

Interoperability in the context of i2010 Digital Libraries initiative

Stefan Gradmann, Ariane Labat

Our presentation at the DELOS-MultiMATCH event will briefly report on the perspective of the working group on Digital Library Interoperability which is part of the process of setting up the European Digital Library, a common access point that will make millions of objects from all kind of cultural institutions and of all types of format easily accessible for all European citizens by 2008 and beyond.

Indeed, there is no "spontaneous" convergence in the exposition of European cultural content from museums, libraries and archives (MLA) to the European citizens, but rather a fragmented access to European cultural content offered to the final users.

Actually, upstream to the users, the strategic orientations and the implementation solutions chosen by MLA institutions to expose their European cultural content to the European citizens are not spontaneously "converging" and especially not always interoperable.

As improving interoperability is one of the key actions to minimise fragmentation of access to European digital cultural heritage, the Commission has brought together and is chairing a group on "Interoperability and Multilingualism". This group, facilitated by Dr. Stefan Gradman, has the mission of producing recommendations for short term action as well as for a longer term strategy regarding Digital Library Interoperability and Multilingualism in Europe.

The group has the task to identify elements for a short term action plan regarding interoperability and multilingualism to achieve the 2008 objective of making 2 million objects amongst Europe's digital cultural heritage accessible online through a common multilingual access point. Besides, the group has to give recommendations for a longer term strategy, because such a longer term strategy is needed to give some stable perspectives to decision makers and developers in the cultural institutions and in the service providers, for them to anticipate and undertake investments or new developments.

In concrete terms, this group is gathered:

- to identify more precisely the determining factors of the "interoperability problems" between MLA legacy systems when aiming at creating a common access to European digital cultural heritage
- to propose a list of prioritised feasible options to lower the barriers towards more interoperability when creating a common access point to Europe's digital cultural heritage, to be released in 2008 and expanded in 2010 and beyond.

The group is therefore intended to be an environment that seed starts more intensive technical discussions within ongoing or future eContentPlus and IST projects:

>> The eContentPlus programme is there to support experimenting the use of existing semantic tools in MLA current environments.

>> The IST programme is there to support experimenting longer term approaches to solve interoperability issues in MLA future complex environments.