

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

Wybo Wiersma*
University of Groningen
wybo@logilogi.org

Stefano David†
Università Politecnica delle Marche
sdavid@delicias.dia.fi.upm.es

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1 Introduction

In this paper we describe the differences between the LOGILOGI and TALIA/PHILOSPACE systems, whose intended users are philosophers, students, and other people interested in philosophy. They are only shortly introduced here as they are described in detail in [WS08] and [DNP08], [MN08].

Both LOGILOGI and TALIA¹ are Free Open Source Software developed in Ruby on Rails². They represent two different approaches to using modern, web-

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¹Philospace is developed in Java

²Ruby on Rails is a web development framework that makes creating web applications faster and easier 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

based technologies for fulfilling the core use-cases of reading, publishing, navigation and annotation of texts in philosophy.

LOGILOGI's central values are openness and quality of content. It wants to meet the needs of philosophers for in-depth, quick-turnaround, informal publication and annotation without taking the fun out of it by making things too complicated. It does not make use of forum-threads like earlier websystems, but of tags and links that can also be inserted by others than their original author[Log].

TALIA is a distributed semantic digital library and publishing system for philosophical texts and contributions on them, organized in several nodes, each dedicated to one philosopher. PHILOSPACE is a desktop application, used to browse Talia nodes, to take personal or public notes on texts, or to submit works for publication[Dis].

Although LOGILOGI and TALIA/PHILOSPACE have about the same prospective users, they also differ in several aspects: their aims, global system architecture, organization of content, and approach to quality control, which we will now discuss.

2 Differences

2.1 Aims

The LogiLogi Project aims at providing an informal philosophical discussion platform for those ideas that one is unable to turn into a full journal paper, but that are interesting enough to share and discuss. It does not aim to be a full publishing framework and it targets students a bit more than TALIA. It has these narrow aims because it is a small project (2 to 10 volunteers), and also because in what people call Web2.0, narrow aims mean simpler and easier to use software, that - via REST and RSS API's - can be integrated into existing sites and blogs³.

On the other hand, TALIA/PHILOSPACE are intended as a research tool, which features the availability of source texts and a publishing framework for philosophical writings, headed towards classical academic research. They are based on Semantic Web technologies and represent the efforts of an EU-funded project, which needs to satisfy formal guidelines, and gather six partners with different competencies.

³In the Web2.0 world it is considered good practice to go 80% of the way with 20% of the software.

2.2 Architecture

LogiLogi is a singular site (like Wikipedia or Facebook) that works in any modern browser. It wants to be just something that philosophers can begin using at the side, and it does not hook into existing institutions. Consequently, the architecture of LOGILOGI is as simple as it can be, which again means faster development of the software. Moreover, keeping it singular also gives users the full advantages of forming a global community.

Contrary, Talia is a webplatform whose instances form a network of repositories, each of which stores documents (identified with stable URIs, referable also when working offline) and supports SQL and SPARQL queries, whereas PHILOSPACE is a desktop application that allows users to browse Talia nodes, to annotate documents with personal notes, and to work offline. Version 2.0 of PHILOSPACE will feature a tighter integration with TALIA, allowing also direct submissions to the editorial board, and to create *channels* to share comments and opinions on philosophical work.

2.3 Organisation of Content

LOGILOGI does not hold original writings, but is solely meant for new contributions. Users can post short documents of upto 500 words maximum. This forces people to express their thoughts in a modular way, so the advantages of hyper-text (linking instead of paraphrasing) are maximized. Documents can easily be linked with other documents and sites, and can receive comments (documents themselves), ratings, and short annotations. They can be tagged with one or more tags, which can be navigated like a concept tree and also function as the targets for most links⁴. LOGILOGI does not start out with an ontology, but its folksonomy of tags can grow and be adapted over time, for simplicity and flexibility.

Texts on TALIA may have variable length, can be original writings with different editions, are uniquely referable, and are stored on TALIA nodes, which are intended to aggregate the community of scholars on a single topic or philosopher. Content is organized 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 documents. Ontologies were used to stimulate the usage of the same vocabulary to annotate a philosopher's writings, so relationships with other contributions are more evident. However, on a PHILOSPACE channel, a scholar can also write comments as simple text, without the need to annotate them.

⁴Links can point to tags, to documents or to versions of documents (the latter two types are stable URIs).

2.4 Quality Control

LOGILOGI employs a simple, but flexible quality control mechanism: documents have ratings, which are essentially averages of grades given by visitors and other authors. If an author's contributions are rated well, he receives more voting power and through this he can gradually gain standing and influence. To allow for diversity, logis can be rated from the viewpoints of multiple *peergroups*. Authors have different voting power in each, and users can pick which peergroup to use for filtering content. Such an algorithmic quality control mechanism was chosen because it, like a market mechanism, is self-regulating and transparent to participants. Also it allows communities to appear gradually, as any person can start a peergroup, but only the better ones will grow and be used as a filter by knowledgeable users.

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*. Works submitted by scholars to a node are published only after a positive review by its editorial board. On PHILOSPACE and its channels, the reliability of sources and other circulating material are delegated to each user, who can decide what to use or filter out. 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. On the other hand, PHILOSPACE can be seen as a communication medium that allows informal discussion between scholars.

3 Conclusion

We have shown that LOGILOGI and TALIA/PHILOSPACE are very different in their approaches. While LOGILOGI just aims at providing a simple Web2.0 discussion platform, to be used in addition to existing practices, TALIA is an EU project that tries to hook into existing institutions and also wants to provide original writings, in addition to a federative publishing platform. Finally 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 turns out to be better, at least until we have usage data and user feedback.

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