"Everlasting Runes": A Research Platform and Linked Data Service for Runic Research

"Everlasting Runes" (Swedish: "Evighetsrunor") is a three-year collaboration between the Swedish National Heritage Board and Uppsala University, with funding provided by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (Riksbankens jubileumsfond) and the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters (Kungliga Vitterhetsakademien). The project combines philology, archaeology, linguistics, and information systems, and is comprised of several research, digitisation, and digital development components.

Chief among these is to release both existing data and newly digitised material onto the web as openly-licensed linked data, in conjunction with the development of a web-based research platform for runic researchers, with the aim of drawing together disparate structured digital runic resources into a single interface, conveniently accessible for both human and machine agents. As part of the platform's development, the corpus of Scandinavian runic inscriptions in Uppsala University's *Runic Text Database* (*Samnordisk runtextdatabas*) will be restructured and marked up for use on the web, and linked against their entries in the previously digitised standard corpus work (*Sveriges runinskrifter*). In addition, photographic archives of runic inscriptions from the 19th- and 20th centuries from both the Swedish National Heritage Board archives and Uppsala University library will be digitised, alongside other hitherto inaccessible archive material. Information from a number of existing relevant open data resources will also be linked in to the platform.

As a collaboration between a university and a state heritage agency with a small research community as its primary target audience, the project must bridge the gap between the different needs and abilities of these stakeholders, as well as resolve issues of long-term maintenance and stability which have previously proved problematic for some of the source datasets in question. The project must also contend with the differing theoretical backgrounds and research needs of the research communities that it intends to benefit – primarily runologists and archaeologists, but also philologists, corpus linguists, and art historians – by structuring and representing the data in a sound manner that is both accessible and useful to these disciplines but also generalised enough to take account of the material's diversity and ensure interoperability with other cultural heritage data sets on the broader semantic web. It is hoped that the resulting research- and data platforms will combine the strengths of both the National Heritage Board and Uppsala university to produce a rich, actively-maintained scholarly resource.

This paper will present the background and aims of the project within the context of runic research, as well as the various datasets that will be linked together in the linked data research platform (with its corresponding web interface) with particular focus on the data structures in question, the philological markup of the corpus of inscriptions, and requirements gathering.