Austria

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Kneeling lad
Black chalk, water coloured
Egon Schiele, 1908
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Policy scenario

1. General description of the political support for digitisation (and national ownership)

With the launch of the Austrian Initiative for Digital Cultural Heritage in November 2003, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture over the last year systematically built the necessary operational infrastructure to drive and co-ordinate the major Austrian digitisation activities.
The strategic objectives of the Austrian Digital Heritage Initiative are:

- to raise awareness for the European coordination effort and the Lund Principles within the Austrian cultural heritage community
- to stimulate and foster information transfer on digitisation activities from the European level, down to the national and regional level - and vice versa;
- to simplify cross-European resource discovery
- to foster the use of standards and good practice among Austrian cultural heritage institutions
- to provide, especially to the regional cultural heritage community, (international) best practice guidelines, proven methods and quality criteria to improve their in-house practices.

Thus and as shortly delineated in the 2nd Progress Report of the National Representatives Group, the first phase of rolling-out the Lund Action Plan in Austria, with the primary objective to identify and collect data on regional and national digitisation projects and to raise awareness for the Lund Principles, the work of the National Representatives Group and the MINERVA activities, is well on its way.

Parallel to setting up the operational infrastructure for co-ordinating Austrian digitisation activities and in response to a recommendation of the Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development, the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture in fall 2004 commissioned a feasibility study on the registration and preservation of Austria's scientific and cultural heritage. Although not exclusively focused on *digital* cultural heritage resources, the primary objective of the study is to issue recommendations concerning a thematic, organisational and financial (medium to long-term) strategy to secure future access to cultural and scientific heritage resources. In this respect, future access to digitised and born-digital resources will most likely arise as an urgent issue. The results of the feasibility study will be available in fall 2005.

For further information on the feasibility study for the registration and preservation of Austrian cultural and scientific heritage, see:
`www.uma.at/kulturerbe/`

2. Range of policy (geographical, institutional and ideological)

The political framework for the Austrian Initiative for Digital Cultural Heritage is the *e*Fit programme, i.e. the national programme to implement the *e*Europe Action Plan and its objectives in Austria. At present, the *e*Fit Austria initiative constitutes the only explicit policy framework for the cultural and scientific heritage sector. However, one result of the feasibility study on preservation of cultural and scientific heritage *may be* a strategic framework for action to secure future access to both born-digital and digitised cultural and scientific heritage resources.

For further information see:
*e*Fit Austria
`www.efit.at/english/`

3. Available instruments and the use of those: guidelines, funds, target organisations

Initially, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture granted direct subsidies for large-scale digitisation projects. The beneficiaries of these subsidies were primarily the large, federally managed Austrian cultural heritage institutions that are responsible for unique collections of high quality and value that have great relevance not only to Austrian culture but also internationally.

At present, funding for a wide range of e-culture projects is made available through the *e*Fit/*e*Culture initiative. Theoretically, all cultural heritage institutions may apply for funding provided they submit a sound project proposal that goes beyond a mere digitisation project. Beyond those funding sources, EU-funding plays an important role, especially on the regional level. Here, it is in particular regional development programmes such as LEADER+ and INTERREG where cultural heritage projects may be submitted. Again, the focal point of these projects is not the digitisation of cultural heritage resources *per se*, yet digitised cultural and scientific resources may be a by-product of those projects. With regard to innovative projects and testing of new technologies within the cultural heritage domain, the EU research and development programmes so far have been a significant source of funding for e-culture projects. With the strategic objective "Access to and preservation of cultural and scientific resources", the FP6 Information Society Technologies' programme (IST) still offers an area specifically targeted at cultural heritage institutions.

However, due to the change of the funding mechanisms and instruments in the 6th EU framework programme for research and development, which now favours fewer, but large-scale and long-term projects, participation of Austrian cultural heritage institutions has considerably dropped in comparison to the 5th framework programme. Currently, only six Austrian CH institutions partake in FP6 projects and networks of excellence (BRICKS, EPOCH, CALIMERA, PRESTO SPACE, DELOS). In addition, while the Austrian government initiated national research and development programmes for most of the strategic objectives defined within EU IST-programme, thus setting off national counterparts in areas such as nanotechnologies, embedded systems, semantic web and cognitive systems or e-learning, no such research programme was commenced for the cultural heritage sector. As a result, the options for applying for funding for e-culture projects on the national level are very limited.

For a list of projects funded under the *e*Fit/*e*Culture scheme, see:
`www.efit.at/english/eculture/`

Co-operation

1. National networks

Besides the well established national nodes of internationally active professional associations such as ICOM Austria or the institutionalised, mostly domain-specific organisations such as the Austrian Library Association, networking at the national level relies on various formal and informal networks. A characteristic feature of those networks that focus, *inter alia*, on the

Emperor's Anthem by Kolo Moser
Ornament folio out of: Max Herzig (Ed.),
Viribus Unitis. Das Buch vom Kaiser,
with an introduction by Josef Alexander Freih. von Helfert
(Budapest, Vienna, and Leipzig: published by Max Herzig, 1898)
Photo: Institut f. Realienkunde des Mittelalters
und der frühen Neuzeit, Krems
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digitisation and preservation of Austrian cultural heritage is that they are mostly loose, non-institutionalised "grassroots" initiatives that are funded by individual institutions or their participating members. Two such national networks are BAM, a non-institutionalised working group for libraries, archives and museums, and Koop Litera, a network of Austrian literary archives.

Arbeitsgruppe BAM – Working Group Libraries, Archives and Museums
BAM Austria is an initiative to intensify the co-operation of libraries, archives and museums. BAM seeks to identify common positions and strategies, to initiate and support projects and activities that promote science and culture and preserve Austrian cultural heritage. There is no formal membership, and participation in the bi-annual BAM-meetings is driven by a common interest to share and exchange experiences with peers, independently of the domain. BAM members represent professional organizations of libraries, archives, museums, documentation centres and some important institutions.

Koop Litera
Originally initiated by the Austrian National Library and the Vienna City (and Provincial) Library, Koop Litera aims to foster and encourage the networking among institutions that are concerned with the acquisition, documentation and preservation of modern autographs and unpublished works. Launched as a project for the establishment and co-ordination of an IT-supported network of Austrian literary archives in 1997, the Koop Litera portal went online in May 2001. It is now supported by many Austrian literary archives with the objective to foster good practice and encourage the use of standards within the literary archives community.

The fact that a lot of the networking happens in informal, self-organising groups is a vital sign for the high demand to exchange information with peers. This also became apparent during the 2nd Salzburg Research eCulture Symposium in September 2004, which also hosted a digitisation workshop carried out in the framework of the MINERVA Plus project. It was particularly the opportunity to network and exchange experiences with representatives from other cultural heritage institutions in an informal environment that had a great impact on the success of the symposium.

2. International co-operation

Many of the leading Austrian cultural heritage institutions involved in digitisation are actively participating in European and international networks and research projects. For the co-operating institutions, participation implies intensive knowledge exchange with peers, participation in good practice and leading-edge projects, as well as active knowledge transfer.
Yet, as mentioned above, due to the changing funding mechanisms in the 6th EU Framework Programme for Research and Development, the number of participating institutions from the cultural and scientific heritage sector has considerably declined, and so have the opportunities for face-to-face networking on the international level.

3. NRG and MINERVA results, interpretation and impact

One of the primary objectives for phase one of the Austrian Initiative for Digital Cultural Heritage was to raise awareness for the European-wide coordination initiative, the work of the National Representatives Group and the MINERVA project (and its results). Besides offering

The Signing of the Treaty
Photo: USIS Staff Vienna
Wien, May 15, 1955.
© Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

relevant information on the website of the Austrian Cultural Heritage Initiative, the coordination initiative was also introduced to the Austrian cultural heritage community in several workshops and conferences, and in form of a designated one-day workshop at the 2004 Salzburg Research e-Culture Symposium. Generally, the initiative is well received. The Austrian cultural heritage community in particular welcomes the launch of a thematically focused platform for information and knowledge transfer on digitisation and makes ample use of the opportunity of having a central point where to ask questions. As such, one of the primary tasks of the initiative is to link those posing questions with those who can provide the answers. Through this mechanism, the areas where institutions primarily lack information have become apparent, namely, which software to use, the application of appropriate standards and the question on funding sources for digitisation projects.
As mentioned above, the demand for networking is particularly high, and so, the Austrian Digital Heritage Initiative took on the role of a mediator that stimulates and perpetuates communication within the cultural heritage community by connecting people. In this respect, the initiative fulfils an important function. Actually measuring the impact of NRG and MINERVA results on the institutional level, however, remains difficult.

Main digitisation initiatives, including the following sections

1. National portals for culture, networked digital repositories, services for users

Access to digital cultural resources
The major Austrian digitisation endeavours are individual projects predominantly initiated and carried out by the larger cultural heritage institutions. In most cases, institutions work individually or with only a small number of partners, sometimes in co-operation with technology providers or research institutions (if it is a pilot or R&D project where academic expertise is needed). Thus, close co-operation between the individual digitisation projects is rare (with the exception where one institution is in charge of several projects), and networked digital repositories encompassing several institutions or even domains are non-existent (also due to the very heterogeneous material that is digitised).

The website of the Austrian Initiative for Digital Cultural Heritage, `www.digital-heritage.at`, is currently the only national portal that focuses on the digitisation of cultural and scientific heritage and on cultural content. Based on the suggested MINERVA good practice model for inventories of digitised content, the website features Austrian digitisation initiatives and projects, and provides access to guidelines and good practice examples from the MINERVA project and selected external sources.

As of January 2005, the database lists a total of 50 projects and 110 organisations that are involved either as initiators, active partners, content providers, technology suppliers, academic consultants, or funding bodies. Six rather heterogeneous best practice examples have been identified and documented in detail. In addition, the site gives access to strategic and policy documents, for example the strategy papers of the National Representatives Group, the Austrian policy profile and status reports on digitisation, and a selection of digitisation guidelines and handbooks. All information is offered in German and English, and is especially targeted at professionals and IT-managers of the Austrian

cultural heritage institutions. Parallel to realising the Austrian digital heritage portal, building and maintaining a contact database of Austrian cultural heritage representatives, members of government institutions, special interest groups and associations, researchers as well as technology providers, has been the second major task during the first roll-out phase. Currently, this contact database is mainly used to *push* relevant information to the community, yet the overall goal should be to involve these contacts more actively in an ongoing dialogue, as virtual supplement to the already existing informal discussion groups such as BAM and Koop Litera. Setting up the necessary tools to support this ongoing virtual dialogue is the next step for enhancing the service portfolio of the digital heritage portal.

For further information, see:
Austrian Digital Heritage Initiative
www.digital-heritage.at/

MINERVA Working Group on inventories, discovery of digitised content and multilingualism issues – "Specifications for inventories of digitised content":
www.minervaeurope.org/intranet/documents/specinv0311.pdf

Library portals
1) The Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek) and the research and scientific libraries of the Austrian universities together form the Austrian library network (Österreichischer Bibliothekenverbund) which offers integrated search in more than sixty research and scientific libraries through a common web-OPAC. Technical infrastructure and central services are provided by the Österreichische Bibliothekenverbund und Service GmbH, a limited company founded in 2002 which has been sourced out from the Austrian National Library after the new library legislation was ratified by the government in 1995.
For further information, see:
Austrian Library Network
www.bibvb.ac.at/

OPAC to the comprehensive catalogue of Austrian academic libraries
www.bibvb.ac.at/verbund-opac.htm

2) The Austrian Library Association (Büchereiverband Österreichs) is the umbrella organisation of the more than 3000 Austrian public libraries and school libraries. With the financial support of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the association started in 1999 to connect its member libraries through the Internet. At present, the catalogues of more than 500 libraries can be searched online, through a common interface. In its final stage, about 1000 libraries will be interlinked.

For further information, see:
Austrian Library Association
www.bvoe.at/

OPAC to the comprehensive catalogue of the Austrian public libraries
www.bibliotheken.at/

Archive portals
1) The Austrian National Archive (Österreichisches Staatsarchiv) provides a comprehensive list of all Austrian archives, including links to their homepages.

For further information, see:
www.oesta.gv.at/deudiv/arch_oe.htm

2) The working group of Austrian diocese archivists established a bi-lingual portal which provides a comprehensive overview on the offerings and services of the archives of the Roman-Catholic church in Austria. The portal lists 45 diocese and church archives. Currently, the working group, with financial support of the Austrian National Archive, is creating a common web-OPAC to allow online-searches in the finding aids of the church archives. So far, the finding aids of seven church and monastery archives can be searched online.

For further information, see:
Web-OPAC for finding aids of Austrian church archives
`www.kirchen.findbuch.net`

Portal of church archives
`www.kirchenarchive.at/`

Museum portals
`www.austrianmuseums.net`
It is the national access point to Austrian museums, funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The portal can be best described as a central entry page that further links to the respective museum link lists offered and maintained by the Austrian provincial governments.

`www.museum.at`
It is a commercial site listing Austrian museums as yellow page entries. Museums that want to be listed need to pay a monthly fee, which varies according to the size of the museum. In addition, individual exhibitions may also be listed.

`www.museumonline.at`
It is a national award funded by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, encouraging students and teachers to submit online projects focusing on the link between education, arts and culture. All submitted online projects are well documented on this portal.

Other cultural portals
The Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture provides an online platform with news and information on current developments in the arts and culture domain. The platform, `www.kulturleben.at`, also features an extensive database covering many different areas of Austrian arts and culture. Furthermore, all Austrian provinces offer regional cultural portals that are run either by the provincial government or commercial providers. They cover many different cultural sectors like theatre, cinema, museums, libraries, literature, etc. While providing information for culturally interested citizens, they are also specifically targeted at the tourism sector. A primary service offered on these sites is the event calendar and the opportunity to book and/or purchase tickets online. Examples of such "arts and culture servers" include:
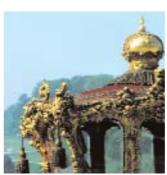
Kulturserver Graz
`www.kulturserver-graz.at/`

Tirolkultur
`www.tirolkultur.net/index.html`
Stadtleben Salzburg
`www.stadtleben.at/`

Furthermore, there exist several national cultural portals run by commercial providers such as:
`www.events.at`
`www.eventsheute.at`
`www.freikarte.at.`

Similar to the regional portals, they focus on many different cultural areas, such as theatre, opera, concerts, exhibitions, and list cultural events from all of Austria. They also offer the functionality to book and purchase tickets online.

2. Emerging initiatives

The currently conducted feasibility study on the preservation of Austrian cultural and scientific heritage may serve as ignition spark for future action in the area of long-term preservation and archiving of digital cultural heritage.

For further information on the feasibility study for the registration and preservation of Austrian cultural and scientific heritage, see:
www.uma.at/kulturerbe/

Imperial carriage
Panel painting by F.X. Wagenschön
Vienna, mid 18th century
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