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Participatory Approaches in the Digitization of Cultural Heritage: Perspectives and Challenges of Crowdsourcing Projects

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Public participation in cultural heritage domain

- Museums and other cultural heritage institutions have long tradition of public participation:
 - open calls for donations of cultural heritage items
 - various volunteer programs
- However, harnessing of ICT (from Human computation to Social computing) in citizen science and crowdsourcing projects provides new possibilities for public participation in hybrid (digital and physical) environment.



Ways of participation in crowdsourcing activities

- **correction and transcription** - inviting users to correct and/or transcribe outputs of digitisation processes
- **tagging** – applying unstructured labels to individual objects
- **categorising** - applying structured labels to a group of objects, collecting sets of objects or guessing the label for or relationship between presented set of objects
- **contextualisation** – adding contextual knowledge to objects, by providing oral histories or eyewitness accounts (gives opportunities for recording different, parallel or even opposite viewpoints)
- **creative responses** - writing an interesting fiction based and inspired on cultural heritage



CrowdHeritage - Crowdsourcing Europeana



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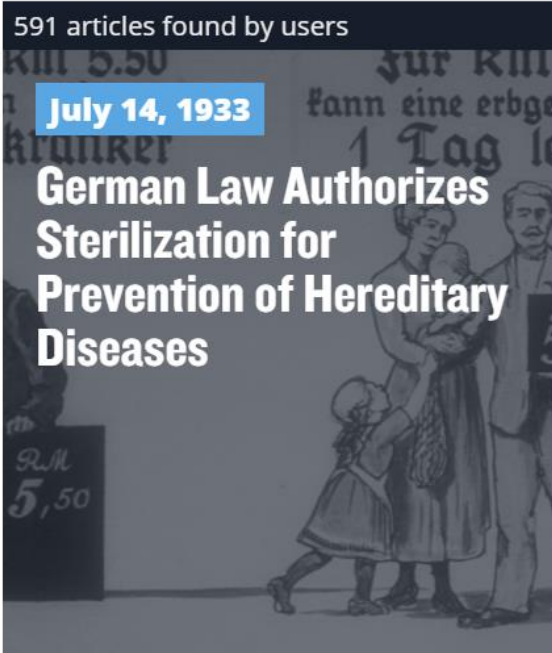
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Events To Research

591 articles found by users

July 14, 1933

German Law Authorizes Sterilization for Prevention of Hereditary Diseases



1,372 articles found by users

June 30, 1934


Hitler Purges Storm Troopers, Executes Opponents



924 articles found by users

July 6, 1938

Evian Conference Offers Neither Help, Nor Haven



723 articles found by users

November 20, 1938

Father Coughlin Blames Jews for Nazi Violence



649 articles found by users

July 1, 1939

Child Refugee Bill Fails in Senate



471 articles found by users

December 17, 1942

Allies Denounce Nazi Plan to "Exterminate" the Jews



537 articles found by users

October 1, 1943

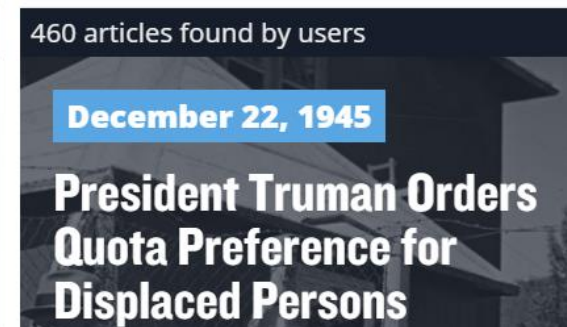
Danes Help Jews Escape to Neutral Sweden



460 articles found by users

December 22, 1945

President Truman Orders Quota Preference for Displaced Persons



Key remarks on use of „crowdsourcing” in cultural heritage sector

- the field of harnessing collective intelligence in the cultural heritage sector is not only based on the idea to **use** the public, but to engage them to contribute, collaborate and co-create. (Bonney et al., 2008).
- It is not only about getting things done but to **communicate the collection** to the users by shifting their focus from consuming digital collections to **collaborating in its development** (e.g. Collection policy).



Four models of public participation in cultural institutions

- **contributory** projects - citizens are asked to provide limited objects, actions, or ideas to an institutionally controlled process
- **collaborative** projects - where citizens are invited to serve as active partners in the creation of institutional projects controlled by the institution
- **co-creative** projects - community members work together with institutional staff members from the beginning to define the project's goals and to generate the program or exhibit based on community interests
- **hosted project** - institution turns over a portion of its facilities and/or resources to present programs developed and implemented by public groups

(Simon, N., 2010)



Perspectives and benefits

- added value for **institutions** is strengthening the relations with end users and getting more precise insight in user's needs
- the benefits for **cultural heritage** per se are obvious - through user participation it is now more preserved, explored, accessed, communicated and interpreted
- **persons** involved in crowdsourcing also find value in contributing to cultural heritage research and enrichment of their cultural identities
- **communities** are empowered through collaboration, dialogue and heritage-based learning from the past



Challenges

- new ways of partnership in hibrid (digital & physical) environment it is necessary to continuously improve mechanisms of collaboration to achieve desired level of trustworthiness and quality of added content
- new user-generated (meta)data sets; origin of data will have to be clearly labeled so that user created data is easily differentiated from data created by heritage professionals
- data protection and privacy; data ownership
- intellectual property rights
- ICT and management skills needed
 - Educating heritage professionals and heritage users is certainly a key component that will empower both to take ownership and responsibility for their cultural heritage through joint projects!



Instead of conclusion

- it is important that citizens are not restricted to being just consumers of (digital) cultural heritage, but that they should be enabled to participate actively, co-create and accordingly be empowered to take ownership of their cultural assets
- cooperation with community members can make cultural institutions more relevant, democratic places
- crowdsourcing and citizen science projects offer important perspectives for citizens to participate in public and cultural life and fulfil the right to their heritage with a view to sustainable development



Thank you for your attention!

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