Developing new partnerships through the Europeana Awareness Best Practice Network: Implementing Europeana in Europe's public libraries

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Background

Europe has an extensive network of public libraries. Up to date figures are not available but the latest reliable figures (from 2004) show that there were over 205,000 public library service points across Europe. This makes them uniquely well placed to reach out to and engage with the people in the communities they serve.

This is an interesting and testing time for public libraries as they face a combination of factors which together are having a negative impact on their traditional roles and activities but which also open up exciting opportunities for them and their staff to develop new services and activities for their users.

On the one hand they are facing:
– severe economic constraints;
– a shift away from print to digital publishing and *e-Books*, where online delivery is challenging and replacing traditional channels;
– a struggle to digitise their unique collections, especially local history collections;
– difficulty in knowing what to collect and preserve in an era when the amount of digitally created content has increased exponentially and now includes user generated content of various types as well as multiple media formats;
– unclear, unhelpful and as yet unresolved issues around IPR law and practice;
– decisions to face in the light of uncertainties about electronic legal deposit and the position of national and other libraries;

– demographic changes which alter customer demands for information – increasing numbers of older citizens and an increase in independent research by the 'citizen-scholar', in many cases associated with local or family history;

– changes in the information-seeking behaviour and expectations of customers as they are influenced by the development of new technologies and resources become available from alternative and new information providers via the Internet,

– a strong and perhaps conflicting demand for easy to use, personalised online services and resources;

– the emergence of new customer groups – organisations such as schools, colleges, businesses many of which will provide increasingly important channels for making library collections and services accessible to far more people than will ever be able to visit the libraries themselves;

– competition from online search services, commercial information providers, and Smartphone *Apps*;

– demands from governments and local authorities that public libraries meet topical political priorities;

– the problems of an ageing professional workforce and a need to re-skill to stay relevant in the digital era;

– and a need to continue to focus on their customers and service provision at a time when municipalities and library services increasingly find themselves facing organisational change and upheaval, often not of their own making.

However, it is also a time of unparalleled opportunities for libraries and librarians who are prepared to look beyond their traditional roles and experiment with new ways of interacting with and serving their communities as well as new methods of working and new tools.

Arguably, now is the time for librarians to stop focusing on managing their collections and start focusing on managing their activities so as to work with and support their various user communities. To move away from providing physical copies of books and other media and focus instead on providing a community space for people to engage with and interact with ideas and information and on giving people the tools and knowledge they need to manage their information and interaction in a sensible way.

Innovative and user focused libraries are already beginning to move in this direction and to play an important role in their communities by providing services such as: archiving the local communities in which they exist; acting as electronic 'outposts' of the central library – offering activities and services tailored to the needs of their local communities which might include:

– digital tablets and *e-Book* readers,

– book download centres,

– periodical centres,

– mini-theatres and performance/rehearsal space,

– gamer stations,

– tools of production such as: audio and video creation/ editing studios, pod cast and blogger studios, mash up consoles, graphic editing suites,

– search centres which allow users to find and interact with information in novel and user friendly ways;

– access to databases and subscription materials;

– educational materials and lifelong learning services;

– co-working spaces providing facilities to support freelancers and homeworkers; day care etc.

All this needs to be supported, promoted and mediated by trained and skilled library staff.

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As they seek to thrive in this environment, Europeana, as a leading supplier of digital content, stands out potentially an ideal partner for public libraries, and vice versa. Public libraries can and do act as important collection points for User Generated Content and are also well placed to reach out to and involve users through workshops, lessons on genealogy and how to use the new media and other services.

Within the Europeana Awareness Best Practice network, funded under the European Union IST-PSP programme, its Workpackage on *Developing New Partnerships* is seeking to identify a range of services based on Europeana which can be engineered to satisfy the interests and needs of public library users for a variety of purposes.

A core group of public libraries based in five countries (Denmark, Germany, Greece, Serbia and Spain) will define, pilot and test these services initially, followed by a period of roll out to the remainder of a network of 100 public libraries right across Europe.

First specification workshop in Madrid[1]

To commence this process, an international workshop was hosted by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture in Madrid during March 2012. The workshop began with an intensive input and discussion of ideas. The group then brainstormed issues for selection of a public library service and ranked them in priority order according to a set of defined criteria. The criteria identified included: legality, security, wide use, need, long-term value, effective use of Europeana content, cost –effectiveness. need for servicing or maintenance, simplicity, relevance to public libraries and promotion of creativity. The distribution of rankings was then assessed in order to determine a weighting for each of the criteria.

A list of candidate service descriptions was then can vassed from the group. The results were summarised as follows:

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I. Europeana search and context widget (configurable, pre-specified national/local searches)

II. Integrated search of library catalogues and Europeana

III. New dynamic interface to Europeana – touch screen based, engaging ways of browsing

IV. Digital storytelling engine/building on existing stories

V. Local data for re-users (via an API)

VI. Crowdsourcing tools – tagging (names, categorisation) – using storytelling platform

VII. Geocoding tool (spatial, temporal annotation)

VIII. Europeana game for children (customised for place) for schools

IX. Contests connected to e.g. local art, published to Wikimedia commons: public library as facilitator

X. Reusable content search engine (i.e. rights identification) as part of public libraries services

XI. Local data mining service

XII. Crowdsourcing accessibility descriptions, describing relationships

On the morning of the second day, the group rated each candidate service on a scale of 0-5 according to negative to positive perceptions on each of the criteria. Rating was multiplied by weighting under each of the criteria in order to arrive at a total score for each candidate service.

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[1] A more detailed report of this event including scores is available from rob.davies@mdrpartners.com

A second scoring exercise – a NAF (Novelty-Attractiveness-Feasibility) service ranking exercise was then introduced for purposes of comparison, using a more general set of criteria. The group scored each service on a scale of 1-10 against each of the three new criteria:
– Novelty – How novel is the idea? If it isn't novel for this situation, it probably isn't very creative;
– Attractiveness – How attractive is this as a solution? Does it completely solve the problem? Or is it only a partial solution?;
– Feasibility – How feasibly is it to put this into practice? It may have been a really attractive solution to use a time machine, but is it really feasible?

The discussion which followed the scoring exercises identified the following activity areas as being potentially the best for development by Europeana in partnership with public libraries:
– Service 1 *Europeana search and content widget/Integrated search of library catalogues and Europeana*;
– Service 2 *Digital storytelling engine/building on existing stories;*
– Service 3 *Crowdsourcing tools – tagging (names, categorisation)* and a *Geocoding tool* for spatial and temporal annotation;
– Service 4 *Contests published to Wikimedia Commons* involving: 'GLAM-Wiki' events (conferences, seminars, Edit-a-Thons); and a European WikiLovesPublicArt campaign and photo contest

The question was therefore raised whether all of the above services could be configured for public libraries during the course of Europeana Awareness?
Finally, as a prelude to the development of requirements by the Europeana technical team the group was asked to answer two important questions as clearly as possible:
– What do we as a 'GLAM' (cultural heritage institution) want to accomplish by using Europeana widgets and content in our services that we couldn't accomplish without them?
– What do we as a 'GLAM', using Europeana widgets or content, want to offer our users that we couldn't offer them without?

Participants elected to address these questions in plenary session and it was agreed that further discussion and definition of these requirements should take place at a second workshop to determine.
– Whether it is feasible for all services/tools from the selected list to be developed or only one or some of them, if so which?
– How to deliver a plan to Europeana in order that they can write the requirements.
– How precisely the proposed tool delivery scheduling in other areas of Europeana's programme of work fits in with the proposed delivery dates in Europeana Awareness, especially as it affects the role of public libraries (see Annex1)

Second specification workshop in The Hague[2]

This second workshop was held at Europeana HQ in The Hague during June 2012 and involved the technical/operational staff of Europeana in addition to those involved in the public libraries work of Europeana Awareness

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[2] A more detailed report of this event is available from rob.davies@mdrpartners.com

Requirement scenarios

During this workshop, a number of requirement scenarios were identified, relevant the various services emerging from the Madrid workshop.

1. Crowdsourcing tools – tagging (names, categorisation)/ Geocoding tool

Scenario A

– I am a **local historian** and I want to contribute my personal knowledge about a monument or building in my village and what happened in relation to it.
– I would like to make Europeana a more valuable source of information about my city.
– The types of things I have to contribute include:
   – more accurate specific facts,
   – translation of existing descriptions into my own language (s)
   – stories and contextual information
   – more representations of the object and relations to other objects.

Scenario B

– I am a **librarian** and I would like to facilitate the local community in improving representation of regional information and specific objects by enriching what is in in Europeana

2. Digital storytelling engine/building on existing stories
– I want to add my own experiences to Europeana by constructing a digital narrative consisting of a personal view and connecting it with existing content.
– I want to share my story with everyone through my regular online channels.
– I want to be able to control whether my real name is displayed alongside the information I have contributed.

3. Results of contests published to Wikimedia Commons
– I am a **librarian** and I see a role for my library in facilitating local community in improving representation of regional information/specific objects, by….
– …collaborating with local Wikimedians, by adding new objects or information in order to improve the information available about my locality on Wikipedia or other wiki projects that can also be found in Europeana.
– People using the service must be made aware of the licensing arrangements applicable to use/re-use.
– I want my library to be attributed within Wikimedia commons for having participated in this activity.

4. Europeana search and content widget/ Integrated search of library catalogues and Europeana

Scenario A

– I am a **teacher** who wants material for a lesson about the Olympic Games.
– I also want the students to be enabled to choose their own materials for an activity related to the Olympics.
– The students will give a multi-media presentation in class.
– I plan to guide the students to use a catalogue or search service which includes content from Europeana.
– I am based in a part of London which is very multilingual.
– I have a time constraint of three weeks for the whole activity from beginning to end.

Scenario B

– I am a 15 year old **student** who needs to find material for an assignment about the Olympic Games.
– I need to create a multimedia presentation to give in class.
– I have been given two weeks to complete this assignment
– My teacher has directed me towards a local public library online search service.

Scenario C

– I am a **librarian** who wants to be able to support the information retrieval needs of local schools.
– Since my catalogue contains mostly non-digital materials I would like an authoritative resource of digitised materials.
– I would like to make it easier for my users to find a broader range of authoritative content online.
– I would like this be available both to people who want to find information on a subject or topic or an individual known author or title.
– The resulting output from Europeana needs to conform to the existing look and feel of my catalogue.
– I am not a developer but fairly comfortable on the web. My library doesn't have anyone with developer skills.

As a further outcome of this second workshop, the following outline timetable for action was agreed:

August 2012
– Europeana to circulate first draft of requirement documents for each candidate service for circulation to the 'core' library partners in Europeana Awareness.

October 2012
– Decision on what can be achieved by the end of December 2012, including possible customisation of search widgets to be able to fetch and filter on page html elements of the host site e.g. search string or author name.
– Burgos conference workshop to identify libraries to
    – test digital storytelling tools
    – host a GLAM wiki events (one library only)

– act as community collection points
– opt to implement one or more of the four 'services'
December 2012
– Europeana search widgets delivered.
January 2013
– Prototype storytelling widget available (Final version 2014).
March 2013 (estimated)
– Tagging/geo-tagging tools delivered by Europeana.

Annex 1. Programme of public libraries work in Europeana Awareness

This section is taken from the Description of Work. Updated information is provided in bold italics

3.1.1 Define, through a process involving two workshops, an initial set of services and tools (such as API, 'widgets' etc.) which can be made available with a limited amount of development to establish and integrate Europeana within the services they provide to their users by M5. ***This event was the second of the two workshops***

3.1.2 define a set of requirements to implement these services by M9 (***September 2012***).

3.1.3 partner libraries ***(i.e. the 5 'core' libraries Aarhus, Belgrade, Berlin, Veria and one nominated by the Ministry of Culture and Education, Spain possibly with the addition of Cluj (Romania) and Varna (Bulgaria), also Awareness partners)*** will test, implement and validate the identified services in the context of their own regular work for a three-month trial period, before describing and 'packaging' them for wider implementation by M14 (***February 2013***). ***Now agreed that at least one service (the Europeana widget) will be available broadly in time for this. Other services will then be tested and made available for implementation on a 'rolling' basis as they come on stream.***

3.1.4 identify at least 100 candidate public libraries covering every ICT-PSP participant country to act as the initial user base for these Europeana services, drawing upon previous European public library networking activities by M12 (***December 2012***). ***Currently over 80 candidate libraries have been identified and work is proceeding***.

3.1.5 A subset of these public libraries, ensuring appropriate country coverage, will be designated as community collection points for User Generated Content in support of WP2 by M12 (***December 2012). Process to begin at Burgos conference in October***

3.1.6 Establish web-based training and orientation activities by M14 (***February 2013***).

3.1.7 host a major public libraries conference to promote the use of Europeana to Ministries, senior professionals, local authorities and other bodies responsible for public libraries to promote the outcomes of this work and to encourage further take-up by M22.

Note: this plan was changed to incorporate the Burgos event in October 2012, following discussion at the kick off meeting. A second conference in Greece is under consideration for Month 22 (October 2013)

3.1.8 Based on this guidance and continuing support. The wider base of 100 public libraries will commence implementation of these services over an initial period of nine months, to be completed by M28 (***April 2014***).

3.1.9 Design and carry out an evaluation of this activity, its take up and impact on the libraries and their users by M35 (***November 2015***)