

## Deutscher Slavistenverband Der Vorsitzende

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### **Letter of Support for the NFDI-Initiative Text+: Language- and Text-based Research Data Infrastructure**

Dear Colleagues,

The *Association of German Slavists* has around 330 members and encompasses linguistics as well as literary and cultural studies. Since our association is the only one for Slavic studies in Germany, we represent all East, West and South Slavic languages, and literatures.

We very much welcome your text+ initiative and confirm hereby our support. At the last member meeting of the Association in September 2019 we started a working group “Digitalization in Slavic studies”.

Digital Humanities play a significant role for Slavic studies in Germany. Research data are produced and made use of in all three areas (‘Collections’, ‘Dictionaries’, ‘Editions’) mentioned in the proposal. This holds most prominently for linguistic corpora, above all historical and diachronic corpora (Church Slavonic; (Old) Russian, Polish, Czech, and Croatian), as well as specialized synchronic corpora, such as oral dialectal corpora, heritage speaker corpora, treebanks, and parallel corpora—see <https://bit.ly/2kxIVTq> for an overview. Even though most of such corpora have been created with issues of sustainability in mind, the degree of standardization, scalability, and integration that the Text+ consortium provides will still prove extremely helpful for the scientific community. The application of corpora in linguistic studies has virtually already become standard in the German Slavists’ community, using not only the excellent National Corpora of Slavic languages, but also many individual collections tailored to the task; these would profit enormously from a joint standard and software infrastructure. Some dictionaries and scholarly editions—so far mainly for Church Slavonic and historical Czech—are already being built according to current digital standards, and the demand is clearly increasing.

Advanced Slavic digital humanities projects, driven by a mixed methods approach, combine philological and corpus linguistic work with machine learning techniques, e.g., in automatic transcription of historical handwriting (OCR) and author/scribe identification. Beyond appropriate data standards, such projects would also profit from the integration and exchange in the Text+ scientific community. Finally, German Slavic literary studies begin to involve in digital humanities—e.g., distant reading, internet and media studies—as evident from respective interest groups and panels at Slavists' conferences. There is certainly great potential for an accessible and standardized infrastructure also in literary studies. In 2018, *Bulletin der deutschen Slavistik* (published once a year by the *Association of German Slavists*) presented a special forum on digital humanities in Slavic studies that encompasses linguistics as well as literary studies: [http://www.slavistenverband.de/Bulletins/Bulletin\\_2018.pdf](http://www.slavistenverband.de/Bulletins/Bulletin_2018.pdf).

For this reason we strongly support the text+ application. We hereby declare our willingness to contribute to the Text+ objectives such as, e.g., establishing data and services' portfolios, representing scientists in the governance structure, or participating in working groups.

At the same time, it must be recognized that German Slavists already actively engage in many successful small and medium-size research projects, which have been working toward and found innovative independent solutions in some key areas of text processing, corpus linguistics, and digital humanities. It is our sincere hope and our urgent wish that future innovation on this medium-size project basis will continue alongside large cooperative initiatives like Text+.

Yours sincerely,



(Prof. Dirk Uffelmann,  
President of the *Association of German Slavists*)