A Common Journey to New Frontiers

DL.org–Co-ordination Action on Digital Library Interoperability, Best Practices & Modelling
Foundations: http://www.dlorg.eu/; info@dlorg.eu

"*Ensuring European information resources are easier and more interesting to use online, while making sure that intellectual property rights are well protected, is a key aim of the European Commission's Digital Libraries initiative. This is one of three flagship projects under the EU's i2010 strategy – a European Information Society for growth and jobs – for boosting Europe's digital economy. Over the next five years at least six million books, newspapers, photographs, manuscripts, maps, archival records, films and music fragments will be made available online to anyone with a web connection. The initiative will also exploit the potential of digital repositories of scientific data as tools for Europe's scientists and engineers.*"

Viviane Reding, European Commissioner Information Society and Media

In the near future all citizens anywhere, anytime will be able to use any internet–connected digital device to search all kinds of human knowledge. Via the Internet, they will be able to access knowledge in digital collections created by traditional libraries, museums, archives, universities, government agencies, specialised organisations, and even individuals around the world. Digital Libraries (DLs) will play a central role in achieving important transformations in our society: the way we communicate, the way we deal with information, the way we learn, the way we conduct commerce, the way we work, the way we deliver and use government services, the way we carry out research, and the way we practise and benefit from health care.

Digital Libraries will make the vision for universally accessible collections of human knowledge a reality. In order for this to happen, considerable advances in Digital Library technologies and systems are needed. In particular, there is the need for Global Digital Library Infrastructures resulting from the federation of regional, national, international interoperable DL systems and digital repositories. However, making DL systems interoperable is a complex process that needs to take into consideration core requirements for digital library architecture, content, functionality, policy, quality and user perspectives.

DL.org, a recently EC-funded project, will pave the way for the future interoperability of DL systems thus making feasible the implementation of Global Digital Library Infrastructures.

DL.org aims to forge strong alliances with major stakeholders and the wider digital library community to harness the global expertise and knowledge that exists and maximize opportunities for the enhanced development of the next generation of Digital Library systems. Key **DL.org** goals focus on capitalising on key achievements made, addressing the main, open research & technical issues, capturing best practices, promoting shared standards, and producing guidelines for the development of the next generation DLs systems.

In order to achieve its objectives, **DL.org** will operate a number of **Working** and **Liaison Groups** composed of representatives of international DL initiatives and internationally known experts.

DL.org has also the ambition to influence the development of the next generation Digital Libraries. The community will benefit from knowledge exchange on key DL issues , as well as from eTraining courses designed to enable the next generation of DL professionals.

The *DELOS Digital Library Reference Model* will constitute the basic conceptual framework within which **DL.org** will conduct its activities addressing the DL interoperability problem from the Architecture, Content, Functionality, Policy, Quality and User perspectives.

Key expected outcomes of **DL.org** include:

❖ A *"Digital Library Technology and Methodology Cookbook"* providing a portfolio of current best practices and patterns to facilitate cross-fertilization among existing systems and their enhancement in terms of critical interoperability issues.
❖ A consolidated and enhanced version of the DELOS Digital Library Reference Model.
❖ Workshops, summer schools, eCourses and Dissemination activities to communicate the impact of DL.org achievements to relevant communities.

Experts from the DL community have welcomed the launch of DL.org:

"The launch of DL.org is both timely and much needed. This effort will provide an umbrella for existing and future digital library projects, which have become fragmented and, in many cases, duplicative in functionality. The community has grown significantly during the past ten years, with many experiments launched and lessons-learned. The current landscape is now in need of coordination to harness the global expertise that exists. Building from the Digital Library Reference Model work, DL.org brings together a team of researchers with a proven track record that is recognized worldwide for their expertise in the digital library community. They recognize that interoperable systems are the key to ensuring that digital libraries continue to grow in a way that meets the needs of users across the Web. Capturing best practices, providing a "living" Digital Library Reference Model and addressing the ongoing educational needs will fill crucial needs for global digital library community".

Geneva Henry from Rice University, USA.

"The paradigm of the world-wide web has profoundly changed the way we conceive and implement the information architectures called 'Digital Libraries'. Today's platforms for handling knowledge and information are moving away from monolithic technological and organisational approaches: new and increasingly complex distributed platforms are built around key concepts like 'co-operation', 'federation' and 'virtual aggregation' of services and of resources. Today, no single institution or platform can reasonably claim to offer substantial value without co-operating, and uniform technical approaches can neither be expected nor strived for! Instead, such DL architectures fundamentally rely on interoperability which in turn has its foundations in standards, especially in settings such as Europeana which are built on multilateral interoperability of many independent partners and platforms. One of the first steps the Commission took for preparing Europeana was to create a working group on 'Interoperability of Digital Libraries'. The DELOS Reference Model was very useful for this group and I strongly believe that the same will be true for the work of DL.org for the DL community as a whole!"

Prof. Dr. Stefan Gradmann
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin / Berlin School of Library and Information Science and Leading
Europeana.net WP2 ("Technical and Semantic Interoperability")

"The key challenge for digital libraries is intelligent, seamless integration of information search, use, and production into user activities and tasks. DLs must use a task-centric as opposed to an application-centric approach. DL.org provides a forum to shape these ideas, among others, and to systematise them in the Digital Library Reference Model for wide communication. Along the way, DL.org will foster consensus and mutual understanding among stakeholders, thus moving the field forward in both theory and practice. I am looking forward to participating in the common journey to new frontiers."

Professor Dagobert Soergel, University of Maryland, USA.