The cultural heritage of Europe: building the value proposition for Europeana

Based on a breakout session held at the 33rd UKSG Conference, Edinburgh, April 2010

Europeana was launched, as a prototype, in November 2008. It gives access to the cultural heritage of Europe held in the museums, libraries, archives and audio visual collections. The subsequent launch of the operational services in summer of 2010 necessitated a relook at the services Europeana could usefully offer to its partners and stakeholders, i.e. what the value propositions are. This paper presents a snapshot of the potential of Europeana through the story of Art Nouveau and the process of creating the value propositions to arrive at a Europeana strategic plan for the coming five years.

Introduction

After a plea by six heads of European countries to the President of the European Commission to promote the diverse culture of Europe online, in 2005 the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL) was asked to create a prototype demonstrating the feasibility of bringing together digital objects held in the cultural heritage institutions of Europe. The prototype was launched to such wide acclaim in November 2008 that it crashed under the amount of traffic. Since that time, the prototype was maintained as a live site and an operational service built and launched in the summer of 2010. The portal at the end of 2010 had 15 million objects from over 2,000 museums, libraries, archives and audio visual collections across the 27 countries of the European Union.

The scope of Europeana

An interesting way to discover the scope of Europeana is not just to start with a person, but a whole movement. Or, in the case of Art Nouveau, a whole series of interconnected and cross-influencing movements.

For a brief and brilliant period at the end of the 19th century, from around 1890 and tailing off before the First World War, domestic furnishing, decorative art, architecture and printing and publishing, particularly advertising, were characterized by the curvilinear elegance, organic forms inspired by nature, and characteristic whiplash line of Art Nouveau (to use a generic term).

The homepage of the Europeana website (http://www.europeana.eu/portal/) invites the reader to explore with a click ‘paintings, music, films and books from Europe’s galleries, libraries, archives and museums’. In Figure 1, for example, we can see a mixture of objects, paintings and a work by Emile Gallé (1846-1904), a major force in the French Art Nouveau movement; and from Romania, a painting by another iconic Nouveau figure, the Czech Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939) of the actress Sarah Bernhardt, whose posters, sets and costumes Mucha was commissioned to design. Bernhardt objects designed by Lalique and others are also on Europeana.

Using the text tab, we can then select an image to take a closer look at a complete book from the period, a version of Snow White with colour plates, from
1906, in the National Library of the Netherlands. The book is fully digitized, as can be seen in Figure 2, and the pervasion of Art Nouveau even down to fairy tales during this period is apparent.

Another book conforming to the Art Nouveau style, this time from the Biblioteca Catalunya in Spain, is *Les Trois femmes de Flandres*, produced in Belgium in 1905 (Figure 3).

Europeana’s reach, and the geographic spread of the Art Nouveau movement, can be seen by the inclusion of treasures from the Baltic States Estonia and Latvia. With around 800 Art Nouveau buildings in the cultural centre of Riga, this poster by Baltic-German artist Bernhard Borchert (see Figure 4) marks the opening of the new City Art Museum there in 1905.
Included in the film material on Europeana are two films from France celebrating Art Nouveau from the L’Ecole de Nancy, a key centre whose artists included Daum, Majorelle and Gallé. Figure 5 shows one of these films held at the Institut national d’audiovisuel in Paris.

The term Art Nouveau is generally attributed to the establishment of the German dealer Siegfried ‘Samuel’ Bing’s shop, Maison de l’Art Nouveau, which opened in December 1895. A noted collector and dealer of Japanese art, the stylistic techniques of which – nature as a source, block colouring and naturalistic designs including birds, insects and botanical studies – were absorbed as influences into Art Nouveau. His shop was a focus for Art Nouveau designers and not just from France and the rest of Europe. Bing was spurred on by American Louis Comfort Tiffany to investigate decorative art. Some of Tiffany’s work can be seen on Europeana. (See Figure 6.)

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Munich). An example from the Museum of Flensburg painted by Hans Christiansen (1866-1945), is shown in Figure 7.

As well as being able to compare styles and interpretations of Art Nouveau in several countries using Europeana, we can study the work of individual artists, whether the straight, geometric lines of the objects and environments created by Charles Renee Mackintosh and the Glasgow School of Art in Scotland or the sinuous lines of Belgian, Victor Horta.

The volume and variety of objects enables us to appreciate how this was a total artform with no detail overlooked, such as in this beautiful door hinge produced by one of Belgium’s leading Nouveau designers, Gustave Serrurier-Bovy (1858-1910) (Figure 8).

In Austria, the Vienna Secession, founded in 1897, with exponents such as Gustav Klimt, is also well represented in Europeana (see Figure 9, for example). This was a time of radical cultural activity, artistically and musically. We can even

Figure 6. One of several objects by Tiffany on Europeana, found using the country filter ‘France’ (inset: stemmed vase ‘bulbe d’oignon’)

Figure 7. Illustration and lettering by Hans Christiansen, intended as a cover for an issue of ‘Jugend’

Figure 8. Art Nouveau door hinge for a bedroom, designed by Gustave Serrurier-Bovy
hear (by clicking on a ‘sound’ icon via Europeana.eu) a classic piece of fin de siècle music by Vienna resident Schoenburg, from Cite de la Musique in Paris11.

The potential of Europeana to connect in the virtual world the treasures of our museums, libraries, archives and audio visual collections throughout Europe has been illustrated using the story of Art Nouveau.

The background

At the same time as launching the prototype, the legal entity that has become the Europeana Foundation was set up. This is a foundation under Dutch law with a Board made up of the pan-European Associations of Content Holders such as CENL, Association Cinémathèques Européennes, European Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives, International Federation of Television Archives, International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives and International Council of Museums Europe. The Board appoints an Executive Committee responsible for the strategic direction and legal compliance, who appoint an Executive Director to manage a team of 30–40, the portal and its associated projects. More recently, a Council of Content Providers and Aggregators has been set up, with its own set of elected Officers, who sit on the Europeana Board and represent the needs of the domains, and support and run working groups. This Council includes the Federation of European Publishers.

Funding is largely from EU project funds under the CIP-IST/PCP Programme. This has been supplemented with support from the Ministries of Culture and Education of Member States, who provide matching funds to enable project participation. Future funding is hoped to be more structural in nature, thus removing the huge overhead participation in 21 projects delivers.

The vision

Europeana is a record of Europe’s journey. Through it, people can discover text, image and audiovisual material, regardless of the country or institution it is held in. All that Europe has considered worthy of keeping, of understanding, of studying – a vast resource of organized and trustworthy knowledge – has the potential to become accessible through Europeana.

Launched as a proof of concept in 2008, with two million objects from 27 EU countries, Europeana spent 2009 and 2010 creating an operational service and ingesting a critical mass of data from some 1,500 providers across Europe. Together with content partners and aided by Europe’s leading research universities, we now have a strong and vibrant network of museums, archives and libraries.

The EU vision of 2006 is partially achieved:

‘A common multilingual access point would make it possible to search Europe’s distributed – that is to say, held in different places by different organisations – digital cultural heritage online.’

Council Communiqué, August 2006

This vision has widened beyond the creation of direct access to the aggregated material to include distributing content into the workflow of the individuals using the material, and acting as a facilitator in ensuring that copyright works better in a web world, whilst engaging the user in their cultural heritage. The aim is to connect society through culture.

Value propositions

To create the value propositions for our partners and stakeholders and hence a strategic plan for the coming five years, 2010 saw a lot of work with
librarians, publishers, curators, archivists and commercial partners to develop these propositions together.

The Business Model Canvas developed by Osterwalder and Pigneur\textsuperscript{11} was used to sharpen our focus on our most important stakeholders: users, policymakers and market players and our main partner group, the European content providers and aggregators (see Figure 10) and understand their relationships with each other and the value that could be achieved.

Over a five-month period these stakeholder groups were involved in the creation of value propositions to form a strategic plan for the coming years for Europeana. The consultation programme comprised two elements:

1) a set of specific value propositions for each of the identified stakeholder groups, that were rated and commented on in an online consultation with various groups. These groups included our User Test Panel, the Council of Content Providers and Aggregators, the Member States Expert Group and market players.

‘The proposition is what makes the organization distinct; it serves to resolve customer problems and meet customer needs.’

(Business Model Innovation Cultural Heritage, DEN Foundation/Kennisland, 2010)

2) five workshops were held with expert representatives from each stakeholder community to translate the resulting value propositions into specific activities. Nearly 70 people from the Europeana network were involved in 30 hours of passionate discussion. This was followed by a thorough analysis and synthesis of the results.

The process resulted in the following value propositions that Europeana could offer.

The users valued:
- trusted source
- ease of use
- re-use
- in my workflow.

The content providers and aggregators valued:
- visibility
- services
- revenue.

The policy-makers valued:
- inclusion
- leadership
- education
- economic growth.

The market valued:
- straightforward route to content
- access to the network
- premium services
- brand association.

The consultation also provided us with expert predictions about our working environment in 2011-2015. Social trends, evolving customer needs and changing economic and political factors were identified. These will determine the direction Europeana takes in order to continue delivering stakeholder value.

At the UKSG conference in 2010, a quick survey was made to determine the value propositions that Europeana could deliver to the publisher. This resulted in the following:
- new route to their content

![Business Model Canvas developed by Osterwalder and Pigneur](image-url)
new access to their content, e.g. search on Vermeer will also bring up the published books and articles
• semantic linking and enrichment of data
• a European lobbyist for widescale digitization and distribution of in-copyright material.

These are all areas of commitment in the Europeana Strategic Plan 2011-2015 and the value propositions form the basis of the Europeana strategy for the next five years. The following four strategic tracks represent the results of our consultation and analysis. They are the means by which Europeana will continue to deliver value to our stakeholder groups in the years 2011-2015. These four strategic tracks – aggregate, facilitate, distribute and engage – underpin Europeana’s future direction and business success. They are fully described in the Europeana Strategic Plan and briefly below:

Aggregate
Build the open trusted source for European cultural heritage content
• source content that represents the diversity of our cultural heritage
• extend the network of aggregators
• improve the quality of the metadata.

Facilitate
Support the cultural heritage sector through knowledge transfer, innovation and advocacy
• share knowledge among cultural heritage professionals
• foster research and development of digital heritage applications
• strengthen Europeana’s advocacy role.

Distribute
Make their heritage available to users wherever they are, whenever they want it
• upgrade the Europeana portal
• put content in the users’ workflow
• develop partnerships to deliver content in new ways.

Engage
Cultivate new ways for users to participate in their cultural heritage
• enhance the users’ experience
• extend our social media programmes and use of web 2.0 tools
• broker a new relationship between curators, content and users.

In line with the creation of the value propositions, some attempt has been made to show the cost-benefit ratio of Europeana.

Cost benefits
Some of the most important benefits of Europeana are considered economically intangible. These include the contribution to a European society connected through culture, the fostering of social inclusion and the furthering of a collective, pan-European understanding. Other benefits are potentially easier to quantify, such as the economic return of increased visibility of our shared heritage, the cost reductions realized by developing and sharing open source code and the value that access to culture can contribute to the educational sector and the creative industries.

Key metrics are being developed to better track and measure some of these effects over the course of the coming years. In order to give an indication of the areas where positive returns on investment (ROIs) are to be expected, we use the (social) cost-benefits classification guidelines developed by OECD of external, indirect and direct ROIs.

External
External benefits are those that can be classified as positive consequences (externalities) of the actions of Europeana. Although hard to quantify, these effects are at the heart of Europeana’s existence and are judged to be an important contribution to the Digital Agenda of the European Union and an underpinning of the knowledge economy. These include but are not limited to:
• the strengthening of a shared European culture
• the promotion and enabling of diversity
• the increase of social inclusion
• the improvement of multimedia literacy.

All are deemed of high importance and Europeana has a unique competitive advantage in succeeding in developing these opportunities.

Indirect
Indirect benefits are benefits that, through market transactions, are transmitted to consumers
and producers in other markets. By making the material accessible outside the cultural sector and by the development of new business models and public–private partnerships, Europeana can play an important role in reaping these indirect benefits. Expected benefits in this area include:

- time savings by researchers
- creation of new businesses in areas such as tourism
- creation of new jobs in the creative industries
- cost savings in the educational market.

**Direct**  
Direct benefits refer to the benefits for Europeana and its participating investors and partner institutions. Direct benefits include the following:

- increased visibility of the content of participating institutions, creating relevance and direct economic returns from use of online content and physical footfall
- decreased cost of providing access through the adoption of the open source code developed by Europeana, such as the portal and ingestion tools
- cost savings through standardization of metadata
- cost savings through knowledge transfer.

**Barriers to success**

Some of the difficulties facing Europeana include the creation of silos of digitization, where access is only allowed within an institution or within a country: a somewhat counter-productive concept to the idea of a single trading block. There remains a perceived need to generate revenue from Europeana.eu. This is fraught with problems, such as providers not wanting advertising on the site or unequal sponsoring by member states and for the amount of money being debated (250,000–500,000 euros) may not be worth the effort.

Probably the largest barriers are the agreements with providers of metadata that have a non-commercial clause in them thus preventing Europeana from publishing the full Europeana data set as linked open data, and in theory from being crawled by the search engines.

Further problems come from the mechanisms of dealing with copyright not being harmonized or useful in a web context. As well, the lack of application by content providers on persistent identifiers leads to problems for users in the longer term and, finally, the need for true multilingualism in search and retrieval has a direct negative affect on the take-up by school children of the content in Europeana.

**The near future**

Further areas were highlighted at the UKSG presentation and the following are now in progress:

- end-user marketing – post the launch of the operational service in the Summer of 2010, a large-scale end user marketing campaign has gone into action
- more content but not just numbers – efforts are now on the quality of metadata submitted and the acquisition of content that strengthen some of the natural themes of Europeana
- user-generated content – some user-generated content from the Great War Archive in the UK has already been incorporated into the portal. During 2011 an equivalent archive is being built with Germany and France, making use of the Great War Archive community software RunCoCo and the knowledge and expertise of Oxford University Computing Services in running and managing such events
- Public Domain Mark and Usage Guide – launched at the Europeana Open Culture Conference in Amsterdam, October 2010. The mark was a joint effort with Creative Commons and aims to make it easy for the user to know that an object is really ‘public domain’. Alongside the mark, a series of norms were developed into the Usage Guide which asks the user to respect the work and effort of the contributing organization, not to abuse it and to ensure attribution stays in place
- collective licensing is being investigated as part of EuropeanaConnect to help with the issue of being able to digitize material of unknown copyright in the first place and to be able to create access. First results on this are due in April 2010.
Conclusion

Overall, Europeana is on track and, helped by The New Renaissance Report of the Comité de Sages and its own Europeana Strategic Plan 2011-2015, it has a vision for the future. With help from the content providers and stakeholders, we just need to make that future happen.

‘Creativity is the driving force of economic growth.’

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Réunion des musées nationaux - Jardinière zoomorphe dite “coupe au faucon”, décor peint et doré sous couverte (close-up detail):
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Jill Cousins
Executive Director
Europeana Foundation
Prins-Willem-Alexanderhof 5
2509 LK The Hague
The Netherlands
E-mail: Jill.Cousins@KB.nl