

EUROPEANA – Europe's Digital Library: Frequently Asked Questions

What is *Europeana*?

Europeana rolls multimedia library, museum and archive into one digital website combined with Web 2.0 features. It offers direct access to digitised books, audio and film material, photos, paintings, maps, manuscripts, newspapers and archival documents that are Europe's cultural heritage. Visitors to www.europeana.eu can search and explore different collections in Europe's cultural institutions in their own language in virtual form, without having to visit multiple sites or countries.

Who is *Europeana* aimed at?

Europeana offers anyone interested in literature, history, art or cinema a simple route to access European cultural resources. For every citizen, it offers a simple way to find cultural material from across Europe in digitised format. *Europeana* is also expected to attract students and researchers with its vast virtual collection of material from all disciplines. That said, it will be just as easy for school children to use it, for homework or for fun.

How does *Europeana* work?

Europeana functions like a multimedia Internet portal with content from different sources. The digital objects that users can find in *Europeana* are not stored on a central computer, but remain with the cultural institution and hosted on their network. *Europeana* collects contextual information about the items, including a small picture. Users will search this contextual information. Once they find what they are looking for, a simple click provides them with access to the full content – inviting them to read a book, play a video or listen to an audio recording – that is stored on the servers of the respective content contributing institutions. Cultural institutions collaborating with *Europeana* organise their digitised content in such a way that this search is possible. At the same time they keep full control over their content.

How does a cultural digital object (book, video, etc.) end up in *Europeana*?

First, the cultural object has to be digitised. Digitisation is the transformation into digital format of text and photos from paper, films from reels, music from vinyl or videos from tape, so it can be (dis)played and used from a computer. For text and photos this involves scanning. Then the cultural institution that has digitised the object has to make it available for search and retrieval through *Europeana*. To make it searchable from a single entry point, the institution has to add the right contextual information to the digital object, such as the name of the author/creator, the place and date of creation, etc.

How many digital objects are available through *Europeana* and where do they come from?

The *Europeana* prototype gives direct access to more than 2 million digitised items from museums, libraries, audiovisual and other archives across Europe. Over 1,000 cultural organisations from across Europe have provided materials to *Europeana*. The digitised objects come from all 27 Member States, although for some of them the content may be very limited at this stage.

Percentage of digitised items per Member State as of 1st November 2008

Austria	0.5
Belgium	0.5
Bulgaria	<0,1
Cyprus	0.1
Czech Republic	<0,1
Denmark	<0,1
Estonia	1
Finland	8
France	52
Germany	1
Greece	2
Hungary	0.5
Ireland	<0,1

Italy	1
Latvia	<0,1
Lithuania	<0,1
Luxembourg	1.5
Malta	<0,1
Netherlands	10
Poland	<0,1
Portugal	0.5
Romania	0.5
Slovakia	<0,1
Slovenia	1.5
Spain	1.4
Sweden	7
UK	10

Are 2 million objects enough or are they a drop in the ocean?

2 million objects are a respectable number, which will make the service interesting from the start. And this is only the beginning. To attract more users and to ensure that users come back to the site, the amount of objects searchable through *Europeana* should significantly grow over the coming years. The speed of this growth depends largely on the pace of digitisation in the Member States.

The objective of the European Commission is that in 2010, the number of digitised works available online through *Europeana* should reach 10 million.

Why can't I find my favourite author/painter in *Europeana*?

Europeana is just at its beginning. It just opened on 20 November. 2 million digital items are certainly a lot, but not much if compared with the vast and rich European cultural heritage. The object you are looking for may not yet be digitised or accessible through *Europeana*. The likelihood that you will find what you are looking will become higher as the amount of content in *Europeana* grows. In the meantime, why not search by your favourite subject and discover new favourites.

Another reason why the book or painting you are looking for is not there, may be related to the fact that the work is in copyright. It may not have been digitised or the rights holder may have decided not to make it available online or to make it available through his own website and not through *Europeana*.

What functions and services does *Europeana* offer me?

Above all, *Europeana* allows you to carry out a single search of thousands of digitised collections. This search can be done by a free text search (typing in a keyword), or by a variety of additional criteria and tools such as a timeline, type of object (image, audio, video, sound), and themes that other *Europeana* users are viewing at the moment. You can also keep a personal MyEuropeana space to store and share saved objects. You can also add tags – descriptive words that help a specific user community find material. In 2010, when the service is further developed, it will have even more interactive zones addressing communities of special interest.

Users also have the opportunity to re-use content that is not covered by intellectual property rights, unless the individual institution that has digitised and holds the content applies restrictions.

How multilingual is *Europeana*?

The *Europeana* interface is available in almost all official EU languages (Maltese and Bulgarian will be added in the coming months), so users will be addressed in their own language. For now, searches will trawl the languages in which the objects are stored: searching for 'treaty' will only yield English material. In the years to come, the application of semantic technologies will gradually enable cross-language searches so that searching for "treaty" will lead to results with "treaty", "traité", "trattato", etc.

How is *Europeana* financed?

Europeana will mainly be financed by the EU. From 2009-2011, the EU [eContentplus](#) programme will contribute about 80% of its budget needs – € 2 million per year. The Member States and cultural institutions will pay for the rest.

Moreover, the EU also co-funds other projects directly or indirectly contributing to *Europeana*, as well as research projects that will improve the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material, as well as its digital preservation. In the coming 2 years, some € 119 million in total will be available for these actions through the EU's overall [research programme](#) (FP7) and its Competitiveness and Innovation Programme.

How will *Europeana* grow from 2 million to 10 million items?

At present only 1% of items in Europe's libraries and other cultural institutions are digitised. The main priority for expanding *Europeana* is therefore funding digitisation to provide more content. This is a responsibility of the Member States, several of whom use money from the EU structural funds for specific digitisation projects (for example, Slovakia has rehabilitated an old military complex as a large-scale digitisation facility using page turning robots).

Through the *eContentplus* programme - and from 2009 the Competitiveness and Innovation programme - the Commission co-funds some digitisation activities, selected on the basis of their cross-border relevance and their contribution to *Europeana*.

This August, the Commission asked Member States to step up their efforts to contribute to *Europeana*, especially by providing more funding to digitisation and putting clearer figures on how much material they would digitise ([IP/08/1255](#)). The Commission also plans to involve the private sector in the further expansion of Europe's digital library (public-private partnerships).

Who decides whether a cultural object goes on *Europeana*?

The holder of the material. Individual libraries, audiovisual collections, libraries and museums decide what they want to digitise. Their decision will be based on several criteria:

- What are the most beautiful, historic or highly regarded items which they are most keen to share with the world?
- What do users most often want to consult or view?
- Are there hidden treasures – little-known items that could be enormously attractive to users once digitised?
- Are items too fragile for uses to consult, or to be displayed? Digitisation can help both preserve material and make it accessible to users.

Many countries have digitisation strategies in place to make sure that the same works are not digitised twice. On the other hand, it can be valuable to digitise related collections. For example, if a library digitised the papers (letters, diaries, speeches) of a prominent statesman, and an archive in that country chose to digitise papers relating to his political party (records of meetings, manifestoes, correspondence) from the same era, both sets of material would gain in strength from the shared context.

What is expected from Member States in relation to *Europeana*?

Europeana is a project implemented by the EU's leading cultural institutions, fully engaged with the objective of bringing Europe's cultural heritage online. The national Ministers responsible for culture and audiovisual affairs have warmly welcomed the creation of *Europeana*. Today, they adopted Council Conclusions that underline the importance of *Europeana* for making Europe's cultural heritage accessible for all on the Internet ([MEMO/08/546](#)).

The Commission has asked Member States to support *Europeana* in different ways:

- by investing in digitisation, so more content will become accessible through *Europeana*, and by setting up national portals that can serve as aggregators bringing content into *Europeana*.
- by making *Europeana* known to the public
- by making a direct financial contribution to *Europeana* as a sponsor.

The actual running of *Europeana* is a matter for the cultural institutions that contribute their content and have the specialised know-how for managing the service.

What kind of interesting cultural objects can I find on *Europeana*?

Internet users will be able to find fascinating cultural objects on *Europeana* such as the 9th Symphony of Beethoven, footage of the coming down of the Berlin wall (**Germany**), the **French** Déclaration des droits de l'homme of 1789 or 'Les Fleurs du Mal' (1857) from the French poet Charles Baudelaire, the British Magna Carta of 1215 from the British Library in **UK**, the Divina Commedia by Dante from **Italy** or pictures of the house and the tomb of the Italian physicist and astronomer Galileo Galilei, several paintings by Vermeer such as 'Girl with the Pearl Earring' from the Mauritshuis in The Hague (**Netherlands**), paintings by Jan Van Eyck, such as the 'Madonna met kanunnik Joris van der Paele' of 1436 from the Groeninge museum in Brugge (**Belgium**), the 'Carta plana de parte da Costa do Brazil' (a map dated 1784), illustrating **Portugal's** former colonies, the medieval Codex Vysegradensis from the **Czech Republic**, works by the **Hungarian** lyrical poet Sandór Petofi from 19th century, the bronze medal portrait of Alfred Nobel from **Sweden**, original letters and music scores by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in **Austria**, the manuscript of symphony

no. 5 by Jan Sibelius, his picture, and performances of his works in **Finland**, the handwritten text of 1563 signed by King Sigismund II Augustus (King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania) from the **Lithuanian** national library, the famous **Slovenian** folk song 'Sem hodu res zanjo' dated from around 1940, a history of the kings of **Spain**, written by the historian Prudencio de Sandoval and published in 1634, the manuscript of the 'preludes' by the famous **Polish** pianist Frédéric Chopin, a 15th century illustration of the 'Danse Macabre', from the **Romanian** national library, the cover of the 'Righas Charta', the cartographic masterpiece of the **Greek** enlightenment, by the Greek writer Righas Velestinlis, a photograph of the opening of negotiations between the two **Cypriot** communities in 2004, a Venetian map of Malta dated 1689, held by the National Library in **Malta**, a recording of the 1950 'Schuman declaration', from the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance de l'Europe in **Luxembourg**, the 19th century 'Levski Ordinance to the workers for the liberation of the **Bulgarian** people', the cover pages of the first edition of the Bible in **Estonian** (1739), the original film material showing the liberation of **Denmark** in 1945, a 'Kalendarium', a unique old book with type setting in red and black dated 1486-1504, held in **Slovakia**, posters announcing the 1933 Song Festival in Riga and the **Latvian** exposition of 1934 in Stockholm, the 'Topographia hiberniae', a map from the 11th century, representing the location of **Ireland** in Europe.

Thousands of other unique pieces of European art, history and culture can also be found on *Europeana*. Just visit it!

How does *Europeana* relate to generic search engines and to digitisation initiatives such as Google book-search?

Europeana is a cultural project and not a commercial undertaking. It creates a multimedia space on the web for everyone interested in European culture.

Europeana will bring together, through one single access point, digitised material (books, documents from archives, audiovisual material, paintings) from different types of cultural institutions (archives, museums, audiovisual archives and libraries). Therefore *Europeana* will be far more specific than the generic search engines: it will give fewer hits, but more targeted results.

Europeana is notable for strong features like the quality and authenticity of the content, guaranteed by the cultural organisations behind the service, and its openness in terms of cultural institutions that can participate and re-use the material.

Europeana has a broader remit than commercial search engines such as "Google books". *Europeana* will give access to different types of content from different types of cultural institutions, thus making it possible to bring together the works of a painter with relevant archival documents, as well as the books written about his life.

Can private individuals or commercial companies make content available for *Europeana*? Can they upload it themselves?

Not at this stage, though there will be a flickr account related to *Europeana* where people can upload their photographs of, for example, their visits to historic sites and monuments. For the fully operational version of *Europeana* in 2010 this aspect of the site will be developed: Private collectors or holders of interesting documentary or photographs, for example, will be able to upload them into the Communities area of the site.

How is *Europeana* organised?

On 8 November 2007, the European Digital Library Foundation was set up formalising the agreement between European archives, museums, audiovisual archives and libraries to work together in the delivery of *Europeana*. The Foundation is open to content holders (individual museums, archives and libraries) and national and European associations of content holders.

The *Europeana* office, where the *Europeana* service is being developed and run, is hosted by the Dutch National Library in The Hague.

How can I access *Europeana*, search cultural content, and learn more about it?

You can visit *Europeana* at www.europeana.eu/

Europeana info clip

EN: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/video.cfm?sitelang=en&type=1>

FR: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/video.cfm?sitelang=fr&type=1>

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