

Dutch Overview Digital Humanities

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The specificity and characteristics of the field of Digital Humanities (DH) can be established in scholarly debates that refer to theoretical and epistemological concepts. A more practical way of grasping the essence of the field and its evolution is through actually mapping and tagging its past performances within a given time frame and geographical area. A team of scholars from the Netherlands and Germany chose this approach and took up the challenge with modest funding of CLARIAH¹ by creating a searchable database that covers teaching and research activities in the Netherlands relating to Digital Humanities. This endeavour can be of benefit to students who search for courses of their interest, but also serve researchers who study the evolution of their field, as well as policy makers wishing to assess the dissemination and performance of DH initiatives that they have funded.

The first phase, creating an overview of DH courses at Dutch and Flemish universities, was successfully completed in 2014 and is meant to encourage enrolment in DH classes and the offering of new DH courses by lecturers. Recently this initiative has been expanded to the rest of Europe and beyond, under the auspices of DARIAH.²

Building on the same infrastructural backend, the DH Project Registry offers the possibility to identify completed DH projects and the involved persons, institutions and disciplines.³ The main

¹ CLARIAH stands for Common Lab Research Infrastructure for the Arts and the Humanities and is a large Humanities infrastructure project in the Netherlands, funded by the National Research Agency NWO. DARIAH is a Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and the Humanities consisting of 15 European partners. See for European Course Registry: <https://dh-registry.de.dariah.eu>

³ Stef Scagliola, Barbara Safradin, Almila Akdag, Hendrik Schmeer, Linda Reijnhoudt, Sally Wyatt, Andrea Scharnhorst (2015) **Mapping Digital Humanities projects - A pilot of a DH project registry for The Netherlands**. Presentation given at the DH Benelux Antwerp June 8-9, 2015 <https://www.slideshare.net/AndreaScharnhorst/a-pilot-of-a-dh-project-registry-for-the-netherlands/edit?src=slideview>

challenges lie in having in depth coverage of projects and selecting categories and terminology that connect to the reference frames of the targeted communities. As we know from science and technology studies, classifying is never a pure technical ordering activity⁴.

Similar initiatives have been taken up, such as the *DH Commons* that offer a project database for which the initiators seek international collaboration,⁵ and the DARIAH consortium which aims at creating an European wide overview of DH related infrastructural activities.⁶ The specific quality of our endeavour lies in the combination of extracting seed information from the National Research Information System NARCIS⁷, and crowdsourcing information among practitioners in DH. Two points are of particular interest: identifying the pioneering proto-DH projects, and locating smaller little known initiatives.

Up to now, the Project Registry includes 211 projects that have been created between 1992 and 2015. A striking, but not unexpected, shift that can be observed is that from hard core computational linguistics projects to initiatives in which the tools increasingly support opening up and analyzing data selected or created by humanities scholars and cultural heritage institutions. The demo we will present offers visualisations of the data collected so far, demonstration of the interface and some functions, including the workflow developed to enable researchers to add their projects to the registry. Attention will also be given to the obstacles experienced by members of the project team. In our view they reflect the classical divergent expectations with regard to knowledge production in the realm of Digital Humanities: at one end of the spectrum we have mathematical logic and reliance on automated processes and at the other human reasoning turned into trusted manually performed routines.

⁴ Bowker, G. C., & Star, S. L. (1999). *Sorting things out: Classification and its consequences*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

⁵ <http://dhcommons.org/projects>

⁶ <https://dariah.eu/activities/humanities-at-scale.html>

⁷ www.narcis.nl