Digital Strategies for Heritage (DISH) 2013

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Chefs' Table session

Table Number: 5
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Table Host: Suzanne de Jong-Kole and Joost van Leusen
Title: How to digitize 7 million natural history objects at less than € 2,- per object in 5 years?

Introduction

How is the knowledge gained during a digitization project secured and how can this knowledge be re-used by other institutions?

In 2010 Naturalis received € 13 M to digitize 7 million relevant natural history objects from a total collection of 37 million objects. The received amount of money implies a digitization cost per object of max € 1,85. At that time object digitization was normally done at a rate of € 4 to € 5,- per object. To bring down the digitization costs new processes had to be developed. To overcome that the activities of the standing organisation were only focused on the digitization project a temporary project structure had to be setup with employees that would run and man the project. A team of at its peak 70 external persons is dedicated to the digitizing project. Now, halfway during the leadtime of the project the average cost per object is a little less than € 1,85.

Discussion

Suzanne de Jong-Kole and Joost van Leusen
How to digitize 7 million natural history objects at less than € 2,- per object in 5 years?

Naturalis received a grant of 14 million euros to digitize a large part of the collection. But, how are we going to digitize? pinned insects, animals in alcohol. you dont want to mix them.

There have to be specific rules and materials to digitize.
Fumes of the animal out of alcohol have to be able to get out of the room.

"Collections without metadata aren't allowed into Naturalis. They are of no use to researchers/scientists."

"When it is found, where it is found and who found it are the most important metadata."

The difficult collections are digitized in the museum itself because you dont wan't them in a car or bus.

"We ended up with 10 rooms where collections are digitized. Internal and external"

"Of the 7 million objects we still have 4 million to go. But with the 40.000 we digitize each day this is not a problem. "

This is a project, what happens when it finishes?

Every 'digistreet' should, after this project, digitize objects of their own street.The curators of each street could do this 3 hours a week. But to get this to work, there has to be talked with management. If its profitable for their own work, they may be more obliged to digitize.