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News

First, an apology for the extreme tardiness of this newsletter. It was started in late August, but life, travel and meetings got in the way of any concerted work on it.

In the last 2 months, I have eaten an Indian meal in London as part of the Contacts Group meeting and joint workshop we held with DELOS. I have consumed with the Technical Working Group and TEL ME MOR partners at a workshop in The Hague. Attending CENL in Luxembourg meant lurching from gourmet meal to gourmet meal prior to rounding up my calories at a garlic restaurant in Tallinn for the TEL ME MOR Review. So besides not being able to see a waistline anymore, these various meetings have set the partners' creative juices running and the generated workload almost as great as my girth.

We welcome 3 new full members to The European Library, Austria, Croatia and Serbia. We have collections available from these libraries already. We have also added a searchable music collection from Slovenia in the last couple of months.

The European Digital Library has also occupied our thoughts. The European Library provides access to some of the digitised and born digital material of the National Libraries that are its partners. By the end of 2006 there will be 20 of these libraries, about half the membership of CENL, contributing their content. However the sum of this digitised content is still very slight as a percentage of the total holdings of the National libraries of Europe. To this end the CENL is looking to form a high level Content Working Group, in which The European Library will participate, aimed at forming a strategy for development in this area. We believe that The European Library is the beginnings of a European Digital Library and that some thought needs to opportunities should be taken to improve on this base.

The European Library Portal

Our next release is due in late November. This release cleans up the code and removes all the frames except one. The site will load more quickly and many of the remaining bugs and issues will disappear. This release will also see some improvements in searching, as this was one of the areas highlighted in the survey we conducted on the usability of search in The European Library with [IRN Research](#) in May/June 2005.

In order to improve the quality of this first release since the Beta launch last March, an outside testing company has been employed. [Furore](#) have created a test plan against the functional specification and this will be implemented for the November release. We will also institute a test programme aimed at improving searching, for this we rely (as for many things) on the help of our full partners. Additionally we are making more efforts to improve access where there are problems with some of our partner library servers. We will also redouble our efforts to get libraries to introduce more services into their metadata to help the user go beyond the online catalogue reference.

We are in the process of putting more help texts on the site and more explanation. This will hopefully be available (though probably not translated into all languages) for the November release.

Language presents The European Library with several issues, not least the ability to search in one language but retrieve results from all languages. The sheer maintenance of multi-languages on the interface of The European Library has also led us to issue some Guidelines and Policy for Language Display on The European Library. These Guidelines follow the policy of Europa (the portal site of the European Union, http://europa.eu.int/index_en.htm). They allow for limited language mixing, prioritise speed of publication over availability of

translation and require all top level pages to be translated in the partner languages. In reality this means that the Office will provide a tool for translations and their tracking and will notify all partners when changes have been made to text, but will not chase any partner for their translations. This pushes the responsibility for maintenance onto the partner libraries. The libraries section will only be maintained in 3 languages, English, French and German, as will all other sections, such as 'About us', except search and retrieve. Unless a library wishes to take on the responsibility of translating and maintaining the translation, in which case we are more than happy to display as many languages as are out there!

Next Steps

The metadata handbook of portal is being rewritten, in cleaner English and hopefully with a better structure. We aim to have completed this by the end of 2005.

The draft NISO Guidelines for Collection Descriptions will be implemented in The European Library as soon as possible, probably with more mandatory fields and drop down choices than are available now. We will then undertake an exercise to upgrade all the existing collection descriptions to comply with the new standard.

We are investigating with [UKOLN](#) an analysis of the Metadata Registry for The European Library, in order to rewrite it so that the items that are functionally necessary for the portal, i.e. the TEL Application Profile are easy to distinguish. We will then create some automatic crosswalks from schemas such as UNIMARC and MARC21 to the TEL Application Profile. The timing for this to be complete is hopefully end of the first quarter of 2006. If anyone reading this has expertise in creating crosswalks and would like to spend some time in the Netherlands, where the weather is always unpredictable, then please contact the Office as we are looking for a freelancer or consultant able to do this work.

We invited Google to the Management Board meeting to help solve the issue of how metadata appears in their results. As by far the largest percentage of digitised material from the libraries is in the form of metadata. There are two aspects to the problem. The first is that search engines such as Google are not used to indexing metadata and therefore their algorithms do not deal favourably with metadata for ranking purposes. The second is that metadata gives a poor display, as it is mostly without an abstract, so there is not much to tempt the searcher to click on the result, in amongst other results with much richer descriptions. We are awaiting their thoughts.

User Survey results

The survey was conducted on the Beta site for us to find out what needs to be changed before entering into further development.

The survey had nearly 200 respondents so we have donated 400 euros to Book Aid International as result. On the whole people were pleased with the site and many used it in the way it should be, via the choosing first of collections prior to launching a search. Though unfortunately a considerable number, particularly students did not go beyond the simple search. There were complaints about the speed of loading and speed of search and the lack of support for some browsers. Also interesting were the expectations. Some searchers think that all the material from all the libraries is available and some expected to be able to access the actual item they had found and were disappointed to find only a reference.

As mentioned above the November release should solve many browser and speed problems. The fact that people were sometimes not going beyond simple search has led to a rethink in the way to lead more people into subject areas. We hope to do some reorganisation and development on getting people further into the site for the first release in 2006.

New Places, New Libraries

The European Library was presented at Internet Librarian, courtesy of Dr. Britta Woldering, her presentation can be found at <http://www.internet-librarian.com/Presentations>.

Olaf Janssen from The European Library Office will give 2 presentations in Singapore in November at the National Library Board's 'Celebrating Knowledge' conference on the 14-15 November 2005. www.nlb.gov.sg/conference2005.

And we will also be presenting in Alexandria at the Pre Summit of the World Summit on the Information Society November 10-11. <http://www.bibalex.org/wsisaalex/>

Working Groups

Several of the Working Groups met to discuss issues and next steps during September, culminating in the Management Board meeting on October 14th in The Hague. The Management Board took a number of decisions based on the recommendations of the working groups. These include the creation of a Content Working Group, the piloting of versions of The European Library being available through National Library portals, Guidelines & Policy for Language as well as approval of budgets and accounts.

The Contacts Group met at the British Library on September 16, having held a joint workshop with DELOS <http://www.delos.info/> to discuss areas of overlap and possible cooperation with The European Library. This led to a follow up meeting to be scheduled with the next Technical Working Group and a proposal for a joint workshop on multilingual solutions. The European Library will also benefit from DELOS evaluating the site against their benchmark and an investigation on how a Daffodil <http://www.is.informatik.uni-duisburg.de/projects/daffodil/> interface might be applied.

The Technical Working Group also met in September where we agreed to set up a character-set working party as we gain more alphabets with new members. We also determined to test the ONE Authority File as a target. The central gateway which converts z39:50 targets to SRU will be moved from its home in the British Library to the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in the first half of 2006. This is to gain a wider spread of experience and some redundancy of knowledge in the gateway.

TEL-ME-MOR www.telmemor.net

A successful workshop was held on September 22-23 in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in Den Haag. The workshop was run by members of the Technical Working Group and addressed Collection Descriptors, SRU and Z39:50 gateways, the TEL Application Profile and crosswalks. The workshop generated a series of recommendations that have been appended to the Implementation Plan, Deliverable 2.2 <http://www.telmemor.net/wp2.php>. This plan, created by Olaf Janssen and Bill Oldroyd, with the cooperation and help of all the New Member States libraries in the project formed part of the Review on TEL ME MOR, held in Tallinn on the 12 October. The Review is part of the procedure for projects funded by the EC and the project was given the thumbs up by the 3 reviewers and Ian Piggott the EC Project Officer.

Our first New Member State collection, the Amicus database from Hungary went live in the TMM Test portal as an SRU target, this week.

New Collections

Five new searchable collections have been added to the portal:

1. Croatian National Bibliography of Books,
2. Serbian Union Catalogue,
3. DOI Serbia (a collection of Serbian published scientific journals),
4. Serbian Children's Digital Library.

5. The Slovenian Collection of rare audio records is now fully searchable

Links to collections that are not yet searchable were also made, these include:

Maps of Slovenian Territory from 1548 to 1924

E-Thesis, Helmi (historical images) and The Finnish Historical Newspaper Collection 1771-1890 from Finland

From Germany 4 new collections have been added: Incunable catalogue of the German Museum for the History of Books and Writing; Buchhändlerische Geschäftsrundschreiben; Inventory of archival sources about the history of the German Book Trade in the 19th & 20th centuries and Verteilte digitalisierte Rechtsquellen: Kontrollratsgesetzgebung.

From the Netherlands 3 new linked collections: Database for Legal History and Legal Iconography, Bibliotheca Universalis Travel Books from the Linschoten Society and Children's Historical Literature Disseminated throughout Europe.

Warm Regards, Jill

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