Metadata and heritage dissemination: opportunities and challenges

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Libraries, museums, archives and other heritage institutions understand the Internet as an opportunity of sharing content and improving the access to heritage. Digital projects like Europeana are good samples of this vision. Metadata and communication standards should help to succeed, but the context is still young and has yet to be consolidated.

The Biblioteca de Catalunya[i], founded in 1907, is the national library of Catalonia. There are 167 people working in it and its budget for 2012 is of 7'8 millions of Euros.

Its collection comprises more than 3.000.000 physical documents of different types and formats: old and modern books, maps, manuscripts, papers, journals, plates, photographs, sound recordings, etc. that grow thanks to the legal deposit, purchases and gifts. Among them, about 120.000 documents have been digitized for contributing to their preservation as well as for being disseminated. Additionally, the library collects the Catalan web archive that today contains 229.396 crawls of 57.993 sites.

In 2004 the Library Board approved a strategic plan for 2004-2008 that paid special attention to digital issues to improve dissemination of its contents, services to users and to collect and preserve the traditional but also the digital heritage of Catalonia. This commitment with digital context was confirmed with the current Strategic Plan (2009-2012).

From 2004 the library invests resources every year to put digital objects available at the Internet. Nowadays it is involved in and, in certain cases is leading, several Catalan cooperative projects of digitisation and preservation:

ARCA[ii] (Arxiu de Revistes Catalanes Antigues) = Archive of old Catalan journals
MDC[iii] (Memoria Digital de Catalunya) = Digital Memory of Catalonia
PADICAT[iv] (Patrimoni Digital de Catalunya) = Digital Heritage of Catalonia
COFRE (COnservem per al Futur Recursos Electronics) = We Preserve Electronic Resources for the Future (it is a digital repository of preservation)

Also, the Library of Catalonia is partner of Europeana since the beginning. It has provided content from its digital collections published through the Digital Memory of Catalonia; and it is acting as intermediary between Europeana and some Catalan institutions to make the process of harvesting and standardizing easier.

The role of the library with Europeana as well as its participation in the cooperative initiatives mentioned above implies issues as legal aspects, agreements, metadata, data and metadata conversion that should be faced from a perspective of permanent evolution.

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[i] Biblioteca de Catalunya. www.bnc.cat
[ii] ARCA. www.bnc.cat/digital/arca/
[iii] Memòria Digital de Catalunya. http://mdc.cbuc.cat
[iv] Patrimoni Digital de Catalunya. http://www.padicat.cat/