

# Reading Europe Advanced Data Investigation Tool – Presentation

Brigitte Ouvry-Vial Le Mans Université & Institut Universitaire de France



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- A transnational & interdisciplinary research program building a large-scale online user interface to collect and analyse evidences of **reading experiences in Europe (18th-21st C)**.
- **Principal investigators**
  - IRISA (CNRS, Rennes): Dr. Guillaume Gravier,  
[guig@irisa.fr](mailto:guig@irisa.fr)
  - Digital Humanities Lab (Utrecht U.) : Dr. José Van kruif,  
[J.deKruif@uu.nl](mailto:J.deKruif@uu.nl)
  - Institute of the Czech Literature (CAS, Prague): Dr. Michael Wögerbauer,  
[woegerbauer@ucl.cas.cz](mailto:woegerbauer@ucl.cas.cz)
  - Arts & Knowledge Media Institute (Open University): Dr. Shafquat Towheed,  
[shafquat.towheed@open.ac.uk](mailto:shafquat.towheed@open.ac.uk)
  - 3LAM (Le Mans U.): Pr. Brigitte Ouvry-Vial (PL) & Dr. François Vignale (Deputy/CoreManagment),  
[bouvry@univ-lemans.fr](mailto:bouvry@univ-lemans.fr);[francois.vignale@univ-lemans.fr](mailto:francois.vignale@univ-lemans.fr)

# Main factors in a reader-centered history of European reading

- 3 Revolutions of the book or evolution of reading?
- Massification of publics and practices (after 1830).
- Diversity of geographical, cultural and political contexts of reading in Europe.
- Reading is an individual activity, multifactorial, and only partially standardized.
- Today's digital revolution shows the simultaneous transformation of the type of texts written, of the media or devices bearing it, and of the modes of its appropriation.
- Reading experience = Interaction between a subject (reader), a medium & content, revealing an effect or state of mind.
- Readers are active co-creators of their readings or *producers*.

# 3 Key issues in reading research today & 3 Main goals of READ-IT

- The 'Why' and 'How' we read still eludes us (Darnton 1986)
- A necessary Interdisciplinary & Intersectorial approach
- Towards an integrative framework of approach for the empirical study of reading experiences (popular or scholarly)
- Gather, describe, exploit and share dispersed evidences of Europe's literary and popular culture (18th-21st centuries) in multiple formats and languages.
- Develop innovative means to accurately search, identify and tag reading experiences in Web-scale data samples involving crowdsourcing, linked data and artificial intelligence.
- Build an open access, dynamic and user-friendly interface for scholars, professionals and the broad public to search this common cultural heritage

# The reading experience / situation, minimal modeling

## Reading experience involves...

Reader

- Male / Female
- Adult / Young
- Occupation
- Language
- Social status
- ...

Medium

- Book
- Newspaper
- Notebook
- Advertising
- Ipad

Content

Kind and genres  
of texts read  
(Novel, poetry..)

And :

- Location
- Time
- **State of mind**
- Premice
- Outcomes
- ...

## Examples of reading experience written testimonies

“I lie contentedly enough, and amuse myself with a book which Qasim, seeing me in pain, has brought me in his kindness. It is his most treasured possession, a life of the Prophet in big lettering on rough paper, brown-black on brown-white, with flowered borders and headlines with the name of Allah, the author's name in a lunette at the top of every page, and the number of the page in a little flowered frame of its own on the margin. It gives one pleasure to handle anything done, even by mechanical means, with so much loving care. The book itself is written guilelessly, and tells the legends of Muhammad; how Amina, his mother, bore him without weight or discomfort, and in sleep saw the prophets month by month in turn, and in the last month the Prophet Jesus - for the substance of Muhammad, a drop from the River of Paradise, had been in the bodies of all the Prophets before him, beginning with Adam.”

Century: 1900-1945 / Reader: Freya Stark / Book

# Detecting concepts in images: Shared reading ? Gendered reading ?



# Examples of reading situations testimonies

- Collective reading, aloud



- Individual silent reading



- Silent reading, multiple readers





# Examples of visual representations of reading situations



- Individual reading experience clearly linked to an emotion.

- Individual reading, outside, lying, leisure ?



- Group reading, aloud, reading/listening



# What kind of information can we automatically retrieve in texts?

What

richness to the story that excited one and made one feel, ooh, there are more things to explore, and I think one found that throughout the whole of that sequence, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, to discover that John Mandeville had written that this was the, the, later, to discover that these were stories that people in the Middle Ages, he was playing around with stories that already existed. I, I, for me that's, that's always been an interest and an, an important part of what makes a book really good.

Where

*And you said you were reading that in Italy, was it?*

Yes.

How

On holiday with family.

How

With family, yes.

*Em, and you read it a chapter at a time. And do you remember anything about the actual book, the cover, the smell, anything?*

When

No, I don't remember. It would have been, it would have been the absolute, ah, you, it would have been the hardback edition with [Pauline Baines 00.10.27] because, as far as I know, this would have been '57, '58, I don't know, I can't remember when it was published, but it must have been very soon after, so I mean, I'd have to look up and find out, but as far as I know, this, it would be very close to its original publication date and paperbacks didn't really exist, so, not as such, so, well, a little bit, but it would be, it would have been the hardback edition.

*And do you remember how it made you feel, reading it? Excited or ... ?*

Results

Yes, you were opening a door, just to go into another world, which I always have loved. I, I mean that's, I wasn't terribly keen on the present day [laughter] generally, but it's this, just completely going into another world and living ...

# What kind of information can we automatically retrieve in image ?

Daylight

2 persons

Book

Seating



Painting

Outside

Garden

Source : Mary Cassatt, Nurse reading to a little girl, 1895, NY, Metropolitan Museum of Art

# Where do the sources come from?

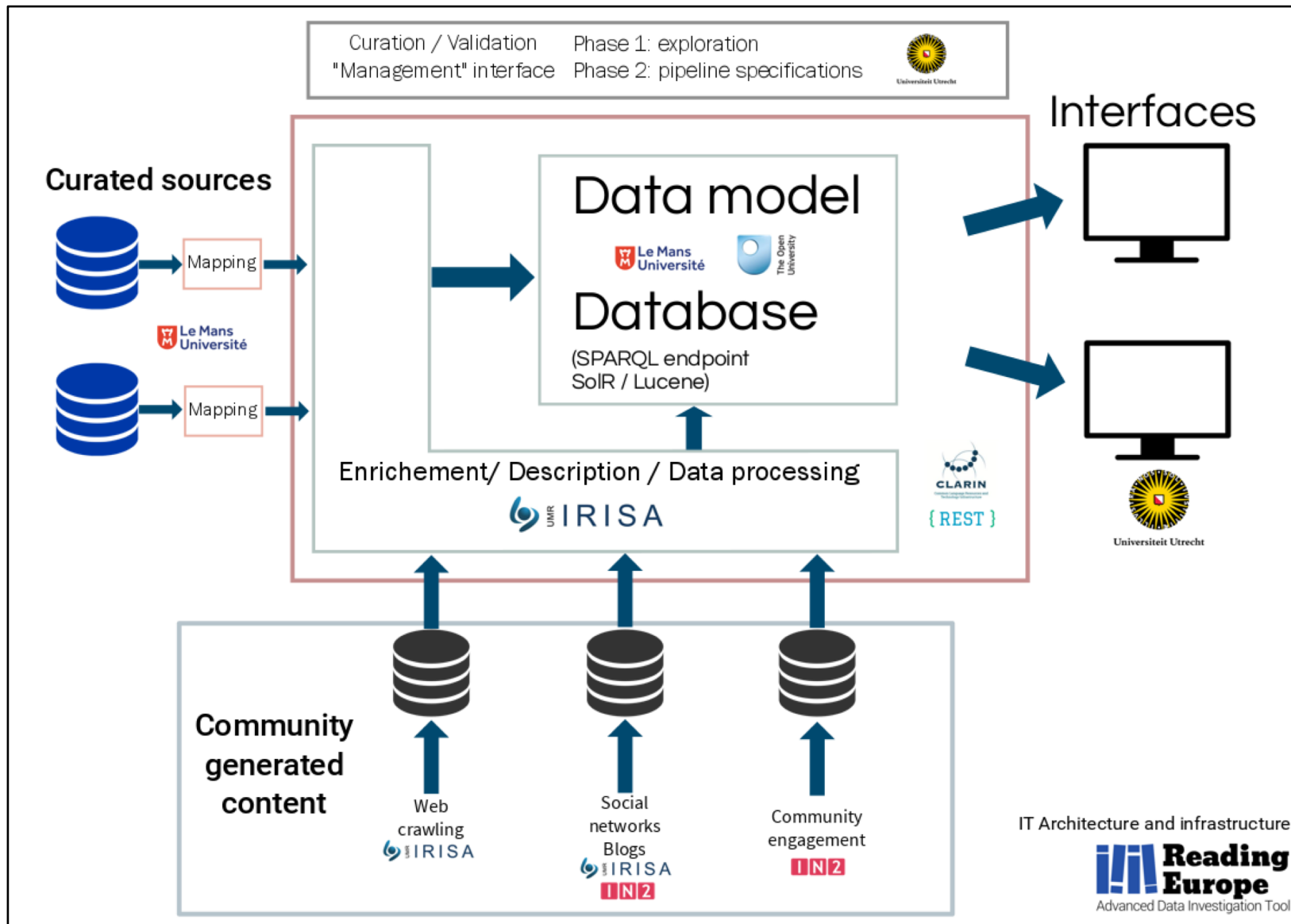
- Existing datasets and collections available from previous research projects (UK RED, EU-RED, etc...).
- Scholarly contributions; private contributions (collection campaigns)
- Other SSH research projects devoted to Cultural Heritage digitization.
- Archives centers and / or websites preserving historical and contemporary documents related to print and written culture (APICE, IMEC, etc.)
- Various other sources, Archives of the National Library of the Czech Republic, European Digital Library Europeana, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), RKD, British library, etc.
- Native online sources : books reviews, reading clubs, social networks, tweets, virtual collections, etc.

# Methodological issues regarding the sources/reading experiences testimonies

- Vast amount of sources, yet scattered & insufficiently tagged.
- Multilingual and multimedia.
- Digitized and not digitized; traditional archives, webcrawled, crowdsourced.
- Variety of formats and contents : anonymous and literary texts; textual evidences include book excerpts, tweets, social media, blogs; audio files; visual representations.
- Variety of AI approaches: text-mining ; visual and audiovisual sources require different methodologies.
- Current limits of computer's in image recognition: paintings are less readable than photos...

# How do we intend to achieve the objectives ?

- READ-IT workflow



IT Architecture and infrastructure

**Reading Europe**  
Advanced Data Investigation Tool

**READ-IT**

# Main research issues

- Contextualization of reading experiences / retrieving its circumstances : Time; Location; Collective/individual; Public/private; Indoor/outdoor; Silent/aloud...
- Text mining and natural language processing will be instrumental in identifying the diversity of reading contexts and in correlating the contexts to the personal circumstances of readers and to the types of material read.
- Incremental enrichment of the thesauri and linked ontology.
- Visual representation of reading : The project will enable answers to crucial questions about the history of reading behaviors as well as the social perceptions and values attached to reading (e.g. women readers versus men).

# Expected contributions to the state of knowledge

- The interdisciplinary research consortium (SSH, DH, ICT) will :
  - Establish a data model and ontology of European reading experience
  - Allow a large public to explore the European cultural heritage of reading culture and to contribute to its enrichment (including through additional Apps for personal collections and stories)
  - Enable scholarly and professional (cultural industries, educators, etc.) search and understanding of the evolution of reading (18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> C.)
  - Connect research in book and reading studies to the underexplored and complex area of the effects that the act of reading triggers and inspires in human beings. This has hardly been studied because of the difficulty in detecting and characterizing emotions, especially in short texts and audiovisual content.



(PL) Brigitte Ouvry-Vial - Le Mans Université  
Institut Universitaire de France

[brigitte.ouvry-vial@univ-lemans.fr](mailto:brigitte.ouvry-vial@univ-lemans.fr)

[www.readit-project.eu](http://www.readit-project.eu)

