

From institutional online presentations to an international research and publication platform: a European experience

*Note: this paper is proposed to form a common session with the paper “**From archival catalogue to institutional research environment: an Estonian experience**” from Tõnis Tärna. Both papers will be concluded with a common discussion on the role and potential users of different access portals (institutional, national and international).*

Between 2003 and 2006 five major documents¹ have been published by several bodies of the European Union dealing with developments in the field of archives: the general challenge of enlarging the Union in May 2004 and the professional challenges of online accessibility, digitisation and digital preservation. This cleared the way for an initiative of the European Board of National Archivists (EBNA) to join forces in building an “Internet Gateway for documents and archives in Europe”. In January 2009 the APEnet project, funded by the European Commission, had its kick-off. Three years later, in January 2012, the Archives Portal Europe version 1.0 has been released, incorporating more than 14 million descriptive units from 61 institutions with links to more than 63 million digitised pages.

The portal’s infrastructure is based on a commonly defined EAD profile, that is used for presenting the material in its original context, for advanced searching on specific parts of information, for sorting and for refinement of search results. With online and stand-alone tools provided by the project in the back-end, the content providers have full control over each step of data ingestion and processing. The latter also includes providing data to the cross-domain portal Europeana.

Starting in spring 2012, the follow-up project APEX will continue the expansion of the network by including more countries and more different archival institutions. It will follow on standardisation activities and it will – in co-operation with the EBNA – encourage common strategies in digitisation and rights clearance of archival material to become accessible online. Additionally, APEX aims at improvements in the usability of the portal’s back-end and front-end as well as at getting the users more involved.

The presentation introduces the portal’s current workflow, tools and functionalities and provides an outlook on the version 1.1 to be released in autumn 2012.

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¹ The “Resolution on archives in the Member States” adopted by the Council of Ministers on 6th May 2003 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2003:113:0002:0002:EN:PDF>), the “Report on Archives in the enlarged European Union” submitted by the Commission to the Council of Ministers in February 2005 (http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/archival_policy/docs/arch/reportarchives_en.pdf), the “Council Recommendation on priority actions to increase cooperation in the field of archives in Europe” of 14th November 2005 (http://europa.eu/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2005/l_312/l_31220051129_en00550056.pdf), the “Commission Recommendation on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation” issued on the 24th August 2006 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:236:0028:0030:EN:PDF>) and the “Council Conclusions on the Digitisation and Online Accessibility of Cultural Material, and Digital Preservation” of 13th November 2006 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2006:297:0001:0005:EN:PDF>).

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