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Building infrastructures for archives in a digital world. APEx project, 26.06.2013-28.06.2013.

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Building infrastructures for archives in a digital world

Digital humanities combine traditional methodologies from historical and social science with computational tools. As a hybrid field of research, they provide certain chances and challenges for the archival community, too. "Building infrastructures for archives in a digital world", thus, belongs to the core issues of a project called Archives Portal Europe Network of Excellence, funded within the EU´s ICT Policy Support Programme.

In order to discuss sufficient frameworks and enhance international collaboration, the APEx consortium, currently consisting of 28 national archives and the International Center for Archival Research (ICARUS), has organized a major conference and gathered experts and scholars from more than 13 European and overseas countries at Trinity College, Dublin.

After a pre-conference primer by Wim van Dongen (Amsterdam) explaining the institutional goals of APEx to a wider audience plus a few opening words by Frances McGee (National Archives of Ireland, IE), Martin Berendse (Nationaal Archief, NL) and Jimmy Deenihan T.D. (Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, IE), three introduction speeches tried to shed some light on the future of archives in a digital world.

DANIEL PITTI (Charlottesville) stressed the intellectual, professional and political significance of new technological opportunities for humanities scholars. Concentrating on archivists, BJÖRN JORDELL (Stockholm) mentioned the ever-growing importance of open data issues, while JENNIFER EDMOND (Dublin) energetically referred to how crucial weighing up chances and risks is, especially for smaller archives, when it comes to making policy choices for their digital future.

Session 1.1 continued to broach strategic issues for archives in a digital environment. ICARUS-president THOMAS AIGNER (St. Pölten) illustrated the significance of sharing experience, expertise, resources and knowledge beyond borders. He suggested to rethink traditional approaches as well as to finally overcome institutional limits of all kinds. Furthermore, DANIEL JELLER (Wien), BORIS BLAZINIC (Zagreb) and HERBERT WURSTER (Passau) dealt with general principles, strategies and techniques for archives to ensure usability as well as preservation of cultural heritage in the future. Wurster emphasized on the importance of keeping up coherence between various types of new media, the "original" sources and information from established finding aids.

Consequently, in session 1.2, JULIA FALLON (The Hague) presented the Europeana Licensing Framework enabling standardized, free and open sharing of metadata. It offers integrated access to more than 25 million books, films, paintings, museum objects and archival documents from about 2,200 content providers. Using the example of monasterium.net, WALTER SCHOLGER showcased some challenges for archives regarding the provision and usage of digital respectively digitized resources. Then MARTIN FRIES (Bern) pointed on data protection issues and described how the Swiss Federal Archives are dealing with sensitive personal data. In the same context, DOROTA DRZEWIECKA and KATARZYNA PEPLOWSKA (both Torun) summarized Polish state law on open access and depicted how archives could ensure that digitization projects do not violate individual rights guaranteed.

The next panel, session 1.3, was dedicated to interdisciplinary cooperation. JANE STEVENSON (Manchester) advanced the view that the expansion of open data was an inevitable fact. Therefore, archives needed to do whatever possible to make sure that their resources remain on the forefront of scholarship and innovation. More concretely, EDDY PUT (Brussels) advocated the future necessity of a thesaurus of documentary forms, thus creatively unlocking traditional finding aids for digital use. As practical examples for successful interdisciplinary collaboration, CONSTANZA GIANNACCINI (Pisa) as well as DAMIANA LUZZI (Florence)) and IRENE PEDRETTI (Rome) presented their current

project: http://www.burckhardtsource.org respectively an ontology for the Historical Archives of the Pontifical Gregorian University.

Session 1.4 turned perspectives, now focusing on the actual users of archivistic content. According to STEFANO VITALI (Bologna), the user profile has fundamentally changed and became more diverse as most archives have gradually been opening up for the digital future. In order to meet those new user types´ expectations, STEPHANE GIERTS (Brussels) and STEPHEN HENNICKE (Berlin) suggested ways to improve accessibility and communication - archives should try to fit their users´ information needs by analyzing enquiry patterns. Instead, PETRA LINKS (Amsterdam) and RETO SPECK (London) highlighted the importance of inter-mediation. They perceive archivists in the role of multiplicators. Links and Speck see a necessity for re-conceptualization of the relationship between archivists, researchers and archives.

In the next session, LAURA GOULD and GUINEVERE BARLOW (both Edinburgh) talked about how social media has helped the Lothian Health Services Archive not only to build new audiences, but also lasting partnerships with other archives, organizations and individuals. Later on, DOREEN KELIMES (Speyer) presented an accurate overview on Web 2.0 activities of several Baltic archives, while ALEXANDER SCHATEK (Wiener Neustadt) discussed crowd-sourcing and volunteer work as a huge grassroots potential for processing archival data which must not be neglected. Afterwards, PETER MOSER (Bern) suggested the virtual nature of his Archives of Rural History as an alternative to the costly establishment of traditional archives. As another example, TOM COBBAERT (Antwerpen) introduced the ArchiefWiki as an initiative by the Dutch-Flemish online community Archief 2.0 which tries to bring together information on Dutch archival terminology in history and present as well as standards and archival laws.

Session 1.6 was devoted to archival content in didactic practice. In her authoritative keynote speech, ANTONELLA AMBROSIO (Naples) emphasized that archives are indeed able to promote virtual learning communities, because they concretely contribute to the shared European and international science community by offering digitized documents and data online. In a very concise manner, HRVOJE STANCIC together with ARIAN RAJH and ANA STANKOVIC (all Zagreb) then benchmarked the educational content on the websites of various international archives and developed a vision of the future development of educational activities in the archival online environment. Consequently, KATHRIN PINDL (Regensburg) presented the results of an online survey she had conducted among the didactic partners of Regensburg´s Spitalarchiv under the aspects of best practice and evaluation, using statistic methods amongst others. Session 1.6 managed to enlighten the present state of the implementation of innovative didactic practice in an archival environment, thus providing valuable experience for fellow institutions.

The second panels dealt with technological requirements of the archives´ digital future. In session 2.1, DANIEL PITTI (Charlottesville), KARIN BREDENBERG (Stockholm), KERSTIN ARNOLD (Berlin) plus MAUD MEDVES (Berlin) discussed some topical issues on the so-called archival metadata landscape and the establishment of common standards for digital archives.

"It´s tool time!" has been the motto of session 2.2. SUSANNE WAIDMANN (Berlin) and BASTIAAN VERHOEF (Amsterdam) occupied themselves with digital tools facilitating the search functionalities and result presentations of the Archives Portal Europe. They put emphasis on the challenges which a multilingual and multicultural portal poses on its technological backbones. JOCHEN GRAF (Cologne), a software developer specialized in metadata standards, XML technologies, JavaScript and object-oriented programming, pointed out some special features of the Monasterium Collaborative Archives and suggested that these could be seen as potential content providers for the Archives Portal Europe. EOGHAN O CARRAGAIN (Dublin) and LUKE O´SULLIVAN (Swansea) presented their open-source project VuFind which is "a library resource portal designed and developed for libraries by libraries". They outlined some of the motivations for incorporating archival collections into VuFind, reviewed some of the technical and design choices made by Vufind developers and last but not least stressed the relevance of VuFind for fellow cultural institutions.

For the last ten to twenty years, the working environment of archives has changed fundamentally, "from cardboard boxes to European e-archives". ZOLTAN SZATUCSEK (Budapest), MARIA POPKOVACHEVA-TERZIEVA (Sofia) and JOHN COX (Dublin) told the audience about how their institutions are facing the challenges of standardization, data security and communication, possibly redefining the nature of humanities research. In this context, PETER FLEER (Bern) focused on the tools necessary in order to turn digital information into actual knowledge. In a very passionate contribution, GRACE TOLAND (Dublin) of the Irish Traditional

Music Archive shared her results of a case study concerning the structure, content and potential of the Inishowen Song Project. In the course of Toland´s presentation, the audience was given the chance to hear and see Irish traditional singers from Donegal.

In the following session, HRVOJE STANCIC, ARIAN RAJH and EDVIN BURSIC (all Zagreb), GIOVANNI CICCAGLIONI (Pisa), SALVATORE VASSALLO (Rome) as well as ARMIN STRAUBE (Frankfurt am Main) discussed a few questions of sustaining digital framework for long-term preservation of digital cultural heritage, whereas the speakers in session 2.5 offered concrete insights into the matter of building frameworks for archives on a national level. VLATKA LEMIC (Zagreb) described in how far regulations, standards and infrastructure were just preconditions which had to be upgraded through planning, coordination and managing. CHRISTINA WOLF and GERALD MAIER (both Stuttgart) introduced the activities and prospects of the German Archives Portal and the German Digital Library, also addressing the definition of a standard for data delivery based on EAD (Encoded Archival Description), an XML standard for encoding archival finding aids. ISTVAN KENYERES (Budapest), KAROL KRAWCZYK (Warsaw) and CHEZKIE KASNETT (Jerusalem) enriched the panel by explaining their experiences on a national level as well as pointing out approaches and strategies for future networks.

The last session expanded the view onto the international level. MANFRED THALLER, JOCHEN GRAF, SEBASTIAN ROSE and ANDRE STREICHER (all Cologne) talked about the software part of Monasterium.net, emphasizing on software support problems for the multilingual project. GEROLD RITTER and JONAS ARNOLD (both Zurich) presented their "Archives Online" project and its technical architecture, while HENK HARMSEN (Amsterdam) showcased DARIAH, the Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities. DARIAH shall develop, maintain and operate an infrastructure in order to bring together the state-of-the-art digital arts and humanities activities of its member countries. Finally, ANNA BOHN and ALEKSANDRA PAWLICZEK (both Berlin) specified how the CENDARI project is building up frameworks to provide access and link data concerning archival holdings of different media types relevant for the First World War - in a transnational, interdisciplinary and multilingual approach.

All in all, most participants at the conference "Building infrastructures for archives in a digital world" perceived the event as an extraordinarily productive one. Taking into account the diverse yet high-profile line up of speakers, the Dublin conference provided more than a few opportunities for instructive interdisciplinary and intercultural exchange. As a by-product of the conference, a number of new inter-institutional partnerships could be established - a fact that bears witness to the sustainable and inspirational effects of the APEx conference on the international archival science community on its path towards the digital future.

Conference Overview:

Introduction speeches: The future of archives in a digital world

Daniel Pitti (Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, University of Virgina, USA): Strategic issues for archives in a digital world

Björn Jordell (Riksarkivet, Sweden): Open data and its strategic impact on archives

Jennifer Edmond (CENDARI project, Ireland): Learning to say 'No': strategic considerations for archives in the digital world

Session 1.1: Strategic issues for archives in a digital world

Thomas Aigner (ICARUS, Austria): International cooperation as a precondition for building infrastructures

Daniel Jeller (ICARUS, Austria): The digital age: opportunities to ensure access to our cultural heritage

Boris Blažinic (Institute for quality and human resource development, Croatia): How to raise visibility: archive's hidden treasuries

Herbert Wurster (Diocese of Passau, Germany): Persistent-meta-data, the keeping of records and archival science

Session 1.2: Open data and licensing

Julia Fallon (IPR & Policiy Advisor Europeana): Open data and licensing (legal aspects, consequences for accessibility, economic aspects, copyright, creative commons etc.)

Walter Scholger (Centre for Information Modelling in the Humanities Graz, Austria): Archives and the 'digital turn': challenges, opportunities and possible solutions to Open Access, provision and use of archival resources.

Martin Fries (Swiss Federal Archives, Switzerland): Everything online? Dealing with data protection issues

Dorota Drzewiecka, Katarzyna Peplowska (Nicolaus Copernicus University of Torun, Poland): Access to Polish archival material: legal dilemmas

Session 1.3: Linking of data - interdisciplinary cooperation

Jane Stevenson (Archives Hub, Great Britain): A Licence to Thrill: the exciting potential of open data

Eddy Put (State Archives Belgium, Belgium): Pleading the case for a flora of archives

Constanza Giannaccini (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Italy): Burckhardtsource.org. A semantic archive

Damiana Luzzi (Digital Renaissance Foundation, Italy), Irene Pedretti (Historical Archives of the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, IT): An ontology for APUG: problem, method and solution

Session 1.4: Users of archivistic content now and in the future

Stefano Vitali (Soprintendenza Archivistica per l'Emilia Romagna, Italy): Archivists and users in the virtual searching room

Stéphane Gierts (Council of the European Union): Archival access and online archives of the Council of the European Union - Considering the user perspective

Steffen Hennicke (Berlin School of Library and Information Science,Germany): Modelling the information needs of archival users

Petra Links (NIOD - Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Netherlands) & Reto Speck (NIOD, Research Associate at Centre for e-Research, King's College London, Great Britain): Research infrastructures and archival inter-mediation

Session 1.5: Building new partnerships

Laura Gould (Lothian Health Services Archive, Great Britain) & Guinevere Barlow (Carmichael Watson Project, Great Britain): Small Scale, Big Change - the impact of social media

Doreen Kelimes (City Archives Speyer, Germany): The eastern and north-eastern European archives between digitisation, Web 2.0 and social media

Alexander Schatek (Topothek, Austria): "Let the crowd work". Creating a Virtual Archive by Local Units

Peter Moser (Archives of Rural History, Switzerland): Virtual archives: a new solution to old problems?

Tom Cobbaert (Archief 2.0, Belgium): ArchiefWiki, the collaborative success of independent knowledge sharing

Session 1.6: Archival content in didactic practice

Antonella Ambrosio (UNINA - Università degli Studi di NapoliFederico II, Italy): Charters and digital archives in the didactic practice

Hrvoje Stancic, Arian Rajh, Ana Stankovic (Department of Information and Communication Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia): Archival education activities in the online environment

Artur Dirmeier & Kathrin Pindl (Spitalarchiv Regensburg, Germany): Spitalarchiv: didactic practice in a digital world

Session 2.1: Archival metadata and standards for digital archives

Daniel Pitti (Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, University of Virginia, USA): The emerging archival metadata landscape

Karin Bredenberg (National Archives of Sweden, Sweden): Record creators: use of EAC-CPF in the Archives Portal Europe

Kerstin Arnold (Technical Coordinator APEx, Federal Archives of Germany,Germany): EAD revision and its effects on the Archives Portal Europe

Maud Medves (CENDARI project, France): EAG CENDARI: customising EAG for research purposes

Session 2.2: Best practice: It's tool time!

Susanne Waidmann (Federal Archives of Germany, Germany): The Archives Portal Europe: the adventure of presenting multicultural and multilingual information on archival material, its creators and their repositories in just one tool

Bastiaan Verhoef (APEx, Nationaal Archief, Netherlands): The backend of the Archives Portal Europe: lessons learned and challenges waiting (provisional)

Jochen Graf (University of Cologne, Germany): Transcription, contextualization and peer review: the 'Monasterium Collaborative Archives'

Eoghan Ó Carragáin (National Library of Ireland, Ireland), Luke O'Sullivan (Swansea Univesity Library, Ireland): Archival collections in Vufind

Session 2.3: Best practice: from cardboard boxes to European e-archives

Zoltán Szatucsek (National Archives of Hungary,Hungary): Search all, find more: access to the Archival Database Service in Hungary

Maria Popkovacheva-Terzieva (Archives State Agency of Bulgaria, Bulgaria): Archives State Agency: attempts to popularize its digital holdings

Peter Fleer (Swiss Federal Archives, Switzerland): Interpretation of digital records

John Cox (National University of Ireland, Ireland): The Abbey Theatre Archive Digitization Project: challenges and opportunities

Grace Toland (Irish Traditional Music Archive, Ireland): The Irish Traditional Music Archive & The Inishowen Song Project

Session 2.4: Best practice: sustaining digital infrastructures in the long run

Hrvoje Stancic, Arian Rajh (Department of Information and Communication Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia), Edvin Buršic (Financial Agency, Croatia): Using Archival Information Packages for production of sustainable archival collections of digitised records

Giovanni Ciccaglioni (ICUU - Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities, Italy): Digital cultural heritage and e-infrastructures

Salvatore Vassallo (Instituto Centrale per gli Archivi, Italy): The Archival Resource Catalogue within the Italian National Archival System

Armin Straube (German National Library, Germany): Frameworks for digital preservation

Session 2.5: Best practice: building infrastructures on a national level

Vlatka Lemic (Croatian State Archives, Croatia): Archival infrastructure at a national level: introducing interoperability, networking and integration in practice

Christina Wolf, Gerald Maier (State Archives Baden-Württemberg, Germany): Building a German archives portal: development of a national platform for archival information within the German Digital Library

István Kenyeres (Budapest City Archives, Hungary): Archives Portal Hungary: asolution for joint publication of databases and digitized archival materials

Karol Krawczyk (Head Office of State Archives, Poland): Holdings accessible online: the Polish experience

Chezkie Kasnett (The National Library of Israel, Israel): The historical archive reborn: approach and strategy for the Archive network)

Session 2.6: Best practice: building infrastructures on an international level

Manfred Thaller, Jochen Graf, Sebastian Rose, Andre Streicher (University of Cologne, Germany): Network(s) for Europe's charters: a proven blueprint for an international infrastructure

Gerold Ritter & Jonas Arnold (Archives Online, Switzerland): Archives Online: real time searched in 13 archives without redundant data

Henk Harmsen (DARIAH-EU): DARIAH: the adventure of building an infrastructure

Anna Bohn & Aleksandra Pawliczek (CENDARI project, Germany): CENDARI: building up a research infrastructure on The First World War across borders

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the list discussion logs at:
http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl.

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