



NUMERIC - Statistics on digitisation of cultural materials in Europe

The Proposed Framework for Measuring Digitisation Activity

By Phillip Ramsdale, IPF

The European Commission [1] has adopted a recommendation to “gather information about current and planned digitisation of cultural material” in order to track how “memory institutions” are diversifying and enriching the information economy. The Commission has appointed IPF Ltd to conduct the Numeric study to formulate this framework to measure the pace and cost of translating often frail collections into this valued resource. The study is being coordinated by Marius Snyders at the DG INFOS of the European Commission.

So far the study team have:

- ◆ researched how previous studies have sought to measure digitisation activities;
- ◆ consulted on what the ideal statistical framework should cover;
- ◆ defined measures for digitisation activity and cost;
- ◆ defined groups of analogue materials and corresponding digital outputs;
- ◆ identified institutions and programmes;
- ◆ balanced the possibilities.

They have learned the following from reviewing previous studies:

- ◆ available statistics are snapshots without any series;
- ◆ failure to define consistent measures for either financial or technical resources;
- ◆ concentration on collecting qualitative rather than quantitative information;
- ◆ no uniform approaches on how to classify digitised collections;
- ◆ indicators of user needs, usage of materials, accessibility and usability of digitised content should be more visible.

After consulting widely on what the ideal statistical framework should cover, the researchers have concluded that the most practicable approach will be a composite of methods:

- ◆ analysing information that has been and is continuing to be collected on specific digitisation projects, and using these and other sources to frame assumptions for making informed estimates of activity;
- ◆ cooperating with and assisting the international professional associations in undertaking surveys amongst their members, or undertaking the surveys on their behalf;
- ◆ promoting sample surveys in each country to gather

information beyond the membership of the international professional associations, in order to balance the impression that would otherwise be dominated by nationally prominent institutions.

There is a real paucity of consistent data for Europe except for those collected by the Conference of European National Librarians and statistics currently being collected by the European Group of Museums. The Numeric Study conducted a Pathfinder Survey (during the Autumn of 2007), in which 60 institutions participated, that proved the practicability of assembling firmer statistics across all the relevant domains; but, pending a round of sample surveys proposed in 2008, the researchers have made some estimates of the overall size of the cultural sector within which digitisation activities are taking place. These have been added to a “foundation database” deriving from the following sources:

- ◆ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO);
- ◆ International Monetary Fund (IMF);
- ◆ EUROSTAT;
- ◆ ERICARTS [2];
- ◆ European Group on Museum Statistics (EGMUS) surveys;
- ◆ Association des Cinémathèques Européennes (ACE);
- ◆ Conference of European National Librarians (CENL) survey;
- ◆ LIBECON (EU study to collate statistics on libraries);
- ◆ Initial results from the Numeric survey.

This dataset will be refined and estimates replaced by statistics as and when these can be verified by their respective national sources. The dataset will be kept up-to-date and made available on the Numeric website.

All the experience points to the danger of relying on sample surveys alone. Less than one-third of institutions have adopted formal project plans to direct their digitisation objectives, and consequently the majority do not maintain the appropriate management information in a form that is convenient to report in surveys. This impacts on the response rates to surveys, and underlines the importance of keeping such exercises simple.

There is other information that many institutions can and have already reported, and there is a growing collection of standard information about projects that have already been completed. These details are being reviewed by the researchers to build an overall impression of the digitisation work being undertaken. Information about how projects are approached [3] can also provide further insights into associated costs.

The ministries/central statistical offices in each country

have immediate priorities that may not be able to accommodate the implementation of a survey on digitisation activities within the time period we require. Therefore, a two tier approach to coordinating the standing surveys of the professional associations and mounting additional sample surveys is proposed in 2008.

The professional associations, active at the international level, mainly represent nationally prominent institutions, and form the principal tier in the recommended approach. They have been largely successful in gaining survey responses from their members. They are to be consulted over the recommended approach and to advise where other significant effort is taking place in regional and other local institutions.

A second tier of survey information will derive from a canvass of 30 representative institutions in each country. The deriving survey data, appropriately weighted, can then be combined with results of the surveys conducted by the professional associations to provide a comprehensive picture across Europe.

For further information contact either Phillip RAMSDALE, Phillip.Ramsdale@IPF.co.uk, Numeric Study, IPF Ltd., UK or Marius SNYDERS, email:

Marius.SNYDERS@ec.europa.eu, European Commission, DG Information Society and Media, Directorate Digital Content and Cognitive Systems. More information including reports and survey results are available at <http://WWW.NUMERIC.WS>.

1. Recommendation on the digitisation and on-line accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation, of 24th August 2006
2. Council of Europe/ERICarts: "Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe", 8th edition 2007, <http://www.culturalpolicies.net>
3. e.g. Astrid Verheusen, KB, The Netherlands - a pragmatic approach to estimating costs

European Digital Library (EDL) Foundation welcomed by the Commissioner

By Carmen Morlon

On 28 November, the European Commission endorsed the work of the European Digital Library (EDL) Foundation, which gathers European associations representing museums, libraries and archives in a common effort to create a European digital library.

Foundation members include the European Regional Branch of International Council on Archives (EURBICA), the International Federation of Television Archives (FIAT), the Association Cinémathèques Européennes (ACE), the European Museums Forum (EMF), the Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche (LIBER), ICOM Europe, MICHAEL - Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe and the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL). The statutes of the Foundation commit its members to work in partnership with the aim to providing access to Europe's cultural and scientific heritage through a cross-domain portal; cooperating in its delivery and sustainability; stimulating initiatives to bring together existing digital content and supporting digitisation of Europe's cultural and scientific heritage.

The EDL initiative, hosted by the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in the Netherlands and led by the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL), is part of the i2010 Initiative (June 2006). Its success depends on the financing of digitisation and on finding solutions to make copyrighted works searchable through the EDL. The High Level Expert Group (HLG) on digital libraries agreed on 27 November to find a solution by June 2008 to deal with orphan works that would include criteria to look for right holders. The Copyright Subgroup of the HLG has set key principles for rights clearance centres and databases for orphan works and out-of-print works. These recommendations can be consulted at http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/digital_libraries/index_en.htm.

The EDL is developing a prototype site aimed at giving direct access to around 2 million archival records, artworks, digital books, photographs, maps, and sound and film materials from the European libraries, archives and museums. Its launch is foreseen in November 2008.

More information can be found at <http://www.europeandigitallibrary.eu/edlnet/>.

Merry Christmas

Firstly we would like to wish all EBLIDA members all the best for Christmas and the New Year and thank everyone for their contribution to the organization. The expertise, talent and support that EBLIDA has amongst its members is what makes our organization an important force for the development of libraries, archives and other information providers in Europe. At the beginning of 2007 we launched *EBLIDA News* and a new website – we hope that both have proved to be useful tools for keeping EBLIDA members informed about European developments and the work of EBLIDA.

In May we had our Annual Council Meeting in Reykjavik and I would once again like to thank our Icelandic colleagues for all their help and hospitality in hosting this meeting. 2007 was also an election year. Mr Gerald Leitner was elected as President, while 10 candidates were elected to serve on the EBLIDA Executive Committee for the period 2007-2009.

In 2008 our Annual Council Meeting will be in The Netherlands, split between The Hague and Amsterdam and we hope that many colleagues will join us. The programme for the conference will be available shortly on the website and members will be able to register from mid-January.

In 2008 we will continue our efforts to lobby for the best legislative results at the European level, but we will also focus more on bringing relevant information about the library sector in Europe to the membership and provide new fora for debate and dialogue amongst our members to strengthen strategic cooperation across Europe. We will also seek to ensure that EBLIDA has representation from all the EU member states, helping to strengthen the organization by ensuring legitimacy and aiming to be the voice of libraries in Europe.

Andrew Cranfield and Carmen Morlon