

Kick-Off DC-NET

Conclusions by Antonia Recchia

We have come to the end of a long working day , so let me thank first and foremost the partners of this project , the Central Institute for the Union catalogue of Italian Libraries (ICCU), the Italian Ministry for Education , University and Research (MIUR) , the European Commission as well as all those who took part in the event and who were the very evidence of the interest generated by this initiative

During this working day we committed ourselves to outline a new pathway , and in doing this we made a very stimulating exercise : i.e. setting up a research infrastructure for digital heritage. The starting point of this idea is the acknowledgment of the fact that the European cultural heritage not only represents an unparalleled asset of artistic, historical, archaeological , literary and scientific masterpieces (...that has no equals worldwide !), and stands as a remarkable economic development opportunity (lets consider for example the publishing industry, the so-called creative industry and the cultural tourism sector), it not only is a stimulus to find out more by those who want to study and learn , but it is a very rich and fertile soil where to let European and international research grow and thrive together with multidisciplinary activities.

I am referring to research activities aiming at finding the most appropriate technological solutions for the management of complex cultural contents , to the finding of advanced computing platforms capable of representing multimedia information, 3-D models , and the reconstruction of virtual scenarios. I am also referring to the finding of distributed memory architectures capable of preserving different contents and information so as to make them accessible to future generations , in the very same way we are nowadays capable of reading ancient books, admiring works of art, visiting museums and consulting archives.

This research activity is focusing on data and metadata models that allow the cross-domain cataloguing of objects and digital collections , that refer to other objects and collections pertaining to different heritage sectors which in past times , and without the support of present new technologies , could only barely be imagined.

This has got to do with the search for instruments and tools that can make cataloguing and digitisation activities more rapid , efficient and cost-effective through data interpretation , automated generation of concepts and representation of knowledge in terms of information that can be processed by computers , such as : recognition of shapes and persons , extraction of key words from texts and pattern-matching techniques. On top of this I could still mention many more examples , such as the research activities carried out in the field of multilingualism , of the semantic web , of the management of identities and accesses , of the protection of copyright, etc....

The community of research laboratories involved in such a vast range of (research) activities needs to share data , services competences and skills in the most effective way. In such a perspective equal importance is attached to the role played by cultural institutions that handle huge quantities of contents and assure their qualitative standards. The encounter between the world of research activities and the world of cultural institutions represents the very basis of our ambitious idea to implement research infrastructures for the digital heritage.

Quite naturally the implementation of an operational plan will entail on one side the availability of the highest levels of technical , scientific and managerial expertise and skills , as well as the support of cultural institutions , and on the other side it will entail -- at policy level -- the agreement of those entities that will have to support (also at financial level) the implementation of the infrastructure.

I believe that today's debate has proven that we are progressing in the right direction and as a consequence I am convinced that we should all activate ourselves in order to support DC-NET and its activities.

In my role of Coordinator of the Joint Programming Initiative for research activities in the field of cultural heritage, it will be my task to extend the Initiative to the digital heritage at national level and to propose the same extension at European level.