Leveraging on the power of expert content curation: the OpenMethods metablog

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Navigating through the rich and dynamically evolving (Wouters et al., 2013) Digital Humanities (henceforth DH) landscape can be a time-consuming task and difficult to integrate into researchers' everyday routines. Yet primary goals of the DH paradigm such as 1. broadening and deepening the adoption of digital methods amongst humanities scholars and 2. facilitating the culture of reuse of already existing resources requires sufficient tools that make DH resources, methods and best practices visible, easily discoverable and freely accessible for researchers in all levels of expertise.

The OpenMethods metablog aims to fulfil this need and provides a platform to bring together all formats of Open Access publications in different languages about methods in DH to spread the knowledge and raise peer recognition for them.

Why metablog?
Creating a suitable environment for this purpose, setting up and organising a platform that is flexible enough to follow the dynamic and multimodal nature (see e.g. Anderson and McPherson 2011) of DH methodology discourse where information can be communicated rapidly and cheaply was a primary criterion. In our presentation we will touch upon in which ways this necessarily involves going beyond the traditional publication workflow and opening for alternative models of scholarly communication. Second and not independently from the first point, the problem of information overload (Larsen and von Ins 2014), that is, providing a trusted selection to help scholars keeping track of or staying on the top of the enormous amount of literature available online also had to be addressed. Bearing in mind that researchers are best-placed to assess what research is relevant to them and to their communities (Tennant 2016), we decided to build a platform around the practice of expert community assessment, where new facilities and know-hows can be recommended and discussed among peers.

What makes it work?
The resulting platform, OpenMethods, therefore leverages on the power of expert content curation. It is aimed at republishing already published content dealing with the methods and tools in Digital Humanities research. The selection is done by an Editorial Team of renowned experts from DH communities around the world. The Editorial Team is coordinated by the Chief Editor and supported by a Management Team. The platform has been developed in close partnership with and supervision of the DARIAH community since it is an offspring of the DARIAH "Humanities at Scale" project (Engelhardt et al. 2017).

The following features have the potential to make OpenMethods a powerful tool to foster discussion about a preliminary important yet underrepresented area in the DH literature.

- OpenMethods takes the perspective of data journals (Candela et al. 2016) as it focuses on and stimulates discussion on DH research methods and tools.
- The scope of the metablog goes beyond traditional publishing as it is inclusive with grey literature and a variety of content types like blog posts, videos, presentations, or podcast. These dynamic publication formats are the key of a

flexible and rapid communication and are "recognized and incrementally integrated into more efficient and dynamic workflows of production, improvement, and dissemination of scholarly knowledge in general." (Heller et al. 2014: 191)

- Enhancing visibility and recognition of languages and cultures other than English and therefore weakening the hegemonic position of English language (Rio Riande et al. 2018) within the field has been one of our primary aims. The multilingual character of the platform gives space for the equal representation of bigger and smaller languages and cultures in the DH discourse.

How does it work?

Nomination of Open Access content to republish is not restricted to suggestions of our Editorial Team but is open to everyone, either anonymously or by name via a browser bookmark or the @openmethods_dh twitter tag. The proposed content is reviewed and discussed by the Editorial Team making the decision about which content should be republished on the metablog. As an enrichment of preselected valuable open access publications, successful nominations are categorised based on the semantic standard TaDiRAH (see also Borek et al. 2016) that makes it easier for the community to find what might be interesting for them and a brief introduction in English is also added to them in which one of our Editors briefly explains their relevance to the DH community. These summaries also give a brief idea of the content for those users who don't have access to the language of the posts.

Communities around OpenMethods

Our goal is to reach and engage the widest possible range of DH communities ranging from scholars taking the first steps towards going digital in their research to DH experts who are shaping specific research areas as representatives for particular methods.

Furthermore, DH journal editors are a special target group within the community as the grey literature republished on the platform may help them to get in contact with the authors to enrich and reorganise the content (i.e. a blog post) in order to produce a publishable article. Building bridges between evolving innovative and more informal components in scholarly communication (like novel content types e.g. blog posts, videos, podcasts or preprints and content evaluation via curation) and the more traditional paradigms of journal publishing, we aim to create an intermediary layer of knowledge creation and dissemination between more informal and more formal spheres of scholarly communication as well as showcase working examples for the alignment and coexistence of such models.

Plugins and development

The platform developed is prepared to be as simple as possible and uses a WordPress instance, one of the simplest CMS available. Developments done for this project and plugins we use are all Open Source. Our power lies with the people behind the platform, not with a technological breakthrough. Talking about reusability, to increase the visibility and discoverability of our posts, we've also created plugins in order to be interoperable with other initiatives like the NERD service that recognises and disambiguates named entities and the search platform Isidore.

The main plugin that we use is PressForward. It enables us to create a simple workflow for our experts as almost all steps of their work (content nomination, discussion, evaluation, publishing, keeping track of published content) can be undertaken within

this plugin. Since the plugin was a very important part of our architecture we had to make sure it was going to fit every aspects we envisioned while designing the concept of OpenMethods. With this goal in mind we contributed to the core source code of the PressForward plugin e.g. we fixed some bugs and added some features to their tool, which they incorporated in their main Github repository.

Desired impact
OpenMethods is envisioned to benefit the DH community in the following ways.
- Supporting and disseminating emerging open community practices in the use of DH tools and methods and raising competences in digital tools.
- Propagating the culture of reuse by showcasing best practices for the adoption of existing services and their underlying software for different research environments and needs.
- Building a network of experts that can serve as a focus point for bringing together and developing new communities.
- Strengthening the multicultural representation of DH.
- Establishing an expert curation-based model of quality assessment of DH tools, methods and discourse around them that allows for evaluation both pre and post publication and that is independent from journal branding.
- Increasing both the trust towards and the visibility of Open Access scholarship and open best practices in DH research.
- Harmonising and connecting the novel components in scholarly communication with the traditional paradigm of journal publishing.

Success criteria, challenges
However, achieving such goals entails facing a range of difficulties. In our presentation we wish to address the following challenges:
- Finding solutions for long-term incentivisation of the Editors and ensuring that all of them are recognised for their contributions.
- Reaching a critical number of readership as a result of focused outreach strategy (e.g. maintaining an active twitter channel, presenting the platform on DH conferences and forums).
- Finally, we would also like to enhance user experiences in terms of search and discovery. In this respect, finding a right balance in generating automated named entity keywords by NERD and reviewing them by human curation will be a key step forward.

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