How to make FAIRness and reliability manifest: the CoreTrustSeal for TextGridRep

The Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities Germany adopts Repository Audit and Certification Catalogue RDA recommendation

The challenge

The TextGrid Repository is a digital preservation archive for human sciences research data and provides a variety of data for teaching and research purposes. The TextGrid Repository also provides researchers with a comprehensive and reliable service to store their data permanently, with a stable reference for citation and reuse.

The designated community of TextGrid is responsible for the ingestion of research data into the repository. In addition, the authenticity and quality of the object archived in the collection 'Digitale Bibliothek' is verified by external editors. Therefore, one challenge was to make clear that this user-based quality control is sufficient to ensure that the repository meets the CoreTrustSeal quality requirements.

The RDA outputs adopted

We decided to adopt the Repository Audit and Certification DSA–WDS Partnership WG Recommendations on CoreTrustSeal because the users of TextGrid Repository must be sure that the data stored will continue to be searchable, interoperably accessible and re-usable in the future, as recommended by the FAIR principles. Funding organisations also demand that data resulting from the projects they fund be made available in a way that is as reusable as possible, and make this an important element of their data management plan requirements. With this certification, the repository can reinforce its quality and alignment with the FAIR principles to both users and funding bodies.

The adoption process

The certification process was carried out under the coordination of the DARIAH-DE Coordination Office. Two task forces were established, one for organisational and administrative aspects and the other for technical requirements. In addition, several partners of the DARIAH-DE consortium who have contributed to the development of TextGrid over the years were consulted to clarify how TextGrid Repository meets specific CoreTrustSeal requirements. Finally, the answers of the CoreTrustSeal reviewers were discussed and answered jointly by the various members of the team.

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The impact of the adoption

The mission of the TextGridRep is to serve national and international research, teaching and learning by providing long term preservation, further processing, openly sharing and dissemination of research data according to the ethical and scientific standards of the international research community. The CoreTrustSeal confirms that TextGrid provides the necessary resources to promote and support making the research results of its community as widely accessible and usable as possible. This certification enables researchers from the humanities and social sciences to archive their data in TextGrid without any concerns.

Since the TextGrid Repository also allows the archiving of data created by researchers who use the Digital Humanities tools of the TextGrid Laboratory, the CoreTrustSeal will promote research activities within the entire virtual research environment of TextGrid.

Lessons learned

The certification process was the reason for TextGrid stakeholders to conduct a detailed analysis and documentation of the repository in order to prove its sustainability and trustworthiness. Carrying out this internal self-assessment in continuous exchange with the peer community has helped to improve the quality and transparency of the processes and to consolidate the compliance with established standards. It was useful to receive independent feedback on how the TextGrid Repository can further develop and improve. The structured discussions between the different DARIAH-DE members and the exchange with external reviewers was also very useful for the preparation of the certification process of another repository of the infrastructure, DARIAH Repository, which is in progress.

About DARIAH-DE

DARIAH-DE (Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities) is an association for the creation of a digital research infrastructure for the humanities and cultural sciences. DARIAH-DE offers services in the areas of Digital Humanities and research data for research and teaching. The infrastructure is supported by sixteen university and non-university institutions.

The TextGrid Repository was a result of the community-driven project TextGrid, which developed a virtual research environment for the collaborative creation, analysis and publication of texts and images from 2006 to 2015. In 2016, the TextGrid Repository and its virtual research environment TextGridLab became part of DARIAH-DE.

The TextGrid community consists of researchers from the humanities, libraries and computer centres who integrate established standards and best practices into the TextGrid virtual research environment and continuously develop it further.

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