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Poster 'Preservation through access: the ADHS Performing Arts collections in ECLAP and Europeana'

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1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Glasgow was home to the Arts and Humanities Data Service Performing Arts (AHDS Performing Arts) [1], one of the five arts and humanities data centres that constitute the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS). Since 1996 AHDS supported the creation, curation, preservation and reuse of digital materials for the UK Arts and Humanities research and teaching community. ADHS Performing Arts, based in Glasgow, supported research, learning and teaching in music, dance, theatre, radio, film, television, and performance for thirteen years. Working with the AHDS Executive, relevant performing arts collections have been ingested, documented, preserved, and where possible made available via the AHDS Cross Search Catalogue and Website to researchers, practitioners, and the general public. Furthermore strong relationships were developed with research and teaching community upon a scoping study investigating user needs [2].

In 2007 the co-funders of the AHDS - Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for the UK and the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) - withdrew their funding. A detailed risk assessment report was produced in response to the withdrawal of core funding [3], but to no avail. When the JISC funding stopped, online access to these cultural resources eventually became discontinued [4].

In 2010, the School of Culture and Creative Arts at the University of Glasgow joined the EU-funded ECLAP project to ensure that at least part of these resources could be accessible for the long term by scholars and practitioners in the performing arts arena, and by the general public. Below we provide an overview of the ECLAP project, the ADHS Performing Arts collections progressively available through it and some thoughts on providing preservation through access for this type of digital cultural resources.

2. ECLAP project

ECLAP (European Collected Library of Artistic Performance, www.eclap.eu/) is a EU-funded Best Practice Network infrastructure and a service portal [5] providing a large, collaborative and multilingual online library for performing arts institutions and industries in Europe and beyond. ECLAP offers a wide range of innovative solutions and tools to support performing arts institutions in managing, providing access to and disseminating their online collections to a large number of users. The ECLAP Consortium, led by DSI University of Florence [6] is composed by European leading national performing arts institutions, universities and research institutes [7].

This initiative is bringing together hundreds of thousands of Europe's most relevant performing arts content (previously often inaccessible online), including collections on theatre, dance,

music, cinema and film, performances, lessons, master classes, teaching, festival, costumes, sketches, production materials, lyrics, posters, locations. File formats include video and audio files, documents, images, animations, playlists, annotations, 3D, interactive content, e-book, slides.

This initiative is also establishing a set of best practice guidelines covering performing art key areas, such as metadata and content modeling, mapping metadata standards, semantic enrichment, IPR management tools, business models, ingestion and integration of end-user contributions, education and leisure tools, digital libraries tools.

2.1 Main goals

Through its portal and services ECLAP aims at enriching and promoting performing arts heritage and culture, and in supporting advances in learning and research in the field of performing arts. ECLAP is fully integrated with Europeana, the portal endorsed by the European Commission providing a single access point to millions European cultural and scientific heritage digital objects [8].

The project goals include:

- Create a stable and open best practice network of European performing art institutions, to help them to exploit digital content and disseminate new technologies and tools;
- Providing solutions and services to major performing arts institutions such as: content ingestion, metadata enrichment, content distribution, content aggregation into Europeana, IPR management, content channel visibility, play lists, annotations, multilingual semantic/fuzzy search queries, partner/colleague search;
- Provide solutions and services for a variety of users: teachers, students, performers, researchers, and performing arts lovers for edutainment, infotainment and entertainment.

2.2 ECLAP portal services

ECLAP offers several functionalities and facilities to registered users and partners, including but not limited to:

- Content ingestion, IPR management and metadata publication in Europeana;
- Search and retrieve extensive curated multimedia content via a multilingual interface (21 languages);
- Possibility to enrich, contextualize, annotate, rate and aggregate content;
- Possibility to share multilingual content, including collaborative indexing and creation of forums;

- Distribution and access all content via diverse devices such as PCs, tablets and smart phones;
- E-learning support and facilities.

3. ADHS PERFORMING ARTS COLLECTIONS IN ECLAP

3.1 Value and challenges for performance digital content

Performing arts represent a valuable cultural resource, and also an important economic sector in the Creative Industries. According to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's annual analysis of the impact of the creative industries on British economy [9], the Music & Visual and Performing Arts sector is the Creative Industries largest contributor, employing in 2009 some 300,000 people and contributing £3.7 billion of Gross Value Added (GVA) to the economy. As Seamus Ross noted, for the performing arts community 'the process of creative activity is itself a core deliverable. While we need to document performance, giving preference to print and text as a way to describe performance is not adequate' [2, Preface]. However performing arts outputs are often constituted by 'rich audiovisual resources that are complex to preserve from both a technical and intellectual point of view' [3]. Furthermore, typically performance collections have an online bibliographic catalogue, through which users can sometimes access a limited amount of digital content, often restricted to textual materials.

3.2 Benefits for ADHS Performing Arts collections

Rather than a scattered group of host institution's websites, the ECLAP portal represents a central point which allow European-wide institutional collections be described, cross-searched and compared, maintaining rights and access restrictions as appropriate, while benefiting from the greater visibility provided by the search, discover, retrieve and access via ECLAP and Europeana. In addition, ECLAP offers a number of content enriching, social networking and distribution services, as mentioned above.

In terms of sustainability, the portal centralised access point, ECLAP strategic planning and its Europeana connection also provide individual performing arts collections with a supporting environment for the long term curation and preservation of their digital assets. For example recent developments in Europeana, the cultural and scientific heritage portal endorsed by the European Commission, are promising in terms of digital preservation. The ASSETS project [10] includes Europeana software services for preparing ground for digital preservation (Risk evaluation & planning for long-term access & usability of contents).

A selection of ADHS Performing Arts public collections are being ingested in ECLAP, starting from the most popular collection of ADHS PA, the rich audiovisual resource Designing Shakespeare, developed to help students and scholars gain a greater understanding of the work of theatre designers working in Britain during 1960-2000, and the vast range of possible interpretations of Shakespeare's work. Ingestion activities include file checking and refreshing, data migration, metadata enrichment, semantic annotations.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

In this poster we have provided an overview of the University of Glasgow efforts, via the EU-funded ECLAP project, to ensure that at least part of the ADHS Performing Arts collections can continue to be accessible for the long term by scholars and practitioners in the performing arts arena, and by the general public. It is our hope that in doing this we will contribute to facilitating discovery, access, understanding, and use of digital performing art resources for current and future generations.

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6. REFERENCES

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