

Workflows for Innovative Scholarly Outputs in Social Sciences and Humanities

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Scholars see innovative means of disseminating their work as a chance to improve the process of sharing of ideas with different audiences, thanks to technological affordances. They understand innovation either in terms of form (novel means of communicating ideas through different media), or access (opening up outputs and making them easily accessible) (cf. Maryl and Błaszczynska 2021, p. 34). What we consider a “scholarly text” has thus become understood as an expression that can employ different media. Innovative scholarly communication refers to the act of sharing such a text through various formal or informal channels in a nontraditional manner (i.e. not through monographs and journal articles).

In order to support this potential of scholarly communication, OPERAS, a European research infrastructure for scholarly communication in Social Sciences and Humanities, has established an Innovation Lab. The Lab provides up-to-date knowledge on innovative communication practices in research as well as targeted guidance for scholars seeking to disseminate their outputs in an innovative way. The Lab was established in the framework of OPERAS-P H2020 project, through extensive user-centered research that covered 655 researchers in Europe and beyond through interaction with 464 workshop participants, 134 respondents survey respondents and 57 interviewees. The results were published in the report on the future of scholarly communication, covering such issues as business models for open access books, multilingualism and bibliodiversity in SSH, opportunities and challenges of FAIRification of SSH data, the future of scholarly writing, and quality assessment of novel research and innovative publications in the SSH (see Maryl and Błaszczynska 2021). The current infrastructure-development project (OPERAS-PLUS) creates the Lab’s website as a subsite of OPERAS website with the aim of collecting and storing data and analysis on innovative outputs as well as on current research in that field. It will provide case studies and research papers from different countries with additional insights and conclusions that could be useful for other members of the SSH community interested in starting and maintaining digital initiatives.

However, engaging with novel forms of communication poses new challenges to scholars, who may lack competences, know-how, or adequate resources to take full advantage of innovative outputs (Tasovac et al. 2018). This presentation will outline the means of support provided by OPERAS Innovation Lab in establishing interdisciplinary, collaborative workflows for supporting innovative outputs in social sciences and humanities (SSH) throughout their lifecycle. The Lab provides guidelines on how to create and sustain FAIR innovative outputs in the SSH.

The poster will showcase three diverse case studies, aiming to address the actual needs faced by SSH researchers who decide to use innovative forms of disseminating their output:

1. The novel publication of project outputs: scholarly toolkit and anthology;
2. Management of an interdisciplinary online journal;
3. Prototyping software services for open science on the example of a recommender system for open access books based on text and data mining (Snijder 2021).

A case study workflow is firstly discussed with the scholars responsible for the project to identify their needs regarding the process and the challenges they are encountering, such as issues of intellectual and technological sustainability or evaluation of non-traditional outputs. Then, in an iterative process, solutions are prototyped, involving various stakeholders, like publishers or e-infrastructures (Ell and Hughes 2013), to forge best practices and provide practical advice. This process is based on a principle of an open collaboration whereby different users will be able to engage with the process and thus the workflow itself will be open for contributions from the wider community through feedback and consultation events, such as this presentation.

Each case study will be presented as a workflow, containing solutions and consecutive steps that should be followed by researchers willing to engage with similar formats and facing related challenges. It will also feature the support options that could be solicited from various e-infrastructures. The goal of the presentation is to validate the project results by engaging with practitioners at DH2023 and receiving the feedback on the work.

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