



Product Specification for Europeana Thematic Collections

Background

In late 2015 Europeana re-launched its portal as Europeana Collections, introducing the first two Thematic Collections focusing on a specific content theme: Music and Art History.

Europeana Collections was designed and developed to support the creation of Thematic Collections and the curatorial and editorial work that goes into their maintenance.

1. What are Thematic Collections?

Thematic Collections are “sub-portals” made available on and via the Europeana platform. They make use of a customised Europeana API search of the full platform to obtain data relevant to the theme and of sufficient quality for the intended audience. Segmentation is based on themes of content, and within a Thematic Collection the user can search and browse in that theme of content only. Users have access to advanced browse capabilities based on thematically appropriate types, subjects and authorities (creators) and can also access curated content - exhibitions, blog posts, timelines, playlist, etc. - relevant to the theme.

Set up in collaboration with the Europeana Foundation and curating partner(s), responsible for continued content acquisition and updating of the site, Thematic Collections are skinned and branded to differentiate them from both the generic portal - Europeana Collections - and other Thematic Collections. They can also offer some functionalities unique to them¹.

Accessible from Europeana Collections and built from the platform, each Thematic Collection can emphasise different functionalities and content. While discovery (search, browse, display) is core to all Thematic Collections, one Thematic Collection may target digital humanities researchers and emphasise access to data download and visualisation, whereas a second one emphasises curated content like exhibitions and galleries, and a third puts emphasis on user-contributed content and annotations. That way each Thematic Collection can create its own unique identity and provide the features that their users value the most.

All data used in the Thematic Collection must also be available via the Europeana Platform.

¹ For example: search facets specific to the theme.

Objectives for the Thematic Collections

Focal points and angles of attack identified and provided

With over 50 million objects in its database the content of Europeana covers a very wide array of topics and has content which is very heterogeneous in quality. Segmenting the content and the services based on the content by themes allows designing services for user groups with specific interests, incremental tackling of data quality issues and the creation of collaborative projects.

Improved data quality

A good way to improve data quality is to feature the data that is above average and therefore incentivise investment in quality over quantity. Thus the Thematic Collections have been designed around Tier 2+ data as defined by the [Europeana Publishing Framework](#).

Improved discovery and user experience

From a search and browse perspective, Thematic Collections allow us to break down the problem of dealing with 50 million+ objects at once and deal with them thematic subset by subset. This creates vertical/domain search experiences within Europeana Collections. Because of the domain's or theme's limited corpus and clear relationships between concepts they provide more relevant results for searchers and browsers.

Increased and deepened engagement with users

By segmenting our channels thematically, they can be better marketed towards specific communities of interest and practice and also provide those communities with a better user experience (see above). Theme segmentation will also make it easier to reach out to these communities and ask them to improve our data via annotations, corrections and contributions.

Active collaboration and publication by Europeana partners

By segmenting thematically, we can more easily partner with projects/consortia to do curation and content marketing around a theme that they have a strong interest in.

Requirements for Thematic Collections

Thematic Collections need to comply with the [Policy on Europeana Thematic Collections](#) and fulfil the following requirements:

1. An organisation or group of people willing and legally able to take responsibility for the Thematic Collection

2. The Thematic Collection demonstrates that it can compete with possibly existing similar initiatives, either by complementing and enriching existing collections or by being better or different.
3. There is user *demand* for the theme.
4. Good quality² content for the theme (i.e. *supply*) is either available in Europeana and/or provided by the partners.
5. The theme is unique.³
6. All data will be made available via the Europeana Platform and therefore complies with the published guidelines and standards.
7. The organisation has the financial and operational resources required to create, curate and manage the collection and can provide firm arrangements to sustain it for a minimum of 4 years.
8. The organisation behind the Thematic Collection agrees to regularly acquire, ingest and maintain relevant and high-quality content for the Thematic Collection via the Europeana Platform, conforming to the Europeana Publishing Guide

2. Functions and features overview

Features overview

Built on the same platform all Thematic Collections can draw on and take advantage of the same features. New features developed become available to all Thematic Collections.

The editors of a Thematic Collection can themselves control which features to put emphasis on and use to a greater or lesser extent. This flexibility aims to support adapting the Thematic Collection to the needs of its particular users.

	Europeana Collections platform, shared features									
Features →	Search & Display	Direct access & download	Browse features	Exhibitions & curation	Blog & editorial pages	Social media	User annotations	Entity pages	Advanced image search	User contributed content
Themes (and emphasis) ↓	Beta v0.5.0	Beta v0.5.0	Beta v0.5.0	Beta v0.1.2	Beta v0.5.0	Beta v0.5.0	Alpha, v0.2.3	Pre-alpha	Planned for dev. in 2017	Planned for dev. in 2017

² Tier 2+ as defined by the Europeana Publishing Framework

³ If two different groups of partners wish to create a Thematic Collection with identical or very similar themes they are likely to be encouraged to collaborate on one Thematic Collection rather than have two competing ones

Music	Core	Low ⁴	Medium	Low	Low	Low	NA	NA	NA	NA
Art history	Core	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	NA	NA	NA	NA
Fashion	Core	High	High	Medium	High	High	NA	NA	NA	NA
Newspapers	Core	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	NA	NA	NA
Photography	Core	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	NA	NA	NA
First World War ⁵	Core	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	NA	Strong

Table 1. Showing existing and planned themes and the features they emphasise.

Search and Display

The core functionality of any Thematic Collection is to support search, search refinements and display of cultural heritage items.

Direct access and download

Another core functionality is that Thematic Collections allow users to directly access the digital representation of the cultural heritage items: to enlarge and view the image or 3D object, to play audio and video and to read texts. In most cases users are also able to download the digital representations as files, for personal use or re-use as specified by its Europeana Licensing Framework rights value.

Browse features

Thematic collections editors can create and feature visualised browse entry points allowing users to directly browse into the content. Browse entry points are either based around topics or people. For themes where imagery is important the contents of the theme is also browsable on colour.

Exhibitions and other curation features

Thematic collections editors have access to a CMS with which they can create curated exhibitions with rich embedded media. The exhibitions CMS has been designed to support

⁴ Much of the audio content is in copyright and directly accessible only via embedded players rather than direct access to files

⁵ Europeana 1914-1918 is currently a standalone micro-site. The plan is to integrate it into the Europeana Collections platform in the course of DSI-2.

easy embedding of other curated formats created in external applications e.g. interactive storymaps and timelines from the Knight Foundation and playlists for video and audio from YouTube/Vimeo and SoundCloud.

Blog and editorial pages

Thematic collections editors have access to a CMS with which they can create blog posts and other pages⁶ on Europeana Collections.

Social media and platforms accounts

A Thematic Collection can have dedicated Europeana branded social media accounts and platform presences⁷ that are also featured on the Thematic Collection landing page.

User annotations

A feature that is in development during DSI-2 is the ability to allow logged-in users to tag items and images as well as link items to each other.

Entity pages

A feature in development during DSI-2 is the ability to allow users to search and browse for pages that represent entities, more concretely topics, item types, persons, organisations and places. Each such entity page will include basic information about the entity (in multiple languages), other entities related to it and display items in Europeana related to the entity (e.g. items about a topic or created by a person).

Advanced image search

A feature in development during DSI-2 is the ability for users to search for images using another image (in Europeana or uploaded by the user) as the starting point and finding the images similar to it.

User contributed content

A feature in development during DSI-2 is the ability for users to upload stories and content to Europeana. This feature will first become available for the first world war theme (Europeana 1914-1918) and will be developed to be a feature that can be applied to select themes only.

⁶ Featuring e.g. partners, events, partner mobile apps, etc.

⁷ For example: Europeana Fashion has accounts on Pinterest, Instagram and Tumblr, and Europeana Sounds on SoundCloud

3. Management of Thematic Collections

The following paragraphs indicate existing good practice as a guideline for the management of Thematic Collections, based on the experience of the Europeana Foundation and its current Thematic Collections partners.

Resource requirements

It is estimated that a group of partners who wish to set up and run a Thematic Collection will need to dedicate a minimum of 1 FTE for the management, curation, editorial and content marketing and data management. However, 2-3 FTEs would be recommended.

Business case

A Thematic Collection connects demand for cultural content with supply, via a platform provided by Europeana and 3rd-party platforms. Partners should gather and analyse information on the use of the Thematic Collection enabling them to deliver a post project business case.

The generic [Business model canvas](#) can serve as a starting point and can become much more concrete (specific data partners, specific user groups/personas, specific staff, specific revenue streams, etc.) for a specific Thematic Collection.

Core roles and responsibilities per Thematic Collection

Advisory Board - generally professionals and experts in the thematic area able to activate both supply and demand for the collection and to direct the editorial of the site.

Collections Manager - responsible for the advisory board and relationship with Europeana Collections, the financial viability of the Thematic Collection and the publishing chain from acquiring content, enabling its ingestion via the Europeana Platform to its display and marketing via the Thematic Collection.

Data Manager - able to advise contributing organisations on the quality improvement and compliance of their data with the [Europeana Publishing Framework](#) and [Data Model](#).

Marketing officers - promote the Thematic Collection to the targeted audience and responsible for its usage.

Editors/Curators - responsible for the keeping the content of the site refreshed and relevant.

Appendix

Themes in production or development

Europeana Art History

Europeana Music

Europeana Fashion

Europeana Newspapers

Europeana 1914-1918

Europeana Photography