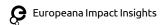europeana

IMPACT INSIGHTS

Testing the impact toolkit on Europeana to
develop a better understanding of our impact
2017

Colophon

Credits
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Sketche by Elco van Staveneren, www.denkschets.nl (CC-BY-SA)

The development was co-funded by the European Union as part of the
Connecting Europe Facility programme.
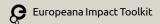
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Executive Summary

Digital cultural heritage changes lives...
but how and by how much?

We believe that everyone benefits from having better and easier access to high-quality and open digital cultural heritage. In 2017, we renewed the strategy that will guide our work towards achieving this through to 2020. Our new priorities are designed to unlock more culture, address our pain points and create more positive change across Europe and the rest of the world. To do this, we target five markets, who are our stakeholders and for whom we seek to bring about a positive change: cultural heritage institutions, European citizens, researchers, educators and the creative industries.

In the spring and summer of 2017, we set out to achieve a better understanding of how we would make the changes we describe in our strategy and business plans. We started off by working with impact consultants Sinzer, and using our experiences to develop the beta version of the Impact Playbook. We looked at our activities and those of Europeana Research and the thematic collections of Photography and Fashion, connecting them with the changes they sought to bring about through a series of workshops.

Together we developed a broad understanding of some of the areas of impact the three projects shared, and the places where they differed. The common ground provided the focus for the identification of measurements to collect the data that would hopefully support the changes we wanted to bring about. These were translated into questions and two surveys distributed through the summer of 2017, which collected a total of 314 responses.

Europeana's five main markets

'It inspired me to look outside my cultural box and broadens my horizon of understanding that we need all the cultural variety as an elixir of life.'

Anonymous citizen response to impact survey, summer 2017

For three of our five markets, we can use the data collected to present insights into the changes we want to bring about for the stakeholders of each market. For example, we want EU citizens to discover cultural heritage online and, through that, gain a deeper understanding and connection with the world around them.

We also looked at the research market and cultural heritage institutions. We searched for evidence and examples of how our activities, and those of our partners, led to the development of skills, understanding and knowledge. How has accessing cultural heritage inspired or influenced teaching material, a research topic, or the development of a new collaboration? And we looked at how attitudes had changed as a result of interacting with Europeana and our partners.

The data we collected indicated lots of positive examples and experiences - in part due to the majority of respondents being long-time users of Europeana either as a user or data partner. The research provided us with some interesting insights into our impact, but no striking conclusions. It gave us a starting point that we could build on to better understand our impact.

We learned a lot from this initial research into impact: that to make impact assessment work for us we need to be more disciplined in our approach, and in some cases more ambitious. Impact is an evolving concept and with that we need to be more innovative in our approaches to data collection. And we need to be more dynamic in embedding impact into our planning, activity and management cycles to keep approaches.

In 2018, we will continue to undertake research to better understand the impact of our activities and start to assess what changes have occurred for our stakeholders as a result of the things that we do. We'll also be working with cultural heritage institutions from across Europe who want to better understand their impact by using the Impact Playbook. And finally, we'll be continuing our work on the Impact Playbook - sharing it with willing audiences and developing the final phases in spring 2018.

66% of citizens felt that through using Europeana they had increased their knowledge and understanding of techniques, styles and trends in certain domains

Introduction

Where we started from

Over the past few years, we've been tackling the challenge of how to demonstrate the changes that come about as a result of our work, and that of our partners. We strongly believe that all cultural heritage institutions can increase the positive changes they bring about by better understanding the impact of the activities they undertake. In 2016, we published our first case study looking at the impact of our long-running World War One project: Europeana 1914-1918. This gave us a taste of what it means to better understand our impact.

The next step we needed to take was to refine and repeat the process and explore the impact of another side of our work. So in the spring and summer of 2017 we undertook a project to explore our impact. To do this, we undertook a preliminary assessment of the impact of Europeana Research, Europeana Fashion (with the Fashion International Association) and Europeana Photography (with Photoconsortium). We looked at what changed for both the providers and users of our data as a result of our activities.

Objectives
The objective was two-fold.

1. To use our experience with the project to test and validate the process of exploring impact.
2. To improve our understanding of the impact of Europeana, and a variety of the activities we run or support.

Why did we do this?
We believe that by monitoring and refining our approach to supporting the digitisation of cultural heritage, we can keep bring about positives changes in society. Undertaking impact assessments helps us achieve a greater understanding of where and how we help to bring about those changes.

What will we do with the results?
We will use the results to help us better understand how our work is experienced by our stakeholders so that we can continuously improve our products and services. We will also use the experience to help us refine the process of exploring impact that is described in the Impact Playbook.

What we did and how we did it

Undertaking impact research
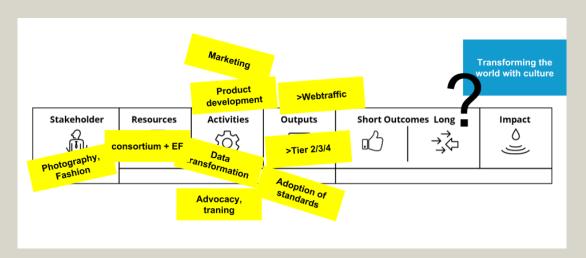## (whilst developing the impact playbook)

The 2017 Europeana Business Plan focused on five markets and included our first attempts to embed impact at the level of business planning within the organisation. For each market we described a statement of intent - a summary of where we thought our activities for the year would achieve an impact for the stakeholders in each market.

Designing the impact of Europeana
To move from the very light touch of a statement of intent, to a deeper understanding of what we actually achieve, we engaged impact consultants, Sinzer. Together we ran a series of workshops which helped us to refine the
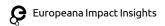
process of how to go about identifying, exploring and crafting your impact. These in turn became the foundations of Phase I of the Impact Playbook[1].

Through these workshops, we were able to make a stronger connection between our activities and the changes we want to bring about. We gained a bird's eye view of the Change Pathways attributable to Europeana as well as to those made possible by Fashion, Photography and Research. We connected the work we did in the workshops with the impact statements from the business plan, and it's from this perspective that we present the results of the research we undertook.

The Europeana Change Pathway

[1] You can read more about how these workshops helped to craft phase 1 of the impact playbook in the report: Developing the impact toolkit, 2017

In each workshop, we followed a standard formula;
• We identified who were our main stakeholders and what drives them.
• We described the long-term outcomes we expected our work to contribute to.
• We connected those changes to the activities (and their metrics) that we undertake each week, month and year

Once we had identified the activities that would ultimately lead to impact, and some of the steps in between, we turned our attention to how we could evidence this. Looking at each stakeholder one at a time, we looked at what changes we thought most important to measure, and identified what data we needed to gather for those measurements. Resource and time constraints meant we were tied to collecting data solely through surveys.

Collecting data
Two surveys were developed targeting the various users of data (stakeholders) that we had identified during the workshops - researchers, designers, professionals and so on - and those that provide data, the cultural heritage institutions themselves. The logic-based surveys were rolled out during the summer months - and despite this typically dormant time of year, we were pleased with the level of response we received: 294 users, and 20 (out of 40 contacted) cultural heritage institutions (or data providers).

It's also worth pointing out a few things about the demographics of the respondents. 63% of people had been using Europeana for over 12 months, and mostly visited Europeana Collections on a monthly basis. This tells us that the results are more influenced by those familiar and loyal to the services we offer, than new users. Similarly, 70% of the cultural heritage data partners had been providing data for over three years. Did these respondents really provide us with results representative of a cross-section of users?

Do you want to read more about how we moved from the Change Pathways of Europeana Fashion, Photography and Research to collecting data, and a detailed analysis of the data we found? Read the detailed results.

Before we move onto the results, we want to acknowledge that the process we followed to get us to this point was not perfect - we have learned many lessons along the way. As a consequence, there is not always a close fit between the research we undertook - and thus the results we uncovered - and the Change Pathways we developed. In retrospect - and we'll talk about this more in the final chapter - we could have connected a few more dots earlier on in the process.

Impact insights

How we are making a difference, one digital object at a time

Let's take a look at what our impact research tells us about the changes Europeana, our services and those run by our partners can make. We'll use a formulaic approach to presenting the results: addressing our ambition for three of our target markets in the context of the problem we are trying to solve. What changes are we trying to bring about for each stakeholder in that market and what does our baseline research tell us about what we achieve?

But first, let's be up front: we can't draw conclusions about our impact from these results alone - to do so requires taking measurements and collecting data over a period of time. But we can view these results as providing us with an insight into the impact our work achieves, or could achieve, or in some cases should achieve. We find these results interesting but not definitive. You can read more about what conclusions we do feel able to draw, and how we move on from this research in the final section of this report.
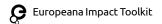
EU Citizens should enjoy access to more cultural heritage

The problem for EU citizens is that they do not always have easy access to trustworthy pan-European cultural heritage content. As a result, they miss out on the opportunity to be inspired by the content and to actively contribute to, reflect on and share it with others. The potential of cultural heritage as a means to create a shared European identity (for example through creating an understanding of others' needs, feelings, viewpoints and behaviours) and connecting people with others is evolving. Moreover, without access to cultural heritage, culture lovers are not able to create new things with it.

Our contribution to helping EU citizens starts at abstract level. By the year 2020, we want to contribute towards the ambition that European citizens are motivated, rewarded and better connected with their EU identity through access to digital cultural heritage.

On a more granular level, we believe that Europeana provides educational, meaningful and inspiring ways for European citizens to engage with and experience digital cultural heritage through their regular channels of communication and social media.

What did we look for in our survey of users of cultural heritage? We asked about their opinions on a range of topics related to their experiences of using Europeana Collections, Research, Photography and Fashion. We looked for evidence that people felt they had learned from their interactions in a meaningful way and that they felt inspired by their interactions. We asked if using the collections and services provided by Europeana inspired citizens, and we asked for examples of how. We also asked how much they expected to learn, and how much they felt they learned.

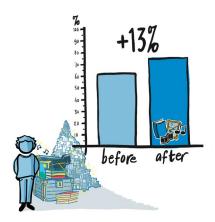## Our Research: what did EU citizens and enthusiasts show us?

Citizens feel more connected with culture from using Europeana services

What did EU citizens and enthusiasts show us?

76% said that using Europeana Collections and services had led to a deeper interest in the cultural heritage that they discovered.

'The Europeana 1914-1918 thematic collection have inspired/is inspiring me with my archival work on WWI : broader understanding of the conflict in Europe and worldwide, resources discovery, illustrations...'
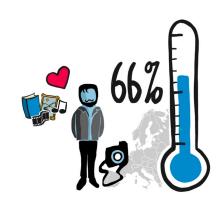
There is a growing awareness of the importance of open digital culture

When asked on a scale of 1-10 where they valued the importance of openly available digital cultural heritage before they used Europeana, 63% of citizens responded 8. This rose to 76% after using Europeana Collections and services.

'The reuse of europeana items on other platforms have given me new ideas of how and where cultural heritage items can be used outside its original context.'

People are motivated and inspired by Europeana

66% of citizens felt that through using Europeana they had increased their knowledge and understanding of techniques, styles and trends in certain domains, and 68% found Europeana to be a source of inspiration, motivating them to pursue a different approach to their hobby, research or work.

'The resources I found here helped me enrich the content by making it more relevant, more meaningful. Furthermore, by reading the blogs I found new ideas for future projects in my community.'

'The serendipity factor has to be taken into account: you are looking for something and then find something different but valuable and inspiring as well!'

A Closer look: Europeana Fashion

Europeana Fashion showcases hundreds of thousands of records from more than 30 institutions across Europe, including historical dresses, accessories and catwalk photographs. Managed by the Europeana Fashion International Association, it features curated editorial content through blog posts, online exhibitions and highlighted content.

Specific fashion-related facets (such as designer, item type, technique) help people filter their searches to find specific content. A date filter allows people to narrow searches to find content relating to time periods.

In our impact research we looked for evidence that students experienced increased access to fashion heritage, and that this had a positive impact on their studies, for example by inspiring them to explore new methods or techniques. We asked data providers how their own, and others', perceptions changed about the value of their collections.

What users of Europeana Fashion said

'As a fashion student, Europeana collections and in particular the fashion collection have been essential to articulate my researches, there I could easily find details and examples that I used as an inspiration for my projects and the suggestions provided by the site helped me broaden my knowledge'

'Europeana Fashion collection has teached to me how many different kind of garments and accessories exists and that fashion can be applied to many fields. I discovered that fashion has been translated in many products, more than we actually know and can recognize. This has inspired me to make deeper researches before to create a new fashion collection.'

What data providers to Europeana Fashion said

'I have been asked to give talks re. my fashion archive through various institutes here (e.g. Modemuze). Presently preparing exhibitions of (selection) of my work and producing a photobook (hopefully 2018/2019).'

Music Notes, Oliver Goldsmith Eyewear (manufacturer), 1950/1959, Victoria and Albert Museum, CC BY

Researchers should enjoy close connections to cultural heritage

The problem for humanities researchers, teachers and creatives is that they do not always have easy access to trustworthy pan-European cultural heritage content, mainly because of a lack of digitisation and copyright issues. They experience significant transaction costs for finding and mining primary resource materials for their research or teaching or may not be able to (digitally) access cultural heritage at all. These barriers hinder the development of new knowledge and insights from our past or the creation of new research methodologies, meaning that teachers cannot fully utilise the potential of the resources to deepen their students' understanding of a shared heritage or shape innovative and inspiring future classrooms.

Our contribution to helping humanities researchers, teachers and creatives is that by 2020, we want to contribute to the goal that researchers, educators and creatives are motivated and rewarded by close connections to accessible high-quality digital cultural heritage. We believe we can address this by nurturing opportunities to deliver high-quality reusable cultural heritage data into the workflows of digital humanities researchers to use in their teaching and research. And also by delivering products and services that increase humanities researchers' awareness of the availability of digital cultural heritage data. We provide services and products that make it easier to find and use data in teaching material.

NB: In this baseline report we focused solely on researchers

What did we look for in our survey of researchers? We asked them how they found working with the data provided by Europeana and our partners. We looked for evidence that they found data published through Europeana channels and partnerships useful to them, and that it opened up opportunities for collaboration and new lines of work.

Our Research: what did out research with the humanities research community show us?

The services and activities supported by Europeana can motivate researchers to use cultural heritage in their work

58% of the researchers/scholars, students and professional users reported that using Europeana has helped them to increase the quality of their work.

'As one of the world's best multimedia archives of historical cultural information Europeana has significantly influenced my work looking at how scaling 3D cultural heritage data in archival practices ought to work and can possibly be incorporated in multi-dimensional visualization systems with their 2D contextual information from groups like Europeana.'
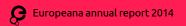
"Every trustworthy source of image empowers my research.."

41%

Researchers feel rewarded by using openly available cultural heritage data and supporting service

41% of all researchers/scholars and teachers reported that using Europeana Collections and services has helped them refine their expertise or way of conducting research.

There is little evidence that more collaborations are being developed through a shared interest in cultural heritage

Researchers and scholars were asked if using Europeana Collections and services had led to an increased number of research collaborations and partnerships they are involved in. Roughly 19% said this to be the case, while 38% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. 43% neither agreed nor disagreed.

'I met new digital projects through links to wikis, museum'

A Closer look: Europeana Photography

The Photography thematic collection, curated by the Photoconsortium publishes over 1 million objects. Its seeks to open up Europe's rich photographic heritage and offer a curated and engaging experience for both professional users and the general public. It offers data providers the opportunity for their cultural collections to be more visible, seen in context with collections of other data providers and in exhibitions, blogs and other editorial outputs.

In our impact research, we looked for evidence that people were inspired to develop new approaches to their own work as a result of using the photography collection. And that they felt a greater understanding of their cultural heritage. We asked data providers how their work and professional opportunities were enhanced through their connection with the photography collection.

What users of Europeana Photography said

'I could discover new authors and styles in photography that helped me to define my style as photographer.'

'Wow, some of the 19th century photographs are amazing, new views of european life from more than 100 years ago.'

What data providers to Europeana Photography said

'The funding received for digitisation and publishing of cultural heritage objects (e. g. via EuropeanaPhotography) or for testing new tools for the reuse of DCH (e. g. AthenaPlus, EuropeanaSpace) mobilized Lithuanian museums to achieving considerable outcomes.'

'The Europeana Photography collection launch happened end of May. Since then we receive contacts, more or less on a weekly basis, from new institutions (often micro institutions or newborn archives) interested in joining Photoconsortium BECAUSE OF the support we can provide in helping creating and then sharing their collections.'

Dancers,
Kusakabe Kimbei,
1880-1890,
Museum für Kunst und
Gewerbe Hamburg, CC0

Cultural Heritage Institutions should be supported to share their digital cultural heritage

The problem for Cultural Heritage Institutions is that the online availability of and access to European cultural heritage content administered by cultural heritage institutions is limited, as is the interconnectedness of those institutions. Consequently, their collections are not used to their full potential, for example in education, research or creative industries. Moreover, it makes it more difficult for the CHIs to connect to funding sources, form partnerships and incubate ideas which lead to new products and services.
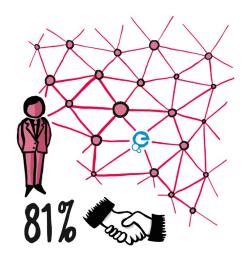
Our contribution to cultural heritage institutions is to help them become better connected, motivated and engaged. Europeana connects cultural heritage institutions who share the principles of openness, mutuality and trust. We provide the infrastructure to support CHIs to make their collections available in high quality, with standardised rights statements that allow for reuse by the general public and for use in education, research, and creative industries. And we provide standards and information to CHIs to help them understand the value of sharing their data openly online.

What did we look for in our survey of cultural heritage institutions and partners of Photoconsortium and the International Fashion Association? We wanted to know about their experiences as a partner, what they learned and how their attitudes have changed.
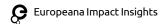
Our Research: what did cultural heritage institutions show us?

Membership of the Network led to more connections

Being part of the Europeana Network Association has helped to increase the amount of contacts and connections made. 81% say they have entered into more collaborations and partnerships.
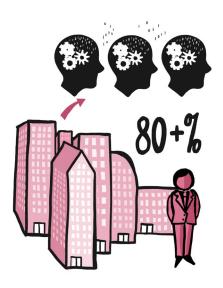

'Our first venture into Europeana was Europeana Photography which was a hugely positive experience both in terms of collaboration and funding to allow digitisation and exposure of some of our valuable archive which could have easily laid untouched for decades. Without being in the process it is unlikely that we would have the connections or confidence to join the Europeana Food and Drink project which helped us collaborate with organisations who were not primarily content providers.'

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Institutions feel rewarded by increasing their collective knowledge and skillset

More than 80% reported that being part of the Europeana Network Association has helped to increase their (institution's) knowledge of digitisation topics within the cultural heritage sector and best practices within the sector.

'Attending the workshops helped us organise our knowledge about the subject, confront it and implement good ideas'

Europeana positively influences the opening up of collections online to reach new audiences

Just over 50% of institutions said that openly licensing cultural heritage assets has helped them to increase the discoverability of their collections online. With 63% reporting that open data helps to connect with new and existing audiences.

25% responded that before working with Europeana, openly licensing data and content was important to their institution. Since working with Europeana, this percentage roughly doubled.

56% responded that before working with Europeana, publishing high-quality metadata and high-quality content was important to their institution. Since working with Europeana, percentages went up for both publishing metadata (69%) and publishing content (75%).

'Providing openly licensed images with high quality metadata definitely affected our institution, but in a positive way - disseminating our collection and reaching to new groups of viewers is our mission.'

A Closer look: Europeana Research

Bringing Europe's galleries, museums, libraries, and archives within digital reach allows researchers to access a much wider scope of material and opinion. Europeana Research exists to make that flow of information easier.

To help reach our goal of promoting the use of our data in academic research, they receive guidance from the Research Advisory Board, which consists of experts in the field of digital humanities and is chaired by Prof. Lorna Hughes.

In our impact research we looked for evidence that researchers were inspired to develop new approaches to their own work as a result of the activities of Europeana Research. And that they learned from access to high-quality and open data, and were motivated to continue using it as a resource in their research and teaching activities.

What researchers of Europeana Research said

'It has also made me interested and helped me to understand aspects of European history of which I was not aware, or not interested. I am not a European citizen (I am a Sri Lankan national). The strongest influence of Europeana has been on my research on new models of making digitized versions of cultural content available to the public, and the social value it can generate.'

'Participation in various Europeana ecosystem projects and events improved our knowledge on variety of subjects related to digitisation processes in memory institutions: from copyright issues of publishing DCH online to user-oriented services / best DCH reuse practices to importance / added value of opening digital collections.'

'I'm particularly fond of Europeana's metadata and cross referencing capabilities--these have inspired me to push for similar and better digital systems in other arenas. The Europeana archiving system is the best base reference for what an archive should look like. And in general, I find that pretty awesome and inspiring in and of itself.'

Låghastighetsmodell av flygplan Saab 105 i vindtunnel på Flygtekniska försöksanstalten, Flygtekniska försöksanstalten, 1960-1962 , Public Domain Marked

What's next: lessons learned and next steps

Our objective was to undertake research to better understand the impact of our work, and that of our partners in the area of research, fashion and photography. We're confident that we have made some progress. We haven't unravelled all the indications of impact that we would like to be able to present but we feel confident that this will come in time.

We want to be open about our experiences of exploring our impact, and about the lessons we take away from this impact research, as well as how we take that forward so that we keep improving our own practices.

Scale back, not up
On a process level, we were not completely consistent and in our future impact research we need to improve on that. In part, this came from revising the processes as we went, but a significant factor is that we cast our net very wide. This is best evidenced by the data that we collected from a wide range of stakeholders answering questions about a wide range of activities. If we had scaled back our ambition and focused on a smaller set of activities or stakeholders, we may have developed deeper insights.

We need to explore better ways to collect data from groups of different sizes and interests, using new methods and techniques in the area of data collection.

What you do with the results is just as important as deciding which data to collect
We found some interesting insights but also some indications of where we can do better. But to make these insights meaningful, we needed to understand how to present them to our stakeholders in a convincing way. The picture the scattered data we collected draws has been a challenging one to document and present. It doesn't always connect obviously with the work we undertook in the workshops, and that makes it difficult to connect with the stories that evolve from the Change Pathways.

It isn't enough to know which data is important to collect, we also need to work on making it easier to connect the data with the Change Pathways.

Continuous improvement is fundamental to managing impact
Impact is not a static concept, and like any strategic tool you use in your business, you can use it to keep refining and checking on your approach against your goals. We learned this the hard way, by not stopping to look again at Europeana's Change Pathways and how these needed to evolve throughout the year, as our understanding of our own work developed. The consequence was subtle but significant - if we had reviewed the basis of our impact research halfway

through the project, we would have refined it. Our understanding of impact would be more fine-tuned, and the data we collected could be assessed in light of that.

We need to take the time to regularly review the key steps we take in the design phase of the impact research to ensure they are refined and kept up to date.

Continuing to work with partners, we'll strive to improve our own processes and approach to measuring and assessing our impact next year.

What do you think? Have you been through an impact assessment and want to share it with a wider audience? Are you keen to explore your impact? Drop us a line at impact@europeana.eu