

Digitisation Coordination Initiative Key steps 2006-2007

Pirjo Hamari
National Board of Antiquities

Implementation of the DAP and other coordinating actions

In addition to the issues connected with the mobility of museum collections, the implementation of the *Dynamic Action Plan* was central to the agenda of the Finnish EU Presidency in the field of safeguarding cultural heritage.

Finland hosted the conference “Why digitise? Who benefits? Impact Assessment of Digital Cultural Heritage Content and Services Digital Heritage” at the National Museum of Finland in Helsinki on 12 October 2006. The conference brought forth a number of issues connected with the *Dynamic Action Plan* and the i2010 Digital Libraries Initiative.

The main approach of the conference was to bring into focus the benefits that digital heritage resources will provide for users and other stakeholders. Case studies and two panel discussions with experts from various cultural heritage institutions illuminated the effects of digital content and services on users from various viewpoints. The chairs of the NRG Action Groups “Users and Content” and “Monitoring Progress” acted as moderators of these discussions.

The conference encouraged dialogue at the European level by offering national representatives, organisations and networks, experts, and the Commission a forum for presenting strategic initiatives and up-to-date activities, for exchanging information and experiences, and for debate.

The 11th Official Meeting of the National Representatives Group took place on the 13th of October 2006 in Helsinki after the conference and was attended by 65 participants.

The launching of the DAP Action Groups

The Action Groups implementing the *Dynamic Action Plan*, discussed in Bristol, were launched in 2006, according to the guidelines described in the previous Status Report. The five Action Groups established were: A. Users and Content, B. Technologies for Digitisation, C. Sustainability of Content, D. Digital Preservation and E. Monitoring Progress. Action Group chairs and co-chairs were confirmed and announcements for membership were distributed to the NRG representatives.

The working meeting of the troika and DAP Action Groups was hosted by Finland and Germany for the chairs and co-chairs of Action Groups 1-5

and the representatives of the troika countries on 21 September 2006 in Helsinki. The groups' contact information and members were confirmed and work plans until the end of 2007 were drafted with the help of a coordination matrix stating the action, output, impact and working methods of each Action Group. Towards the end of the year, along with the development of the political framework, negotiations were started by the Presidency to include the DAP Action Groups within the framework of the MINERVA eC project (Action Groups A, B, C, and E) and the DPE project (Action Group D).

Bridging the gap between Member States' coordination activities and the Commission – securing continuity and sustainability

The growing momentum of the i2010: Digital Libraries and the development of the political framework connected with it brought about a rapid and major shift in the role and position of the NRG during the 2006. During the Finnish EU Presidency, our most important aim was to strengthen the commitment of all stakeholders in our joint effort to make the cultural heritage of Europe digital, searchable and accessible and to preserve it for the generations to come. The *i2010: Digital Libraries Communication* was released by the Commission in September 2005. The initiative aims at making Europe's diverse cultural and scientific heritage (books, films, maps, photographs, music, etc.) easier and more interesting to use online for work, leisure and/or study. The keystone of the initiative is a common multilingual access point to European heritage.

It is important to note that all kinds of heritage categories were included in the discussion, such as heritage in libraries, museums and archives as well as the cultural landscape, sites and monuments. This comprehensive view of the heritage runs through the documents from the Communication onwards and has been supported and promoted by the NRG members throughout the group's existence.

In August 2006, the Commission adopted its own Recommendation on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural materials and digital preservation. The Recommendation urges the Member States to tackle three main areas: digitisation of content, online accessibility and digital preservation, in order to contribute to the creation and content

of the multilingual access point. In response to the Commission Recommendation, the EU Education, Youth and Culture Council adopted conclusions on digitisation and on-line accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation in Brussels on 13 November. The Ministers expressed their commitment to work towards the digitisation of cultural materials (books, journals, newspapers, photographs, museum objects, archival documents, audiovisual material) - thereby contributing to the European Digital Library. The Conclusions indicate the priority actions that the Member States intend to undertake, providing a timetable for the actions to put Europe's digital heritage online, and also invite the Commission to co-ordinate the process, including the setting up of a Member States' Expert Group to further the coordinating work of the NRG group within the Community's institutional framework. On 22 March 2007 the Commission decided to establish the Member States' Expert Group on Digitisation and Digital Preservation (MSEG). The mission of the group is principally to monitor progress and assess the impact of the implementation of the Recommendations and the Conclusions, to provide a forum for cooperation between the Member State bodies and the Commission at the European level and to exchange information and good practices of Member States' policies and strategies on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural materials and digital preservation. The first meeting of the new group is foreseen to take place on 19 June 2007 in Luxembourg.

The decision of setting up the Expert Group will also mean that the final meeting of the NRG was held in Berlin in February 2007 under the German Presidency. The valuable work done by the National Representatives Group from 2001 onwards will now be continued within and by the new Member States' Expert Group on Digitisation and Digital Preservation.