

International Federation of Libraries Association 75th Congress

Theme: “Libraries create futures: building on cultural heritage”

Report on presentations attended by Trilce Navarrete

Reaction to overall conference:

The role of digital libraries has always been to organize world knowledge and to give access to it. The on-line environment brings a shift in the quantity of materials available, requiring a revision on the organization and processing processes, and in the complexity and diversity of the user, requiring a new approach to services. More attention should be given to learning about the on-line user behavior to inform service development of heritage institutions in order to increase on-line users.

There is a misconception that the Internet has no collection, as several speakers proposed. On the contrary, the Internet is a large collection of information that has gone through a selection process (first to be digitized, then to be made available on-line).

Several international projects presented an update of activities, including the World Digital Library, Europeana and Athena. The success of portals as entry points for digital heritage materials was not discussed. The benefits of such entry points appear to be related more to the production of standards and joint vocabulary as well as to the organization of content among heritage institutions.

Access to digital material on-line has increased legal discussions, requiring agreements among country differences and multiple organizational approaches. Multimedia works require clearance of multiple owners' rights, countries limit accessibility to protect their citizens, and private interest conflict with public benefits, to name a few issues raised. IFLA takes part of the international discussions as supporter of freedom of expression and freedom of access to information.

Clearly, IFLA provides a safe forum for discussion to all countries able to attend.

Panel on Statistics (August 24th and 28th):

Statistics were presented on digitization production (Poll, Navarrete, Schweibenz, Mundt and Wimmer), on digitization costs (Poll, Navarrete), on-line users (Huysmans), on-site users (Feliu Oller and Munoz Creus, Fried, Bellini), born-digital collection (Dobрева), collection registration (Schafer, Walker and Foster) and social outcomes (Fried, Baathuli Nfila).

With no doubt, statistical data benefits from clarity on purpose at all stages. Institutions require an incentive to gather and to analyze data, generally experienced as extra workload. Understanding the benefits of the work at different levels is of essence, for the individual worker, manager and policy maker alike.

Navarrete and Huysmans: presented results from *De Digitale Feiten* project and from latest SCP on-line access to heritage materials. The audience voiced concern about the public's inability to link cultural activities to heritage institutions (listening to pop music on-line would not be reported as cultural activity) and about the inaccuracy of estimated digitized collection (lack of institutional accurate data may account for an overestimation of accomplished work).

Issues brought up during the panel presentation included the following:

In the heritage sector there is history of some form of user statistics but these present some problems. User groups are not differentiated (user type, user group) nor the type of materials they use (special collections, featured objects). Museums have the concepts of 'museum visit' that does not include the use of material at all.

Furthermore, definitions and classifications can reflect multiple interpretations that can have an effect on the reading of the data. There lacks a homogenized concept of 'digitization'. At an object level, example of a photo: the role of the object changes if it is an image to identify an object, if it serves to document an event, or if the photo itself is the object collected. EGMUS presents a framework for comparable statistical information.

With the increasingly encompassing definition of 'digital heritage' (to include e.g. blogs), collection metrics may include (a) number of files or URIs, (b) size (TB/GB), (c) counting and sorting by MIME type, (d) (W)ARC files. Metrics to measure costs proposed: hardware and software, direct computing costs, labor costs + scientific or heritage value, scarcity and risk analysis, usage + harvesting.

Heritage institutions (Libraries, Archives and Museums) can benefit from joint approaches to data production, resulting in richer and more balanced retrieval of materials. The ISO 5127 (2001) represents a mutual understanding and common basis of the vocabulary of the 3 sectors has 7 sections, including 'document types', 'cataloguing/documentation operations', preservation, and legal aspects.

Statistics, used also to refer to repositories with object registration information, have been used to inform selection of objects for preservation. Required data includes state of the object in addition to other possible variables such as conditions, value (based on catalogue or auction price). Digitization can sometimes function as a 'cheaper' conservation method.

David Nicholas presented *The Google generation* book, a UK study on the use of Internet among young university students. He proposed a digital information footprint achieved through 28 key figures in 3 areas: activity metrics, information seeking characteristics, and user characteristics. From his results it can be concluded that: There is tremendous activity and is mostly driven to give access. Users are highly diverse (age/gender/culture). 96% of users are robots. UK taxes are paying for USA access. Users view and do not read. Horizontal replaces the vertical, favoring superficial awareness of the existence of high quantities of materials. The library's brand as 'the intermediary' for information access is no longer relevant.