

Two Scholarly Web-Agoras: The LogiLogi and Talia/Philospace Approaches

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1 Introduction

In this paper, we briefly introduce the LOGILOGI and TALIA/PHILOSPACE systems, two systems that aim at helping scholars and philosophers in their research. They represent two different approaches to combining traditional research in philosophy (paper and conversation based) with modern, web-based technologies. And as the systems are described in detail in Wiersma & Sarlo (2008) and David, Nucci & Piazza (2008), Morbidoni & Nucci (2008), we focus on their commonalities and especially their differences here.

2 LogiLogi

LOGILOGI is an hypertext web-platform developed for LogiLogi.org by the LogiLogi Foundation¹. It tries to combine the virtues of good conversations and the written word by providing a form of quick, informal publication and annotation of short texts (so called *Logis*) via the web.

Its central values are openness and quality of content. Contrarily to early websystems it does not make use of forum-threads (avoiding their many problems), but of tags and links that can also be added to *logis* by others than the original author.

LOGILOGI wants to meet the need of philosophers, students, and others for in-depth, quick-turnaround, high quality discussions without taking the fun out of it by making things too complicated.

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3 Talia and Philospace

TALIA and PHILOSPACE are developed within the Discovery project². TALIA is a distributed semantic digital library and publishing system, that acts as a container for *Sources*, i.e., for Corpora of philosophers or texts on a certain philosophical topic, and for scholarly contributions. Each Talia node is dedicated to the writings of a philosopher and contributions on them, and will be part of the Talia Federation.

On the other hand, PHILOSPACE is a desktop application, that scholars can use in different ways: for example to browse one or more Talia nodes, to take personal or public notes on the *sources* they are reading, or to submit their works for publication in a Talia node.

TALIA and PHILOSPACE will be tightly connected and together they will form a powerful framework, easily exploitable by scholars.

4 Commonalities

Both LOGILOGI and TALIA³ are Free Software developed in Ruby, and on top of Ruby on Rails, a web development framework that makes creating web applications faster and easier⁴.

The intended users for both platforms are philosophers, scholars, students, and people interested in philosophy, and their central use-cases are reading, publishing, navigating and annotating texts⁵.

Although their prospective users are about the same, there are some differences in focus and aims, that we will discuss next.

5 Differences

LOGILOGI and TALIA/PHILOSPACE differ in several aspects, namely their aims, global system architecture, organization of content, and approach to quality control.

5.1 Aims

The LogiLogi Project aims at providing a philosophical discussion platform that falls between good conversations and journal papers. It is intended for ideas that one is unable to turn into a full sized journal paper, but that are interesting enough to share and discuss. In this it also targets students a bit more than TALIA.

On the other hand, TALIA/PHILOSPACE's goals are broader: They are intended as a research tool, which features the availability of source texts and a publishing framework for philosophical writings. In this sense, LOGILOGI can be seen as an informal platform for exploring, sharing and discussing new ideas, whereas TALIA/PHILOSPACE represents a more formal platform headed towards classical research.

LOGILOGI has such narrow aims, first of all, because it is a small project (between 2 and 10 volunteers), but secondly also because in what people call Web2.0, narrow aims mean simpler and easier to use software, that - via API's - can be integrated into existing sites and blogs. These aims were chosen because a platform suitable for philosophical discussions was most notably missing on the web⁶.

Contrarily, TALIA/PHILOSPACE represents the efforts of an EU Project, which needs to satisfy formal guidelines and gathers six partners with different competencies, to provide professional philosophers and scholars with a research tool based on Semantic Web technologies, that can be used also without a network.

5.2 Architecture

LogiLogi.org is a website that works in any modern browser. It is meant to be a singular

site (like Wikipedia or Facebook). For integration with other sites it will offer REST and RSS API's, but that's it. Consequently, the architecture of LOGILOGI is as simple as it can be.

The Talia Federation is a network of repositories, each of which stores documents in both a SQL DB and in a triple store, whereas PHILOSPACE is a desktop application that currently allows users to browse Talia nodes, to annotate documents with personal notes, and implements an *offline mode*.

LOGILOGI kept its architecture (not just its aims) so simple because it makes adapting the software much easier and faster. Moreover, keeping it as a single site also immediately gives users the full advantages of forming a global community. It also could be kept so simple because LOGILOGI does not try to hook into existing institutions, but rather wants to be something that philosophers can begin using at the side.

The Talia federation will provide each document with a stable URI, referable also when working offline and supporting both SQL and SPARQL queries. Version 2.0 of PHILOSPACE will feature a tighter integration with TALIA, allowing also direct submissions to the editorial board and to create *channels* where to share comments and opinions on philosophical work.

5.3 Organisation of Content

LOGILOGI does not hold original writings, but is solely meant for new contributions. Users can post short documents (*logis*) of about 500 words max. They can easily be linked with other *logis* and sites, and can receive comments (other *logis*), ratings, and short annotations. *logis* can be tagged with one or more tags, which can be navigated like a concept tree and also function as the targets for most links⁷. LOGILOGI does not start out with a (formal) ontology but its folksonomy of tags can grow and be adapted over time.

Texts (*sources*) on TALIA may have variable length, can be original writings with different editions, and are uniquely referable.

They are stored on TALIA nodes, and each node is intended to aggregate the community of scholars on a single topic or philosopher. Content is organised by means of several domain ontologies (one per node), which organize knowledge inside TALIA and by an upper ontology which eases the search for relationships among *sources* in the different Talia nodes.

In LOGILOGI *logis* are kept short because this forces people to write to the point and also to express their thoughts in a more modular way, so the advantages of hypertext (in the sense of linking to things instead of paraphrasing them) are better used. Also no formal ontologies were added, to keep things simple and flexible for users.

On TALIA ontologies were used to stimulate the usage of the same vocabulary to annotate a scholar's writings, so relationships with other contributions are explicit. However, on a PHILOSPACE channel, a scholar can also write her comments as simple text, without the need to annotate them.

5.4 Quality Control

LOGILOGI employs a simple, but flexible quality control mechanism. As noted *logis* have ratings, and these are essentially averages of grades given by visitors and other authors. If an author's contributions are rated well, she receives more voting-power and through this she can gradually gain standing and influence. To allow for diversity, *logis* can be rated from the viewpoints of multiple *peer-groups*, authors have different voting power in each, and users can pick which to use for filtering content.

On the other hand, each Talia node has an editorial board, consisting of invited experts nominated by the Discovery's content partners, who have to assess the quality of the *sources*. They also review works submitted by scholars, that are published only after a positive review by the editorial board responsible for that node. On PHILOSPACE and its channels, the reliability of sources, contributions, comments, and other circulating mate-

rial will be delegated to each user, who can decide whether to use or filter out user's writings.

For LOGILOGI an algorithmic quality control mechanism was chosen because it, just like a market mechanism, is self-regulating and more transparent to participants. Also such a system can take off more gradually and informally, as any person can start a *peer-group*, but only the better ones will grow and be used as a filter by knowledgeable users.

The purpose of TALIA to be a research tool and to provide original writings requires that someone be in charge of the overall quality of both these and new contributions, hence the necessity to provide an editorial board to set up the initial writings and accept further contributions by users. On the other hand, PHILOSPACE can be seen as a communication medium that allows informal discussion between scholars.

6 Conclusion

We have shown that LOGILOGI and TALIA/PHILOSPACE are very different in their approaches. While LOGILOGI just aims at providing a Web2.0 discussion platform, TALIA is an EU project that also wants to provide original writings and a publishing platform. LOGILOGI is a simple site for use in addition to existing practices, while TALIA is more complex, consists of multiple applications, and tries to hook into existing institutions. Also LOGILOGI uses tags to organize things, while TALIA uses ontologies. And where TALIA takes the traditional approach of using editorial boards, LOGILOGI employs a meritocratic *peergroup* algorithm for quality control.

Time has to tell which of these two approaches is better, if any, and of course it depends for what use.

Notes

¹<http://logilogi.org> and <http://foundation.logilogi.org>

²<http://www.discovery-project.eu>

³Philospace is developed in Java, since it is a modification and customization of an existent application.

⁴Ruby on Rails does this by providing libraries and sensible defaults for common tasks, and by using the meta-programming (code generating code) capabilities of Ruby. Also it makes use of proven design practices, like a Model View Controller architecture

⁵This also makes them interesting for, and adaptable to, the field of Humanities in general.

⁶In the Web2.0 world it is considered good practice to go 80% of the way with 20% of the software.

⁷Links can point to tags, to *logis* or to versions of *logis* (the latter two types are stable URI's).

References

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