

Research Infrastructures are reshaping Humanities storytelling

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Humanities is in all its tasks and activities a storytelling. In her 1958 essay *The Modern Concept of History*, Hannah Arendt was recognizing the first face-to-face meeting between history and poetics in a scene told by Homer: Ulysses, the witness, cries by listening the blind bard Demodocos narrating his own deeds during the war of Troy (Arendt, 1958). But Ulysses stops Demodocos' storytelling as a "too perfect" song, *liên kata kosmon* (Hartog, 2003; *Odysseus* 8.487-491). If Humanities has been since centuries written as *storytelling*, from literature to philosophy passing through history, this paper argues that research infrastructures are nowadays the necessary and imperfect witnesses that keep the Humanities storytelling anchored in the physical and real world. Research infrastructures (RIs) are anonymous Ulysses standing up and claiming attention, efforts and sweat, whereas scholars would like to just sing a brilliant storytelling. *RIs are Humanities storytellers*, as illustrated by the three following examples.

The first one is the Sisyphus temptation for Humanist scholars to publish *corpora* on virtual research environments (VREs). As well argued (Pierazzo, 2015), the notion of printed edition is evolving towards digital *collections*, that remain open-ended but stop when time and/or resources are missing (Mombert, 2014). Leadings to the creation of collections, the VREs are deeply reshaping the established textual categories (Clivaz, 2016). Moreover, VREs are producing Humanities stories often before the proper scholarly narration, whereas in printed books, authors can and have to choose the starting point, the conclusion, and the intermediate steps. *RIs are open-ended and efficient storytellers*.

Secondly, the knowledge hierarchies of the modern *episteme* are also largely reshaped by the VREs. Until the fifties at least, the study of Latin and Greek was mandatory even in the studies of medicine, a phenomenon entitled in French *faire ses humanités* (Berra, 2012). The spreading of research infrastructures has apparently sealed the reign of English, but this phenomenon also brings benefits. The beloved Latin and Greek heritage are now accessible to a non-elitist public, thanks to the web serendipity, or in crowd-sourcing projects. Moreover, other ancient languages, often let aside in Humanities, are raising up: forgotten words, rare languages can be read online. *RIs are Open Science storytellers*.

Finally, big research infrastructures are reshaping Humanities storytelling by creating narrative human networks: the lonely work of the 19th century scholar at the desk is definitively over. DARIAH is in this regard a clear example of the emergence of Humanities communities: designed in summer 2013 around four Virtual Competence Centers (VCCs), – according to a repartition between “hardware” infrastructure (VCC1), teaching (VCC2), research (VCC3) and community (VCC4) –, DARIAH is evolving since the last years in plural living networks – the working groups (WGs). They all include elements from the 4 VCCs. Through its WGs, DARIAH demonstrates that *RIs can reshape Humanities scholarship in storytelling communities*.

References of the abstract

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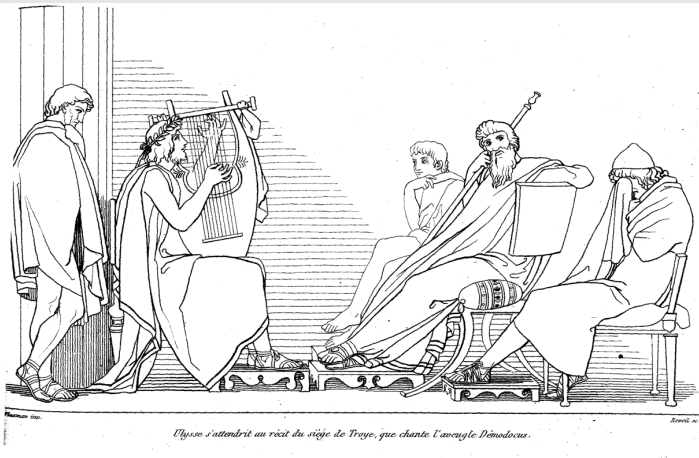


Illustration of Odysseus (1810); author: John Flaxman, Public Domain (US), <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:OdysseusDemodokos.png>

According to Hannah Arendt (1958), this Homer's scene is the first face-to-face meeting between history and poetics : Ulysses, the witness, cries by listening the blind bard Demodocos narrating his own deeds during the war of Troy (*Odysseus* 8.487-491).

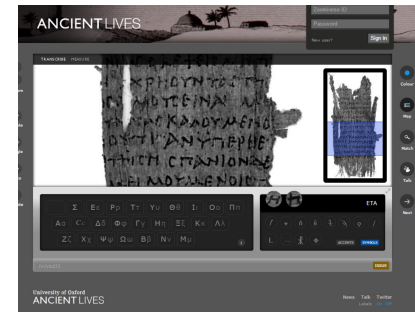
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1) RIs are open-ended and efficient storytellers

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See Beth Strackpole, "The next chapter in analytics: data storyteller", MIT Management Sloan School, 20.05.2020

2) RIs are Open Science storytellers – Example



Crowdsourcing the Oxyrhynchus Papyri – Ancient Lives Project University of Oxford (UK)



3) RIs can reshape Humanities scholarship in storytelling communities. Example: DARIAH VCCs and working groups.

