

United Kingdom

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The report presents an overview of just some of the activity carried out by institutions large and small across the UK. Activities were selected for inclusion on the basis of relevance to the objectives outlined in the Dynamic Action Plan.

A. Users and content

In February 2005, the Common Information Environment (CIE) group published a report commissioned from MORI that took a wide-ranging look at the issues of reliability of information found on the Internet and the extent to which users feel they can trust the information they find there. The survey found that the reputation of an organisation and the trustworthiness of the content of Websites are important factors in people's attitudes. Information provided via the Websites of museums, libraries and archives are most likely to gain a great deal or fair amount of trust from people.

<http://www.common-info.org.uk/news/archives/2005/02/commissoned_1.html>

In March the Department for Education and Skills published its new e-learning strategy. The five-year strategy sets out a vision in which the full potential of technology can be harnessed for the benefit of all learners and, for the first time in one document, across all sectors. The report sets out the means for achieving a «personalised education system» based on five principles of reform: greater personalisation and choice, a strong voice for learners, a commitment to leadership and staff development, and effective partnerships. Digital literacy will, it says, be the cornerstone of a highly-educated workforce and of a modern economy. Supporting learners in transition between education sectors is a key concern of the strategy. Personalised online portfolios will support the concept of «citizens as learners».

<<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/e-strategy>>

In March 2005, two Culture Online projects won BAFTA Interactive Awards - Stagework won the top prize in the Best Factual and Best Learning categories and Headline History won the Children's Learning category. Established in 2002, Culture Online commissioned a portfolio of creative projects to extend access to the arts and culture. Many of the projects encourage mass participation and inspire people to interact with arts, heritage and cultural organisations in an innovative way. <<http://www.cultureonline.gov.uk>>

In April 2005 MLA launched a report revealing that the cultural sector's compliance with Web accessibility standards is above the national average. The level of compliance with the basic accessibility guidelines, WAI Level A, is over twice that found by the Disability Rights Commission in an audit of other Websites undertaken in 2004. The report, produced by City University, was based on an audit of a representative sample of 300 museum, library and archive Websites in England. The report identified the role of Technical Standards frameworks as an important element in this achievement.

October 2005 marked the award of grants to forty public library services across England from the UK online Public Libraries Challenge Fund. The grants were awarded by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and the University for Industry (Ufi) to enhance the ICT provision of public libraries to local communities, particularly excluded groups. The funding builds on the success of the People's Network which brought Internet access to all public libraries in the UK. It also recognises the important role that public libraries play as part of the UK online centres network. The projects cover a range of innovative ICT applications, from Wireless 'hotspots', to satellite provision on mobile libraries, interactive whiteboards for e-learners, and portable ICT equipment for use in local communities.

November, 2005. JISC and CURL published a report recommending the creation of a UK-wide strategy to avoid the duplication, gaps in provision and lack of coordination that have hampered public sector efforts in digitisation. Although around £130m of public money has been spent on the creation of digital content since the mid-1990s, public sector digitisation programmes have sometimes been unstructured, piecemeal and fragmented. The report called for “a dynamic response” from public sector organisations to meet these challenges and also highlighted the “phenomenal” growth in the “richly detailed and flexible material” that publicly-funded digitisation programmes have been responsible for in the last ten years. «Digital resources are now available to enrich educational experiences at all stages of the learning journey», says the report, «from formalised lessons in the primary classroom to the lifelong learner’s casual browsing at home». In order to maximise continuing public sector investment in digitisation, however, the report recommends the setting up of a UK task force to set clear guidelines on standards and to coordinate a national e-content strategy. The development of a single point of access to the range of services, information sources and funding streams on offer would also, the report continues, bring much-needed coordination to national efforts. Finally, the report recommends that greater attention be paid to the needs of users, which, it says, «are still not fully understood».

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=digital_report>

November 2005 marked the launch of an online initiative to create a digital archive of poetry readings, at <<http://www.poetryarchive.org>>. The brainchild of Poet Laureate Andrew Motion and recording producer Richard Carrington, the Poetry Archive is recording significant poets reading their own works and preserving them in an online database freely available to everyone. The Poetry Archive has also tackled new areas in ensuring that its content is available to those with disabilities, and it aims to be user friendly for both the visually impaired and those with hearing difficulties.

B. Technologies for digitisation

In March, 2005 the National Centre for Text Mining (NaCTeM) was launched as a collaboration between the

Universities of Manchester, Liverpool and Salford. Funding is provided by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), the Biotechnology and Biological Research Council (BBSRC) and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). Search engines return thousands of documents, but the difficulty for the user is to find those which are most personally relevant. Most of these searches have little concept of the meaning of words that is gained from the context of a sentence. By using natural language processing, text mining can discover this meaning and focus on specific needs of the user.

In May, the JISC announced projects funded under a £4m Digital Repositories programme intended to help the learning and research community move forward with all the issues involved in setting up and using digital repositories, including the interaction of repositories within the national and international context. The programme is concerned with the range of repository content that can support learning and research: ePrints of journal articles, learning objects, technical reports, multimedia, research datasets etc. The programme will also include an investigation of more informal repository issues such as personal repositories.

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=programme_digital_repositories>

In October 2005 the Scottish Museums Council (SMC) published *Museums, Galleries and Digitisation*. This identifies a simple checklist that museums and galleries can use to ensure that their digitisation of collections is as effective as possible. SMC’s new document suggests that by following nine practical criteria, even the smallest of museums can build a successful digital collection which will appeal to browsers and which may promote increased visits to physical collections.

<http://www.scottishmuseums.org.uk/areas_of_work/ICT/digitisation.asp>

Edinburgh University Library has added extra functionality to DSpace <<http://www.dspace.org>>, a digital library system that facilitates the capturing, storage and maintenance of university elearning and research repositories. The new system, TAPIR, was developed with funding from the JISC and is designed to create a supervised authoring facility in which supervisors can observe and comment on ongoing work

by their students. TAPIR will be Open Source and freely available. <<http://www.thesesalive.ac.uk/>>

C. Sustainability of content

In January 2005 Slainte (Information and Libraries, Scotland) published guidance for members wishing to apply for innovation and development funding. Funding is available for a range of activities including research, impact analysis, service development, staff training, pilot creation of new resources and evaluation of new technology, case studies, preparation of good practice guides or promotion of standards. The objective is raising quality of provision.

In March 2005, UKOLN published the *Good Practice Guide for Developers of Cultural Heritage Web Services* (GPG), which provides advice on standards and best practices to interested organisations. The content of the guidebook is based on the guidance provided by the NOF-digitise Technical Advisory Service to projects funded by the NOF-digitise Programme, and has been updated to take into account the MINERVA *Technical Guidelines*. UKOLN is committed to maintaining and developing it in order to support new digital library development work across the sector, and it has already been accessed by over 6000 users.

<<http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/interop-focus/gpg/>>

May 2005 marked the launch by The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council of LONGITUDE, a toolkit of resources for public library staff to evaluate the long-term impact of IT-based services on users. Public libraries have been transformed by the People's Network, attracting new users and providing new services via 32,000 computer terminals across the UK's 4200 public libraries. In the past year alone, visits to public libraries increased by 14 million. New ICT services are having a marked impact on library use. The LONGITUDE toolkit will enable library staff to measure these benefits over a period of time, as users become more and more familiar with ICT and all it has to offer. The toolkit was been developed by the Centre for Research in Library & Information Management (CERLIM) at the Manchester Metropolitan University, in partnership with Birmingham Public Libraries and Cheshire County Libraries, where the toolkit was piloted.

<http://www.mla.gov.uk/websites/programmes/peoples_network/impact_of_the_peoples_network/longitude>

A study published in October 2005 by the Common Information Environment (CIE) found that the use of Creative Commons Licenses could make digital content more widely available. The research, part funded by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), was undertaken by Intrallect and the AHRC Research Centre for Studies in Intellectual Property & Technology law at the University of Edinburgh. The study investigates how the use of Creative Commons Licenses could clarify and simplify the process of making digital resources available for re-use.

D. Digital preservation

June 2005 marked the publication of a report by MLA and the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) about the future access to digital museum, library and archive collections. This new survey shows that existing digitised collections may be at significant risk of being lost to future generations if the issue of digital preservation is not addressed. The survey, which will inform the development of a national digitisation strategy, looked at non-national museums, libraries and archives in two English regions – the North East and West Midlands – to discover how well prepared they are to deal with the problems of keeping digital material in the long term. The results show that there is a significant commitment to digitisation, with over 80 digitisation projects currently in place. However, the survey highlighted a major concern that 90 per cent of the projects were externally funded and therefore took no account of the need to provide the long-term, sustainable support needed to preserve and protect public access to the digital collections.

In August, the first instalment of a *Digital Curation Manual* was made available by the Digital Curation Centre (DCC), funded by JISC and the e-science core programme. Set up in 2004 the DCC provides a national focus for research and development into digital curation issues. The DCC *Digital Curation Manual* is a community-driven resource – authored by leading experts in the field of digital curation – and is designed

to assist data creators, curators and re-users to better understand the challenges they face and the roles they play in creating, managing and preserving their digital information over time.

<<http://www.dcc.ac.uk>>

During 2005 the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) made grants to the sum of £1 million to nine higher and further educational institutions in the UK to support digital preservation and asset management. JISC funding is aimed at developing the infrastructure necessary to maintain access in the future. Funded projects include the development of repository software, collaborative preservation networks, training and assessment tools.

E. Monitoring

The 24 Hour Museum has been conducting a survey of Web statistics in the cultural sector since 2002, and published the 2004 figures in April 2005. The survey follows the methodology initially developed for the NOF-digitise programme. The survey, though small, represented a wide range of organisations. Highlights figures were:

Visitor sessions	60 million per annum
Duration of visit	8 minutes
Average number of pages per session	9.5 pages

Where institutions reported visitor sessions in both 2003 and 2004, the average increase over the year was 165%.

NRG, MINERVA and MICHAEL results

The UK held the Presidency of the EU during the second half of 2005, and hosted the 9th Meeting of the National Representatives Group, in addition to a major conference looking at the links between education and culture. The highlight of the Presidency was the launch of the *Dynamic Action Plan*, which sets out the future agenda of the NRG. This was the result of joint work by the Netherlands, Luxembourg and UK Presidencies, supported by the NRG. The *Dynamic Action Plan* was also presented to the Cultural Affairs Committee, and, together with the Commission Communication on the European Digital Library, was the subject of an

extended debate of European Ministers of Culture in Brussels in November. Ministers were clear that they supported the promotions of access to culture and heritage, and the principles in both documents.

Diffusion and impact of the MINERVA products and tools

MLA's Web Accessibility Report, commissioned in the context of MINERVA work on Website quality, was launched to the national audience at the Jodi Mattes Website Accessibility awards ceremony and has been disseminated at MLA and NRG events.

MINERVA technical guidelines are mandatory for MLA funding programmes, and have also been adopted by other organisations in funding for new digitisation projects.

The MINERVA report on the issues surrounding the exploitation of MLA digital content, within wide formal and informal "learning" contexts, has been disseminated by MLA via the eSociety group and to decision-makers in the education community. The MINERVA 10 Quality Principles have informed the development of Quality measures for the education sector, currently being developed by Becta. During the year, the work of the NRG, MINERVA and MICHAEL were the subject of a number of talks and presentations. Within the UK, this included to groups such as the Museum Computer Group and Institute of Field Archaeologists. Outside the UK, this included the CALIMERA Conference and a meeting of the international Digital Cultural Content Forum, chaired by MLA, the US Institute of Museum and Library Services, and Canadian Heritage Information Network.

Impact of MICHAEL

350 digital collections were recorded in the UK's MICHAEL database during 2005.

The MICHAEL UK portal was launched at the MICHAEL Conference in Bristol in November, one of a series of events linked to the UK Presidency of the EU.