



Image: Two men dissecting a body with plague
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Table of Contents

Europeana for Research: Current Context, Vision and Challenges.....	3
The Context for Research.....	3
The Vision: Europeanafor Research.....	3
Current Challenges.....	4
Overarching recommendations	5
Draft Policy Recommendations: Europeana for Research	6
Recommendations for research policy makers	6
Recommendations for culture policymakers	6
Recommendations for cultural heritage institutions.....	7
Reference documents	8
Research	8
Cultural heritage.....	8

Europeana for Research: Current Context, Vision and Challenges

The Context for Research

Constant advances in information and communication technologies are bringing major changes in the research process and culture. Research is becoming digital for its entire process cycle. Researchers increasingly rely on internet tools to carry out research and they expect the immediate and open availability of content, publications and research data. Finally, they often communicate the results of their research exclusively online and more frequently release them in open access. All of which is drastically changing the landscape in scholarly communication.

Recent years have witnessed the birth of Digital Humanities, Digital Arts and Social Sciences as fields in which researchers carry out digital research with advanced IT tools and techniques such as text and data mining, visualization techniques and crowdsourcing, to ask new questions and often make discoveries and connections among large collections of digital material that would have been impossible to make through traditional research.

At the same time, some of these developments in the research ecosystem take place at the local or national level leading to considerable fragmentation. Bringing together disparate digital resources, tools, infrastructures, and indeed accrued knowledge of all types, in a fashion that fosters science as an open enterprise to accelerate research and innovation for the prosperity of European society and economy therefore becomes more and more important.

The Vision: Europeana for Research

Europeana is the platform where the libraries, archives, museums and other memory institutions of Europe deposit, exchange and share metadata and content for discovery and use by a variety of users.

This aggregated, normalized, standardized, enriched data wealth of 30m digitized cultural heritage objects spans the entire breadth of the cultural history of Europe. Europeana can therefore serve as a primary resource for research for scholars in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. With explicit licensing and provenance information Europeana metadata and content can be easily used for research, publishing and education. This corpus of metadata is a body of knowledge that can form the basis for small or big-data research in the future.

Europeana will provide an enriched set of metadata with the correct licenses attributed according to researcher needs and so that others can develop services on top of that data

and content. Europeana will encourage the availability of digitized content for research and innovation, and advocate strongly for a European copyright framework that supports text and data mining and other solutions that enhance research of large cultural data corpora.

In partnership with culture and research policymakers and cultural heritage institutions, and taking into consideration the current developments in Digital Arts and Humanities and the research and culture ecosystem, Europeana envisions matching its content and services to the needs of research communities thereby becoming a major resource and potential enabler of e-research in the near future and acquiring an important role in the research ecosystem and value chain.

Current Challenges

There are numerous challenges in achieving this vision:

- Researchers in the Arts and Humanities still rely less on online tools and services for performing their research compared to their colleagues in the natural and medical sciences.
- Trusted digital cultural information does not proliferate to the same extent as research data in the science, technical, engineering and medical fields, with only an estimated 10% of the European cultural heritage digitized (ENUMERATE Survey 2014).
- The value and use of digital cultural heritage for research has not been emphasized enough by relevant actors, e.g. cultural heritage institutions, culture policy makers.
- When cultural information becomes digital there are often barriers to its open dissemination, and therefore reuse, also for research and also through Europeana, such as:
 - Intellectual Property Rights barriers, in particular of digitized cultural information with heavy burden on proprietary attitudes and policies.
 - Problems in implementing internationally accepted digitization standards that support interoperability and openness.
 - Lacking of sustainable e-infrastructure and specific skills in the cultural heritage field to guarantee the sustainable accessibility of digital cultural heritage
- The European e-infrastructure environment for research and culture is fragmented.
- Europeana is not yet perceived as a platform that systematically serves research.

Overarching recommendations

- **Culture and research policy makers are invited** to work together at the national and European level to achieve coordinated policies, strategies and practices leading to the greatest possible openness and reuse of Europe's digital cultural heritage, for the benefit of research, innovation and the citizens of Europe.
- **Research policy makers are invited** to take measures that promote the use of Europeana as a resource for research and to encourage synergies among related initiatives, infrastructures and stakeholders at all levels capitalizing on investments already made.
- **Culture policy makers** are invited to take active and coordinated measures for the digitization of Europe's cultural heritage to enable its widest possible access, reuse and preservation for the benefit of society and the European economy, and addressing the needs of the researchers.
- **Cultural heritage institutions are invited** to collaborate at the national and European level, using Europeana where possible, to meet the increasing demand for digitized cultural content for research, along internationally accepted standards of interoperability and in the maximum possible openness to meet the needs of the researcher community.
- **The European Commission is invited** to develop policies and instruments that enable and promote synergies among initiatives and e-infrastructures of similar scope to capitalise on investments already committed for the promotion of research and digital culture, and support the European dialogue of relevant stakeholders. Specific legal measures are needed to allow for text and data mining.
- **Europeana is invited** to accelerate, subject to funding, the implementation of tools and services that will serve the needs of researchers, provide good practices of the use of the platform for research, and increase its collaboration with relevant initiatives and e-infrastructures at the European level.
- **All stakeholders** are invited to collaborate closely at the national and European level within the research and culture ecosystem to safeguard sustainability of the European cultural digital heritage and its use for research purposes (for example in Digital Arts and Humanities) also through Europeana and under the principles of openness and transparency conveyed by the Berlin Declaration on Open Access for Science and Humanities.

Draft Policy Recommendations: Europeana for Research

Recommendations for research policy makers

Research policy makers are invited to explore and exploit the rich content of European Cultural Heritage, its role within the European and global e-infrastructure ecosystem and facilitate the further development of the European platform for research by:

1. Collaborating with culture policymakers and other important stakeholders in the research ecosystem, such as research performing organizations, to develop policies and instruments that demonstrate the use of digital cultural heritage for research on the basis of researcher needs and provide impetus for data-driven research in cultural heritage.
2. Take an active role in enabling synergies and complementarities between national and European Research Infrastructures and other initiatives in the Arts and Humanities, thus capitalizing on existing investments for the benefits of research.
3. Emphasizing the need for permanent, cross border, rights labeled access to cultural heritage material for research.
4. Encouraging the use and development of Europeana as an open and shared resource of cultural heritage for primary and citizen science research in national and European research environments.
5. Advocating for, educating and developing policies for open access and reuse to publicly funded research outputs, including research and cultural data, for the benefit of researchers and citizens and the use of open standards and licenses.
6. Research policy makers are invited to stimulate change by promoting new and innovative research and innovation actions for digital cultural heritage.

Recommendations for culture policymakers

Culture policy makers are invited actively to contribute to the online accessibility in the widest possible sense of Europe's cultural heritage, using the Europeana platform –where relevant-, to meet the needs of researchers in the Arts and the Humanities by:

1. Collaborating with research policymakers and other important stakeholders in the research ecosystem, such as research performing organizations, to develop policies and instruments that demonstrate the use of digital cultural heritage for research on the basis of researcher needs.

2. Establishing, in collaboration with cultural heritage organisations, the benefits at the national level of digital cultural assets for research and the desirability of opening up cultural digital assets for research under open standards and licenses.
3. Setting concrete priorities and targets for digitization along with standards of interoperability to enhance access to and preservation of Europe's cultural heritage, also through Europeana.
4. Providing cultural heritage institutions with incentives for digitizing their cultural content under internationally accepted standards of interoperability, openness and according to national prioritization.
5. Take an active role in enabling synergies and complementarities between national and European Research Infrastructures and other initiatives in the Arts and Humanities, thus capitalizing on existing investments for the benefits of research for cultural heritage aims.

Collaborating with national and European stakeholders for the promotion of legal frameworks that enable open access to digital cultural heritage under internationally accepted licensing schemes, such as Creative Commons, also resulting into the enrichment of Europeana.

Recommendations for cultural heritage institutions

Cultural heritage institutions are encouraged to explore, in collaboration with culture and research policymakers, the benefits of digitizing and opening up cultural assets, also through Europeana, to enrich the digital cultural heritage for research by:

1. Digitizing collections and making them available along internationally accepted standards of interoperability and openness, to enhance digital cultural heritage and its reuse for research.
2. Collaborating with researchers to assess their needs for digital cultural content and services for research and to find novel ways to create digital collections and to implement a strategic approach towards them.
3. Collaborating with research and culture policymakers to make available digital cultural content that serves national and European research and culture policies.
4. Collaborating with local stakeholders to enhance the presence of regional cultural in the digital cultural record and in digital research.
5. Working with Europeana to assess the impact of making their material available for research.

Reference documents

Research

Relevant policy documents

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.topic&id=1301>

and in particular:

Recommendation on access to and preservation of scientific information (July 2012)

http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/recommendation-access-and-preservation-scientific-information_en.pdf

Communication Towards better access to scientific information: Boosting the benefits of public investments in research (July 2012)

http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/era-communication-towards-better-access-to-scientific-information_en.pdf

The Council acknowledges the prioritisation process for the implementation of the ESFRI roadmap

http://ec.europa.eu/research/infrastructures/index_en.cfm?pg=home

Cultural heritage

Council of the European Union, Conclusions on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe, EDUCATION, YOUTH, CULTURE and SPORT Council meeting , Brussels, 20 May 2014

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/142705.pdf

Commission Recommendation of October 2011 on Digitisation and Digital Preservation.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:283:0039:0045:EN:PDF>

Survey Report on Digitisation in European Cultural Heritage Institutions 2014,
<http://www.enumerate.eu/fileadmin/ENUMERATE/documents/ENUMERATE-Digitisation-Survey-2014.pdf>