



Methodological Excellence in Data-Driven  
Approaches to Linguistics

## Digital Humanities in Estonia

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### **Abstract**

*The first Digital Humanities (DH) round table in Estonia, held on 25 September 2023 and organised by the Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics, brought together academic institutions, memory organisations, and policymakers to address the growing need for digital expertise in the humanities. The discussion focused on curriculum reform, early student engagement through internships, and stronger collaboration between universities and cultural institutions. This whitepaper summarises the key insights and recommendations from the event, highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary modules, international partnerships, and sustainable models for knowledge exchange. It calls for a coordinated strategy to ensure digital humanities education in Estonia remains innovative and aligned with societal and policy priorities.*

### **Digital Humanities in Estonia: Strengthening Collaboration and Curriculum**

On 25 September 2023, the first Digital Humanities (DH) round table was held in Tartu, Estonia, convening stakeholders from academic institutions, memory institutions (GLAMs), and national policymakers. Organised by the Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics (IEGL), the event aimed to assess current practices, identify development needs, and foster interdisciplinary collaboration in the field of Digital Humanities.

The round table was moderated by IEGL head Prof. Liina Lindström and brought together experts from diverse roles, including research managers, digital humanities specialists, department heads, and policy advisers. Among the participants were Martin Eessalu (Institute of the Estonian Language), Mari Sarv (Estonian Literary Museum), Laura Nemvalts (National Library of Estonia), Sander Jürisson (Estonian Maritime Museum), Sven Lepa (National Archives of Estonia), and several heads of departments from the University of Tartu Library, including

Piret Zettur, Moonika Teemus, Lilian Neerut, and Kristhel Haak. The Ministry of Culture was represented by Viivian Jõemets, while the University of Tartu Faculty of Arts and Humanities was represented by Anti Selart, Joshua Wilbur, Terje Loogus, Rahel Toomik, Alexandra Milyakina, Aigi Rahi-Tamm, Liina Lindström, Siim Sorokin, Jane Klavan, and Riho Altnurme. Additional participants included Taavi Vanaveski (MEDAL project manager) and Keit Mõisavald (IEGL specialist in marketing and communications).

Central themes included the integration of digital methods across disciplines, the importance of early internships and student employment in memory institutions, and the need for sustained cross-sectoral engagement. The discussion highlighted the need for a successful model of informal, interdisciplinary collaboration, which would foster new research initiatives through monthly DH mornings involving academia, business, and the arts. International perspectives were also explored, including collaborative projects and the development of online programmes that combine digital media, communication, and linguistics. The round table emphasised DH's potential to enrich language education, support comparative linguistic analysis, and equip students with data literacy and visualisation skills. Nonetheless, structural challenges persist, particularly regarding programme identity, recruitment, and the need to simplify terminology for broader accessibility.

The discussion underscored the urgency of curriculum reform, the expansion of digital competencies, and stronger institutional partnerships. The event concluded with a strong commitment to continuing the round table format and expanding participation to include EU-level policymakers and language institutes. Through collaboration with CDHIS and IEGL, the MEDAL project aims to ensure that future research and curriculum development are aligned with societal needs and policy priorities.

### **Discussion Recommendations for Advancing Digital Humanities**

- Revise curricula to embed digital skills training across humanities disciplines
- Strengthen collaboration between universities and memory institutions through internships and joint projects
- Develop interdisciplinary modules integrating text, image, and data analysis
- Support early student engagement with DH through practical projects and employment opportunities
- Promote DH in language education, including comparative linguistic analysis and corpus-based learning
- Simplify programme and module titles to enhance visibility and recruitment
- Continue round table discussions with broader stakeholder participation
- Fund collaborative initiatives to foster informal knowledge exchange and innovation
- Address structural challenges in the DH programme identity and cross-departmental integration
- Encourage international partnerships to keep DH education and research competitive