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Chefs' Table session

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Table Session: 02
Table Host: Marco de Niet and Gerhard Jan Nauta
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

What kind of physical collections are you digitizing? Photographs are on top, with 66 institutions. Specific looking at the domains, the domain archive digitizes as most their archive records. Among all the institutions the most digitized items are photographs and archive records. Archives are digitizing all kind of objects. Only 33% of the archive records digitized are digitized by Archives Portal Europe. Born digital heritage is been collected by more than 50% of the institutions. Institutions are stretching what they collect digital for their collection.

Discussion points:
 * the shift to more user driven services reduces the need for domain oriented services.
 * management of digital heritage collections is becoming more and more generic information management (cf. software for domain specific collection management).

* if heritage institutions collect similar born digital object types, traditional domain boundaries (based on physical management) will make less sense in the future.
 * government funding in organized along domain boundaries. This will not be an effective way for the funding of digital services in the future.

There are collections disappearing, the Dutch archives have a law which Dutch museums don't have.

There is a gap between what the institute wants to tell and their collection. The collections are based on the story the institution wants to tell and on their identity. In digitizing the collection this is changing.

We still focus a lot on the physical collection. With changing the mindset for upcoming professionals in the field towards digital collection, maybe the physical collection gets less important.

You can use your own collection to tell your own story. When you work together with other institutions for reaching more users you need another strategy.

Do you need to collect all information on your own website or do you link to other institutions to give users more information? The majority at the table thinks you have to link to each other.

The institutions are still based on the old conservation domains. Should the functions of the institutions become the base instead of the current base?

It is much easier to connect with other institutions if the institution is online. Next to that it is easier if you have for example common themes.

Should the focus be on the popular subjects to digitize? If you combine institutions you can easier provide the non-popular subjects.

How do we enhance the compatibility between institutions? Making the connection between the institution and the users is necessary.

In Gelderland there is one platform where the users can find for example information on the second world war. Every institution is represented with two results.