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Europeana Local

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*e**Content**plus*

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a multiannual Community programme to make digital content in Europe more accessible, usable and exploitable.

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2 Project Objectives

EuropeanaLocal has set out to put in place an infrastructure that will continue to increase the content available to Europeana, specifically by instigating and demonstrating the contribution to be made by content sourced from cultural institutions (archives, libraries and museums) **at local and regional level**. At the same time, the project has sought to enhance the skills, expertise and motivation required to support local institutions to do this throughout Europe.

Over its three year duration, this Best Practice Network has acted to improve the interoperability of the digital content held by regional and local institutions and make it accessible through the Europeana service and in principle to other services, helping establish a network of OAI-PMH compliant repositories that are highly interoperable with Europeana.

Europeana Local has sought to work with Europeana to establish efficient and sustainable processes through which local institutions can easily make their content available during and after the project, adopting and promoting the use of Europeana infrastructures, tools and standards, as specifications have emerged, especially OAI-PMH repositories and Europeana's metadata application profiles initially, moving forward to its semantic-oriented approaches later.

3 Consortium

The Europeana Local consortium established in order to bring about successful networking of this kind included:

- A financial co-ordinator (Sogn og Fjordane)

- A project manager/scientific co-ordinator and experienced dissemination leader with responsibility for development and maintenance of the project information service and website (MDR Partners).

- Europeana Foundation, which acted as technical, standards and interoperability co-ordinator.

- Two technical partners (Asplan Viak from Norway and EEA from the Slovak Republic) with specific, relevant areas of expertise, to provide ongoing support and training for partners from local and regional organisations, in accordance with existing level of skills, knowledge and experience, in order to enable them to install and operate the necessary Europeana-defined tools, such as those for repository software, metadata mapping and vocabulary transformation.

- One large municipal, regional or national level representative in each EU Member State, able to provide a substantial body of digital content metadata from museums, archives and libraries, to demonstrate appropriate content use policies and intentions and a capacity to implement the architecture and tools defined by Europeana Local. Where necessary this country representative has guaranteed the association of other content holders necessary to provide a sufficient critical mass of digitised cultural content. A full list of partners can be found at:

    http://www.europeanalocal.eu/eng/About/Partners

Where they existed, national or regional aggregators which incorporated local and regional content were selected in this role. However, at the beginning of the project, this was the case in a minority of Member States. Elsewhere, a region, municipality or institution in each country was identified as the national consortium partner, according criteria which included access to a substantial pre-identified corpora of already digitised content sourced from across the museums, archives and libraries sectors and held on the web or in machine-readable databases, content management systems and repositories.

4   Project Results/Achievements

Europeana Local achieved a considerable success in having over 3.4 million items ingested by Europeana for its 'Rhine release' in summer 2010. This figure fluctuated at around 24-33% of all the content accessible through in Europeana during the period of intensive Rhine-related ingestion. Europeana Local's contribution was thus instrumental in enabling Europeana to exceed its own target of 10 million items for this release.

By the end of the project, approaching 6 million items had been made available for ingestion from a total of 19 million in Europeana in all.

At the outset of the work, partners were asked to reconfirm how many individual content providers (cultural institutions) they were involving by means of a content survey. The 26 responding partners identified 379 content providers in total (or a quotient of 14.6 per partner). This number included: 122 libraries, 37 museums and 17 archives. However, the largest category (203), were designated 'other' and represented local collection holders such as church councils or local history Associations

By the end of the project a further 403 content providers (112 libraries, 186 museums, 19 archives, 86 other).had been brought into the Europeana's network, representing over 700 institutional content providers in all, becoming involved as a result of Europeana Local. .

However, Europeana naturally wishes to harvest metadata from a manageable number of aggregations across Europe, rather than the several thousand individual repositories which would be needed to provide representative coverage of Europe's regions and localities. The mobilisation of infrastructure brought about by Europeana Local had a very significant impact in this direction.

Most notably, whereas there were nine member states in which no such aggregation existed at the beginning of the project period, there were no such instances by the end. This improvement can be set alongside an increase from 2 to 6 in the number of countries where a national aggregator had expressed the intention to establish a service including most or all regional and local content, in addition to an increase from 4 to 5 in the number of countries already running such a service.

5   Target Users & their Needs

The main target user groups for Europeana Local were:

- Content providers, digital collection managers and aggregators of cultural content from local and regional institutions jn all Member States , who needed to establish sustainable methods by which to make their content available to Europeana and for wider exposure to users

- European and national policy makers who wished to see Europeana incorporate a critical mass of content and provide successful services based on that.

- Regional and local policy makers who wished to promote their region and its heritage to audiences for tourism, education and research of all kinds.

- End users such as researchers at academic and personal level, students and teachers, business people, tourists and visitors who sought easy and reliable access to more content in their field of interest, especially those with a geographical or thematic interest in the regions and localities of Europe. Europeana Local identified a demographically-representative user group to test this premise.

Partners in Europeana Local faced a variety of technical and organisational challenges including:

- those associated with OAI-PMH infrastructure or other hardware/software
- complying with Europeana metadata and standards
- availability of qualified staff
- finance
- copyright/IPR issues
- issues related to the 'politics of aggregation' or domain relationships

Asked, in the course of the project's evaluation work, to indicate to what extent these issues have been resolved within the framework of Europeana Local, responding partners indicated that: whereas most technical challenges had been resolved through the training and guidance available, more underlying systemic problems such as finance and staff availability remained an issue:

6   Underlying Content

The content made available by the Europeana Local network has added substantial value to Europeana and its users, by:

- greatly expanding and enriching the geographic and thematic range of freely available and accessible content to be found by users through the Europeana portal, including items and collections of high cultural value ('treasures') held at local or regional level;
- specific local collections held by libraries, museums and archives, local sound and film archives;
- public records held by archives
- material relevant to local history from less formal cultural associations and bodies.

7   Summary of Activities

The sequence of activities carried out within the Europeana Local process involved:

- <u>A Metadata survey and content analysis</u>. A relatively brief phase of necessary survey work to determine the range of available content and metadata schema and approaches, harvesting activities and repository aggregation levels in use in the participating museums, archives, libraries and other cultural content holders at local and regional level;
- <u>A training and knowledge transfer process</u>, in order to make it easier for institutions at local and regional levels to contribute their content to Europeana. Two series of training workshops were organised in a number of European locations to share experiences, good practices and problems encountered throughout the process of implementing OAI-PMH metadata harvesting infrastructure and the Europeana Semantic Elements (ESE) metadata profile in partner collection management systems, familiarise participants with current developments in Europeana and to look at semantic web and content enrichment opportunities. .A Technical Guidance toolkit manual was made available together with an online help desk service provided by the two technical partners, who divided their support equally between two geographic 'sections' of Europe;

- Mapping and normalisation A strong base of knowledge was gained through the preparatory work carried out in the first year of Europeana Local and the subsequent installation and population with metadata and testing of the repository software selected in each location. By the end of the first year, the great majority of Europeana Local partners were able to build on this base by mapping the elements from the metadata formats in use locally to the ESE. A normalisation process was then carried out by Europeana to enable machine readability. Guidelines on metadata and normalisation were produced by the Europeana office to assist content providers with the preparation of their data, explaining in more detail the use of the elements and the mapping process. In undertaking this work, partners were able to use a 'Content Checker' tool provided by Europeana, allowing them to search, browse and validate their data as if they were using Europeana itself: Europeana Local was the first project to make use of this tool and in this way acted as a 'test bed' for Europeana and the other Europeana related projects;

- Content harvesting and ingestion. The second year saw the launching of the main implementation phase of the project according to a timetable and plan established as part of the project's technical workshops. By about the end of the first half of 2010, content had been harvested by Europeana from some 20 of the partner countries, with most of the remainder coming on stream during the rest of 2010. Many of the partners have continued to make available new content for subsequent ingestion as Europeana Local gained momentum among content providers in each country;

- Dissemination and awareness raising was a vital component of the work of EuropeanaLocal. Key mechanisms for understanding and participating in Europeana, such as the Aggregator Handbook4 and the Public Domain Charter were actively promoted to its constituency. A project website www.europeanalocal.eu was established and continuously developed in line with Europeana branding and design guidelines. This was underpinned by a substantial database of stakeholders for content distribution. However the key activity and focus for much of Europeana Local resources in the third year of the project involved the organisation of national meetings in each participating country in which Europeana representatives were also frequently involved. These were often high profile events in which many actors players in the cultural heritage sector participated. A full set of reports from these meetings is available on the website. Europeana Local partners have also participated in a number of national and international events to promote their experiences more widely;

- End users have been involved in the validation of the work of EuropeanaLocal through the establishment of a user testing group in each partner region. These were called upon to carry out structured usability testing of Europeana specifications and interfaces at various key stages of the project;

- Evaluation and progress monitoring.Tools were developed to assess the quantity of content at various stages in the 'pipeline' to Europeana and used to monitor progress on this front. A study to assess the impact of EuropeanaLocal on users and content providers (D6.3) was designed and implemented during the final four months of the project.

8   Impact & Sustainability

In all, Europeana Local was a pioneering satellite project within the Europeana 'family'. The following summarises its main areas of impact:

- the first project 'satellite' project to deliver data to the Europeana prototype in December 2009 and the first to map its data to ESE and to use the Content Checker;

- played a key role in helping to define the optimal workflows for a range of different types of provider;

- currently still the leading contributor of content to Europeana, demonstrating the important contribution to be made by local and regional institutions;

- an important contributor strategy and awareness for Europeana across the Member States , helping Europeana to achieve a better understanding of the aggregation landscape across Europe and the needs of content providers: smaller content providers have been enabled to join a regional or national initiative and to distribute their data on a European level;

- helped Europeana to better understand its audience, through its engagement of user test groups and extensive user testing work and adapt to their needs;

- an active and influential promoter of national aggregations, leveraging the potential of a 'bottom up' approach through Europe's myriad local cultural institutions;

- a provider of input and feedback in support of the development of practical Europeana tools, documentation and guidelines for content providers and aggregators;

- 25% of the organisations involved in the Europeana Open Linked Data pilot exercise were Europeana Local partners;

- through its representation and mobilisation of content contribution in 27 countries it has brought about an improvement in the geographical representation of content in Europeana; by April 2011 16 countries contributed more than 1% of the total content. In some cases, such as Spain, Poland, Malta, Bulgaria and Latvia, over 90% of that content was contributed by the content providers of Europeana Local.

Sustainability

Through this work, Europeana Local has provided Europeana to sustain and build upon the contribution of local and regional cultural institutions and for moving towards effective representation in Europeana of all of Europe's regions and localities. An important vehicle for maintaining momentum will be the Council of Content Providers and aggregators (CCPA) in which Europeana Local partners are actively involved, which in turn provides a substantial opportunity to influence national digitisation and aggregation strategies and stakeholders.

9   Further Information

A video promoting Europeana Local results is freely available from the website at:
http://www.europeanalocal.eu/