

EUROPEANA – GROUNDBREAKING COLLABORATION

REVY talks to Jill Cousins, executive director of EUROPEANA, about the status of this groundbreaking collaboration between cultural institutions from all over Europe, lobbying in Brussels and the problems surrounding orphan works and the proposed directive.

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REVY: – What is the status of Europeana today?

JC: We are going in the right direction, but not quite there yet. As of June 2012 we have 23 million records (ie. metadata records) with access to at least 23 million digital objects. At the moment traffic is 4.7 million hits per year. We are starting to look more at creating thematic access to Europeana – e.g. the online digital exhibition about the First World War brings together a lot of objects, stories and items from the general public. This is the result of WW1 content digitized by our cultural heritage institutions but also the result of family history road shows across Europe on the theme. As well as giving an archive of material that was really otherwise hidden away it can bring generations together and in that way Europeana is also a lot about contributing to the European inclusion agenda. So it's both a question of collecting and storing data and objects, and also about presenting data in a certain way.

The whole Europeana concept is not about creating a destination site in Europeana.eu but about distributing the aggregated data into other systems, mobile applications and so forth so that the content can be used in many different ways and sustain different ways of looking at the material – e.g. in higher education and schools. The Europeana Licensing Framework contains an essential tool for this purpose, the Data Exchange Agreement, adopted 1. January 2012 – this agreement asks data providers and aggregators to deliver their metadata under a CC0, Universal Public Domain license. The metadata must include some basic mandatory fields, such as a labeling of the rights of the content itself, and a link pointing to the digital object at the provider's website.

To aid discovery providers are requested to provide a thumbnail image but this keeps the rights of the original item, so if that was under copyright so should the thumbnail be. The Europeana Licensing Framework covers the terms for re-use on other platforms/databases of the metadata, but by making the metadata CC0, providers are allowing its reuse anywhere for anything and thus improving discoverability of their content. The content providers have the responsibility for ensuring that the data is rights cleared for reuse. By June of

2012 about 17 million items in Europeana are covered by the data exchange agreement and the full data set will be released as open data on the 1 September 2012. Access to this data is open for both commercial and non-commercial information providers, but they are asked to respect the use guidelines, which include attribution.

REVY: How about ownership – who at the end of the day owns Europeana?

JC: The general public does! The basis for Europeana is public spending – both at the European and national level. At the moment we compete for EU project funding and ask Ministries of Culture and Education across the European Union to provide us with the necessary matching funds. Most EU projects are funded to the tune of 80%, requiring the other additional 20% to come from the receiving institutions funds together with any overhead needed. We are hoping to be funded, as a Core Platform, under the Connecting Europe Facility (being negotiated) which aims to strengthen, among other things, ICT and digital networks.

We are looking to support the whole ecosystem around digital libraries across Europe, which accounts for 30 million euros per year at the moment. This includes projects such as EUScreen, APeX, European Film Gateway, D2ME as well as Europeana Awareness. If the CEF goes through we should have an operating grant from 2014 until 2020.

The Europeana Foundation's Board is made up of 17 institutional members (including LIBER) and 6 elected European Network Officers. The Board appoints an Executive Committee with 8 members. under the chair of Bruno Racine from the French National Library.

REVY: Has there been a change of direction or strategy away from one single access point to a more strategic focus on content distribution over the last couple of years?

JC: No, not really. This has always been the strategy, but in the beginning it was crucial to build a critical mass of content, so this was the main task at the start of Europeana – and then move on to distributing the resources to others – the four words that make up the Europeana thinking are aggregation, distribution, engagement and facilitation.

REVY: We've talked a bit about the finances of Europeana, but of course there are many other challenges, one of which, not least, is copyright. Europeana has joined forces with some other organisations under the banner Informations Sans Frontières (ISF). Can you tell us a little about this alliance and how it came about?

JC: Well, it's fairly clear that the publishing industry and other rights holders are good at lobbying at the European level, and some

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Image available in Europeana as part of the 1914-1918 project

library sector organizations felt this very much with the term extension for performance rights (adopted September 2011), which brought home how the views of the rights holders and their business models seem to resonate in Brussels, and it seemed that the copyright message has been very much a one way message. The first suggestion for an alliance was between LIBER, OSI (Open Source Initiative), EBLIDA and GOOGLE – We felt that such an alliance could be very difficult in PR terms so in the end Europeana replaced GOOGLE. I don't think it would have been very sensible to be that closely related to GOOGLE considering the level of mistrust from the rights holders towards GOOGLE's digitisation projects. The FEP (Federation of European Publishers) has been uncomfortable about this alliance and the how this plays with its position in the Europeana Foundation Board, so we are trying to establish guidelines for how to work with situations like this where there are legitimate differences of opinion between organisations representing rights holders and those representing different cultural sectors and institutions. Can we as a democratic organization agree to differ on certain issues and take the majority position. It is important in the eyes of many of our other members that we defend our right to lobby.

REVY: Without doubt I would think the proposed orphan works directive is one of the major issues being addressed by the ISF. The original proposal from the Commission looked sensible, but a number of the changes proposed in parliamentary committee are quite problematic?

JC: Yes, if the directive can't give the institutions legal certainty for the digitisation of orphan works then it's not what they want or wished for from the orphan works legislation. They are also concerned about the concept of remuneration for past use – where if a rights holder appears, say, ten years after a work has been made available to the

public then he or she would be entitled to economic compensation. This creates financial uncertainty for cultural institutions making their heritage collections available to the general public.

REVY: A tool to identify orphan works and to avoid orphan works in the future is the ARROW database which to some extent is mentioned indirectly in the proposed directive. Is this the answer to the orphan works challenge?

JC: There is certainly nothing wrong with the idea, but I don't think it's the whole answer to be sure. If there is one thing we can be certain of, it's that defining technical requirements that stretch into the future is an almost impossible task and therefore we are recommending not to define over-elaborate technical requirements for record-keeping. ●

About EUROPEANA

For users it is a single access point to millions of books, paintings, films, museum objects and archival records that have been digitised throughout Europe. It is an authoritative source of information coming from European cultural and scientific institutions.

For heritage institutions Europeana is an opportunity to reach out to more users, increase their web traffic, enhance their users' experience and build new partnerships.

For professionals in the heritage sector it is a platform for knowledge exchange between librarians, curators, archivists and the creative industries.