

Summary

Ubiquitous Infrastructure: The Digital Transformation of Literary Studies

This book offers a comprehensive look at the digital infrastructure of literary studies, analysing its history, evolving conditions, and impact on research practices. Here, infrastructure is understood as a ‘boundary object’—a plane of intersection and negotiation among various stakeholders. This emphasis also highlights the role of exchange, dialogue, and understanding between different stakeholders to build a shared research space. Ten intertwining chapters illuminate the issue of digital infrastructure in literary studies from a range of perspectives. Together, they form a holistic account of a complex ecosystem, its history, institutional conditions, and the latest phenomena that shape it.

Chapter 1, **‘Paradoxes of Infrastructure’**, introduces the concept of infrastructure as a ‘boundary object’—a space for negotiation between different stakeholders with varying needs and goals. By discussing the ambiguity of the term ‘infrastructure,’ I identify key paradoxes that frame the issues explored in subsequent chapters: the merging of old and new, material and digital, hidden and ubiquitous, open and closed, and dynamic and permanent. I also analyse the tension between infrastructure as a general concept and research infrastructure, examining its disciplinary and multidisciplinary nature.

The following chapters demonstrate the digital transformation of research practices. In Chapter 2, **‘Refreshing Literary Studies’**, I define key concepts in digital humanities, presenting it as a renewal of literary studies that aids research without altering its core objective: understanding culture through its texts. I show how digitisation processes influence our working methods, where texts become tools

and the information they contain becomes data. I continue these reflections in Chapter 3, **'How Polish Humanities Became Digital'**, where I discuss the development of Polish digital humanities in both regional and global contexts. Based on various studies, I analyse the stages of its development—self-assessment, institutionalisation, and resource consolidation—and highlight the crucial need for federating resources and creating research infrastructure. I focus on the role of international and inter-institutional collaboration, using the CLARIN-PL and DARIAH-PL consortia as examples in building the infrastructure of Polish digital humanities.

Chapter 4, **'Digital Humanities Centre: A Survival Guide'**, delves into the institutional dimensions of this process, outlining the key stages and challenges involved in establishing a digital humanities centre, using the Digital Humanities Centre at the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences (CHC IBL PAN) as a case study. I stress the role of people and procedures in building durable infrastructure while also pointing to the need for diversifying both areas of activity and funding sources. The next section, Chapter 5, **'The Digital Transformation of Data, Practices, and Infrastructure'**, concludes this part of the discussion by systematising the analysis of digital transformation across three main areas: data, practices, and infrastructure. Using ontologies and definitions of research activities, I discuss the subsequent stages of the research process in terms of the use of digital tools and data. I analyse the digitisation of the research process within the context of data, practices, and infrastructure.

The next three chapters focus on the infrastructural side of the research process and various organisational methods. Chapter 6, **'The Ecosystem of Research Infrastructures'**, presents research infrastructures as mediators between different communities, particularly between the academic community and policymakers. Looking at the history of infrastructures in post-war Europe, I analyse their ecosystem, which consists of substantive, institutional, individual, political, and financial areas. I discuss key initiatives in the humanities and social sciences, both in Poland and across Europe, and the mechanisms for managing them via Research Infrastructure Roadmaps. Chapter 7, **'Literary Studies Infrastructures'**, brings these considerations

to the very specific ground of literary research. Based on various infrastructure catalogues, I discuss classification methods and the specific nature of humanities infrastructure and, within that, literary infrastructure. I propose my own typology, based on three elements: **what** (resources), **how** (methods and tools), and **who** (institutions), and discuss exemplary infrastructures from each of these categories. I also examine how digital initiatives remediate the traditional infrastructures of the discipline, such as editions, bibliographies, lexicons, biographies, and dictionaries.

Chapter 8, '**Infrastructure as a Trope of Reality**', discusses the role of infrastructures in modelling and representing the world. Any representation of a given segment of cultural reality requires defining a metamodel and a data model, then preparing a specific instance of it with careful attention to the data: its origins, conditions of creation, and context of acquisition. All these elements influence both interaction with the model and the results of the research conducted with its help. I discuss strategies for creating a model and issues such as operationalisation, standardisation, representativeness, and sustainability. This section concludes with Chapter 9, '**Evaluation of Infrastructure – Infrastructures of Evaluation**', in which I analyse the problems associated with the misalignment of scientific evaluation criteria with digital practices and publications. I discuss innovations in scholarly communication, such as facilitating access to digital resources, the development of new forms of academic publication, and reaching a wider audience, as well as the challenges associated with them: linking research to source data, open publications, interdisciplinary collaboration, training, and peer review. I also look at alternative academic careers (*alt-ac*) and the need for a clear description and appreciation of diverse research contributions in evaluation processes.

In the closing chapter, '**The Coming Infrastructure**', I present key challenges that humanities infrastructures must confront in the coming years, such as artificial intelligence, climate and conflict, openness, the research ecosystem, and the entropy of the future. The chapter proposes a set of recommendations for various stakeholders to navigate this complex ecosystem of opportunities and challenges. The main message of the book is systemic, and this systemic approach assumes

collaboration among all elements; thus, the recommendations are for specific actions. For decision-makers and funders, the primary recommendation is to build a cohesive ecosystem and foster synergy, breaking down ministerial silos, leveraging existing research infrastructures to support policy-making, and promoting and enforcing open science standards. Academic units and cultural institutions should focus on building competencies and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration by developing staff expertise and engaging with national and European consortia. For research infrastructures, the recommendation is to build strong connections and take responsibility for codifying and maintaining standards, acting as the central link in the ecosystem. Finally, researchers themselves must actively engage with and contribute to their discipline's infrastructure, using available tools and sharing their research findings openly.