



Gorffennol Digidol Digital Past - 2020

EUROPEANA:

Driving digital transformation

Harry Verwayen, Executive Director, [Europeana Foundation](#)

The European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018 awakened the cultural heritage field in Europe to the social and economic impact our sector can have. Not only do we contribute access to valuable content resources to the fast-growing cultural and creative industries, but the sector is seen more and more as an R&D lab, fertile soil, an environment in which technological, behavioural and organisational experimentation can take place in a relatively safe environment.

At the same time, the world around us continues to change. Artificial intelligence is feeding itself on the Big Data we are all mass producing and new machine-readable worlds in 3D are emerging from the garages of Silicon Valley. Imagine a future where everything physical will have a digital representation, an augmented 'mirror world' of information on top of the real world, accessible to you through augmented reality devices. We'll be able to see it all at once. And play with it, learn from it. Think of it as a sort of Google Earth. Except that you don't access it on a laptop or a phone in your hand. Instead, it will be meshed up with the real world, a kind of fourth dimension with a virtual representation of every aspect of the physical world.

While it may sound like science fiction, this is what our world could look like in just a few years' time. The web made data interlinked; social media made it social. The next platform, some say, will bring the convergence of the digital and the physical worlds.

What is critical for us is to understand as a sector is how we stay relevant in this changing landscape. What is the role of (audiovisual) cultural heritage? How do we nurture and protect a thriving public space? How do we keep up with technology? What is the role of interoperable standards?

The more we experience history, art and science, the more we understand past generations and how they relate to our own. And the more we understand each other, the better we can work and live together. That's the idea. As our society transforms from an analogue one to one that operates increasingly in digital ways, the cultural heritage sector should embrace the opportunities to make our heritage increasingly part of the present, and prepare it for the future.

Using Europeana as an example, we will explore what this changing landscape might look like and what we can do to play a meaningful role in the decade to come.

Biography

Harry Verwayen is the Executive Director Europeana Foundation, the operator of the Europeana platform. Across Europe, museums, galleries and archives digitize their collections. Europeana supports these organisations in their digital transformation by making these collections available as widely as possible so that people can find and use them. Prior to this Harry worked at the Amsterdam based think tank [Knowledgeland](#) where he was responsible for business model innovation in the cultural heritage sector. Harry holds a MA in History from Leiden University and has worked over ten years in the Academic Publishing Industry.

