal dissemination group to one that feeds information on the state of the art of research communities back into the Research Infrastructure. To this end, we work towards identifying **new research communities** within the Humanities that have not previously engaged with research infrastructures, such as DARIAH, and **identifying the barriers** that have previously prevented them from doing so, as well as their **current research needs**. In this way, we are aiming to **serve and support the research community finding its way around Research Infrastructures** to advance their research and address their research needs. In October 2017 we received funding for 12 months from the DARIAH Working Group funding scheme to further our investigations.

How our questions have evolved since Feb 2017

Feb - April 2017

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May - Sept 2017

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Oct 2017 - May 2018

HOW DO YOU DEFINE RESEARCH COMMUNITIES?

HOW DO RESEARCH COMMUNITIES COMMUNICATE?

DO YOU USE RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES?

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM A RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE?

Poster at DARIAH meeting, 2017

Poster at DARIAH-EU meeting in Berlin in April 2017 gave an outline of our working principles, and also asked attendees to give us their ideas around how to define research communities.

Twitter polls

We asked a series of questions on Twitter to see how people defined research communities, and what communities they considered themselves a part of. These were intended as a means to answer our questions, but also to get people re-engaged with the working group.

Webinar to introduce DARIAH

In December 2017, we held a webinar to reach out to potential new communities. The webinar featured short presentations from the Board of Directors of DARIAH, the heads of VCC2, the DARIAH Communications Officer, and researchers who already make use of DARIAH. We then moved on to a discussion about how people define RCs, whether or not they use RIs, and if not, why not. Finally we asked what they would want from an RI like DARIAH.

Internship

As part of our work, we ran an internship from February - May 2018. Our intern, Xander Cosgrave, came from the MPhil in Digital Humanities and Society in Trinity College Dublin. Xander was tasked with identifying potential new RCs, and finding out to what extent they make use of (digital) humanities resources, and RIs. His work will form part of our final report.

Online Survey

To support our investigations into potential new research communities and their engagement (or not) with RIs, we began an online survey, targeted directly at members of mailing lists for RCs that haven't necessarily engaged with DARIAH before.

The Internship Experience

Alexander Cosgrave



The DARIAH Community Engagement working group internship was part of the programme for identifying research communities and their needs, one of the working principles of the working group, and was then tied into the professional development module for the MPhil in Digital Humanities and Society that takes place in TCD.

It was structured with a mix of the following, with a focus on being flexible as new questions arose through research.

- Regular Engagement Meetings
- Collaborative research
- Self-Directed Learning

These were all for the purpose of supporting the working group to help their overall goals of finding academic research groups to engage with on behalf of DARIAH, and of course for professional growth. Some of my deliverables as part of my internship included:

- Blog posts on the DARIAH Community Engagement Blog
- Sourcing other academics to engage with the Blog
- Finding novel and new research communities to engage with
- Helping define how academic communities are engaged with.

On the other side of this, the internship had several points of academic and professional development as it tied into the MPhil.

- Updates on the MPhil academic blog
- A series of presentations for my academic supervisor
- A full white paper showing the work that had been done for DARIAH
- Developing New Online Research and Interview Skills
- Working as part of an academic research group

All of this culminated in supporting the poster presentation, as well as having supported a novel and worthy programme while engaging with the academic and professional development learning goals of the MPhil. This all has led to the development of some useful skills, as I said above, but also an appreciation for the important work that research infrastructures support, and why we need to use them to make the best academic work possible.

What did we find out

Defining Research Communities

Interestingly, the answers to the questions "How do you define Research Communities" and "What Research Community do you identify with" appear to have a discrete difference. Researchers tend to identify themselves as part of a research community mainly according to their discipline. However, when they are asked to define what constitutes a research community, then they are more creative in identifying different elements, such as methodology, topic and research question (see Fig. 1).

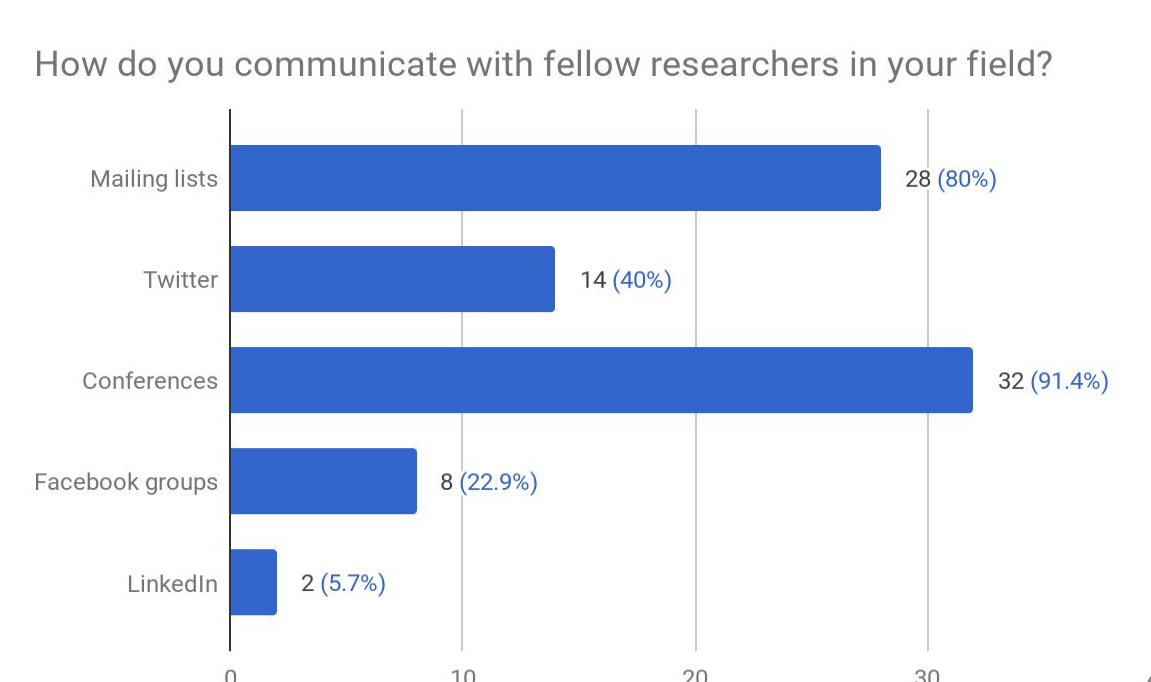


Fig. 2 - Responses from online survey

Communication among Research Communities

Digital means of communication seem to offer a variety of options to the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Communities to collaborate, exchange knowledge and stay up to date in terms of new publications and new research developments. Conferences and word of mouth are also voted highly among the ways communities tend to communicate and be informed of their field (see Fig. 2).

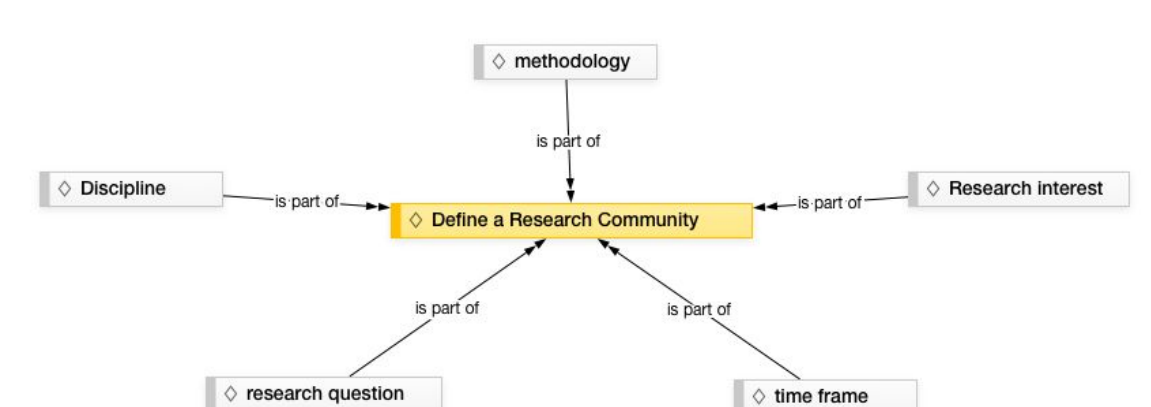


Fig. 1 - Visualisation of responses to 'How do you define research communities' from webinar

What do you want from a Research Infrastructure?

Almost 86% of our total respondents in the online questionnaire said that they don't participate in any research infrastructure, or at least they don't consider themselves participating in any. This fact highlights the problem for Research Infrastructures to reach new research audiences and to explain with clarity their role and services to researchers. The responses we received during the webinar (see Fig. 3) were mirrored in the responses we have received so far in our online survey, particularly with regards to more information about RIs and DARIAH, opportunities for networking, collaboration and funding, and access to digital tools.

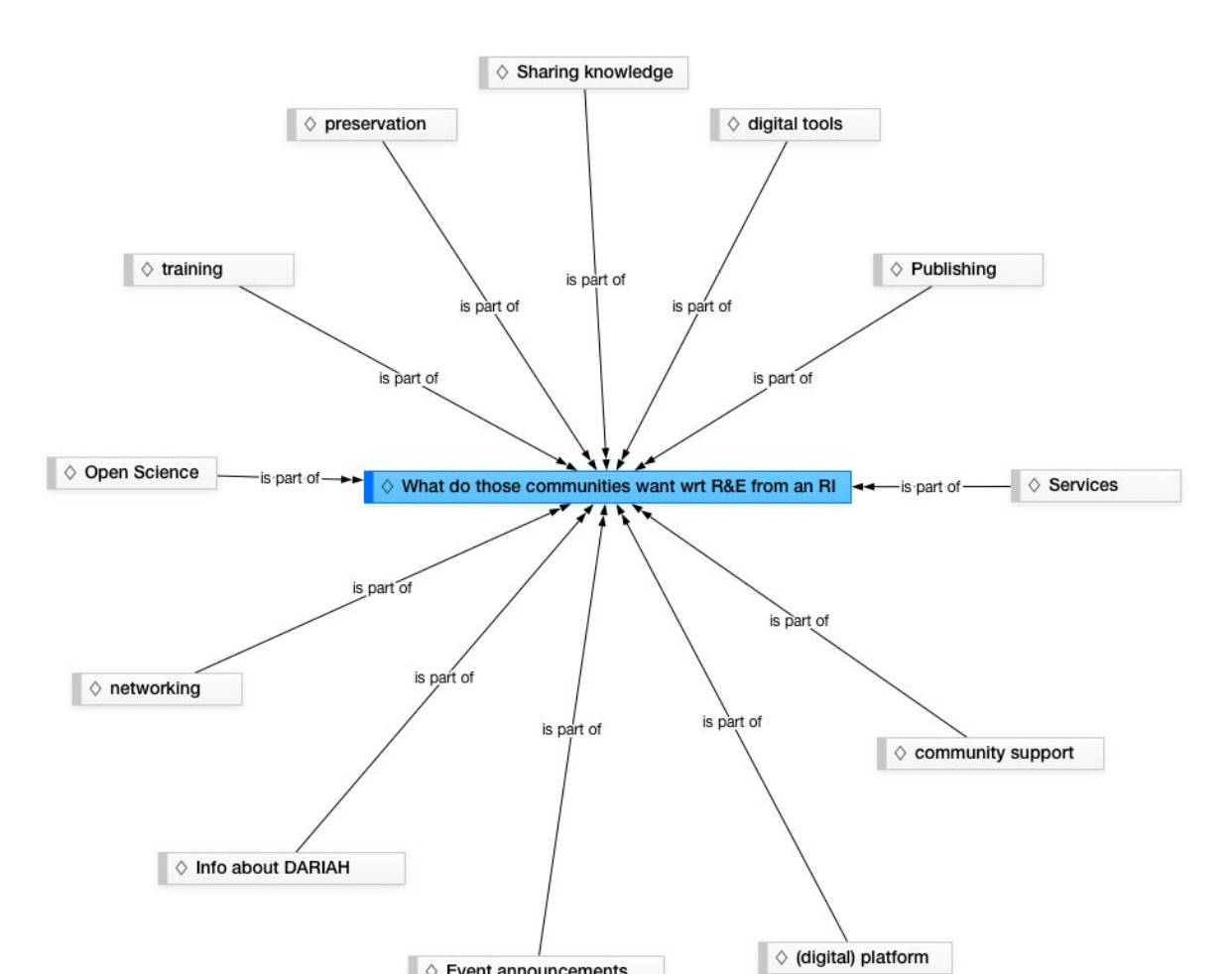


Fig. 3 - Visualisation of responses to 'What would your research community want from a research infrastructure?' from webinar

Next Steps for the Community Engagement Working Group

- Present a roundtable panel session at BALTEHUMS in Riga October, along with colleagues from the DARIAH Environmental Humanities Working Group.
- Offer a travel bursary for the BALTEHUMS conference for an early stage researcher (to assist at our roundtable session).
- Expand our Editorial Team to create 'Hubs' across Europe for conducting further investigation into new and emerging research communities in the Arts and Humanities that could benefit from joining DARIAH.
- Bring a third co-chair on board.