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EuropeanaTravel

Sustainability of the LIBER aggregator

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1. Introduction

This document recommends a sustainability solution for the EuropeanaTravel 'LIBER aggregator'. It is the Deliverable from Task 6 of EuropeanaTravel Work Package 3. In full, Task 6 is:

Use the LIBER Board and communication structure and other suitable means to examine policy options and to seek a solution for the financial sustainability of the closed access aggregation service portal after the end of the project to be used by increasing numbers of LIBER members who are not using other aggregators to supply Europeana.

The aggregation landscape in Europe has changed since the EuropeanaTravel Description of Work was compiled; indeed, it has changed since the EuropeanaTravel survey of research libraries and aggregation (D3.3, November 2010). The emergence of the Europeana Libraries project, which will deliver library-domain aggregation for Europeana through The European Library by the end of 2012, means that fully business-costed long-term sustainability is no longer required for the EuropeanaTravel LIBER aggregator. This document explains the sustainability needs of the EuropeanaTravel aggregation, and how they will be fulfilled in the context of the services to be created through Europeana Libraries.

2. The LIBER aggregator

WP3 delivered an aggregator for collecting structured metadata about objects digitised as part of EuropeanaTravel WP2 and exposing it for collection by Europeana. The WP3 aggregator supported the EuropeanaTravel partners who are members of LIBER but not also members of CENL, as follows:

- Moravian Library in Brno
- University of Debrecen
- Trinity College Dublin
- University of Innsbruck
- Lund University
- University of Regensburg
- UCL (University College London)
- National Library of Wales

The aggregator is a customised version of the open source REPOX software, which was developed for the Europeana environment as part of the TEL Plus project. Partners' metadata is collected using OAI-PMH, transformed as appropriate to comply with Europeana's ESE (Europeana Semantic Elements) standards, and collected by Europeana, also using OAI-PMH.

3. Sustainability

When considering the post-project requirements from the EuropeanaTravel LIBER aggregator, there are two aspects to sustainability, expansion and maintenance.

3.1. Expansion

In planning the EuropeanaTravel project, it was felt that opportunities for the aggregator not only to serve the project partners, but to 'scale up' to fill the gaps in existing aggregation provision for the full LIBER community should be explored. The intention of WP3 Task 6 was in part to ensure that the EuropeanaTravel aggregator would be available to any LIBER member library whose digital content was not making its way into Europeana through any other aggregation service(s).

3.2. Maintenance

The LIBER aggregator must continue to be available to the EuropeanaTravel research library partners, post-project, in case changes are made to source metadata. Such changes might be relatively trivial, for example the correction of a publication date in a catalogue record, or substantive, such as a new network address for a partner's digital repository server. Continuation of the aggregator service will ensure that any metadata change made at source is propagated to the Europeana portal.

The Europeana Libraries project and its implications for the sustainability needs of the EuropeanaTravel LIBER aggregator are discussed in the following sections.

4. Europeana Libraries

EuropeanaLibraries is an ICT PSP 2010 Best Practice Network which will bring over 5 million digital objects from Europe's national and university libraries into Europeana. Additionally, the project will create a scalable aggregation infrastructure, supported by a business model, that will make it possible for all Europe's research libraries to deliver digital content to Europeana.

The Europeana Libraries aggregation will be delivered by The European Library. Hitherto, The European Library has aggregated only national library content. In the course of Europeana Libraries, The European Library will be repositioned as a library-domain aggregator, beginning with content held by the research library partners in Europeana Libraries. To this end, Europeana Libraries includes the following elements:

- An early requirements analysis, to ensure that the aggregation service is scalable and meets the needs of the non-national libraries.
- Business modelling, including work on value propositions to identify and highlight the added value of the library domain aggregator to research

libraries.

- Revision of The European Library's governance apparatus, to ensure that research libraries (through their main European networks, LIBER and CERL) are represented appropriately in the governance model for The European Library.
- A business plan for the library domain aggregator.

The work of EuropeanaTravel WP3 is reflected strongly in Europeana Libraries. The WP3 leader of the former project is also leading the sustainability work of the latter and contributed to the proposal, ensuring that all the learning from the EuropeanaTravel aggregation experience was taken into account in the planning for a library domain successor. Moreover, the EuropeanaTravel WP3 survey is an important cornerstone of the landscape modelling which will take place in Europeana Libraries in support of its business planning activities.

5. Implications of Europeana Libraries for the EuropeanaTravel LIBER aggregator

5.1. Expansion

The most immediate implication of Europeana Libraries is that, by end of project, Europe's research libraries will have a one-stop aggregation solution, prepared with the backing of and input from the two prominent sector-wide research library networks, LIBER and CERL, and drawing on the experience of EuropeanaTravel and other library aggregation projects. This means that the business need to accommodate additional source libraries in the EuropeanaTravel LIBER aggregator, which was correctly identified in the planning stages of EuropeanaTravel, no longer applies. Europe's research libraries certainly need a viable domain-level aggregation solution, but Europeana Libraries is now charged with finding that solution, in a participative, scalable and sustainable way, with The European Library as the central aggregation agency for the library domain.

The extension of the EuropeanaTravel LIBER aggregator service to incorporate data from research libraries other than its 8 original LIBER participants is therefore no longer required.

5.2. Maintenance

As described in section 3.2, the EuropeanaTravel LIBER aggregator must be maintained post-project in case of data changes at the 8 source libraries. In the medium term, the LIBER aggregator will be replaced by the Europeana Libraries aggregator. In the short-term, UCL has agreed to underwrite the costs of maintaining the LIBER aggregator until such a time as all 8 contributing libraries are feeding Europeana through the library domain aggregator housed at The European Library.

These costs are in fact very low. UCL's REPOX installation is used for purposes other than EuropeanaTravel, and so there are no additional costs to UCL in maintaining the aggregation platform. Now that EuropeanaTravel aggregation processes have been developed and implemented, maintaining

currency is a simple matter. If a EuropeanaTravel contributor's metadata changes, they will notify UCL, who will first activate harvesting of fresh data from the partner, and then send a request to Europeana to replace its entire copy of the relevant partner's dataset. Every time this scenario occurs, the entire transaction will occupy under an hour of person time at UCL. The frequency with which the scenario might occur is not predictable, but on the evidence of the aggregation service to date, it is likely to be no more than two or three times per year overall.

UCL is therefore willing to commit to maintaining the EuropeanaTravel service for existing contributors until such a time as all have been successfully migrated to the library domain aggregator being developed under Europeana Libraries, migration which UCL, as a Work Package leader in Europeana Libraries, will facilitate. In facilitating the migration, UCL will liaise with TEL and Europeana on behalf of the LIBER partners to ensure that there is no duplication of data in Europeana when the transition is made from current aggregator to the Europeana Libraries aggregator.

6. Summary

The extension of the EuropeanaTravel LIBER aggregator to accommodate research libraries that are not currently able to feed Europeana is no longer required. The Europeana Libraries project is building a domain-level aggregator for all Europe's libraries, to be delivered by The European Library and supported by a business plan and revised governance model. It is expected that the holdings of all research libraries will be channelled into Europeana through this service, and that an architecture and business model to support this will be available the end of 2012. The influence of the EuropeanaTravel project in helping to shape the future European aggregation landscape is to be noted, albeit that the EuropeanaTravel aggregator has only a limited future. There is a short-term business need for the EuropeanaTravel to remain active as a means of ensuring synchronicity between the holdings of its contributors and their expression in Europeana. The costs of maintaining such a service are negligible, and UCL is willing to underwrite them until such a time as all contributors have, with the support of UCL, migrated to The European Library's library domain aggregation service.

The LIBER partners were consulted about the proposals summarised above and gave specific or tacit consent.