

QUESTIONS FOR THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION "EUROPEANA - NEXT STEPS" TOGETHER WITH MODEL ANSWERS

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Questions and answers:

General

I am directing my response to the user perspective. All my comments therefore will be focused on usability issues in the context of the contemporary surfer in a Web 2.0 environment.

Question 1

Which orientations would you suggest for the future development of Europeana as a common access point to Europe's cultural heritage in the digital environment?

- 1.1 The advantage of harvesting and integrating digital content from museums, libraries, archives and audiovisual collections from every Member State means that due to the curatorial process that has already culled the quality assets from the more generic content, users who discover content draw on the institutional provenance that is embedded in these kinds of institutions. Therefore they are confident that resources they find in Europeana will resonate with the same measure of trust, credence and accuracy that these institutions clearly denote. Once this brand has been fully absorbed and appreciated by the online community, users will prefer a Europeana search over other digital libraries which might manage large-scale, catch-all collections that do not differentiate between accuracy over imprecision; meticulousness over sloppiness, and factuality over fictitiousness. My concern, therefore, would be with the ambitious steps still ahead of Europeana and an agenda that may priorities quantity over quality. I would argue that Europeana could lose its advantage over other digital libraries if it were to jeopardize its policy of the integration of digital objects that are not harvested with robust metadata or with objects that do not comply with professional description standards.

- 1.2 As Europeana broadens and deepens its institutional reach to and incorporates the full range of cultural and scientific heritage of Europe there needs to be mechanisms in place that amplify the difference kinds of content such as; monuments, architecture and the built environment, archaeological sites, social history institutions, university repositories and medical museums. In addition to the already broad mandate of museums, archives and libraries that formulate the foundation of the European library, additional content must be carefully structured so as not to confound the user with an excess of content. This may be accomplished by suggestions of thematic routes; content organised by speciality subjects; or hidden treasures that have been pre-configured.
This could guide users around the broad content while building on relations that have been built into the architecture through semantic association. In this way the wide range of cultural holdings could be fully integrated in to the whole

drawing on sign-posted pathways and spotlight thoroughfares. If users are left to their own devices to trawl the depths of the library without any guideline (other than the given categories of; texts, images, videos and sounds – or search categories such as; by language, country, date, provider, type) they would probably never discover the gems in the library or even worse, receive such a broad result in their search query that they in fact give up in despair as one does with a typical Google search. This would demand a curatorial role in the development of the library that sets up pre-defined journeys through the objects organised in thematic, associative or creative pathways. 'My Europeana' then could be filled with the highlights of the library much more easily and 'teach' the user how to search thematically across the library.

- 1.3 Europeana should delineate its borders in order to not dilute the coherency of its collections. Content that has its provenance outside of Europe can be associated in parallel platforms, drawing on the European semantic model and standards developed by Europeana to assure full interoperability. Future development could therefore encourage new synergies with the Russian Federation, South East Pacific Basin, or South America where Europeana becomes the exemplar, and fraternal platforms follow the Europeana model.

Question 2

Which features should be given priority in the further development of the site?

- 2.1 Rather than incorporating Europeana as a favourite site or expecting users to save subsets of content to users on their Web 2.0 profiles or personal spaces, the digital Library should use its platform as a springboard of innovation and creativity that is fully embedded inside social networks. This demands that the European Library does not visualise its contents as located outside of social networks and always one click away from the sites where 60% of surfers are spending their web time, but should promote its rich contents as the prime location of primary resources that can be drawn into synchronic and asynchronous projects and activities that inspire distributed creativity. Cultural interaction and production that crosses (European) geographic borders can inspire new forms of creativity and new kinds of real time interactions. The rich variety of cultural production that takes place locally can be amplified across geographic borders with impressive results; innovative visual and audio mixes can evolve into real-time production across European borders and serve to amplify the historic associations of European cultural heritage in a contemporary experience.
- 2.2 Once the European digital library is recognised by its users as a playground of creativity, users can draw directly on its in-built functionalities to experiment with innovative spaces. New platforms, driven by API's and interactive applications will facilitate innovation based on Europeana's quality content to inform, and motivate distributed creativity in academia, cultural production, and scientific research.
 - 2.2.1 Multilingualism has to remain a high priority. Rather than relying on on-the-fly translations, Europe has an excellent opportunity to harvest not only books, poetry, plays and musical scores in the original language, but can activate its

association of cultural institutions and the trained staff that work in them to identify official translations of primary recourses in other European languages. This will ensure quality control of cultural assets that have been endorsed by professionals across Europe and will assure coherency and a formalised structure that draws on Europeana's true assets; the professionals located in museums, libraries and archives across Europe.

Question 3

Has Europeana struck the right balance between making Europe's digitised cultural heritage searchable through a common entry point and at the same time giving visibility to the institutions that contribute the material, or should the material accessible through Europeana be presented in a more unified way?

- 3.1 The delicate balance between the comprehensive Europeana brand and the ability to maintain institutional integrity works in exactly the same way that Europe's cultural individuality as a federation of national states is maintained in the cultural whole. While enabling polyphonic voices to speak up; each in their own language and fully embedded in their own cultural heritage, Europe gives rise to a multifaceted mosaic of cultural identity drawing in all cultures and all nationalities into the coherent whole. Cultural and scientific institutions are also reflections of embedded cultural and scientific activities and need to be identified at source and easily traced back to source in generic searches with confidence. Should the link to individual institutions that have contributed their content into Europeana be blurred, or confounded, so is the cultural or national/professional distinctiveness of the content is lost in the melting pot of the supra-European identity. Maintaining local and national identity, as well as institutional integrity is both crucial and vital to the governance of Europeana so that the multilingual and multinational essence of Europe is not only maintained but also amplified.

Question 4

How should Europeana further develop its own autonomous identity?

- 4.1 The Europeana brand can only be clarified in apposition to what is NOT Europeana. Guidelines and definitions to the cultural heritage of Europe should be just one click away – which languages are recognised as official European languages, what kinds of institutions are hosted under the European brand. These guidelines should be clear both to authors of the library and to users and should serve to clarify the European Library's brand.
- 4.2 At the same time, Web 2.0 platforms that are built into Europeana should be fully branded at every level through IP identification as well as adherence to the Europeana guidelines. All web 2.0 creativity or secondary resources that do not comply with these guidelines can be welcome as a Europeana fraternal associate but can not be entered under the European umbrella (i.e. can not use the Europeana name or logo).

Question 5

Should there be minimum requirements for the content brought into Europeana by the contributing organisations (e.g. minimum viewing or use options)? If so, who should be responsible for defining and imposing these minimum requirements?

- 5.1 Users must be confident that when they query Europeana that they will be discovering professionally curated information, data and metadata. This means that they are reliant on Europeana's governing body to enforce minimum requirements for all content providers which should be defined by Europeana in consultation with content providers. By setting minimum standards, Europeana can not transfer responsibility out to the providers but must take direct responsibility to establish standards that are compliant with the current world standards for Library, Museum, Archive and Audiovisual materials. These standards are originally developed, updated and maintained by professional associations such as IFLA, IASA, ICA and ICOM and should be co-opted into Europeana which should actively determine and enforce these standards on all content providers as a prerequisite to entry into the digital library. Only with a top-down governance policy can Europeana facilitate cross-domain interoperability and be confident in delivering a seamless user experience. In order to maintaining quality control and to insure the long-term sustainability of digital objects, Europeana should require that the content providers take responsibility for their role in the sustainability of the library by supplying and maintaining a persistent identifier for each file uploaded into the platform.

Content for Europeana

Question 6

Which categories of content are so important for the users that Member States and their cultural institutions should be encouraged to make them available through Europeana? What measures can be taken to ensure the availability of these works through Europeana?

- 6.1 There is a certain tension between what users want and what the European Library is able to deliver and sustain. Clearly users want content that is qualitative and only one click away. Most studies now agree that users¹ and particularly online, native, (young) users are spending more time on social networks rather than the silos of Internet 1.0². If Europeana does not seamlessly interface in these spaces content will simply not be delivered to users where they are located and active. As stated above, Europeana should

¹ The share of adult internet users who have a profile on an online social network site has more than quadrupled in the past four years -- from 8% in 2005 to 35% now, according to the Pew Internet & American Life Project's December 2008 tracking survey <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/Adults-and-Social-Network-Websites.aspx>

² Overall, around 49 percent of Internet users are also using social network sites http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/twitter_use_up_among_internet_social_network_mobil.php.

develop its services as a Web 2.0 platform where primary resources are one click away from distributed creativity.

According to Nielsen Facebook not only actively reaches to 54.28% of users but engages them for approximately for much longer on the site than do other sites.

Top 10 U.S. Web Parent Companies, Home & Work September 2009

RANK	PARENT	UNIQUE AUDIENCE (000)	ACTIVE REACH %	TIME PER PERSON (HH:MM:SS)
1	GOOGLE	153,928	79.24	2:36:52
2	MICROSOFT	136,639	70.34	2:08:38
3	YAHOO!	134,688	69.33	3:08:28
4	FACEBOOK	105,449	54.28	5:24:38

<<http://en-us.nielsen.com/rankings/insights/rankings/internet>>

6.2 At the same time Europeana has a responsibility to its users to present and sustain the consensus of the European meta-narrative³ in addition to local and individual micro-narratives that convey pan-European historical perspectives. Giving prominence to quality content derived from Europe's shared history, would then serve to develop cultural identity from the perspective of a European collective. The European meta-narrative should be based on the traditional historic perspective that recalls Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Medieval, and Renaissance heritage up until modernity. This narrative could be built up and kept vital by the addition of continuous scholarly contributions that act within this communal perspective and would act to extend the narratives in contemporary terms. Parallel histories that create trajectories with the European meta-narrative would include those histories to include the Vikings, the Reformation, and the two world wars, etc. and should be woven into the historical architecture to ensure that pan-European searches produce pan-European content. Local histories and individual micro-narratives could then add to the richness of the European fabric but will not do so at the expense of the European meta-narrative. Translated into pragmatic terms, this would mean that users discover content that showcases European histories and culture and not run into endless images or audio recordings of meaningless content that is blocking up the quality of the critical mass of European objects that come from memory institutions and professional authorship.

6.3 Governments and Ministries should be directly involved in the governance policy and long term sustainability of the Digital Library. This burden of this ambitious undertaken should be shared equality by the member states under the auspices of the individual member nation states under the directorship of the ministries⁴. In this way European nation states may realise the added benefit of taking on an active role in shepherding the development of the European Library and stimulating local production; the documentation and digitalization of cultural heritage; and the fostering and productions of both

³ Europe From Wikipedia <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe>>

⁴ See for example Minerva EC <http://www.minervaeurope.org/> and Michael Europe <http://www.michael-culture.org>.

national and local content. Encouraging their local creative industries to take up the state-of-the-art technology would encourage and promote the optimization of new business models in e-commerce and m-commerce, as well as supporting local SMEs on the marketplace. These kinds of local cultural production would go a long way to reduce the “digital divide”: between the technology-empowered and technology-excluded communities. Local cultural production carried out by the cultural industries of each member nation, and would strengthen the participation of citizens through digital production and the direct management of their own cultural heritage.

Question 7

What is the best way to encourage cultural institutions and rightsholders to take into account cross-border access - including through Europeana - in their agreements on digitisation and dissemination of in-copyright material? Which legal or practical barriers to this cross-border access need to be addressed?

7.1 My only comment to this intensely complex area would be to state that there needs to be a decisive updating of EU Copyright law in the internet age. Here again, Europeana needs to be Europe's flagship in determining European IP policy and should be highly proactive in establishing IP standards rather than taking up a reactionary position. This is a golden opportunity that will not be repeated often in the future. If the European Digital Library governance can not resolve such complex issues then there is little hope for other actions lines to produce a more compelling proof of concept of IP resolution and pan-European cooperation.

7.2 From a user's perspective if meaningful content is not readily accessibly, reliable and inspirational, users will simply turn elsewhere. There will always be a need for school children to find answers for their homework; there will always be a need for scholarly communities to share their scientific results and exchange the latest information, as there will always be a desire for citizens from the European member states to be able to sense their national and Pan-European identities through readily available quality content. If Europeana is unable to resolve the IP issues in good time then all this potential will be sadly missed and along with this loss an irretrievable demise for the European community.

Question 10

What measures can be taken to ensure that cultural institutions make their digitised public domain material accessible and usable in the widest possible way on the Internet? Should there be minimum requirements for the way in which digitised public domain content is made available through Europeana?

10.1 Awareness-raising should take place among the institutions, their funders and other stakeholders under the guidance and support at a ministerial level, where ministries take a direct responsibility in the stimulation of their local creative industries, to revise revenues modules and crate new employment potential that such actions will stimulate.

Financing and governance

Question 11

Which financing model would reflect a fair distribution between Community funding, Member States' funding and private funding, taking into account that the aim of Europeana is to give the widest possible access to Europe's cultural heritage at a pan-European level? Could Europeana be financed solely by national cultural institutions or by private funding?

- 11.1 From the perspective of the end user, European citizens have a right to see their own cultural heritage and scientific achievements made available, first and foremost in their own language, and secondly made available across the world as they each take up their place in the member state fraternity of the European community. This enormous responsibility must be shouldered by all nation states across Europe and should be managed by the member states themselves in conjunction with the leading cultural specialists in the European Commission. Only a vibrant pan-European umbrella can take responsibility for the management of so many assets and only pan-European management can promise the long term sustainability of the European Digital Library.