

COMMUNIA Kick-off meeting, Turin, Italy, 28 September 2007

By Carmen Morlon, EBLIDA EU Information Officer

On Friday I attended, on behalf of EBLIDA, the COMMUNIA kick-off meeting, which aimed at introducing the project and presenting its management team. It was a great opportunity to meet the members of the COMMUNIA Network and to exchange views on the organisation of workshops and conferences and in particular, on the Working Groups.

What is COMMUNIA?

COMMUNIA is the European Thematic Network on the Public Domain in the Digital Age, funded under the eContent *plus* programme. It aims at building a network of organisations to act as a European single point of reference for high-level policy on issues related to the public domain in the digital environment.

Within 36 months, the COMMUNIA Network will seek to identify current practices on the digital public domain; gather facts and figures and conduct theoretical analysis in order to propose policy strategies on a number of topics, primarily on the public domain in its strictest sense, Open Access and orphan works. Related topics such as alternative forms of licensing for creative material will also be analysed. Many of the topics are in fact wider in scope and refer to copyright and the management of IPR.

The idea is to produce a set of policy guidelines to help public and private stakeholders at all levels understand the role of the digital public domain and of its potential for cultural, economic, and scientific and technological development.

Who is COMMUNIA?

The COMMUNIA Network will bring together 36 organisations from Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, the Netherlands and the UK as well as Croatia, Macedonia, Switzerland, Brazil and the US.

Well-known 'umbrella organisations' such as BEUC, CO-DATA, *Creative Commons* and EBLIDA will also participate in the Network from the start. It is intended to have 50 members (organisations) by the end of the project.

How will COMMUNIA achieve results?

To achieve its goals and outcomes, six Working Packages (WP) and Five Working Groups (WG) have been foreseen under COMMUNIA.

WP 1 and WP 5 will handle the daily management, the extension of the network, the organisation of workshops and conferences and the making of the strategic guidelines. WP 2 will focus on dissemination and awareness activities such as a web-based portal, the launch of a theme-specific academic journal on the digital public domain (subject to a feasibility study) and a book on the proceedings. WP 3 and WP 4 will deal, in that order, with the organisation of three European conferences and nine open workshops. WP 6 will produce a map of existing and prospective 'excellence centres' that focus on digital public domain and related issues in order to produce a best-practices guide for such centres and WP 7 will perform assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the activities.

To ensure that all issues of potential interest are covered, the members have organised themselves into WG. At the kick-off meeting, the following WG were proposed: WG 1 (Education and scientific research), WG 2 (Technology issues), WG 3 (Libraries and archives), WG 4 (Economic analysis and new business paradigms) and WG 5 (the public sphere). As part of WG 3 and 5, EBLIDA will work, amongst others, with EEAR, ICM, IIL, KL, Luxcommons, Minciu Sodas, NEUMANN, POLITO, St. Gallen, UB and UPC.

Congratulations to our new-born Network!

With the NAPLE Forum in Spain By Andrew Cranfield, EBLIDA Director

On the 26th and 27th of September EBLIDA's President, Gerald Leitner and Director, Andrew Cranfield, attended as guests the 4th NAPLE Conference entitled "Digital Resources in Public Libraries". Two days of stimulating presentations and the possibility to meet colleagues from European national library authorities and other government agencies ensued.

After an opening address by the Spanish Minister of Culture, Cesar Antonio Molina, Mr. Jens Thorhauge of the Danish Library Agency addressed the issues of digital library services for children. There is little doubt that the role of children's libraries needs to be strengthened if we are to reach out to the new generation and there is urgency in harnessing new technologies and new discourses for this user group. Thorhauge underlined the importance of creating participation and dialogue between the libraries and children to ensure personal development and to create synergy and value between the different kinds of library services. He also talked about the need for a change in staff attitudes to new technological developments and underlined the importance of continuing professional de-

velopment in the work place.

Chris Batt from the MLA (Museums, Libraries, Archives) in the UK also took up this theme and the need to coordinate access to digital and online resources at the national level – the new generation thinks that “if it’s not on the web, it doesn’t exist.” We need to ensure that libraries are at the heart of public policy and to advocate for libraries in economic terms, i.e. how much does investment in the library sector bring to society at large.

Many presentations showed how much work is being done in the library, public and academic, to create digital content and to facilitate access to these resources, including a database of Spanish Public Library buildings, information about Ireland at <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/> (including a digital archive of the Irish Times), digital libraries in the Czech Republic and community resources at the Taragona Public Library in Spain. All these examples proved that there are many interesting and valid projects being completed in Europe, but that it is also probably necessary to gain a detailed and analytical overview of what is happening in the public library sector in Europe in order to formulate strategies and direction at the European level.

Jan Braeckman from the Vlaams Centrum voor Openbare Bibliotheken vzw in Belgium concluded in his presentation that new media brings new users, there has to be a relevant mass of content and that there is a shift from the provider to consumer.

With focus on the i2010 initiative and the European Digital Library many delegates felt that the emphasis was very much on the issues of digitization for preservation rather than on access and for public libraries this is obviously of paramount importance in order to fulfill our role as public disseminators. EBLIDA is fully aware of this challenge and in our discussions with right holders we underline the importance of not creating “dark archives” and thereby locking up relevant information for years to come.

Many of the challenges and strategies for NAPLE and EBLIDA are common and we hope to strengthen areas of cooperation in the near future, something on which the NAPLE Board and EBLIDA representatives fully agreed upon.

More information about NAPLE Forum, including the NAPLE newsletter, can be found at:
<http://www.naple.info/>.

Laying the foundations for the European Digital Library *Press Release of 19 September 2007*

A project has begun to bring the European heritage online through a single portal.

Seventy senior managers and technical experts from museums, archives, audio-visual collections and libraries across Europe came together to plan the European Digital Library. The meeting took place at the National Library of the Netherlands.

The initiative stems from the call by Viviane Reding, the European Commissioner for Information Society and Media to ‘make the wealth of material in Europe’s libraries, museums and archives accessible to all’.

This reflects growing user interest in major digitisation projects that are creating large-scale online heritage resources. However, this is the first initiative to focus on providing a multilingual interface to digital artefacts, texts and media from across the European heritage.

Such collaboration between the archival, library, audio-visual and museum domains on this scale is a significant new move. Claudia Dillmann, director of the Deutsches Filminstitut and President of the Association des Cinémathèques Européennes said ‘We recognise that researchers and people learning about European history and culture need to explore all sorts of media, including films, sounds, photos and papers. Their expectation of the internet is that it can give them integrated access to all these things. It’s vital that the different domains work together to collaborate on the technical solutions to enable research across different media.’

The project – the European Digital Library network (EDLnet) – runs for two years, and will develop a prototype that demonstrates proof of concept, bringing together content from some of Europe’s major cultural organisations. The project will be run by The European Library together with the National Library of the Netherlands.

The project will look at the political, human, technical and semantic issues that will contribute to the creation of an interoperable system able to access fully digitised content. It will invite feedback from different types of users in order to create a service that enriches the widest public and answers the needs of researchers, students, teachers and the creative industries.

EDLnet [<http://www.europeandigitallibrary.eu/edlnet/>] is an initiative developed following the European Commission’s recommendation on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material on 24 August 2006 [http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/digital_libraries/doc/recommendation/recommendation/en.pdf]. It is a Thematic Network funded under the eContentplus programme [http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/econtentplus/index_en.htm] as part of the i2010 policy. EDLnet builds on the success of The European Library [<http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/index.html>] a portal that enables people to search across 150 million titles, from 172 collections in 31 European national libraries. The European Library is a service of the Conference of European Libraries [<http://www.cenl.org/>].

Experts from Europe’s major heritage institutions (<http://www.europeandigitallibrary.eu/edlnet/about/partners.php>) will collaborate on the technical solutions and user-centred functionality. Contact J Purday on +31 (0)70 3140684 or by email at Jonathan.purday@theeuropeanlibrary.org for further information.