



These boots are made for walking Interview with Jill Cousins about Europeana

During the month of July, while much of the world seems to be on holiday, I managed to catch up with Jill Cousins, the executive director of the EDL foundation and asked her about the current status of Europeana. The first prototype has been launched and this has presented a number of challenges relating to the use and quality of metadata, where the quality of the metadata provided by the contributing institutions is very much the key to the usability of Europeana across different domains and different types of material and which makes thematic linking more difficult. By November 2008 Europeana will contain 6 million digital objects, far exceeding the original goal of 2 million objects by the end of 2008. With over 70 institutions contributing content the enthusiasm to make this work has been and will be one of the crucial elements for the success of Europeana. According to Jill Cousins one of the major challenges over the coming months will be to align the different expectations of both suppliers and users as to what Europeana can actually deliver in year one and it will take in the region of three to five years before we can talk about a fully operational Europeana, but let's remember, Jill adds, that even Google took a number of years before becoming the resource it is today.

Over the next two years it will be important to optimize the work flows, moving from manual to automatic work processes, making use of the semantic web and harvesting on a regular basis.

While the Europeana as a project is financed with funds from the European Community, the actual digitization of European cultural heritage has been left to the member states as laid out in the 2006 recommendation on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation from the European Commission which asks the member states to inform the Commission of action taken in response to the recommendation every two years starting in 2008. Jill Cousins said that it was often in the smaller member states that most progress had been made, naming Slovakia, Latvia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and The Netherlands as countries where national programmes have been developed.

The organization

The organization of the Europeana favours a horizontal rather than hierarchical approach, which can, at times, make the organizational structure and decision-making process somewhat hard to follow. The original idea for the EDL was conceived by the Conference of European Na-

tional Librarians (CENL) and the European Commission. The CENL had already established The European Library (TEL), which joined together the catalogues and some of the digitized material of many of the National libraries of Europe, allowing one to simultaneously search their collections. Today TEL is still financed by the CENL, while the infrastructure of Europeana is funded from the EU. However both portals use much of the same technology and the same staff. The EDL foundation, which is the legal body behind all new proposals, is a partner in many new pan European projects whose aim is to take develop and contribute to the framework of the Europeana. New projects with the involvement of the EDL foundation are, among others, Europeana Local, which will bring together more regional and local digital resources, Athena, will do the same for the museum sector and the European Film Gateway. Jill Cousins describes the organization of Europeana as a spider's web – a loose structure with the Foundation in the middle.

The Challenges

One of the major concerns and reasons for establishing a portal to European cultural heritage was the need to ensure that non-English material be made available and to ensure access to culturally diverse resources and to counter the hegemony for the English language on the net. As those who have just a small knowledge of the challenges of multi lingual access and searching knows this is no easy task and Jill Cousins sees this as one of the biggest challenges in realizing the Europeana dream.

Another topic is of course the whole question of copyright and how best to solve this issue in the digital age. At present nearly all the Europeana material is public domain and out of copyright, but this is of course something of a limitation and the "20th century black hole" should be avoided at all costs. At the European level stakeholders have worked together on issues of digital preservation, out-of-print works and orphan works to formulate and facilitate voluntary solutions for these types of materials, hopefully ensuring that materials of little or no economic value can be made available to the European user. For those materials that are still commercially viable and are made available by the publishing communities, Jill Cousins thinks that it is important to create new business and payment models so the users are able to gain access to these materials, though either institutions or end users will have to pay for this.

To have access to material and to avoid unnecessary duplication and confusion it is essential that materials can be identified through the use of persistent identifiers, which

means that the material in question has a unique identification to ensure that the material can be identified even if it is removed from its original location.

The users

For any large scale project such as this the million dollar question is, of course, who are the users. In one sense it's everyone, says Jill, but naturally there are some strong target groups, which we have identified such as academics, the educational sector and tourists. It is for groups such as these that one should adopt various more direct marketing strategies. However it is important not to see Europeana as a single access point to its content - ownership can be much broader and institutions will be allowed to reuse material for non-commercial purposes under some form of creative commons license. This is very much in keeping with the decentral thinking of Europeana – that the information need not only be accessible from a single access point, but should be available in other national and European data collections.

Long-term sustainability

While Europeana will receive funding in the coming years from various EU project funds, the question of long term sustainability remains, as at some stage the various stakeholders and content suppliers will have to adopt the ownership of Europeana and be prepared to take on the financial burden. Jill explained that much of the R&D being developed for Europeana is in many ways cutting edge technology, e.g. development of interoperability mechanisms and multi-lingual search facilities and these have a commercial value, which can help support the sustainability of Europeana.

Digitisation and national policies

I asked Jill about the role of the national associations in the development of digitization strategies in Europe and she was convinced that they should play an active part in the formulation of such policies – digitization and library policy in general. While it may be the national and research libraries, which have driven the main activities so far, it is essential that all types of libraries, including public libraries, offer access to and information about the cultural resources of Europe.

European Commission launches consultation on copyright in the knowledge economy

By Andrew Cranfield, EBLIDA Director

In the middle of July the European Commission published its Green Paper entitled "Copyright in the knowledge economy". The stated purpose of the Green Paper "is to foster a debate on how knowledge for research, science and education can best be disseminated in the online environment. The Green Paper aims to set out a number of issues connected with the role of copyright in the "knowledge economy" and intends to launch a consultation on these issues".

The Green Paper is certainly important for libraries and

archives as it focuses to a large extent on exceptions to exclusive rights as they are formulated in the INFO SOC directive from 2001. Not surprisingly the Green Paper underlines the need for a high level of copyright protection, given the importance of the publishing industry in Europe, but the paper does also reflect on the fact that copyright must also facilitate progress and innovation.

Essentially the Green Paper focuses on the exceptions and limitations most relevant for the creation and sustainability of a European knowledge economy. These are:

- ◆ The exception for the benefit of libraries and archives
- ◆ The exception allowing the dissemination of works for teaching and research purposes
- ◆ The exception for the benefit of people with a disability
- ◆ A possible exception for user-created content

All of these four areas are, undoubtedly, of importance for libraries and other public information providers and must be reconsidered in the light of the technological advances of the last decade.

In European copyright, harmonization has been the name of the game since the early 1990's, but, as so often noted before, this harmonization has not been satisfactorily achieved at the European level. This has a lot to do with the voluntary nature of the exhaustive limitations set out in the INFO SOC directive, leaving national law-makers the freedom to pick and choose from among 20 exceptions and limitations. This has led to a very different and complex situation in the member states when it comes to understanding what is and what is not allowed in the rights of reproduction and communication to the public.

The Green Paper address these issues and asks a number of relevant questions relating to, among other things, the question of whether there should be guidelines for contractual agreements, clarification on the question of format shifting, number of copies and mass digitization, orphan works, exceptions for those with reading disabilities, clarification for the exception for teaching/research as regards distance learning and lastly the question of user-created content in the context of added value and new creative works.

For EBLIDA the questions that the Green paper raises are highly relevant and address a crucial set of challenges for the library sector in the coming years.

The EBLIDA expert group on information law (EGIL) will of course give our response to the Commission Green Paper, but I would like to encourage all our members, not least the national associations, to respond separately to the Green Paper to ensure that the voice of libraries comes through loud and clear in Brussels.

For more information regarding the Green Paper please contact Andrew Cranfield, EBLIDA Director: cranfield@debibliotheken.nl or Toby Bainton, EBLIDA-EGIL Chair: toby.bainton@sconul.ac.uk.