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News

A Mozilla/Firefox compliant version of The European Library www.TheEuropeanLibrary.org is now available. We apologise to all of you who thought we were in the pay of Microsoft, it was never our intention to give such an impression! We had some problems making the original code work with Mozilla so had to rewrite chunks of it.

A new tab in the main navigation has been added: **Browse**. Clicking on it you see a full list of all collections you can search in, ordered by library. A description of each collection is also provided. This is to try and encourage users to realize that there are a lot more collections to search in than those covered by the simple search presented on the home page.

The new management section will be incorporated into the site this month. It is password protected.

Next Steps

The portal is in a stabilisation and reflection phase. It is looking to ensure stable, timely access to all the material from the partner libraries and to canvass opinion on whether its structure works. A programme of tidying up with each of the partners has been implemented to agree time schedules and actions for any necessary work. Further a survey has been launched in 7 languages asking for user opinion on the way the site works – i.e.: do users understand that simple search defaults to only 10 of the 170 collections available to them to search? Can they discover the next steps intuitively or do we need to provide more guidance? The idea is to use the user survey to inform the next functionality release, due in autumn this year. The survey has been executed now, even though there are still some bugs and issues to solve as we are still very much in a Beta phase, trying to discover what works and what doesn't for the user. Leaving such knowledge until later in the year might mean that we continue to improve functionality the user does not like. On limited resource and budget the approach of getting all the criticism at once may be giving us the image of 'gluttons for punishment' but is probably the most cost and time effective way of dealing with any issues.

Collection and service descriptions together with a recommendation over how to tell the user what is and is not available via The European Library in terms of content will be forthcoming after the summer. Ways of improving the user experience will also be developed by the participating libraries, so that having discovered that a book or item is available in a library the user is told how they might view or use it.

Discussion documents on how to deal with language maintenance as the site grows in content and partners and whether a real help desk can be provided are in process. Meanwhile we will endeavour to provide better help and demo searches on the site itself.

New Places, New Libraries, New People

The last couple of months have meant a fairly intensive travel schedule with visits to the British Library, Helsinki University Library and speaking at the EUSIDIC and ELAG conferences in Brussels and Geneva respectively. The European Library is gaining 3 new full members with the National Libraries of Austria, Croatia and Serbia. These libraries will be visited in July by a technical member of The European Library Office to design individual accession plans for the incorporation of their collections into The European Library. The National Library of Denmark will together with Latvia and Estonia join as full members from January 2006.

A presentation 'The European Library Where Now' was given at ELAG in Cerne. This details some of the new developments and strategic directions The European Library is moving towards. The presentation will be available at <http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org/>

We have been joined by Eric van der Meulen in The European Library Office. Eric is Dutch but spent a large chunk of his life in Canada. He is the new ex-Skater, music loving (well Pink Floyd and the Grateful Dead!) Technical Assistant for the Office, backing up Julie Verleyen, who is to work more on implementing the technical requirements for the new member states under TEL ME MOR.

TEL-ME-MOR www.telmemor.net

An analysis of what is required for each of the new member states to prepare their collections for access via The European Library has been completed and is available at www.telmemor.net. We are now entering the next stage of creating individual implementation plans for each library and running a workshop to discuss any resulting issues on September 22-23 in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in Den Haag. The workshop will be largely run by members of the Technical Working Group and will address topics such as SRU and Z39:50 gateways, standards in Metadata and crosswalks.

Help Required

As mentioned above we are seeking real user opinion. We are aware of the shortcomings of portal access and delivery and wish to find out the things that please or irritate you the most. We can then prioritise our next developments taking real regard of user needs. The survey can be found at www.TheEuropeanLibrary.org. It is available in 7 languages on the site. If you can spare 10 15 minutes please take some time to complete the survey. For every completed survey we receive we will donate €2 to Book Aid International. The results will be published with the actions to be taken in September.

New Developments

We are in the process of putting operational systems in place such as a bugs and issues list for all the partners to see, communication planning in the event of a server or collection being unavailable and improving the interoperability and purpose of the working groups.

In terms of new functionality we are looking at ways, together with the search engines, to solve the problems of using metadata in their technology and to make it work in the ranking algorithms.

The issue of language interoperability remains problematic so The European Library is investigating the feasibility of piloting MACS, within the site in a release early in 2006.

Two new collections from Italy are added to the portal this month. Manoscritti in rete - digitised images of manuscripts such as music, maps and architecture and the Bertini Collection, contemporary art editions.

Snippets

In a move to try to streamline some of Europe's virtual library activities, The European Library is holding a joint workshop with DELOS in September at the British Library in London. Any member of CENL is cordially invited to attend this workshop. If you are interested please contact Jill.Cousins@kb.nl

Bye, Jill

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