TECHNoCuLTuRE

Creating value from cultural data in the age of digital transformation

Episode 9

Full transcript

Guest: Harry Verwayen (Europeana) [Harry]
Host: Federica Bressan [Federica]

[Federica]: Welcome to a new episode of Technoculture. I'm your host, Federica Bressan, and today my guest is Harry Verwayen, executive director of the Europeana Foundation. Welcome Harry.

[Harry]: Hi, Federica.

[Federica]: I'm very happy to have an episode of Technoculture on Europeana, because this is a very important and large-scale project that many people are familiar with, many of us have heard Europeana mentioned in one context or the other, but it's not obvious that everybody would know what it is exactly, and most importantly what it can do, what it does for different types of communities in Europe but also across the world. I just described it as a "digital platform", which is a rather abstract and generic description. A "digital platform for cultural "; it's also a "meta-aggregator" and "display space for digitized works", it's an "assembly of collections", and these are all expressions that I'm picking from various descriptions of Europeana. So, if you don't mind I would like to begin by asking you what Europeana is.

[Harry]: Yeah, that's a very good starting point. So, in order to tell you what it is, let me tell you what we do. The core of what we do is, we help museums, libraries, archives across Europe to make their digital content available on the web. It's actually as simple as that. But in order to make that happen we do a large number of different activities. So, we develop, for example, metadata models, we help with intellectual property issues, we do some advocacy work to make sure that both in Brussels and in the museums and libraries, openness - as a con-

cept - is something that people start to understand. But we also develop new technologies: for example, recently, IIIF (International Image Interoperability Framework), a way to interrogate images on the web, has started to become a standard. That's where we jump in and then we hope to roll that out across the museums.

[Federica]: I introduced you as executive director of Europeana Foundation. What is the difference or what is the relationship between Europeana Foundation and Europeana as the thing we think of when we think of Europeana, so the digital platform, the collection of services...

[Harry]: So, Europeana Foundation is an organization based in The Hague, Den Haag, in the Netherlands. And there's about 50 some people walking around here, from developers, Java developers, to a couple of marketeers, to policy design specialists, a bit of everything. Twenty five nationalities, by the way, which is quite interesting. So, what we do is we operate what is called the Europeana service or the platform, and that has a very specific remit that comes from the European Commission. So, the European Commission funds the core service and we execute that, but we don't do that alone: we do that in a consortium with currently 27 partners. Some of those partners are, for example, aggregators, so specialists in the domain of video, like EU Screen or Carrara, who understand the archeology field. And they are the ones who then work with the individual institutions of which we have currently close to 4,000 who participate. We've got some technological partners... so that is really on the executing level, the relationship between Europeana Foundation, partners, and the service that we developed for the European Commission, the European Union. And then besides that, to make it even more interesting, we have a network of professionals, cultural innovators, from the field: they can be in education, they can be creatives, they can be professionals in the library domain, and about 2,000 of them. And they are hosted by what's the Europeana network association. So, I'm hoping that didn't confuse you. Is that clear to you now, or you have more questions on that?

[Federica]: That's very clear, and I have more questions for you. You just said that one of the main objectives of Europeana is to help archives and cultural institutions enhance the presence of their collections online. I would assume that most of these institutions already have their own website, where they probably display some of their holdings online. So what is special about Europeana, besides bringing them all in one place? Is there an added value, like the content, the metadata, are there specific sections for music, for history of art? What is the driving force behind the idea of bringing all these collections together in one place?

[Harry]: Excellent question. Well, I think, for starters, not all institutions have their own website. Of course, the Louvre, and the Rijksmuseum, and the National Library of Austria, they all have their own websites. They're pretty well organized. But, you know, smaller archives

in the Netherlands or Bulgaria, they may very well not have websites. So that's something you should understand. Secondly, you can put stuff on the web, that's not difficult, right? Even with your iPhone, you can take a picture of a painting and put it on a website. But what we believe in is that the more we standardize the way all these institutions make the data available on the web, the better they can interact with each other, the better interfaces can be built on top of them, in other words the higher the impact for the European citizen. So, to give you a concrete example: if I'm interested in, let's say, the painter Van Gogh, I can interrogate the website of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, right? You may have been there, even. But that doesn't mean that you also have access to the letters he wrote to his brother, which are an incredible source of information about who he was, you know, how he thought about things, etc. And even not all the paintings that van Gogh painted, of course, are in the Van Gogh Museum, they're scattered all over Europe, actually beyond Europe. So, what we hope to do is that by standardizing how the metadata is constructed, the licenses that are applied to it, that other websites like Europeana can bring all that material in together in a relevant space. So that's why it's so important to have someone like Europeana. Maybe it's important to make a little distinction: so, on the one hand I'd be very happy if all the material is just available on the open standards, openly on the web anywhere. So that you can find it on Wikipedia, you can also find it in websites like DailyArt or whatever. But of course Europeana also has the remit of bringing all the Europeannes in one website, so that's why I think it's important to have a face as Europeans towards each other, towards ourselves, and maybe towards the rest of the world. This is who we are. So that's why I think it's important to the work that we're doing.

[Federica]: I fully empathize with this concept, and having agreed on what you just said, I don't think that Europeana wants to be a European only initiative. So, can you talk a little bit about how Europeana opens itself up to the rest of the world.

[Harry]: I think it really comes down to some fundamental principles. So, Europeana was conceived of about 10 years ago, actually literally 10 years ago on the 20th of November [2018]. And it came about as a desire to not be completely delivered to tech monopolists like Google. So, if you remember at the time, there was in 2005, 2006, Google came about with a pretty interesting proposition. At the time it said, you know, "we will come and digitize all your main libraries: Oxford, Cambridge, Bibliothque Nationale de France, a couple of museums, and we will scan all of that, will feed it to our search engine, and you all get a free copy." Pretty good deal, right? So, it did sound fairly attractive, until the point where we started realizing as Europeans that, well, and I've got nothing against private enterprise, really, but this is our cultural , this is ours, this is fundamentally of the people and for the people, this is who we are. So, it's a bit risky to say, well, all of that, we're okay with taking a cheap ticket here, and letting a private company do all that. But what if, for example, Google at a certain point would say "well, you know, the French material really isn't giving us enough clicks, let's sort of skip that," or the Bulgarian, or whatever. So you cannot think... imagine what that would

mean for the interpretation of our cultural in the future, right? So, there was the fundament of the thinking behind the Europeana, we should be able to do this as Europeans in a different way, and a different way is very much based on the ideas of inclusiveness, anyone should be able to participate, not only the big hits and the Mona Lisas, etc. But equally the smaller museums and the smaller artworks. And secondly we wanted to build this on open standards. So, with us, we really try very very hard, to all the way from the business model to the technological stacks, to the applications that we're building, to the data itself, to build that on open principles. So we've got, for example, a licensing framework for the artworks themselves and the books, where we've worked together with Creative Commons to develop a set of licensing statements that any library, museum or archive can use to put their content on the web. And of course, we propagate that to "the more open you make your material available, the more interesting it will be for others to do something with", and that is really the driving principle.

[Federica]: Sometimes cultural content is protected by copyright. So it cannot just be delivered online like that. How does Europeana deal with this? Is there protected content, and what's the ratio between the content and the metadata?

[Harry]: Okay, just to be precise, what we have in Europeana is metadata. So, we have information about artworks or books. Essentially we're big catalog. Except that what we try to do is to represent the artwork which will be hosted on a server somewhere else, right?, where the original resides, in as good a way possible on the Europeana website. So, all the metadata with us is licensed under the Licensee CC0, which is essentially a public domain statement. The content itself can follow any of 14 licenses that we make available, which includes under copyright, but it can also include things like "it is in copyright, but we as the institutions make it available under certain reusable formats", like for example, you can share it, but you need to say where it comes from, or it can be used only for educational purposes but not for commercial purposes.

[Federica]: Let me ask you a practical example. Say, I want to know more about the Mona Lisa. I can google it, and that's probably what most people would do today. I also know where the Mona Lisa is, it's in the Louvre in Paris, so I can go to their website. And I can, you know, use several kinds of resources. So why Europeana? Why would I want to make a search within Europeana? Is there always at least as much information as on the websites of the institutions that hold the specific artwork? Can there be less, sometimes, for some reason? Or can there be more, because information gets enriched by merging it with information coming from the other institutions across Europe that are all collected in Europeana?

[Harry]: Uhm, okay, so there are the two ways into your question, here. The first one is, you're mentioning the Mona Lisa, which is a famous artwork, perhaps even the most famous. And you probably will know that it is in the Louvre. So in that case, you would only, I think,

go to Europeana because you want to know, okay, so what else is there about the Mona Lisa that I didn't know. And maybe Europeana has some other interesting information, like books about when it was abducted from the Louvre, or those type of things. But I think most people will come to Europeana because we're a long-tailed organization. So you don't know exactly what you're looking for, but you might be looking for, say, a theme, like Art Nouveau, or like I said Van Gogh, or I'm looking for circus posters that I can reuse as a creative. So those are the types of things that I hope people will come to Europeana for. You ask, you know, can I always find the best possible resolution at Europeana? I'm afraid I have to say no. In some cases the best resolution you will be able to find is at the institution itself. But what you should be able to find in Europeana is a good enough resolution for you to at least do something with, if the license allows it. Or there will be a link to the original place and then you can find the original. A good example is the Rijksmuseum: are you familiar with their works?

[Federica]: The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam? Yeah, yeah.

[Harry]: Yeah? So, the Rijksmuseum is this world very famous example of an institution who deliberately makes all their artworks available on the highest possible resolutions for anyone to do whatever they want with. If you want to put it on toilet paper, The Milkmaid, for example, they encourage you to do it. So, what you have on Europeana will be a very resolution but if you click through and go to the Rijksmuseum, you'll find a place where you can find the original TIFFs, which are sometimes, you know, gigabytes big. So you can actually put it on a wallpaper.

[Federica]: Okay, I find that a very good thing.

[Harry]: Yeah, so do I.

[Federica]: You know, I've been interacting with several types of archives for at least the past ten years, and there is a school of thought that doesn't seem to me to be a winner in the long term; but there is a school of thought that some archives adopt or apply, that is "I do not share my material because it loses value: if I deliver it to you already, then you will not come to me, so I should keep it local. So you will come to me." The approach that the Rijksmuseum has adopted must prove successful because, number one, they wouldn't be doing it otherwise, and number two, it seems to embody some democratic values that Europe should be proud of, Europe should be promoting. Open up!

[Harry]: Yeah, I mean, that's exactly what I would also say. Most of these institutions, libraries, museums, or archives, I mean, they have a public mission, right? And the more their works infiltrate in science, and education, and creativity, will help Europe and essentially help themselves. However, and I think that is sometimes the most critical point, these museums,

libraries, and archives, are also under tremendous pressure financially. And I do really see that. So, on the one hand they need to show the relevance to society, which I think, you know, I can't see a reason why openness would not make them more relevant; but that is sometimes countered by, okay, "I actually make a couple of hundred thousand euros at the moment, selling licenses, so, you know, will people actually come to my museum?" There's an embedded fear in there, that they lose customers, if you want. What's brilliant about the Rijksmuseum case is that they said, "well, actually it works for us on both sides:" on a business side, we've made ourselves a lot more relevant because the amount of people coming to them now... basically, they're branding, how much of their branding is now out there, how many mugs are being made, t-shirts, all kinds of things, basically saying "come to the Rijksmuseum and see the original" is tremendous, right?

[Federica]: I wonder if the aura effect can only be true for the Mona Lisa. I actually don't think it can, but what I wonder is, what it takes for the other institutions, for all the institutions, to learn the lesson. The Mona Lisa is the one successful example of a work of art that everybody has seen one way or the other, in a book, online, and yet people travel to Paris to see the the Mona Lisa in person. I guess it's undeniable that there is something special about standing in front of a masterpiece. It's your experience of being there. It's actually very funny that you know some people will go to the Louvre just to see the Mona Lisa, like check, I've done that. And it's very funny, a shame, that you neglect many other works exhibited there because you want to see the Mona Lisa. Now, that also depends on your education, taste, your liking, the time you have at your disposal. But, you know that happens, and that's very telling probably about human nature in a way. But, for institutions, that should just let them know that the more people are exposed to items in their collections, the more somebody will want to know more about that specific one, because it attracted their attention. It's about having your own experience of the work.

[Harry]: I think it would go even further than that. I mean, you should be happy if, even if people don't come to your museum, that people actually use the works that you are, I mean... you're a custodian for something that doesn't really belong to you in the first place, because it's cultural that belongs to us all. I think many many directors I speak to actually believe that, and it's true. On the other hand, I do think that there are smart ways to use it also as marketing or branding material, to let people into your context, that you still have as a museum or a library, and say "come visit that fantastic work, but inside the premises of my museum or my library of my archive, and I'll tell you a lot more about it, and your experience will be enhanced by that." But, I mean, I think we're now entering a really interesting new space. You know, there's the the word on the street at the moment in Brussels - I'm sure you're aware of that - is "digital transformation", which I find a very fascinating term. So, the aim of Europe is to help Europeans go through that so-called digital transformation, but I think you can interpret that in many ways. So, you can think that digital transformation means

that we're just gonna use more digital stuff, right?, more technology, more things like Skype, you know, there will be scanners everywhere, etc. I think we have a strong responsibility, and in particular in cultureculture, to help that transformation take shape, to give it character, to give it flavor. You know, what do we want to transform into as a society at the end of the day? And what role can cultureculture play there? And I think that's where museums, libraries, and archives have a tremendous responsibility, and a huge opportunity. So I don't want to personally live in a world 20 years from now where, you know, all my data is things that tell things about me which are inherently from me, from my personhood, only interrogated by big companies like Facebook. And I would certainly also not want that to happen to me, you know, all the artworks and all the cultureculture that we produce here in Europe. So those are the big questions that I think we're facing at the moment in that context.

[Federica]: Besides the Orwellian twist of what you just said, I think that that's precisely the cultureculture in Technoculture. I think that for how fascinating it is to see how far we've come, and how far we can go with the development of technology that for the most part makes our lives easier, technology should never be where our look ends. It's not the horizon. It's always a means. But it's our existential questions that bug us, we need to find a reason to get out of bed in the morning, and we all suffer because of love, and there is death, and there is meaning... So, these questions will never leave us no matter what technology we come up with. And I think that cultureculture is that place where you don't find the answers, but you can find the best pointers to finding your own answers. Cultural , memory, history, this is knowledge and artifacts, you know, the books and the objects that people before us have left for us, produced not always for us but they survived to us, and these are people just like we are, so they were concerned with the same fundamental questions in a different historical context. And this is what Technoculture is about. But it's hard to ask the question directly. It's very hard to ask "how does having a smartphone, or how is it living in this techno-driven society today impacting how I ask my fundamental questions." So Techniculturecultrue kind of talks "around" this point in hope that it will shed some light on the core issue. There is a very funny anecdote then I'm gonna give. It's a funny, silly anecdote, but it made me think. Uh, I was in Paris recently, and I was visiting the Musée d'Orsay, and there was a temporary exhibition on Van Gogh. First of all I thought "how long have I been missing from museums, because I do not remember everybody walking around with their smartphones." For me, the museum - I must be so old school - is still a place of silent contemplation. It's you and the artworks, you know, it's, I mean, a mystical experience or something like that. And sure enough, in front of the Starry Night, there was a small crowd taking pictures of the painting and moving on. So I stopped there, and actually observed the crowd for a while. At some point, there was a young couple that turned their backs to the painting to take a selfie with the painting on the background. And... I wanted to call security! I was scandalized! I thought "these people don't know how museums work!"

[Harry]: Really! Okay, let me challenge that, because I think that that's fascinating. Did they first look at the Starry Night before they did the picture?

[Federica]: Look, honestly, they just turned around for a moment to make sure that the painting was correctly in the picture.

[Harry]: Of course, it's a bit sad if that's your only way of interacting with fantastic artwork like that. Then it becomes a narcissistic exercise, right? It's "look at me, where I am now," it's like taking a selfie was Beyoncé, right? But on the other hand, I think I always get very pissed off when I'm at the museum and they don't allow me to take a picture of an artwork. And it's still sometimes the case, right? Because we're living in an age of cultural participation, I mean it helps me to express myself if I can say look, I'm now in this museum and I've seen this fantastic detail in this statue, and I want to be able to send that to my friends on WhatsApp or whatever. If I can't do that, then, you know, we're still in a very old paradigm where art is being used as a podium for, you know, half-gods to tell us what the world looks like. It doesn't help me to understand or express what it can do to me.

[Federica]: I fully agree on taking a picture of a detail if you want to share it with your friends, if that's safe for the work in terms of using the flesh and those things. I still think that the selfie is a different thing, but let's move on and let's keep talking about how people engage with content. I read from the strategic plan of Europeana that there are four keywords, four key actions: aggregate, facilitate, distribute, and engage. I think that we've covered aggregation. How is content promoted, for example? How it is distributed, and how is access to it facilitated? And what strategies are put in place so that people engage with it?

[Harry]: First of all, I think you're looking at an old strategic plan, that goes until 2011, or 15 maybe?

[Federica]: Indeed, this is a plan from 2011 to 2015, but I also read that it was renewed for the period 2015-2020. So is this outdated?

[Harry]: Well, it is as the way we frame things, it's outdated, but, you know, the words facilitation and engagement, we can still talk about that, that's not a problem.

[Federica]: What's the difference between facilitate and engage?

[Harry]: Facilitate to me means that we enable other people to do something with the material. So, for example, because through the work of my teams here at Europeana Foundation, the content which you will find in Europeana tells you exactly "okay, this is something I can reuse" or not, it is, you know, certain metadata quality levels, it's big enough for me to put on

my screen, that enables someone to do something with it, which is facilitation process. When it's about engage, it's when I bring people together actively in an engagement situation. So, I'll give you an example of the project we're currently in which I'm really fascinated by. It's called transcribathon, as a concept. So what it is: we've got 200,000 letters and diaries and postcards from the First World War from 26 countries. So, soldiers from the front writing letters back to their loved ones, letter sent back, and then from the French side, the German side, etc. The problem is that that material is of course handwritten. It's scanned, but you can't actually OCR it. You can't make it machine readable by itself, with current technology. Our engagement activity here is that we invite people to come to a library on, let's say, you know, a Saturday, it could be schoolchildren, school classes, older people, etc. and we invite them to sit behind a desk, and literally transcribe a letter from what it currently is. And on the right-hand screen you see an open field where you can type it in. Now, the engagement here is that... I was really really fascinated, you see 16-17 year-olds, and I have a son of that age myself, who I always think have, you know, a very limited attention spans for these type of things, spending hours, literally hours, deciphering a letter. And through that process empathizing with, you know, what these people went through at the time. So they're doing something helpful for me, but the real big effect is that they are empathizing and getting involved in their own histories, you know. These are, of course, people who are... sometimes these letters were written by people of their own age, right?, 16-17 year-olds. So, that is when I actively create formats where people, real people on the street, you and me, can engage with this material in interesting ways. There's a little game aspect to it too, but I won't go into detail.

[Federica]: In the beginning of this interview, I have defined Europeana as the European digital platform for cultural . Cultural relates to concepts like memory and identity, so it is something that needs to be defined: whose memory is it? I want to connect this with the issue of immigration, which is not a new thing, it's just very actual now in the cultural and political discourse. But sure enough, our cultural , or the existing cultural in Europe, will be embraced by the newcomers, and they will also bring parts of their cultureculture, that most likely will become part of the European cultural . I know that Europeana has an ongoing initiative about stories of immigration: an initiative that involves ten museums across Europe. Can you tell us more about this initiative?

[Harry]: So, the the concept itself is pretty similar to what I just told you about with the transcribathon example. So we, at the simplest, we invite people, again on that Saturday morning, come to a place, a museum, a library, an archive, and bring an object that reminds them of their own migration history. So, it could be a diary, it could be a crumbled pack of cigarettes that their grandfather still had on them when they fled Hungary in 1956, when they went to the West, it can be all these type of things. And we digitized that and we collect their stories. Now, you might wonder why would Europeana, a platform for cultural , be engaged in a topic which is so political as migration, right? So here, I mean, and I really want to make

this point, we're not political in that sense, it's not that I'm advocating "migration is good", or bad, or whatever of that kind. I mean, that is a political debate that I don't think Europeana has a role in. But I do think we have a role in... you know, it's to be to stay relevant to political discourses. And what this project aims to do is to say look, we feel that because people don't know their own histories enough, there's a sense that migration is something that is only happening now, right? We are the original inhabitants of this continent, and there are people coming now from Northern Africa on boats trying to enter our space. Now, what this project aims to do is to say look, if you think about it, 99% of the people here in Europe who consider themselves to be "originals" quote-unquote, have a migration background also somehow. And we're interrogating that. From a very personal perspective, when I thought about it, so I'm Dutch, as you know, so I've always lived here, and that's from your own background, but if you were to look at a picture of me you think, he doesn't look maybe as archetypical Dutch, as I might think he should be, and that's because I have some French blood in there, from the XVII century. And there's probably some Spanish blood in there as well. And a more recent history, on both sides of my family [they] have lived in Indonesia, which was a former Dutch colony. So there's stories about that, and the type of food that had filtered into my being and my consciousness. So that's the type of thinking that we're trying to stimulate with this project.

[Federica]: Europeana celebrates its first tenth anniversary this year, precisely on November the 20th [2018], and I was gonna ask you about the objectives of Europeana and whether they have been achieved during this first ten years of activity. But I understand from what you've been saying that the purpose of Europeana is more that of serving cultural , of being an aggregator and facilitator. So that sounds to me like something that is an ongoing task, something you just keep doing. So I'm gonna ask you instead: with respect to the goals that you set for yourself, have you been able to monitor and measure your success? And have you maybe even raised the bar in the light of the achievements you've accumulated during this 10 years? And in other words, how has Europeana changed during this 10 years?

[Harry]: Yeah, that's a great question for a 10 year anniversary. Well, I think we certainly made, I think, progression in our thinking about what Europeana is, can be, and should be. We started out really as a portal, I think. I think... even in the frame of "we should be an alternative public Google," so a place, you know, where content flows in and can be seen, and over the years we've developed a character around it that is much broader. So, we really believe that it's our mission statement that we can transform the world with cultureculture. So, to me, the whole, you know, helping institutions get their data standardized for on the web and into Europeana is an instrument to something much bigger. Now, your question was, you know, have you been able to measure some success there. I think, to a certain extent we did. So, not only do we want to make beautiful pictures available on the websites, but we've made our own lives a lot harder by saying "well, we also want that to have to happen under standardized and open licenses." So that's a much harder job than just getting pretty pictures on a website.

And for that I have metrics. I can tell you that over 50% of the material in Europeana is openly licensed. Which I think is a nice feat [?] in itself. That's still an output measure. What we're now interested in is really measuring beyond that, what longer-term effects do we have on society, in specific areas, that we change people's perspectives on migration, for example; if we change people's, pupils' behavior in how they act and think about Europe; which are things that are of course much harder to measure, but we're developing methodologies now to start doing that and I think that's really where our future lies, is to be able to do that better and in a more precise way, so that it's really comprehensible, you know, for the investors in Europeana, which is the EU but in essence it's also you or me as taxpayers, right? We need to understand why this is a valuable investment. So that's what I'm gonna focus on in the next couple of years, is to make that much more tangible to people why it's good to do it. Not only do it, but to do it the way that we propose to do it.

[Federica]: Just shortly: who supports Europeana? How does it live? Who pays the electricity bill for lights in your office? [smile] Is it taxpayers money? You and me, like you said before?

[Harry]: I think here, because you live in Brussels, and I'm in the Netherlands, it's me and not you because we're hosted kindly by the Royal Library in the Netherlands, who gives a very good deal for the office space. But 90% what funds Europeana comes from the EU. We're centrally funded by the EU. But all the member states also chip in a little bit, all the 28 member States. But to me that's only... it really is fundamentally only part of a bigger story, I mean, there's an immense amount of volunteer work which is not quantified in euros but, you know, really adds to what we can do and how powerful we are. So, yes, you and me as taxpayers, but also maybe you as a volunteer Wikipedian, or me as a participant in a transcribathon, all of that also makes Europeana happen.

[Federica]: Who can contribute to Europeana? Who should I be? What kind of skills should I possess, if I have some spare time and I want to contribute to Europeana?

[Harry]: Remind me to write down your name and email address after this. [laugh] But that's an excellent question. As a real volunteer from outside this sector, I think participating in these public engagement things is really tremendously helpful. If you have a story about migration to share, there's a place on our website where you can do it; if you want to participate in transcribathon, and again you really don't need to have any real skills for that, as long as you can type in your own language, you'll be good. If you're professional in this environment, so perhaps you work in a museum or a library, and you think "ah, yeah I want to contribute to this thing, Europeana," not only because Europeana but also because it helps you in your own personal development. There's plenty of ways to participate. The first thing you need to do is become a member of our Network Association, and then you'll be invited to participate in solving issues we all face, like 3D scanning is now becoming bigger. What kind of standards do

we need to develop for that? How do we present that on the web? So, you might be a little bit techie, if you want to be in there. But if you have some art skills, we'd invite you to create your own collections on the Europeana collections, with the stuff you like. So I think there's plenty of ways to do it, it is an area... you know, participation of the general public is something that is difficult, but is something that we'd like to develop a lot further in the coming years.

[Federica]: We've mentioned already that Europeana celebrates its first tenth anniversary on November the 20th this year, 2018, which also happens to be the European Year of Cultural (EYCH). Can you talk a little bit about the celebrations of this anniversary for Europeana?

[Harry]: Yeah! I mean, yeah, it's an incredible coincidence, that these two things coincide. So, we're preparing a bit of a month of celebration, not just on the 20th. We'll probably have a nice cake here in the office, but I think more importantly we want to thank our network, we want to thank all the institutions that participated, all the politicians and the policymakers who helped to make it happen. So, we're having a number of events around November, in December, where we'll celebrate some of these things. But I think most importantly we don't want to just look back, we want to say you know, this is what worked well in the past, these are the flaws in the system - which we're with plenty of, believe me, - but also this is how we can contribute to a Europe of, you know, in its 20s, the 2020s, we're facing some big issues here, about identity, about the economy. And we think that as a network infrastructure, of all these museums, libraries, and archives, facilitated by Europeana, we can do something. I think that's where the European gear comes in. I put cultural really at least in policy-land on the forefront of the agenda. I'm not sure how much that filter through to individual citizens at the moment. But that's a great opportunity especially now there will be parliamentary elections, right?, in Spring next year. This is a fantastic opportunity to shape how the future will be run.

[Federica]: We learn from your short biography on the Europeana website, that what you like to do more than anything, quote is to "design and implement new business models that will change our way of thinking about as an enabler of social and economic growth" unquote. I would like to ask you something that probably transcends the scope of Europeana, but I'd like you to answer in the light of your work for Europeana, and that is the relationship between cultural and the economy. Not just in the sense of making profit from it, but indeed making it more appealing from the economical point of view, and certainly defeating this idea that cultureculture is a bad investment, that money spent on cultureculture is lost. We know from the creative industries that this is a very profitable market, because it's not just about the works and the people directly involved with art and cultural , but also all the professions that go around it. So since this is the thing you like to do the most, what's your idea of making cultural more appealing from the economical point of view, provided then it remains intact in its meaning.

[Harry]: I think... a couple of years back, I think, it started from the 1980s, Thatcherism thinking, but even until 2015, cultural , digital cultureculture I should say, was still seen as, you know, something really nice that you can do, you know, if everything else was already taken care of, right?, on the top of the Maslow's pyramid. Or perhaps as for a creative industry, right?, so the idea was that you digitize all that stuff, you now make it available for these creatives, and new companies which start up using that fuel, that data, to create new business. I think we're moving away from that, and I think rightfully so. I think the new frame, when you see that back in policy documents like the New Agenda for cultureculture, which was recently released in May [2018], policy documents where it says well, really we should look at cultural and cultureculture in general as much broader effects than just in cultureculture itself. It has an effect on tourism, right?, the second biggest driver for tourism, comes out of the statistics, it's always cultureculture. That's why the Japanese and the Americans come to Europe: for cultureculture. But it goes again much broader than that: it has an effect on our well-being. I ran into a very interesting app the other day, where cultural being used to support caretakers in the field of dementia. So I think that's an unexplored field, where probably the biggest, you know, impact can be seen. Now, obviously you can also turn that into economics, you can express the value of that in monetary terms, if you want. You can say well, if this helps dementia caretakers, then probably the patients have to go less to the hospital, and that's a cost saving thing. But again that's a very limited view on the world. So there's been a lot of studies this year and last year that show the tremendous value that cultural has way beyond its own cadres. So the 12 million people working in the cultural sector, it's said to contribute to about four and a half percent of GDP, but it is only the, you know, the accountable stuff. So that's what I'm most fascinated by, is again to start developing metrics to investigate that, how does that change. If you are confronted with much more cultureculture and be able to participate in it, how does that change your perspective on things like change, and if you are more receptive to change, how much more receptive are you to innovation, for example? So, there are trickle-down effects that we need to get a lot more insight in. But I'm now rambling a little bit. Is that still in line with your question?

[Federica]: Yes, yes, thank you very much. And I like some of the images you suggested there. Now, you have been appointed executive director of the Europeana Foundation this year 2018 in the month of May. But how long have with Europeana before this appointment?

[Harry]: I've been with Europeana seven years before. Yeah. So, I started out as the business director, and became deputy director under Jill Cousins, the previous executive director. And yeah, I must say I fell in love with his organization. I have always liked and loved the aim of it. I love working with these type of people. It's really at the crossroads of tech, cultureculture, innovation. That's just... I don't think I'll get bored here for a very very long time. And I was incredibly excited when I was appointed executive director, which I had to fight by the way, wasn't just something that fell into my lap. And now, being able to put my own signature

on it, I feel very blessed, I must say.

[Federica]: I like to hear that you're so passionate about what you do, and it was refreshing to hear you say a couple of minutes ago that also some directors of museums with whom you interact share this love for what they do, the awareness that they are actually guardians of our common . That's an immense responsibility. And as public we don't always get to see these people, and we might think sometimes that museums are run like businesses, which they have to be to some extent to support themselves, but it's refreshing to hear that people at the top of those hierarchies actually have an awareness of the importance of their role, and a love for what they're keeping. So thank you for sharing that. And speaking of sharing: is there any special story and anecdote, something funny or cool that was made possible by the Network, by the platform, what Europeana stands for, during the seven years that you've been with Europeana.

[Harry]: Wow, there are many of such stories. I think, you know, I feel immensely proud of having been part of the release of all the Europeana metadata. I think at the time it was about 22 million under a CC0, that's a public domain license. It was a huge, huge affair. It was the biggest contribution of cultureculture to the public domain at the time. And it was really done... we were able to do this not because of one individual, because of a bunch of individuals, you know, who put two hearts in it, all their intelligence and talents, and for a couple of years. And the release of that, I still remember I was lucky enough I could present it in Helsinki at an Open Knowledge Foundation meeting, was a tremendous feat. And I can still remember how proud I felt to be part of this organization.

[Federica]: Thank you for sharing your Europeana stories with us. We remember that during this months you have lots of celebrations going on, so we will certainly link some useful information in the description of this episode. And thank you for being on Technoculture.

[Harry]: So it was very nice meeting you. Very intelligent questions. Thank you for that.

[Federica]: Oh! Can I keep this in the interview?

[Harry]: Yeah, sure.

[Federica]: Thank you very much! Thank you very much. Talk to you soon, then.

[Harry]: All right, bye.

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