

European Digital Library Foundation welcomed by the Commissioner

Yesterday, the European Commission endorsed the work of the European Digital Library Foundation when high level EC officials met members for the formal handover of their statutes. "Europe's citizens should all be able to enjoy our rich cultural heritage. This Foundation is a significant step towards making that ambition come true," Commissioner Viviane Reding, responsible for Information Society and Media commented. "It shows the commitment of Europe's cultural institutions to work together to make their collections available and searchable by the public through a common and multilingual access point online."

Foundation members include the key European heritage and information associations. Their statutes commit members to work in partnership to:

- Provide access to Europe's cultural and scientific heritage through a cross-domain portal
- Co-operate in the delivery and sustainability of the joint portal
- Stimulate initiatives to bring together existing digital content
- Support digitisation of Europe's cultural and scientific heritage

The European digital library is developing its prototype site for launch next year. To coincide with the formal handover to the Commissioner, the Foundation announced the CITY as the first of the site's themes.

The CITY is a broad theme that will enable the prototype site to show the European urban experience from several perspectives. Emerging ideas include:

- cities of the future/cities of the past
- migration and diaspora
- trade and industry
- design, shopping and urban cool
- pox, cholera and the plague: the route to urban health
- archaeology and architecture
- utopias and cities of the imagination
- riot and disorder
- palaces and politics

The digital library project is gathering digitised content from European archives, museums, audio-visual collections and libraries. It will use maps, artefacts, photos, sound, film material, books, archival records and artworks to explore two millennia of connectivity between Europe's cities.

Dr Wim van Drimmelen, foundation member and Director of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the Netherlands, which hosts the European digital library initiative, said, "archives, museums, audio-visual collections and libraries are collaborating in order to guarantee that their resources can be brought together in a virtual world, regardless of where the original is held. It's what users expect. However, the benefits are not just for the users. The development work is providing an excellent forum for knowledge transfer between the domains, which increases our collective ability to respond to changing user needs and remain relevant in the fast-moving digital environment."

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Notes for editors

The European digital library will launch a prototype in November 2008. It will give direct access to at least 2 million digitised books, photos, maps, sounds, films and archival records from Europe's libraries, archives, museums and audio-visual collections.

The European Digital Library Foundation includes the following members:

Martine de Boisdeffre, EURBICA: European Regional Branch of International Council on Archives

Edwin van Huis, FIAT: International Federation of Television Archives

Claudia Dillmann, ACE: Association Cinémathèques Européennes

Massimo Negri, EMF: European Museums Forum

Elisabeth Niggemann, CENL: Conference of European National Librarians

Hans Geleijnse, LIBER: Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche

Christophe Dessaux, MICHAEL: Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe

Wim van Drimmelen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, national library of the Netherlands

ICOM Europe: International Council of Museums, Europe

CERL: Consortium of European Research Libraries

The European digital library is hosted by the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the national library of the Netherlands, and led by the Conference of European National Librarians

The initiative is one of the Commission's flagship i2010 initiatives to create a European Information Society for growth and jobs (see [IP/05/643](#)).

On 25 August 2006, the Commission adopted a Recommendation on digitisation and digital preservation (see [IP/06/1124](#) and [MEMO/06/311](#)) which urged EU Member States to set up large-scale digitisation facilities, so as to accelerate the process of getting Europe's cultural heritage online via the European digital library.

In November 2006 the idea of a European digital library was strongly endorsed by the Culture Ministers of all EU Member States and was recently backed by the European Parliament in its [resolution](#) of 27 September 2007.

More information about the European digital library can be found at <http://www.europeandigitallibrary.eu/edlnet/>