



Consultation on Digitisation of the Jewish Cultural Heritage

The meeting was held December 10th, 2004 at the Phoenix Building, Brussels from 12:00 to 16:00 p.m.

Summary

Cultural Diversity in Europe: a focus for the consultationⁱ

The consultation provided an opportunity for substantial exchanges regarding the present EU agenda and the role of Jewish Cultural Heritage.

Initially the concerns leading to this consultation were those related to the internal needs of the Jewish community in using digitisation for having its cultural heritage accessible and re-integrated in the cycle of Jewish life.

However, beginning with the discussions held with Prof. Niccolucci in Parma and expanded in the present consultation, a wider panorama emerged in which the initiative may be embedded.

This regards the present European concerns with Cultural Diversity. This matter is presently very much in the political agenda of the European Union, such as matters related to European identity in view of the enlargement of the Union; the debate regarding Turkey; and the attitude to substantial cultural and religious minorities in Europe today.

Prof. Franco Niccolucci expressed his view that European Jewry is part of the European Identity. It is worthwhile to tell people, both Jews and non-Jews, about their common history in Europe. The project should go beyond the borders between the communities; it should overlap. Jewish presence is enmeshed into European communities even if today they may not have any Jews living among them. Still they are challenged by the Jewish physical presence – neighborhoods, buildings, street names and monuments, and synagogues.

This may be part of an ongoing discussion in Europe regarding European Identity and the issue of diversity. As an example he recalled a debate in the Italian television regarding the celebration of the Nativity in schools. There was an attempt to attribute it to Islamic opposition when in fact it is a debate between secularists and observant Italians regarding their identity.

Jewish Cultural Heritage, part of the European heritage and European in its spatial scope, may provide a focus for probing these issues that are at the epicenter of the debate on European identity.

David Dawson noted that the MLA is interested and has supported projects expressing the cultural diversity of the UK, including the funding of the Jewish museums in their digitisation efforts. A significant example for the way the MLA deals with a cultural diversity is its support to the award-winning website, Moving Here – 200 Years of Migration to England, which provides access to in-depth resources documenting Caribbean, Irish, Jewish and South Asian migration.

Neil Silberman expressed his feeling that the whole scope of Jewish material culture should be explored. He deplored that Jewish archaeology is restricted to

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earlier periods, up to the Bar Kochba rebellion in 135 C.E. European Jewry material culture of a later period should be better explored, researched and mainstreamed.

Agenda and resolutions:

1. **Mapping good practices in Jewish Cultural Heritage Digitisation.** This identifies and defines the leading target community of practice to be involved in further initiatives. Preparation of a briefing paper on Jewish Cultural Heritage Digitisation ([JPR](#)).

The participants agreed on an initiative to map the field of Jewish Cultural Heritage Digitisation through a Good Practices Survey. This will provide a basic guide on who is doing what and where. The questionnaire being used for the Good Practice survey of MINERVA and the booklet "Good Practices Handbook version 1.3", which was distributed to the participants, will serve to seek the relevant projects and initiatives.

David Dawson suggested and the participants welcomed the idea that the survey will feed back its findings to the National Representatives Group representatives. The NRG will also be contacted for help in identifying relevant Jewish Cultural Heritage resources available in the institutions such as museums, archives, libraries, and broadcasters within the various European countries.

The Jewish Agency, the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), EPOCH, and ENAME expressed their interest in actively supporting the survey. The Jewish Agency will employ for this purpose a research assistant and will coordinate the work with the other institutions participating in the consultation.

Preparation of a briefing paper on Jewish Cultural Heritage Digitisation policy: It was agreed that after the results of the survey will be collected during the next two months, the next step will be the preparation of a briefing paper. The Jewish Agency and JPR will then decide on how to allocate the work and get the resources for preparing such paper.

2. **Working Groups (WG) of MINERVA and the extension of such work (or part of it) into the Jewish sphere** – see [Concerted Policy paper](#).

Four WGs have been established in Israel and staffed by experts volunteered by the statutory institutions in the area of Cultural Heritage: WP6 – Good Practice and Competence Centers (Orly Simon); WP4 – Interoperability and Service Provision with an extension on IPR and business models (Ora Zehavi, Amalia Keshet); WP3 – Inventories and Common Access to Content with and Extension to Multilingual Thesauri (Dr. Allison Kupietzki); WP5 - Content and Quality Framework for Common Access Points Including Issues of Accessibility and Usability, extended to the needs of small institutions (Susan Hazan).

A short discussion focused on the way to extend the work of such groups, or part of them into a Global Jewish Scope. It was agreed:

Jean-Claude Kuperminc expressed his readiness, as AIU Chief Librarian and Archivist, to become involved and lead work related to multilingual thesauri, multilingualism and common access to content.

Lena Stanley-Clamp from the IJPR expressed her readiness to be involved in promoting the WG on Interoperability, Business Models and IPR. She suggested



that a workshop be organised by the IJPR and the EAJC for February/ March 2005 in London.

3. **The European Day of Jewish Culture**

The European Day of Jewish Culture (EDJC) was presented by Camille Dansette (presentation attached). . It is organized by B'nai B'rith Europe, the European Council of Jewish Communities, and Red de Juderias de Espana-Caminos de Sefarad. The presentation and the statistics concerning visits to the portal invoked much interest. Camille reminded us that the concerns of this meeting are closed to that of the sponsors of the EDJC that intend to disseminate Jewish Culture in Europe and have it become more accessible.

4. **EPOCH, CHIRON and an EU Jewish Heritage Action**

Prof. Franco Niccolucci presented the EPOCH project for Intelligent Cultural Heritage, which is a Network of Excellence with four main partners who lead more than 80 associated partners. His particular area of responsibility covers the dissemination of showcases in digitisation, training and dissemination. The detailed presentation is attached.

Prof. Niccolucci expressed his interest in developing an initiative related to Jewish Cultural Heritage Digitisation. EPOCH provides several opportunities in the lines of action related to implementing the technologies of the showcases (NEWTONs); in promoting training programs that may bring general digitisation approaches and technologies and tailor their application to Jewish Cultural Heritage and more.

Future calls from the Commission may enable this group to develop an horizontal initiative focused on Jewish Cultural Heritage in Europe, for example Culture Plus and the next ICT call for September 2005.

CHIRON is a new project that enables the partners to host advanced students in a variety of areas that may be interested in receiving further training in Cultural Heritage Digitisation. The hosting universities offer specific expertise, e.g.

Automatic data acquisition: techniques for 3D data acquisition; **Data organisation:** Technology for cultural data management: databases, XML encoding. Ontologies. **Data management and processing:** Database-based and native XML-based archival systems. GIS. 3D modeling. **Interfaces:** Design and evaluation of interfaces. **Communication and interpretation:** Digital museology. VR applications. Storytelling methodology and technology. **Dissemination and publication:** Electronic publication; digital preservation; interoperability; common information environments. IPR management. integration with tourism and local development. **Methodological issues:** Credibility and validation. **Social and economic issues:** Sustainability. Socio-economic models for CH. Business models.

The participants of this meeting may wish to disseminate the invitation to candidates for the scholarships. Eventually one of the candidates interested in Jewish Cultural Heritage will be chosen. See: <http://www.chiron-training.net/>

5. Taskforce on Jewish archaeology in Europe: advice on the consolidation and digitisation of all known excavations of Jewish quarters, synagogues, and cemeteries in Europe.

Neil Silberman exposed the thesis that physical, archaeological, documentation of Jewish Cultural Heritage is deeply skewed for the Israelite period; this is a bias of Israel archaeology that has deep ideological connotations. There is much research and many PhDs dissertations on excavations and findings until the 2nd Century C.E. There is almost nothing for the subsequent centuries of Jewish life in Europe. He suggested that as part of an effort to mainstream Jewish Cultural Heritage in Europe, this bias be corrected.

He suggested that in collaboration with the Auschwitz Jewish Center and ENAME, excavations be carried out in the town of Oswiecim near the camp, documenting the life of the Jewish community that lived there for centuries. Following some commentaries of the participants, Neil Silberman suggested that alternatively such excavations be carried out at Troyes, south of France, as part of the celebration of the centennial of Rashi, the famous Jewish scholar from the 10th century. Jean-Claude Kuperminc expressed interest as the AIU is part of the preparations for the centennial, and perhaps Dr. Max Polonovsky, from the French Ministry of Culture may show interest as well.

David Dawson, himself a trained archaeologist, suggested an alternative approach. Tackling with the initial issue raised by Neil Silberman regarding "Mainstreaming Jewish Cultural Heritage in Europe", he pointed out that there are enough archaeological excavations all over Europe that document the continent's history. Certainly there are large amounts of Jewish-related findings all over. For a mainstreaming effort, what is needed is to seek and map such findings; a possible approach is to have a consultation of experts in European Jewish History and archaeologists to define the suitable areas for such mapping. The deliverable of such an exercise may well be the definition of a GIS layer concerning Jewish material cultural heritage in Europe. The suggestion was warmly welcomed by the participants.

6. A preliminary agenda for a small conference dealing with Digitisation of Jewish Cultural Heritage

The process of organizing a conference dealing with the Digitisation of Jewish Cultural Heritage will contribute to the definition of an agenda, to the identification and involvement of key players in the area, and to the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

The idea is not to have a completely independent event, but rather to have it as part or an add-on of a general event dealing with digitisation of cultural heritage. Several options were discussed. EVA Florence (14-18 March) is too soon and does not leave enough time for preparations; The Polish Ministry of Culture event in Krakow in early June is too close to the NRG to be held in Luxembourg in mid-June; The suggestion of having the event as part of EVA London (25-29 July) or immediately afterwards (30th July, 2005) was welcomed. Dov Winer will contact the EVA London organisers to check their readiness for such an arrangement.

The schedule then may be as follows: (1) The Good Practices survey until February/March will map the target population of institutions and practitioners



involved (2) The results of the survey and the briefing paper (March/April) will provide a possible agenda for the event (3) The participants in the consultation and the other institutions involved or interested, such as the National Foundation for Jewish Culture and CARLJS, Paideia, Lauder Foundation will seek to nominate a program and an organising committee for the event.

Participants:

Miriam Benchetrit (Grants Programme Officer, Hanadiv Charitable Foundation);

Camille Dansette (Coordinator European Day of Jewish Culture – EDJC; organized by B'nai B'rith Europe, the European Council of Jewish Communities, and Red de Juderias de Espana-Caminos de Sefarad.

David Dawson (Senior ICT Adviser, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council - UK; UK NRG Representative);

Sorin Hermon (EPOCH – PIN Center, University of Florence);

Jean-Claude Kuperminc (Directeur de la Biliotheque et des Archives, Alliance Israelite Universelle

David Massart (Technical Advisor, European Day of Jewish Culture);

Prof. Franco Niccolucci (Director, EPOCH; PIN Center – University of Florence);

Neil Silberman (Director, ENAME Center for Public Archaeology and Heritage Presentation)

Lena Stanley-Clamp (Director, Public Activities, Institute for Jewish Policy Research; Director, European Association for Jewish Culture)

Dov Winer (Coordinator, MINERVA Plus (Israel); Director, eJewish.info The Jewish Agency Initiative for Jewish Networking)

Part of the time: **Daniel Pletinckx**, Coordinator of New Technologies and **Dirk Oosterlynck** from the ENAME Center

Excused themselves:

Prof. Elhanan Adler, Deputy Director for Information Technology, The Jewish National and University Library (Jerusalem); **Dr. George Ban** (Director, Lauder Foundation); **Dr. David Gilner** (Chairman CARLJ/NFJC and Director of Libraries, The Hebrew Union College) for the National Foundation for Jewish Culture; **Barbara Spectre** (Director PAIDEIA)

Opening the Meeting

Dov Winer summarised the various activities that took place within the last year related to this Consultation.

In December 2003 Prof. Franco Niccolucci, during the occasion of the MINERVA conference and Italian Presidency NRG meeting in Parma, expressed his interest in taking part in developing a Jewish Cultural Heritage initiative related to concerns of the wider communities among which Jews live(d) in Europe.

David Dawson, early in the MINERVA development, expressed that the MLA has invested in Jewish Cultural Heritage projects in the UK and would appreciate following this up in view of increasing their added value.



The European Association of Jewish Culture (EAJC), the Hanadiv Charitable Foundation and others institutions organised in April 2004 the conference "The Future of Jewish Heritage in Europe" <http://www.mittelpunkt.biz/jewishheritageconference/> . The conference included sessions which addressed technological issues: Technology in the Service of Jewish Heritage and Jewish Museums: Their role in the 21st Century. The paper on a Concerted Policy for Jewish Cultural Heritage Digitisation was presented by Dov Winer in the former session.

Richard Siegel, the Executive Director of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, North America (NFJC) became interested in the proposal for a concerted policy and nominated Dr. David Gilner, the chairman of the Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies, as the NFJC representative for its advancement. Dr. Gilner reported to the Council in its convention of June 2004.

Other related European strands included

The Jewish Agency, the EAJC/IJPR and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture (NFJC) had exchanges focused on that paper and as a result, the NFJC nominated Dr. David Gilner, chairman of its CARLJ (Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies) as their representative for this ongoing process.

Working Groups of experts have been established in Israel through 2004 in the framework of the MINERVA project. They were nominated by the statutory institutions in Israel with responsibilities for Cultural Heritage. The groups deal with Interoperability (and IPR); Common Access to Content (and Multilingualism); Quality Framework (including issues of Accessibility and Usability); Good Practice and Competence Centers.

The Jerusalem Conference on Digitisation of Cultural Heritage took place October 11th and 12th, 2004. The first day was dedicated to workshops organised by the Israel MINERVA work groups and the second day of the conference to several workshops organized by the EC-supported projects in the area of digitisation of Cultural Heritage: MINERVA and the CNR of Italy (The Cultural Semantic Web); EPOCH (Intelligent Cultural Heritage); PrestoSpace (Digitisation of Broadcasting Archives); and CALIMERA (Small Institutions and Local Authorities).

The conference issued the Jerusalem Declaration under the aegis of the Israel statutory institutions in the area of cultural heritage. It is wholly inserted in the context of the European policy in this area reminding us that for an extensive period, the Jewish people lived in Europe and contributed to its culture. It calls for a policy that emulating the processes in the European Union and grounded on the existing excellent communication and technological infrastructures.

The present Consultation is part of such a rolling agenda seeking to concert initiatives related to Jewish Cultural Heritage digitisation.

Presentation of the Participants:

The participants introduced themselves and their institutions:

Prof. Franco Niccolucci: In 1974 became a professor at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Florence where he still teaches in the School of Specialization in Archaeology and a post-graduate course on "History and Computers" organised by the Department of History. As part of the PIN Center of the University, he is one of the four main partners in EPOCH in which he serves as director for dissemination.

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[See attached presentation of EPOCH]

Neil Silberman, Director of the ENAME Center for Public Archaeology and Heritage Presentation – <http://www.enamecenter.org> . Author and historian with a special interest in history, archaeology, public interpretation and heritage policy. Worked for about eight years in Israel at Tel Aviv University and was co-director of the Megiddo excavations. ENAME is now a partner with the Israel National Parks Authority and the Tel Aviv University in a project that will present a reconstruction of the Israelite palace and stables, including a 3D virtual reality interpretive and educational program.

Lena Stanley-Clamp: Director of the EAJC and Director for Public Activities of the IJPR. The **European Association for Jewish Culture** is an independent organisation whose mission is to encourage and support artistic creativity and achievement, and *facilitate access* to contemporary Jewish culture in Europe. This mission is carried out by commissioning new works in the performing and visual arts, which address the Jewish experience. Established in 2001 with the support of the EC Culture 2000 Programme, the European Association has awarded 80 grants to artists and projects based in 20 European countries for exhibitions, plays, choreographies and films. <http://www.jewishcultureineurope.org>

The **Institute for Jewish Policy Research** informs and influences policy and decision-making on social, cultural and political issues affecting Jewish life. JPR pursues this mission through research, debate and policy development. Based in London, JPR is an independent think-tank which deals with international issues with a special focus on Europe. <http://www.jpr.org.uk>

David Dawson: Senior ICT Adviser, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council -UK; He managed the DCMS/MLA IT Challenge Fund, and is currently working on a range of other projects and strategic developments. He represents MLA on many initiatives and is the UK NRG Representative. <http://www.mla.org.uk>
http://www.archimuse.com/mw2004/bios/au_85011135.html

Jean-Claude Kuperminc: Directeur de la Bibliothèque et des Archives, Alliance Israelite Universelle (<http://www.aiu.org/biblio/presentation/>). He organised the conference held in Potsdam on "Preserving Jewish Archives as Part of the European Cultural Heritage: A Conference on Judaica Archives in Europe, for Archivists and Librarians" <http://www.isjm.org/Links/echconf.htm> and edited its proceedings which serve as a basic guide to Jewish Archives.
[See attached presentation]

Camille Dansette, DEA de Science Politique (Université de Lille); coordinator of the European Day of Jewish Culture <http://jewishheritage.org/> . It is organised by B'nai B'rith Europe <http://www.bnaibrithurope.org/>, the European Council of Jewish Communities <http://www.ecjc.org/>, and Red de Juderias de Espana -Camino de Sefarad <http://www.redjuderias.org/>. [See attached presentation]

David Massart, PhD in information science from the Free University of Brussels (ULB). Before joining the EUN (European Schoolnet, <http://www.eun.org>), worked at the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL) as a research assistant and lecturer in computer science. Fascinated by information systems and knowledge management,

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from the theoretical principles to the practical technical details. Responsible for the technical aspects of the European Day of Jewish Culture.

Sorin Hermon: PhD from Ben Gurion University in Israel on Pre-historical Archaeology. Presently hold simultaneous positions at Ben Gurion University and at the PIN Center of the University of Florence where he is in charge of the activities of the EPOCH (<http://www.epoch-net.org>) and the CHIRON (<http://www.chiron-training.net/>) EC 6FP IST Projects in the area of Cultural Heritage Digitisation.

[See attached presentation for EPOCH]

Miriam Benchetrit: Grants Programme Officer, Hanadiv Charitable Foundation, London. Miriam is the author of "The History of Memory: Shaping Holocaust Remembrances in Israeli Politics" and short stories and fiction works. For further information on the Hanadiv Charitable Foundation programs, see: <http://www.jewishstudiesgrants.org>

Dov Winer: Psychologist who specialized in online education and training at the University of London. Director of the Jewish Agency Initiative for Developing Jewish Networking Infrastructures; its initial focus was on the accessibility of Jewish resources in the Internet through metadata tagging at the registry at <http://www.ejewish.info>. Now there are partner registries in Jewish History, Jewish Genealogy and others. Another focus is that of digitisation of Jewish Cultural Heritage. eJewish.info is a partner in the EC IST project MINERVA, the operational arm of the EC Lund Action Plan. Four Working Groups of experts have been established in Israel operating in tandem with their European counterparts: Good Practice and Cost Reduction; Interoperability and IPR; Common Access and Controlled Vocabularies; Quality, Accessibility and Usability. With the WG leaders he organised the [Jerusalem Conference on Digitisation of Cultural Heritage](#) which issued last October the [Jerusalem Declaration](#).

[See attached presentation]

Documents Attached:

EPOCH Presentation

The Alliance Israelite Universelle Presentation

The European Day of Jewish Culture Presentation

Brochures presenting the Institute of Jewish Policy Research and the European Association for Jewish Culture were distributed among the participants.

The documents from the Hanadiv Charitable Foundation are available at: <http://www.jewishstudies.org>

The Jerusalem Declaration on Digitisation of Cultural Heritage

The paper, Towards a Concerted Policy for Jewish Cultural Heritage Digitisation

The Museums, Libraries and Archives UK Council documents are available at <http://www.mla.org.uk>

ⁱ European decisions and document regarding cultural diversity include:

Cultural diversity in the Treaty

http://europa.eu.int/comm/avpolicy/extern/culdi_en.htm#3

Preservation and promotion of **cultural diversity** are among the founding principles of the European model. They are enshrined in the Treaty, in Article 151; in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, under Article 22, and will figure prominently in our future Constitution.

In terms of internal policies, [Article 151](#), which has permitted the development of cultural actions, notably through the Culture 2000 Programme, requires in addition the taking into account of the cultural dimension in other Community policies – as it is the case for industrial policy as far as the [MEDIA Plus](#) Programme is concerned, and for freedom of movement of services within the internal market with regards to the [Television Without Frontiers Directive](#).

eContent (<http://www.cordis.lu/econtent/>): supports the production, use and distribution of European digital content and promotes linguistic and **cultural diversity** on the global networks. See in particular the Proposal for Directive on Public Sector Information;

The Lund Principles http://www.cordis.lu/ist/directorate_e/digicult/lund_principles.htm:

"Support for cultural diversity, education and content industries: Digitised cultural assets are crucial in sustaining and promoting **cultural diversity** in a global environment. They are also a key resource for education and for the tourism and media industries. "

On Cultural Diversity and GATS (unanimously adopted by the European Regional Ministers for Culture and Education Brixen/Bressanone, 18th October 2002):

"16. We fully concur with the recognition as expressed in the Universal Declaration on **Cultural Diversity** adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO on 2nd November 2001 and the Declaration on **Cultural Diversity** adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 7th December 2000 that **cultural diversity** is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature and that policies to promote and protect **cultural diversity** thus are an integral part of sustainable development; that cultural goods and services which, as vectors of identity, values and meaning, must not be treated as mere commodities or consumer goods, and that cultural and audiovisual policies, which promote and respect **cultural diversity**, are a necessary complement to trade policies."