

# Memorandum of Understanding

## by NFDI Initiatives in the Humanities and Cultural Studies

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Research data from the humanities and cultural studies are of particular relevance to scholarship, society, and the cultural economy. Such data provide access to, uphold, and remind us of our global cultural heritage. Preserving the extensive collections of data that already exist in the humanities and cultural studies across generations and the ones that are created anew on a daily basis and making them accessible for research requires a cross-disciplinary, nationally coordinated, and sustainable management of research data.

The undersigned initiatives from the humanities and cultural studies agree to closely cooperate in establishing a national research data infrastructure (NFDI) and to support one another constructively with the shared goal of achieving the best possible design for the NFDI. They commit themselves to effecting a cultural change in how their communities deal with research data, the necessity of which has been emphasized by the Council for Scientific Information Infrastructures<sup>1</sup>.

Starting with a series of workshops on “Academic Research Infrastructures for the Humanities and Cultural Studies in Germany” in 2018, representatives of professional associations, universities, and memory institutions as well as infrastructure providers entered a dialogue early on to assess the requirements for the NFDI<sup>2</sup>. As a result of this process, it became clear that research data from the humanities and cultural studies extend across a broad range of disciplines and comprise very different types of data, which vary considerably in terms of quantity, degree of abstraction, dynamism, and quality.

The expertise required for digital research and the infrastructural procedures involved therein have taken root in the humanities and cultural studies communities to varying degrees. From this it follows that there are not only substantial differences in research data themselves but also in the methodological and epistemological demands and practices relevant to their management. Meeting these demands and improving these practices can best be achieved by means of a jointly coordinated and continuous development carried out in complementary fields of action and the integration of common elements identified in the process into the overarching context of the NFDI. To reach these goals, the initiatives have signed and closely embrace the principles outlined in the Berlin Declaration (2019) and Berlin-Leipzig Declaration (2020) on cross cutting topics in the NFDI<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Rat für Informationsinfrastrukturen: Leistung aus Vielfalt. Empfehlungen zu Strukturen, Prozessen und Finanzierung des Forschungsdatenmanagements in Deutschland, Göttingen 2016, 160 pages. URN of the online edition: <urn:nbn:de:101:1-201606229098>

<sup>2</sup> <http://forschungsinfrastrukturen.de>

<sup>3</sup> Berlin Declaration: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3457213>; Berlin-Leipzig Declaration: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3895209>

In addition, the initiatives have agreed to the following:

1. They will develop their established structure of cooperation and will assume shared responsibility within the NFDI process in an ongoing dialogue organized by a joint liaison group. The liaison group was established in July 2019 and continues its work in regular strategy meetings. The process of coming to a cross-disciplinary understanding will be promoted by active participation in the NFDI assembly.
2. The initiatives will budget appropriate resources for addressing cross-cutting topics. They will make these resources available to the NFDI via joint contributions and via membership in the NFDI e.V.
3. As producers and users of research data, scholars will be involved in the process from the onset, and this involvement will be continued over time (e.g., in the DHd Association's NFDI forum<sup>4</sup>). In their consortial governance, the initiatives will systematically involve representatives of professional associations from the communities that they address.
4. The infrastructure facilities will be integrated into this structure and will engage in close mutual coordination, for instance, in regard to the division of tasks along the life cycle of research data.
5. The initiatives will be institutionally interconnected – with clearly distinguished roles – and will deliberately ensure mutual openness and dynamism, structurally, organizationally, and in terms of personnel, that will extend throughout the entire NFDI.
6. In a needs-oriented approach, the initiatives will continuously identify and evaluate their specific service portfolio and further develop it on the basis of constant mutual exchange. In this context, special significance will be given to joint coordination in new, innovative fields of action. This will entail the systematic implementation of thinking and acting in terms of processes and structures.
7. The initiatives have identified (a) metadata, authority data and terminologies, (b) provenance, (c) rights and ethics, and (d) data literacy as joint fields of action in which they can provide substantial, long-standing expertise and develop common services that will create added value for digital research in their communities and benefit the NFDI as a whole.
8. Acceding to this memorandum is encouraged and possible by engaging in a dialogue with the liaison group.
9. The undersigned initiatives commit to cooperation instead of competition, both among each other and with other NFDI initiatives.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://nfdi.hypotheses.org/>

# Signatories of the memorandum

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