



STRATEGIES FOR MULTIMEDIA ARCHIVES

Gent, 6 februari 2009

CONTEXT REPORT SESSION 2

In this digital world the possibilities for presenting collections in a contextualised framework are infinite. In this session, we want to explore how and why context is created in a digital environment. Three institutions, from the heritage field and the broadcasting sector, presented their experience with the generation of content in interdisciplinary digital archives. Bert Looper talked about the Frisian archive Tresoar, which he argued is the gatekeeper of the collective memory of the region Friesland in the Netherlands. Cees Klapwijk led us through the history of the development of the Digital Library for Dutch Literature, a platform for the cultural heritage of Flanders and the Netherlands, and Philippe Van Meerbeeck illustrated the crossmedia policy of the Flemish public broadcaster VRT with a few recent cases.

Bert Looper (Tresoar, Leeuwarden) presented the archive Tresoar and 'the many contexts of Friesland (Frieslân)'. In his talk, he discussed the aims of Tresoar, how they present the collection in a digital environment and how they create context. In 2002 three archives merged into Tresoar¹. These archives played an important part in the transmission of the cultural heritage of Friesland. Bert Looper sees Tresoar as a gatekeeper, preserving the heritage for the future, but also providing access to the digital collection. It is no longer sufficient to just display objects, we have to place the object in its context and present this story to the visitor. Julian Spalding explains in his 'Poetic Museum' that we have to extract the deeper and hidden meaning of objects and that each document has the potential to stir the imagination. Bert Looper believes that the institution, as a gatekeeper, has the responsibility not only to provide access to the collection, but also to create a framework for presenting the cultural heritage within its different contexts. This is the social role of the 'memory institution' in our society. Tresoar also wants to participate to community building. By using the aquabrowser, communities can search for content related to their interest and recontextualise the collection.

In his presentation 'Text, context and contest. Creating access to a shared written heritage' **Cees Klapwijk** (Digitale Bibliotheek Nederlandse Letteren, Leiden) led us through the development history of the Digital Library for Dutch Literature, an institution which provides access to a collection of historical and modern texts on the cultural history of the Netherlands and Flanders. By presenting this history, Cees Klapwijk wanted to illustrate how digitisation plans sometimes give inspiration to present the collection in a context-related environment. The project was started up in the early nineties within the University Library of Leiden, the Netherlands, and also received finances from The Dutch Ministry of Education. They first invested in the technical infrastructure, after which they were inspired to create a knowledge network on Dutch language and literature. This small collection was received very well, which stimulated the organisation to be more ambitious. However, in the mean while it became clear that there existed differing visions within the University Library of Leiden. A new organisation was founded by the Society for Dutch Literature, with the aim to build a digital library on the literature and language of the Low Countries. Three other Dutch and Flemish institutions also joined the organisation. By this time, there was no longer a formal relation between the new digital library and the old University Library of Leiden. Extra funding by the NWO and the Dutch Language Union consolidated the organisation and a new aim was set "to create a digital library, specified as a digital collection with primary and secondary information on Dutch language and literature and its historical, societal and cultural context." Cees Klapwijk then explained the production process of scanning, encoding and dataconversion and illustrated that the ground work for contextualisation is laid out when encoding the documents.

¹ The Public Records Office in Friesland, the Provincial and Buma Library and the Frisian Literary Museum and Documentation Centre.

Philippe Van Meerbeeck (VRT, Brussels) talked about 'Crossmedia: new context for old archive' and how the 'create once and publish many' policy affects the use of the archive of the Flemish public broadcaster VRT. He illustrated this with several cases, like Gedichtendag or Flemish Poetry Day, the Flemish tv-youth series 'Tienerklanken' and last years fiftieth anniversary of Expo '58. For the Flemish Poetry day, a selection of archive material on poetry was digitised and shown on the cultural portal Klara.be. On this website, cliché's on poetry like 'poets are drunks' or 'poems have to be about great things' were invalidated by showing archive material from the early days of television. With the same content a linear program was made and broadcasted on Canvas+. These two media are different in that respect that television is 'lean back', while the internet is 'hands on'. Another case was the rediscovery of the Flemish tv-youth series 'Tienerklanken' by tv-maker Peter Van De Veire. A clip of Moody Bleus was restored and came to his attention, on which he promptly started using fragments of 'Tienerklanken' as a regular item in his tv-show, which reached a large audience every week. Philippe Van Meerbeeck emphasised that by broadcasting archive material in this context, we can convince the public of value of the archives. As a result, a newspaper article was also published "De VRT zit op een berg goud", reporting on the enormous potential of the tv-archive. The final example concerns the large amount of expo items which were digitised and used in several media on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Expo '58 in Brussels last year. Material from the earliest days of television were used in television and radio programs, by the television news, on websites, a DVD was made and a cross medial event was organised. Now the VRT is digitising its most fragile archive material within the framework of the DIVA digitising project.