Chefs' Table session

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Title: Invasion of the Hybrids! How digital heritage collections disrupt traditional domain boundaries

Introduction

How digital heritage collections disrupt traditional domain boundaries.

It has become more and more apparent, that the creation and maintenance of digital services are forcing archives, libraries and museums to change. New competencies are needed to engage with digital audiences; new business models are needed to sustain the digital services; new collaborations are needed to enhance the value creation. One aspect that is often overlooked, but that will have serious consequences for the traditional boundaries, are the digital collection policies.

ENUMERATE and other surveys show that a vast majority of heritage institutions are extending their digital collections beyond the scope of their physical collections. Not only do they collect new types of born digital heritage, they also breathe a new digital life into collection types that are not part of their core collections. They even collect object types in a digital format that they didn't collect as part of their physical collections. Archives digitise newspapers and paintings; museums digitise books and archival materials; libraries digitize photographs and manuscripts. And they all collect websites, games and other born digital cultural heritage, which they make accessible through heritage-wide portals like Europeana. In the ENUMERATE survey, many institutions mentioned that they felt uncomfortable with the label 'Archive', 'Library' or 'Museum' and they chose to classify them as 'Other type'. How much longer can the segregation of LAM's remain in the digital age? In this Chefs table we will share some remarkable data from recent research to feed the debate.

Discussion
- Future of the domains we work in – i.e., museums, archives, libraries, monuments, archaeology, etcetera. Will these domains be different in 25 years from now? A lot of [YES]. Museums and archives are strong concepts in society.
- Lots of institutions digitise photos and their archives in general. This is mainly their documentation collection. These are the popular collections to be digitised.
- The main issue: segregation with the domains.
- Europeana brings together all the different domains.
- Born digital heritage – does one collect this? [YES] It is being collected and preserved for future generations.
  - Note: Very little diversity in the different types.
- There is a tendency to be more 'traditional' and collect physical artefacts.

Discussion:
1. The shift to user driven services reduces the need for domain orientated services.
2. Management of digital heritage collections.
3. Collecting digital born heritage.
4. Government funding. How does it affect and change policy.

Users aren't interested in where the information comes from. Bundle all the information [accessible] together and make it easier for the user to access the information. One search environment for the information. Within the search environment create separate 'paths' for the different domains. Maintaining specific metadata for the different domains. Should we then change the model for the practise for the institutions?

Losing context, by bringing everything together. Context can be a part of the specific domain. One must bring these domains together so that they may exchange information, ideas and concepts. By losing context, one [artefact] can lose its meaning. It seems though, that this is defined and interpreted by the specific domains. It's about the value one perceives.

Collecting stories – museums, archives and libraries. These domains can either be the beginning or the end of the spectrum. One can collect and/or create stories by collecting. Separating these functions, is that necessary? It seems that it's best to combine and use all the sources to create one big story. Then one focusses on a specific topic.

Institutions should have less of an ego. It disrupts the things you want to achieve as a heritage institution. In essence, put aside your ego and collect for the greater good of history. On the other hand, their ego's may prove to be stronger and unchangeable.

Practices of different domains cross over. For example: a museum may use archival practices to collect their artefacts. However, there will always be a difference between the function and the institution itself. Experience forms an important part of a visitor's perception.

Hybridity – blended set of practices and tools. The user wants everything accessible in one portal. How to discover what is available, one ought to be able to cross reference the different domains. Institutional domains are working together more and more, forming cross-domain institutions such as the New Insititution.