

e-Infrastructures for cultural heritage
DC-NET Conference
29/11/2010
Royal library of Belgium, Brussels

On Friday, 29/10, the first of two international conferences, organised by the DC-NET project (Digital Cultural Heritage Network, 2009 – 2011), took place in the Royal Library of Belgium.

The 120 participants, of 25 different nationalities, represented the ICT sector, the cultural heritage sector (e.g. the large federal museums), researchers from different institutions and universities, and administrations and policy makers.

The proceedings were opened by the general director of the Royal Library and by a representative of the Belgian federal Minister for science policy Sabine Laruelle, who stressed the utmost importance of ICT infrastructures for the further development of cultural institutions. This is in particular the case for Belgium, where the science policy department is preparing for the second phase of an ambitious digitisation plan of the cultural and scientific heritage held by the federal institutions. The representative of the European Commission introduced the European Union's Digital Agenda, in which digitisation of cultural heritage takes a prominent place.

Information and communication technologies offer enormous possibilities for the cultural sector: the public as well as scientific researchers can access collections in an interactive, detailed manner. One of the technologies described during the conference presentations was a foldable and portable system to create 3D images, of a quality suitable for research purposes, of artistic or historic objects on location in museums. Another example of the added value of technology is a project which allows online access to thousands of historic testimonies, which remained hidden in archives before.

A director of CERN, the European laboratory for particle physics, illustrated how powerful e-infrastructures for data storage and management, developed in scientific laboratories, can be valuable instruments for the challenges cultural communities are facing. A close cooperation between informaticians and scientists is essential for this aim.

Next to examples of the immensely valuable contribution ICT can offer the cultural heritage sector, there was a discussion of possible problems arising during such a cooperation: there is, for example, a significant difference between data from "hard" sciences, often the result of measurements, and data from social sciences and humanities, which rarely exist in a bare form: they were created in a certain context, have been interpreted, which makes sharing them, and the loss of control this entails, more difficult. That representatives of e-infrastructures and researchers in the cultural sector also need to find a way to communicate, to understand each others needs, limitations and possibilities, was another observation returning in several presentations.

Several speakers voiced a determination to work closer together, within and between different domains and expertise. The conference organizers hope that a first step in this direction was taken, during the presentations and discussions as well as during the informal meetings and conversations.

For more information:

The conference website with the programme, presentations and photos: www.dc-net.be

Contact: Jean Moulin

jean.moulin@stis.belspo.be

02 23 83 745

elena.phalet@stis.belspo.be

02 23 83 741