

"The Digitization Age. Mass Culture is Quality Culture" by Promoter Srl

The Digitization Age: Mass Culture is Quality Culture. Challenges for cultural heritage and society.

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Abstract. The amount of digitized cultural heritage in Europe continues to grow: the digitization activities have a positive impact on the society, by making the cultural heritage more accessible for the citizens, and by generating benefits to the content owners. Several questions arise about digitized cultural heritage: how can digital cultural data be re-used at best, what is the impact on society and how to preserve it in the long term? This paper offers an overview of EU projects that try to provide answers: EuropeanaPhotography, Europeana Space, RICHES, PREFORMA, Civic Epistemologies. The common key-words in order to guarantee the best results are in any case knowledge-sharing and networking.

Keywords: digitization, EU projects, photography, creativity, re-use, societal changes, archival standards, preservation, knowledge sharing, networking, digitalmeetsculture.net.

1 Introduction

The Digital Age is also the Digitization Age. Due to the support provided by national and international programs, in the past years almost everywhere in Europe big efforts were put in place by public institutions and private bodies for converting the "physical cultural heritage" into "digital". This happened not only for documents and images, but also for audio/video resources, for the performing arts, for sport and folkloristic customs and for the monuments and landscapes. Also intangible cultural heritage such as oral memories, food and drink, local traditions went digital, so that no aspect misses to be present in the digital world. After digitizing, the content is also made available on the Web, thus over-flooding internet with zillions of digital objects of cultural, artistic, scientific value. Besides that, we also see a growing impact of user-generated content that is converging on the Web and that represents a new frontier of our "global" culture.

What to do with this enormous amount of files? First need is to collect them and organize them in a sensed way, to facilitate search and retrieval: a file that cannot be retrieved by a user, simply doesn't exist for that user. The attempt to collect in a single container all the European cultural heritage is probably utopian, although the enormous amount of digital resources should be managed and collected somehow, for