



Netherlands

Marius Snyders
Ministry of Education, Culture
and Science,
Directorate for Cultural Heritage

Digitisation policies and emerging initiatives

Dutch digitisation policy aims at more efficient and effective (public) investments in digitising cultural and scientific collections, measured in their long-term contribution to the knowledge society. This not only has implications for heritage institutions but also for the conditions that need to be created at national level. One year since the last Status Report and two years since the Lund take-off, the future of Dutch digitisation policy and its ensuing initiatives can be described as better focused. For 2004, the frameworks need to be put in place. With next years' financial intensifications in digitisation of cultural collections, the public libraries' infrastructure and cultural education, the government acknowledges the cultural sector as an important pillar to the knowledge infrastructure – the very basis for an upward Dutch economy. As a result, in a period in which most public and private sectors will continue to tighten their belts, funding for digitisation was never so present. A yearly budget of € 9 mln (2007) is appointed to the improvement of the entire digitisation spectrum, from capturing to enrichment and making accessible, by meeting three preconditions:

1. Investing in a self-provisional quality-management system for digitisation
Focus will be on standardisation and durable digitisation. This will only be realised when institutions are willing and stimulated to adhere to the norm because it has proven its worth. Therefore, the establishment of a knowledge management centre for digitisation, where proven and stipulated standards and procedures are collected and made available, will be supported. It will issue digitisation guidelines and manuals tailored to the various sectors and types

of institution. Governments, funding bodies and individual institutions can turn to this centre to collect appropriate or enforceable conditions for digitisation programmes and projects. As a result, when setting targets and deciding on grants, government authorities and culture funds will be able to invoke clear procedures and standards composed by the sector itself.

2. Investing in knowledge transfer and professionalism
Knowledge transfer and professionalism play a central role in digitisation and standardisation and will require considerable investment. To improve the back-log in the field of basic registration – which is often still regarded as a precondition for knowledge transfer – the embedding of museum information in an open knowledge infrastructure with two-way traffic of knowledge and information must be guaranteed. Besides a substantial investment in tools and a physical infrastructure, this requires an almost equally substantial investment in human capital, a larger focus on a hypermedia approach to heritage in education, dismantlement of strongholds within institutions, a change of behaviour and mentality of the middle management of the institutions and, in particular, growing professionalism, continuing education, training and intellectual support.

3. Stimulating R&D-programmes
Action research on knowledge enrichment and metadata is being considered as an important precondition for increasing the efficacy and efficiency of digital access and reinforcing the knowledge infrastructure. A national research proposal for the digitisation of heritage by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) was prepared in 2003



by a diversely composed consortium of heritage institutions, IT-businesses and computer science research departments at major universities

Cooperation developments

Organising Lund

A National Steering Group to support implementation of the Lund-Principles and the coordination of the national activities within the EU-framework was established end 2001. Participators are the National Archives (Nationaal Archief), the National Library (Koninklijke Bibliotheek), the Netherlands Digital Heritage Association (Vereniging Digitaal Erfgoed Nederland, DEN), the Netherlands Institute for Image and Sound (Beeld en Geluid) and the Ministry of Culture. In 2004 the group will be enlarged with the membership of the national bodies for archeology and monuments. Issues that remain open are to better define competence and responsibility of the group, to promote wider visibility and participation of small and medium size heritage institutions.

ALM-cooperation

Access by mapping and description process charts, is already used by some institutions as a procedure for developing their own (be it limited) exchange process, which is usable for combining and exchanging object information from different heritage sectors. A project proposal to map the digital information on the collections of public libraries and heritage institutions was created by the Association for Public Libraries (NBLC) and DEN. The project is funded for two years by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking in the Netherlands is coordinated by the Dutch Ministry of Culture, department for Cultural Heritage. From the benchmarking data structure, elements have been transferred to the evaluation structure that has to complete digitisation projects within the "Memories of the Netherlands Programme". This conforms to the widely supported vision that benchmarking in the Netherlands should be embedded in existing preparatory or evaluation phases, so as not to burden the sometimes over-regulated field with new time-consuming forms to fill in. Institutions are encouraged to participate in the benchmarking activities by two lines of approach: 1) benchmarking will be part of the evaluation process that is built into the fund application procedure; 2) benchmarking will be presented as a tool for self-assessment and raising the quality of project plans. Benchmarking more initiatives has yielded valuable knowledge as how the phrasing and wording of the indicators should be to get a maximum result. 60 initiatives have been benchmarked so far, most of them under the digitisation programme of the Mondriaan Foundation and the "Memories of the Netherlands programme".

The Website <http://www.cultuurtechnologie.net> tracks the progress of the benchmarking effort and, consequently, grows with the activity. Backgrounds of the benchmarking activities and documentation about the MINERVA programme and the eEurope initiative are disseminated through this site and cumulative benchmarking results are published on the Website as well, together with short descriptive analyses of the results. The site is currently being rebuilt to better serve automated analyses. Furthermore



The Big Flood of 1953 (Stavenisse)
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it is being translated in the Dutch language to better serve Dutch institutions, instead of being an international communication channel only.

Emerging issues

EU-presidency agenda

During July-December 2004 the Netherlands will preside over the European Union and, as a result, will host in De Hague the 7th official meeting of the national representatives group (NRG) for the implementation of the Lund Action Plan. The meeting will be held on September 15, following a two days conference on the building of a "European area for digitised cultural resources". The first day will deal with topics closely related to the quality of such an area": transparency (unimpeded access), durability (preservation and continuation of digitised sources), and relevance (knowledge infrastructure functionality). The second day will deal with how to achieve such a "European area": what are good organisational examples and appropriate conditions on the level of users, projects, national and European (policy) frameworks. The conference will deliver input for the 7th NRG meeting and a concluding blueprint for a future Action Plan to be presented in the Council meeting at 15-16 November, to be taken further by the next presidencies and MINERVA.

Tjalk (rounded cargo ship with flat bottom)
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De Bezige Bij (underground publisher World War II)
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Broadside Murder Ballade
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