Describing Infrastructure - miro board link:
https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVEckczIg=/?share_link_id=373832561394

*An invitation to a termly reading-and-practice group on metadata in arts and humanities digital research infrastructure (A&H DRI), hosted by **Data/Culture**, the Digital Infrastructures for Arts, Humanities and Cultural Heritage Community Interest Group (**DIAHCH-CIG**) of the UK–Ireland Digital Humanities Association, **DARIAH-IE**, and **Mapping the Arts and Humanities**.*

Every portal, registry and infrastructure map rests on a set of metadata decisions: which fields exist, which values are allowed, and what then becomes visible. At Data/Culture, the Mapping the Arts and Humanities project and DARIAH-IE, we have lived this first-hand. Over the years, each of our metadata models has changed considerably, adapted to funders' reporting requirements, to social sciences and humanities (SSH) frameworks and, above all, to what the resources we were describing actually required. Each of those changes was an interpretive choice and we suspect many colleagues are making similar choices in parallel, often without a place to compare notes. As part of our work on infrastructure description, metadata and classification, we hope this group will be a place where such discussions can take place!

Why metadata, and why now

The scholarship gathered in our recent work suggests possible strands that this group may want to focus on as it showcases new projects' metadata schemata:

- **Standards and their limits.** FAIR has set the baseline for research data (Wilkinson et al. 2016), but its humanities implementation must stay attentive to disciplinary difference (Harrower et al. 2020; Edmond and Tóth-Czifra 2018). FAIRsFAIR mapped standards onto higher-level concepts (Méndez et al. 2020), raising the question of what happens to specificity.
- **Keeping the original.** GoTriple, aggregating heterogeneous SSH metadata, chose to preserve original metadata alongside normalised values (Umerle et al. 2023); collections-as-data work similarly asks that provenance and transformation decisions be made visible (Ames 2021).
- **Beyond the object record.** Heritage metadata is moving towards 'object biographies' linking things to events, actors, places and meanings (Gerber and Wagner 2026).
- **Visibility and AI.** Infrastructure maps tend to favour formally recognised institutions over grassroots, community and practice-based infrastructure (Di Martino, Murphy and Zolotariov 2026), while metadata increasingly mediates access for machines as well as people (Colavizza and Jaillant 2026; Greenberg et al. 2026; Tasovac 2025).

How the group will work

- **Termly meetings** (one per academic term), online, around 90 minutes, convened by Data/Culture, MAHP, DARIAH-IE, DIAHCH-CIG with hosting rotating among participating projects.
- **Each session pairs** one project presentation, showing a real metadata model with its trade-offs and workarounds, with **two or three pieces of scholarship** circulated in advance for discussion.
- **First meeting:** Data/Culture opens by showcasing how and why its metadata has evolved, read alongside Méndez et al. (2020), Umerle et al. (2023) and Harrower et al. (2020).
- **Founding conversations** are under way with colleagues we already collaborate with through the CIG: the Mapping the Arts and Humanities project, DARIAH-IE and the UK–Ireland Digital Humanities Association, who will present in future terms.

Who should come? Anyone who builds, maintains or relies on metadata for arts, humanities and cultural heritage infrastructure: portal and registry teams, infrastructure mappers, GLAM and archive professionals, research software engineers, data stewards, researchers, practitioners and community-based organisers. No technical background is needed; curiosity about how description shapes knowledge is enough.

Join us! If you would like to take part, propose a reading, or present your project in a future term, please contact **Giovanna Di Martino** at giovanna.dimartino@anthro.ox.ac.uk by **15 November 2026**. We will confirm the date of the first session, **mid-November**, with everyone who expresses interest. We would love to have you with us.

References: Ames, S. (2021) LIBER Quarterly 31(1). · Colavizza, G. and Jaillant, L. (2026) Archives and Records. · Di Martino, G., Murphy, J. and Zolotariov, E. (2026) DHA DIAHCH Community Interest Group. · Edmond, J. and Tóth-Czifra, E. (2018) Open Data for Humanists, Zenodo. · Gerber, A. and Wagner, S. (2026) Positionspapier: Die Objektbiografie als Modell…, Zenodo. · Greenberg, J. et al. (2026) AI Magazine 47(2). · Harrower, N. et al. (eds) (2020) Sustainable and FAIR Data Sharing in the Humanities, ALLEA. · Méndez, E. et al. (2020) FAIRsFAIR D3.6, Zenodo. · Tasovac, T. (2025) 'Through the Noise', Text+, Göttingen. · Umerle, T. et al. (2023) TRIPLE D8.5, Zenodo. · Wilkinson, M.D. et al. (2016) Scientific Data 3.