Digital Cultural Heritage: Access and Re-use

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Cultural Heritage should be accessible to all. Digitisation possibilities and activities in the last decades took place in many cultural heritage institutions. This allows much wider access.

In the early 21st century an initiative was launched by six heads of state in Europe to make better and more widely known European cultural heritage by using digital means. Therefore the European Commission was asked to create a general digital cultural information tool that would allow access to digital European cultural heritage material on a broad scale and by large populations.

The European Commission invited representatives of relevant stakeholders from museums, libraries, media and record archives and the Member States of the European Union to develop a framework for such an initiative. The plan to establish Europeana (www.europeana.eu) as a digital platform was born. A first version went live in 2008. A group of Europeana related projects were called for and co-financed by the European Commission: EuropeanaFashion, EuropeanaNewspapers, Europeana1914-1918, Partage Plus (on Art Nouvau) etc. Through this projects and Europeana dissemination activities, experts from all relevant areas were invited to become involved. They were invited to become members of the Europeana Network Association (ENA). Representatives of this association became part of the Europeana Governing Board which also comprises representatives from European Cultural Heritage Associations or European branches of international Cultural Heritage Organization, e.g. ICOM Europe, CENL. Up to now Europeana is still funded on a project basis and efforts are undertaken to secure its operation on a permanent basis.

Following this European development, in several EU-Member States National digital cultural Heritage Portals have been established or are underway. In Germany, f.e., we have the DDB, die Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek (= German Digital Library, www.ddb.de).

Providing access at a central place is one of the aims of Europeana and also the national platforms, but also – dependent on the legal situation in the Member States – re-use should be possible. Two projects of the "Europeana universe" had a special

focus on that: Europeana Creative and EuropeanaSpace.

The presentation will sketch these developments in Europe and will particularly feature the results of the work which was undertaken in the EuropeanaSpace project to experiment and allow the development of creative re-use of digital cultural heritage.

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