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INTERVIEW

with *Mr. Jon Purday,*

Senior Communications Advisor, Europeana Foundation

to *Eva Semertzaki,* editor *Synergasia*

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We met Mr. Jon Purday in Athens on the occasion of the symposium: "Adding Greek cultural content in the European Digital Library", on October 19, 2010. Mr. Purday was invited to talk on "Europeana: opening up access to our cultural heritage". Mr. Purday is the Senior Communications Advisor for Europeana.eu since 2007. He is on secondment from the British Library, where he has been Head of Corporate Communications since 2000, responsible for implementing award-winning campaigns around public value and digital access.

ES. Mr. Purday, welcome to our country, welcome to Athens on this sunny day of October. My first question for this interview concerns the inception of the Europeana project since its beginning in 2006, the initial concept, its vision and goals.

JP.   The idea for Europeana came in existence in 2005, the same year that the Google Books project was launched. At that time, the President of the French Republic grouped together 5 other State Presidents to write a letter to the Presidency of Council of Europe and to the European Commission. They suggested the creation of an online European library where the cultural material of European countries will be represented in the online environment. The six Heads of States who signed the letter came from the countries France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Spain.

At that time, the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) was experimenting with the digitization of books and other materials in collaboration with a number of other European countries. It was suggested that a pan-European project should be funded by the European Commission. Thus, in 2007 we moved to the idea of the European digital library prototype, to be developed by a project team to be based in the national library of the Netherlands. Broadly, all types of resources derived from museums, libraries and archives should be included. We used the original name - Europeana - devised by the BnF, and the project was managed by Catherine Lupovici, who had formerly been project manager at the BnF.

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ES. Who were the pioneering institutions that initiated the project of the European digital library?

JP. Right from the beginning the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) and the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (National Library of the Netherlands) in The Hague expressed their interest to be involved. The project was built on the management and technical expertise developed by The European Library, which is run by the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL), a pioneering group, too. The European Library exposes the catalogs of the participating national libraries under one portal.

ES. Which is the structure of Europeana and how is it funded since the beginning?

JP. Europeana is a service run by the Europeana Foundation. It brings together all libraries, archives, museums and audiovisual collections across Europe. It includes key European cultural heritage associations from those four domains, such as the CENL. The Europeana Foundation is a partnership of the Presidents and Chairs of of European cultural heritage organizations who come together to plan the strategy and policy of Europeana. Their partnership has helped create the integration of the different content types in Europeana.

The Europeana service has three phases:
1. The Europeana prototype is the result of the European digital library network (the EDL Project) and covers the period July 2007-Jan. 2009.
2. The Europeana Version 1.0 Project, is taking the prototype to a fully operational service during the years 2009-2011.
3. The Europeana Version 2.0 Project will further develop the service between the years 2011 and 2013.

However, we depend on the funding the project. Europeana is funded by the European Union and the member states. Therefore, the development of the project depends on the way the EU and the member states contribute to the funding. For example, the Dutch Ministry of Education provides finance for the project and also very generously hosts and houses it in the premises of Koninklijke Bibliotheek. Europeana is also a partner in twenty one projects associated with Europeana. Most of these projects are funded with about 80% of the total sum; to partipate in them, Europeana must find the remaining 20% of the funding. All those projects are similar

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because they create and aggregate content to feed Europeana.eu, or develop the technology for new features and functions.

ES. The Europeana Foundation has set standards that should be followed by all institutions that desire to add content to it. What are they?

JP. The basic set of standards is the Europeana Semantic Element (ESE) which is based on Dublin Core with a few added extras. Metadata records must be mapped to the ESE standard, which is not difficult, but ensures that all standards work together and display consistently.

Now we will be moving on the Europeana Data Model (EDM) which complies with the main professional standards, such as MARC, EAD for archives, LIDO for museums and METS for digital libraries. People can submit content in all data formats. They do not have to change the format of their data. But you get richer results when content accommodates to standards.

ES. Which are the requirements for an institution to join the project with its digitized content?

JP. The basic requirement for an institution to join Europeana is to possess digitized content. Then, the institution needs to work with a domain or a national aggregator. For example, a domain aggregator is *EU Screen* whose partner is the Hellenic National Audiovisual Archive and feeds material to Europeana. An example of a regional aggregator is the *Europeana Local* which is represented in Greece by the Veria Central Public Library. A national aggregator is *culture.fr* which brings material from cultural institutions across France. The fourth type of an aggregator is the thematic one, such as the Musical Instrument Museum Online. The task of the aggregator is to help the organization map the content and then get it to Europeana.

ES. How can an institute that holds rare material but has not digitized it yet, participate in Europeana? Do you accept bibliographic entries pertaining to this rare material with the intention to help the institute in the digitization process, the standards, the people to contact etc?

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JP. We do not get bibliographic data. To reply to that, the project *AccessIT* is an information source for institutions. It provides online courses to help them with metadata and to help people who are interested in digitization activities.

ES. Nowadays, a new version, Europeana version 1.0, replaced the prototype and the Europeana management plans for the next phase, the Danube version. What is the size of Europeana today as regards the items, partners, participating institutions, formats of material included in it and the similar?

JP. Today the size of Europeana is over 13 million objects deriving from 1.500 participating institutions, from 28 aggregators, from the 27 European Union member states. We also gather material from Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Serbia and in general from states of the Council of Europe. However, we mainly focus on the European Union countries and we try to have equal proportions in terms of patrimony.

As regards formats, the text predominates but we try to get on to more audiovisual objects because we do not have very many films and videos. This is due to the copyright issues pertaining to this kind of material. Though, we encourage more audio-visual institutions to contribute to Europeana with their material.

ES. Which of the 27 European countries has a predominant role as regards the amount of digitized content in Europeana?

JP. France definitely predominated with 47 % of the entire Europeana content at the time of its creation. Their content was the nucleus of Europeana since the beginning. The content is provided by *culture.fr*, a sophisticated national aggregator. France is the pioneer in the creation of Europeana, because their systems were ready to join when we started. Now the French content comes down to 30 % because more aggregators put their material in Europeana, as it is the case with the Hellenic aggregator.

ES. Who are the users of Europeana today?

JP. At present, our key demographic seems to be people over 40 - the same age group that makes most use of museums and libraries. A lot of them are professionals, researchers, curators and similar. It is important to reach young learners, students and school children. For that purpose, we are starting to work with *EU School Net* to put teaching applications together.

We have been developing a Facebook group for people interested in Europeana. We link exhibitions, e.g. the Exhibition of Art Nouveau, to the Facebook art nouveau community. We are piloting the use of APIs[1], as a way to integrate Europeana content into other sites. An example of an API is Google Maps that can be embedded in a wide range of different websites. The Europeana API will enable our content to be searched from and integrated into a college's website, for example. We offer the APIs for free and we will also offer web services such as widgets. Thus, we will be able to put our material into the workflow of a younger demographic population.

ES. *Which are the benefits for an institution to join Europeana? Some institutions are reluctant to share their content because they think that they will lose their uniqueness and also think that everyone interested in their collections will visit their portal.*

JP. The institutions benefit from feeding their content to Europeana in several ways:
- They keep their content on their websites and on their servers. We only drive the traffic and direct users to the institution's website.
- We make people part of a large network because we bring them together with all great players in Europe. That's good for knowledge sharing.
- Our technology is Open Source, and our partners and providers have access and can re-use our code to develop their own applications. People's material is visible to many users. Thus, Europeana enriches historical events such as the Independence War via the sources of the British Library. For example, by digitizing diverse material of life in Greece and supply it to Europeana, we bring together various sources from different institutions and enable the researcher access an integrated content in order to get a picture of Greece and its poetry, history and mythology derived from textual sources, images, paintings, videos and films.
- The sense of opportunity is to cross borders. Greece has a more than 2.500 years old history and mythology. It has the extraordinary advantage of

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[1] ΣτΜ. API: Application Programming Interfaces (Διασυνδέσεις Προγραμματισμού Εφαρμογών)

mythology that penetrates all European cultures. Mythology has underpinned European literature and is still vividly depicted in contemporary movies. Similarly, Greece. Greece is recognized for the legacy of democracy that it has brought to the world, and the development of the political process can be tracked through Europeana, down the ages and across Europe.

- It is easier to share ideas via the Internet. That causes disadvantages, too. If you do not make your material readable from the Internet, you are irrelevant for new generations. If younger people find things interested while searching the Internet, they come to your doors. Otherwise, they simply ignore you. Therefore, Europeana helps reinforcing relevance of cultural institutions to new generations.

ES. Europeana has a strong competitor: Google. How do you meet the competition between the two content providers?

JP. We are not competitors with Google but we co-operate with them. We talk about multilinguality, metadata and technologies. For example, three of our main partners have signed agreements with Google: the University of Ghent, the KB which is the hosting institution of Europeana and the National Library of Austria which is the coordinator of *Europeana Connect* project. Those partners digitize a lot of material and will bring another 500.000 books to Europeana. Consequently, the relation between Europeana and Google is close. But we do different things. We bring sounds, newspapers, images, paintings, videos, films and books together. It is a whole integration of formats. On the contrary, Google is concerned only about textual material.

We also prefer to have material in the Public Domain. It is good to offer widely accessible material via the content provider and make it freely accessible.

ES. Greek is one of the 27 European Union languages. However, the percentage of the Greek content remains low although it includes content from two countries: Greece and Cyprus. Of course, by launching the content of Europeana Local the amount of Greek digital content is gradually augmenting. On the other hand, many institutions have implemented digitization projects with funds from the Information Society Programme of the European Union. What could you suggest to the Greek

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JP.   The Greek National Library is working with The European Library and will be getting more material.

The efforts to persuade people to contribute their institutions' material are explained when we referred to the benefits of joining Europeana in a previous question. Today at the conference we heard some fantastic endorsements from people. We heard the views from five Greek content providers who have benefited because their material is spread to the public. Events such as the symposium today and the contribution of the Veria Central Public Library are significant ways to persuade people. I am impressed by the number of people in the audience today, their diversity and the encouraging messages of the Hellenic aggregator.

ES. *Which are the future goals of the development of Europeana?*

JP.   We will become the trusted provider for cultural content across Europe. We will ensure that the content is easily accessible and enable people to share and distribute content via APIs. We will distribute the code to develop new applications. We will open up access to our data and support semantic web applications. We facilitate knowledge transfer, knowledge about intellectual property rights, public domain and standards. We are constantly seeking new ways to innovate and apply technological means in cultural areas. It is a high profile contribution.

We can get sectors to work together. We are engaged with users and create a dialogue with users and content providers.
In the coming years our strategic goals of Europeana are:

- to attain a sustainable funding model in 2013,
- to put relevant content to Europeana,
- to present an appropriate business model as to the value of the objectives and needs of the users.

JP. A lot of work and efforts are going to presentations we give to professional groups at an average of twice a week. We attend conferences talking and helping people become part of Europeana. We are visible to our content providers. On October 13th and14th 2010 we organized a conference on Europeana in Amsterdam. The number of attendees was 350 people, including curators, librarians and archivists at a professional level.

We also write articles in journals about the things we do in Europeana. We prepare press releases and write on blogs. We talk to different communities, such as the professional community of your journal. We discuss with end-users through social networking media. We publish a newsletter. We talk to our users through media channels and through our partners, who talk to their users and endorse Europeana to their users.

Our content providers know their users and introduce Europeana to them. Moreover, there are different channels for different target groups and there is an overlap between them. The same person can be a professional librarian, using Europeana in their working life, finding information for users, then in another part of their life they can be an end-user, seeking cultural information about their holiday destination, for example.

Concerning the feedback of our users, we realize that people are enthusiastic when they write e-mails to us. We have a focus group and a test panel of young users. We run media labs to ensure that the site is usable, navigable to enable users to find what they want. There is a range of different sources of getting feedback of users to figure out what they need from us, which are their expectations. It is developing all the time.

ES. In my judgement, Europeana has a splendid and bright future. Its role is extraordinary significant to preserve the cultural heritage of Europe. At this point, I would like to thank you for this interview and for the thorough answers. The

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information you just presented us will enhance the knowledge of the Synergasia readers as regards the Pan-European digital library, namely the Europeana.eu! I wish you and the Europeana team all the success for your ambitious and value-added program.

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