

**THE EUROPEAN DIGITAL LIBRARY  
POLICY CONTEXT AND AMBITIONS**

SPEECH FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
"ONE MORE STEP TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN DIGITAL LIBRARY"  
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Dear host, Elisabeth Niggemann,

It is a pleasure for me to open this conference. I feel that I have a special responsibility for the EDL projects and the people involved, as it is these people that will have to carry the European Digital Library to success — together with the recently established foundation for the European Digital Library; and together with projects like TelPlus and VideoActive that have positively contributed to their integration in the infrastructure of the European Digital Library. The European Digital Library is becoming reality at a high pace now.

The plan for a European Digital Library was presented two and a half years ago when Commissioner Reding called for "a common access point to Europe's distributed digital cultural heritage" in a speech she held to the conference of National Librarians in Luxembourg.

The European Commission's aim is to improve access to quality digital content for all. And the European Digital Library is the highly visible means that will make Europe's distributed cultural and scientific knowledge commonly available. It will enable Europeans to be more active and more creative participants in society. And you, as stakeholders in the European Digital Library, feature as pioneers: you play a fundamental role as the collectors and stewards of Europe's heritage. While organising and adding value by digital means you are making a case for both quality and equality of online access to Europe's cultural treasures. By bringing our heritage online, you make it easier for citizens to appreciate their own past as well as their common European history. Appreciate, in particular, the positive aspects of that history.

Today, the internet provides an opportunity to circulate the European cultural richness to advantage and to make it known to the world at large. To take a few examples: there are roughly 2.5 billion books in the libraries of the European Union. The combined audiovisual holdings of archives in Europe accumulate to over 40 million hours. These are some astonishing quantities. The European Digital Library service will make it possible to search, use and personalise all this information — at item level. It will enable citizens to apply a large assortment of tools and services for doing research about or within a book, a manuscript, an artefact, a film — for reading, for printing, for streaming, and for creating one's own personal library. The potential demand is huge: the Internet has expanded from

1 million in 1990 to over 1.2 billion fixed users worldwide today. The estimated number of mobile internet users is in the order of 700 million.

The Digital Libraries initiative has triggered significant political interest. Parliament as well as the Member States through their Ministers of culture have embraced the Commission's call for a European Digital Library and to the broader issues around digitisation, online accessibility and digital preservation. These issues are not independent of each other — we do not want to see e.g. investments in digitisation without, at the same time, providing access via the European Digital Library.

As we all know, at present, only a very small part of the relevant collections has been digitised. A major effort by the Member States is needed. The European Digital Library can mobilise national funding for digitisation, and, fortunately, we see that some of Member States are actually making this effort. For example in The Netherlands, where 154M Euro has recently been allocated to digitisation. In some Member States, inactivity witnesses lack of political priority. We are working on this. For example, to tackle the huge volumes the Commission has called for coordinated approaches. One first step is to create better identification mechanisms for what has been and is being digitised. There will, in all likelihood, be a number of different practical and organisational solutions to this. Member States can make visible their digitisation planning; registries are already being provided from different sources; and access services that harvest metadata about digitised objects in collections are also more and more becoming a useful source of information. These sources will need to become interoperable and usable over time — not only to identify specific works but also to profile collections so that, e.g., digitisation priorities can be set up.

Incentives for commercial sponsorship and public-private partnerships also need to be examined and developed further. Successful collaboration between public and private entities, in particular for digitisation, has shown different forms already, but this is all rather preliminary and in most European countries the majority of digitisation activities within cultural heritage institutions is still small and is being financed within the institution's own budgets, sometimes with support from national projects.

Public Private Partnerships may be a way forward. The private sector already provides technical support, sponsorship and direct funding of digitisation. However, there are pitfalls, for example exclusive deals that make works that are in the public domain disappear from it. The contrary of what is intended from a policy point of view may result. We are, therefore, stimulating stakeholders to build up experience on benefits and risks — for both parties — and to understand better what is accepted practice and where public interest might be compromised. To that end, the Commission's High Level Experts Group on Digital Libraries has drafted a set of guidelines on public private partnerships. Their report is available on our Digital Libraries website and can be helpful for those who want to engage in future partnerships.

Improving technologies for digitisation can also play a role in reducing costs, whether for mass digitisation or digitisation of specific types of material that are not well-served by the current market place. There are also organisational challenges, for the archive, library and museum domain, in ensuring that digitisation competences and, if necessary, capacity is available not only in the large organisations but in smaller ones. Exactly this idea is behind the identification in our research agenda under FP7 of the need to establish competence centres at European level that could support digitisation and digital preservation. Why? To leverage the effect of — and on — national actions. To improve technological capacity and solutions. To use complementarity to extend competence. To develop skills and services at European level.

As a result of a Call for proposals in R&D, we are investing 11.5 M Euro in a new project, IMPACT, that is focused on digitisation of printed materials and aiming to improve the technologies for OCR-ing, for structuring documents, and for working with different languages.

Core issues that have an effect on access revolve round copyrights with specific implications for digitisation and accessibility. We risk, but cannot afford to limit the European Digital Library just to public domain material. We should avoid a Digital Library in which almost all information from before 1900 is available and in which the 20th century is absent. For many young people what you cannot find on the Internet does not exist. So, they would be given the impressions that 20<sup>th</sup> century was a black hole. Nobody, not even the advocates of the rightholders, may want that.

Cultural institutions therefore need to be able to digitise and provide access with legal certainty. They are however confronted with the impossibility of clearing rights individually for all their materials, even where rights are known.

New practical, equitable and cross-border solutions to IPR are needed. The Commission has addressed the cross-border nature of these copyright related challenges in a Recommendation to Member States in 2006, and Member States have committed themselves by Council Conclusions to seek progress along clear timelines.

First, orphan works — that is where the rights holder is not known or cannot be traced. While some categories of work are well regulated and well represented, others have very high levels of orphan works. Clear search guidelines for the specific contexts are needed. Moreover, such guidelines need to be scalable — to support reasonable search — not requiring individual searches for categories of work that are highly orphaned. Other options include consensus on historical cut-off points, and allowing for mixed approaches with roles for collecting societies and for the digitising organisation to assume responsibility for the digitised work.

On a practical level, the High Level Group has worked on mechanisms for clearing rights in bulk, appropriately for the category of work, and for maintaining registries, shared at European level, of declared orphan works. The big test is whether these mechanisms are adequate to support legally the mutual recognition across Member States of orphan status, where different copyright provisions and exceptions are in force. We are confident, it will, but the test is still ahead of us.

Out-of-print works, where the rights holder is known, give rise to another set of problems, which have been worked on again by the High Level Experts Group. The group has agreed on a model licence for the use of copyrighted protected works in a digital environment. This specifies permissible uses and restrictions, and strikes mutually beneficial balance between the interests of creators and users.

We realise that although we have been able to improve on status quo and to take actions accordingly, significant work is still ahead of us, to provide the best prerequisites for digitisation in Europe and to make the European Digital Library a reality. Our Digital

Libraries project is, therefore, not a short term goal. It is a process, that will occupy you for quite some time, although it is wise to set concrete short and medium-term goals.

A large responsibility rests on the shoulders of the EDLnet project and the European Digital Library foundation. They have an important operational task, in providing the essential showcase — not only to content owners, but also to politicians and their ministries — of what will be done and what needs to be done and how. This is essential if we are to capitalise on and retain the political interest shown so far.

The targets set politically for the European Digital Library imply that a critical mass of digital content will need to be integrated into the European Digital Library fast — before the end of this year. The model chosen by the foundation is one that is practical, agile and distributed, but yet involves a tremendous interoperability experiment: archives, audio-visual archives, museums and libraries and other content holders need to collaborate to show both the heterogeneity and the connections that can be made between collections in the different domains. And these different domains come under different ministries — you will need to bridge all these organisational splits at various levels as the scope and the scale of the European Digital Library continue to grow.

I consider this conference step towards the EDL that makes considerable progress already. And it is on time. As the maquette of the European Digital Library will be presented tomorrow, a new chapter will open, clearly paving the way towards the launch of the first usable version of the European Digital Library in November.

As I have understood, as from today EUROPEANA is the new brand of the European Digital Library. I like the name Europeana. It certainly gives a clear label to a service that is European and multilingual. It also takes away any connections with a specific domain or type of content. Moreover, it builds onwards from the support that we received from France, as initiator for building an early prototype.

Meanwhile, as a result of the latest Call for proposals under eContentPlus, we intend to invest almost 17M Euro in bringing content from film archives, national archives, museums and local institutions into Europeana.

The final eContentplus Call for proposals will open this March and will close 12 June [*a draft workprogramme is already available on the website*]. Under this call — besides the funding available for improving the interoperability of digital libraries held by museums, archives and libraries with the Europeana service — there will be additional support for improving the use and services of Europeana, addressing issues like user friendliness, trust and management and multilingual access through the common user interface.

We are committed to continue our support also in the future. Together with our actions at political and strategic level, and with the commitments from Member States to support our initiative, this should guarantee the future success of Europeana.