

Digital Humanities Austria Strategy 2021+

Four Guidelines for Digital Humanities in Austria

Version 1.2 – 28.05.2021

Presented by the CLARIAH-AT Consortium

[CLARIAH-AT](#) is a consortium of those Austrian universities and research institutions, commissioned by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), which undertake and coordinate activity within the [CLARIN-ERIC](#) and [DARIAH-EU](#) research frameworks. The consortium brings together institutions that are actively involved in the establishment and development of technical and social research infrastructures for the digital humanities in Austria.

As early as 2015, the consortium had developed a strategic document that serves as a roadmap for the sustainable establishment of the digital humanities in Austria. In 2021, a new edition, the **Digital Humanities Austria Strategy 2021+** was presented. After inviting the wider Austrian professional digital humanities community to discuss the strategy and make additions, we are now in a place to present version 1.2 of the guidelines, which came out of this consultation process.

Working groups have been assigned to each of the guidelines and are responsible for the formulation, design and implementation of concrete measures in each area. Each working group could, and should, include staff from institutions outside the CLARIAH-AT consortium.

1. Research infrastructures and networks

1.1 Austrian engagement in the international research consortia

- **The continuation of a strong involvement** in the two European research infrastructure consortia in the field of the digital humanities: *European Research Infrastructure for Language Resources and Technology* ([CLARIN-ERIC](#)) and *Digital Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities* ([DARIAH-EU](#)). Special attention is given to the main areas of education and training, metadata (quality), standards, controlled vocabularies, networks and scientific communication, especially in the context of collaboration between corresponding thematic working groups and committees within the consortia.
- Efforts will be made to collaborate and network with **thematically relevant national and international (research) infrastructures**, such as the Austrian Social Science Data Archive ([AUSSDA](#)) and [Heritage Science Austria](#), as well as Open Scholarly Communication in the European Research Area in the Social Sciences and Humanities ([OPERAS](#)), European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science ([E-RIHS](#)), the Social Sciences & Humanities Open Cloud ([SSHOC](#)), the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure ([EHRI](#)) and the [Time Machine Organization](#).
- In addition, to **enhance collaboration and communication in the areas of research data management and research infrastructures**, networking will

be intensified with other relevant associations and working groups, such as the European Open Science Cloud ([ESOC](#)), European Collaborative Data Infrastructure ([EUDAT](#)), the Research Data Alliance ([RDA](#)) and the network for repository managers ([RepManNet](#)).

1.2 The continuation and expansion of national networking and dissemination activities in the field of digital humanities

- **Hold an annual event**, such as the ‘Digital Humanities Conference’, that has taken place several times in the past, or similar events, such as an ‘Austrian Digital Humanities Day’, or a twitter showcase.
- Enable **closer and more formalized cooperation** – beyond the already successful synergistic cooperation on past and existing projects – with the **technical universities** (TU Graz and TU Wien), the Digital Science Centre ([DiSC](#)) of the University of Innsbruck, as well as **non-university research institutions**, such as the [Know-Center](#) and the research department of the [Mozarteum Foundation](#). This will focus especially on areas such as machine learning and computer vision.
- A closer involvement with **art schools** is also planned, not only with regards to research questions addressed by them, but also in terms of their function as a bridge between research, art and memory. They will complement, and be a valuable addition to, the existing CLARIAH-AT consortium.
- Initiatives at Austrian universities and research institutions that deal with **digital transformation** in specific scientific fields, or in society as a whole, should be invited to enter into a closer dialogue with the digital humanities.

1.3 Expansion of our cooperation with memory institutions

- **Cultural heritage or memory institutions** (archives, libraries, galleries and museums), umbrella organisations, as well as individual institutions, some of which already have a digital profile, should be approached for closer cooperation. Examples and models of effective cooperation between memory institutions and research institutions in the field of digital humanities already exist (e.g. Belvedere, Albertina, the Austrian National Library, the Salzburg Literary Archive, Graz Museum, the Mozarteum Foundation etc.), the basis of which can help achieve closer networking. An invitation to attend further talks to help **realise cooperation** is planned and will be sent [to libraries, archives and museums in Austria](#) (BAM), to the [Austrian National Committee of the International Council of Museums](#) (ICOM), the [Austrian Museums Board](#) and [the International Centre for Archival Research](#) (ICARUS).
- **Through cooperation between memory and research institutions**, we hope to achieve more than simply digital duplication or the provision of collections. Scientific indexing will also be promoted, which will flow back to memory institutions in terms of added value, and along with new insights, will open up new possibilities for dissemination. (Scientific) digitalization not only means digitally reproducing analogue collections, but also their scientific

indexing, using methods such as full-text recognition and image analysis (e.g., with machine learning methods) and then making them widely available (e.g., through the use of standards such as IIF, semantic networks etc.). A special role will be played by communication with the scientific libraries in the [Austrian Library Network](#) (OBVSG).

- There is a structural challenge here in that memory institutions and universities within the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Public Service and Sport (BMKÖS) and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) are assigned to different funding bodies, as well as ministries. Amongst other things, this is reflected in a lack of funding opportunities which would allow cooperation between university and non-university, as well as GLAM institutions.

1.4 Sustainability of infrastructure measures

- In addition to the **sustainable financing of technical infrastructure and services**, the sustainable financing of **long-term or permanent employment contracts for the operation, curation, further development and maintenance of research infrastructure** is critical. In memory institutions, such expertise must first be built up across many areas and then subsequently anchored in a sustainable manner.
- Since funding for infrastructure and services usually has to be provided by institutions themselves, it is often seen as a competitor to funding for projects and positions in the fields of arts and sciences. It is important to convince institutions that infrastructure and services provide a necessary basic and synergistic environment for the arts and sciences, which promotes them and makes them possible in the first place. It is important that the **development and maintenance of infrastructure and services** is included in the **development plans, targets and performance agreements** of the institutions themselves and that the maintenance provider provides remuneration accordingly.
- There is an urgent need for both a **national research data infrastructure, as well as national funding channels** for the development and long-term maintenance of infrastructure and services. The creation, further development and maintenance of a research data infrastructure is a national task that cannot and should not be borne by individual institutions alone. The National Research Data Infrastructure ([NFDI](#)) in Germany can be used as a trend-setting example.
- In addition, the development of basic structures should not be subject to competitive tender processes, but rather should be regarded by policymakers as an indispensable basic prerequisite for research that builds on them, which may be competitive in nature. Looking ahead, developing cultural heritage that is predominantly constituted of digitally created materials, will require sufficient investment in appropriate measures to preserve it.

2 Research data and repositories

2.1 Establishing a repository network

- CLARIAH-AT is working to establish a **repository network of research data in the humanities**, based on existing infrastructure at Austrian universities and research institutions. The aim is not to establish a single national repository, but rather to harmonize existing repositories, or those in development, at the Austrian Academy of Sciences ([ARCHE](#)), the University of Graz ([GAMS](#)), the Danube University Krems ([ADA](#)), the University of Salzburg ([dhPLUS](#)) and the University of Vienna ([Phaidra](#)), by developing, implementing and recommending jointly-defined solutions.
- Practical workshops by the operators of subject-relevant repositories will be used to jointly develop, make available and recommend **guidelines and concrete requirements**, based on international development and established standards. For example, these could be around the development of APIs, the use of specific metadata schemas, the creation of management plans, recommendations on established standards, possible funding models and certifications to seek out etc. Recommendations will be discussed with repository operators in other disciplines as well as other stakeholders in the field of research data and repositories (e.g., RDA). This also includes the formulation of recommendations for the use of existing (national) depositing services for research data by national funding agencies (e.g., FWF and FFG) as well as recommendations around the support needed for implementation.
- The establishing of a common **research platform**, with the aim of making a digital resources database available for independent research projects in the humanities.
- A further goal is to improve the **quality and availability of metadata obtained from Austrian sources** in European aggregators, such as the European digital library, [Europeana](#), or the [CLARIN Virtual Language Observatory](#).

2.2 Registries

- Austria is already a much-referenced player in the aforementioned European ESFRI research infrastructures, in particular around the development, maintenance and provision of central services and platforms as national 'in kind' services (e.g. [dariahTeach](#), [DH Course Registry](#), [DARIAH Vocabs](#), [ELDAH Consent Form Wizard](#)). This focus on providing centralized offerings should be further expanded to benefit both the national and international community.
- Special attention should be given to the maintenance and expansion of the Digital Humanities Austria (DHA) website <https://digital-humanities.at> as a **central platform and presentation space** for national digital humanities developments outside of the CLARIAH-AT consortium.

2.3 Digital sources and data for research and teaching

- The digital **provision of research data and source collections** provides the foundation for research, innovation and teaching. Equally important is ensuring its **long-term availability** (*data as a service*). To do this, the **FAIR principles** (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) must be followed at all costs.
- CLARIAH-AT supports comprehensive **open science** access in the digital humanities: CLARIAH-AT understands this to mean in addition to the open access publication of research results, open access to research data (open data) and teaching materials (open educational resources), transparent and reusable research methods (open methods) and digital tools (open source), as well as the infrastructures themselves (open infrastructures).
- The **provision and scholarly indexing of new holdings in certified repositories** is important in terms of cooperation with memory institutions (see 1.3) and the promotion of young researchers, and this therefore a declared goal.

3 Methods and tools

3.1 Development and provision of stable, supervised tools and digital methods

- In addition to the generation and sustainable provision of digital research data, the development of **open, innovative digital methods and research tools** is a central feature of the digital humanities and is an indispensable component, not only in terms of research support, but also often as a research question and object itself. Often – due to the operation and funding of projects – parallel development and tools that often emerge can no longer be maintained, let alone used, at the end of a project and quickly become obsolete.
It is therefore necessary to think sustainably not only about the data, but also about the tools and methods, and focus more on their stability and open availability by making them an integral part of the research data measures mentioned above (see 2.1 and 2.3).
- In the field of digital humanities, a number of tools have been established that represent state-of-the-art digital research methodology in certain fields. While many of these tools are available through open licences for further development and reuse, there are some that are exclusively licensed for a fee, but still play an important role in the canon of methods. CLARIAH-AT wants to find ways as a **national intermediary** to make tools such as [Transkribus](#) or the [Oxygen XML Editor](#), available for researchers and students, possibly in the form of a national licence.
- The development of viable and realistic **business models** for the exploitation of both technical solutions and human resource expertise, must be guaranteed. For example, public-private partnerships can contribute to the professionalization of the humanities. However, the principle of open access to methods, data and research results must be guaranteed.

3.2 Closer cooperation with industry/business: “Method Mobility”

- So far, there have been very few examples of **cooperation between research institutions and industry** in the field of digital humanities. The open and non-profit-orientated access to research data and results in the digital humanities sits in perceived conflict with commercial economic exploitability; there is direct competition for personnel; there are hardly any meeting points or political incentives (for example, through programs) for closer cooperation, without an exploitation incentive. Nevertheless, there are methods being developed in the digital humanities that are of enormous interest to industry (for example, data science, information mining, models and training data for machine learning...) and vice versa. It is a central concern of CLARIAH-AT to create certain meeting spaces (e.g. in the context of events co-organised by the consortium) in which **dialogue with industry** can be initiated and business models can be developed which allow **synergistic cooperation and mutual transfer of expertise and knowledge**.

4 Education, training and knowledge transfer

4.1 Digital humanities in university teaching

- CLARIAH-AT is setting out to **improve and intensify communication between different study locations in digital humanities in Austria**. On the one hand, this will help find common denominators for indispensable contents and competencies for the digital humanities in higher education and on the other, it will enable the mutual recognition of courses and modules.
- The **joint development of modular courses** – e.g., within the framework of designated elective modules or supplementary studies – is to be carried out university locations where no formal organized teaching in the field of digital humanities takes place. In these situations, various forms of **digital knowledge transfer**, for example in the form of digital teaching (e.g., dariahTeach) offer excellent opportunities for further development.
- Cooperation between teaching and memory institutions should be improved, for example by establishing internships for students at memory institutions.
- In addition, CLARIAH-AT will promote faculty mobility and the **exchange of site-specific expertise** through the creditability of national ‘in-kind’ services for the European research infrastructures CLARIN and DARIAH.
- In the context of higher education in the field of digital humanities, formats for the **transfer of knowledge into teacher training** should be taken into account, in order to introduce digital humanities content and methods during secondary education.

4.2 Promotion of young researchers and training

- In order to meet the steadily growing demand for relevant know-how, CLARIAH-AT will continue to offer **extra-curricular knowledge transfer events** such as lecture series, schools and workshops, as well as tool galleries, webinars and other virtual professional development formats.

- By funding smaller digital humanities research projects, the aim is to motivate young researchers in particular to acquire and deepen their digital competencies, and to develop and test digital methods. This area in particular offers the opportunity to bring together memory institutions as source owners, researchers with digital methodological skills and the expertise of technical universities or non-public research organizations. These synergies have largely been untapped to date.
- Competitive **grant funding for articles and small projects or the award of travel grants** for international digital humanities events can provide an incentive for young researchers.

4.3 Expert group and joint virtual helpdesk

- CLARIAH-AT will strengthen its activities in the area of research support. As part of this, **project consulting in the field of digital humanities** will be embedded at as many partner institutions as possible. The main aim is to ensure that people with the right technical and/or methodological expertise are available for project planning and development, in order to be able to push forward the digital agenda in the humanities in a targeted manner. This also includes the development of guidelines, information services and training around legal issues. The competencies and responsibilities of partners should complement one another, along with the **methodological advice, depending on the focus of the location**. The contact persons for the individual institutions should be in a continuous exchange and process of agreement.