

# DELIVERABLE

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**Project Title:** Europeana Collections 1914-1918: Remembering the First World War – a digital collection of outstanding sources from European national libraries

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## D4.9 Launch/exhibition reports Brussels

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**Contributions:**

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Dissemination Level		
P	Public	x
C	Confidential, only for members of the consortium and the Commission Services	

## Revision History

Revision	Date	Author	Organisation	Description

**Statement of originality:**

This deliverable contains original unpublished work except where clearly indicated otherwise. Acknowledgement of previously published material and of the work of others has been made through appropriate citation, quotation or both.

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## 1. Executive Summary

At the end of Europeana Collections 1914-18, four of the contributing libraries mounted exhibitions/launch events in their institutions.

The following chapters detail the activities in Brussels.

Due to the programming cycles of some of the libraries, it was not possible to hold all of the exhibitions during the period of the funded project; however, where the exhibition has not opened yet in order to coincide better with European commemorations of the War in August and November 2014, contributors have included details of the scope of the exhibitions, and plans/designs.

## 2. Exhibition at KBR, Brussels

### 2.1 Aims/concept of the exhibition

The 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1914, the German invasion hits Belgium with a terrible shock. Since 1839 its neutrality had guaranteed peace. This ends abruptly in the summer of 1914.

The Royal Archives, the SOMA and the Royal Library of Belgium offer a day to day reconstruction of the chaotic weeks during the summer and fall of 1914. Visitors will be able to learn about these traumatic events based upon official records, written press and personal testimonies. Over 14.000 of these records were digitised in the framework of the Europeana Collections 1914-1918 project. These documents form the backbone of the exhibition, in their original form or adapted into animated film or touch screen applications throughout the exhibition.

But the expo aims higher: at the outbreak of World War One the burgeoning mass-media witnessed one of their first worldwide highlights. Which providers of information were available and how reliable were they in 1914? Within three generations we witnessed an explosive increase in amount, shape and speed of transmission of information. Radio, TV, internet, social media radically changed the coverage of war. These themes provide the exhibition a universal and contemporary dimension that will surpass the mere historical point of view.

Within the communication, where the Royal Library primarily focuses on students and secondary schools, a 'special blogpost' is planned for October concerning the collaboration with the Europeana projects and the exhibition.

The exhibition will be available in Dutch, French and English

Admission will be free

### 2.2 Venue & Date

**11.09.2014-28.02.2015**

Royal Library of Belgium

Kunstberg – 1000 Brussels

[www.kbr.be](http://www.kbr.be)

[www.shock1914.be](http://www.shock1914.be) (under construction)

+32(0)2 519 53 11

Monday till Saturday: 09.00-17.00

Closed on Sundays and public holidays and from 25 till 31.12.2014

Check for regular updates:

[www.kbr.be](http://www.kbr.be)

[www.shock1914.be](http://www.shock1914.be) (under construction)

#### How to reach ?

Brussels Airport (15 min.)

Train: Centraal Station (5 min.)

Tram: 92-94 (Koningsplein) (5 min.)

Bus: 29-38-63-66-71-65-86 (Centraal Station) of 27-95-38-71 (Koningsplein)



## 2.3 Reviews, reports, publicity

The exhibition will open in September 2014.

## 2.4 Structure / Images

### *Mass, Media and War*

The exhibition opens with an animated film which explains to the visitor the important role of the press as the fourth power on the eve of the First World War. After a short and general overview of the media 'explosion' during the 20<sup>th</sup> century the film takes the visitor back to the beginning where the written press at its highpoint played an important role in forging the public opinion. It was Von Buhlow himself who stated in 1909 that: "*most conflicts in the World in the past decades did not start out of Royal ambitions or governmental initiative but out of public agitation that swept away parliament and legislative power through the media.*"

He may or may not have been right, but what was certain at the eve of the First World War was that public opinion was dictated through the written press thanks to democratisation, industrial innovation and improving life standards. Mass media were able to reach more people worldwide, photo's could vividly and irrefutably 'proof' the stories and rumours and elected officials and governments had every reason to keep public opinion at their best interest.

In the opening scene of the exhibition this film takes a close look at this relation and at impact of the written press and media in general at the eve of the First World War, in Europe and especially in Belgium.



*The war came as a shock*

The exhibition continues in the hall towards the main exhibition space. The visitor learns in this hall about the historical facts during the summer of 1914 through five historical shocks that *shook* the public opinion in Belgium:

1. Spirit of August
2. Invasion of Belgium
3. Atrocities by the German army towards civilians
4. Germany as a cultural nation
5. Panic and refugees



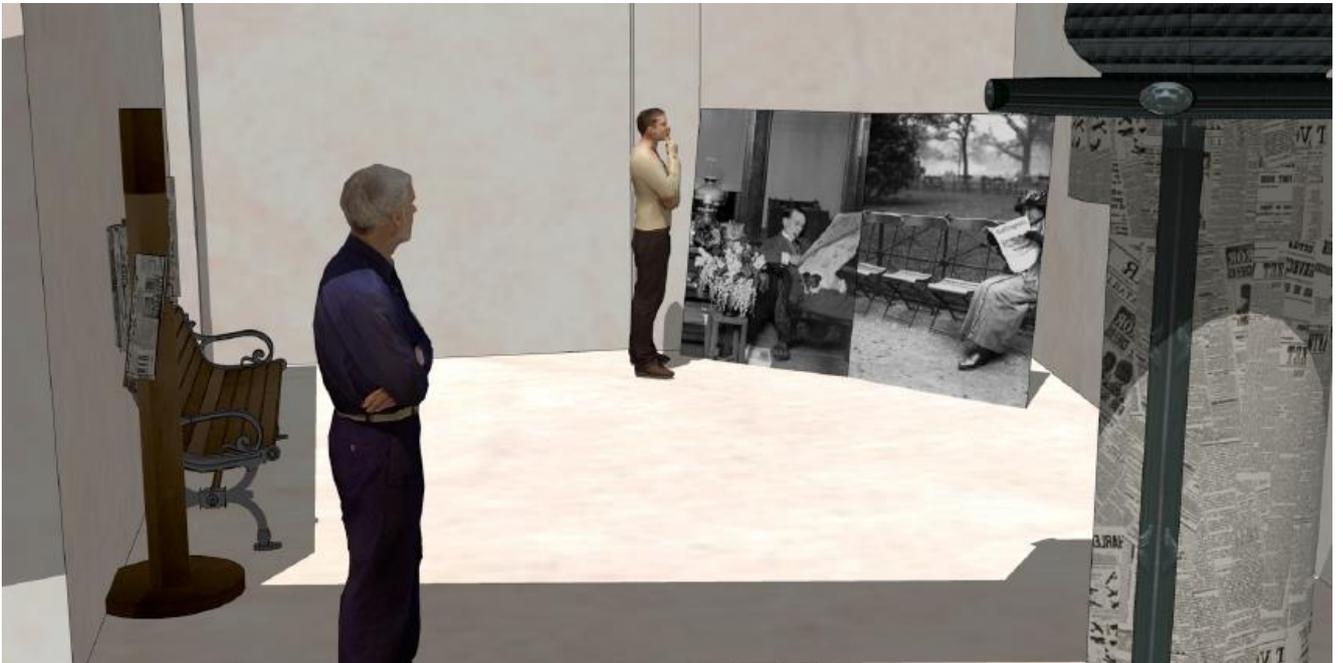
Original documents and objects help to illustrate the five panels on which the historical events are explained. Sound and image evoke in this part of the exhibition the shocks that introduced the war to the Belgian population and gave Belgium its international status as martyr nation.



### *Witnesses tell their story*

In the next two rooms the visitors enter the main body of the exhibition. In the first of these two rooms the exhibition focusses on how the population reacted on these *Shocks*. Throughout witness reports from Liège, Brussels and Antwerp the exhibition analyses the emotions of the population. Five emotions make out the thread: **indifference, patriotism, fear, panic and hope**.

These emotions are being illustrated by newspaper articles, posters, journals, photos and original postcards. Visitors can listen to testimonies; look at animated films that explain the events in the three cities.



### *Which impact had the media on these events?*

After experiencing the emotions that the Belgian population endured during the first weeks of the war the visitors are being introduced in the fourth room on what role the media played in creating this atmosphere, we found out four theme's that correspond with the emotions.

1. July crisis/indifference
2. Chaos and rumours/ fear and panic
3. Propaganda, film and video/ hope, patriotism
4. Censure, oppression



### *Newsroom*

In the last room we challenge the visitor to look beyond the historical facts and ask to reflect on the baseline *what if war breaks out tomorrow?* Four historical shocks from the 20<sup>th</sup> century are being illustrated through the eyes of journalists. A newsroom from 1940, at the beginning of the Second World War, one from the Vietnam War, a journalist at the Berlin wall in November 1989 and one at the twin towers in the early morning on 9/11 2001 show the visitors the evolution in mass media.

