



WP2 Integration Meeting at RMV
WP2-TR11-2003 - Version 2

ECHO Meeting at the National Dutch Museum for Ethnology

P. Wittenburg
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Participants:

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The meeting was meant to be a first brainstorming meeting to find out about the status of the digital collections at RMV (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, or NME, National Dutch Museum for Ethnology) and about possibilities to integrate them into an ECHO framework.

State of the Digital Collections

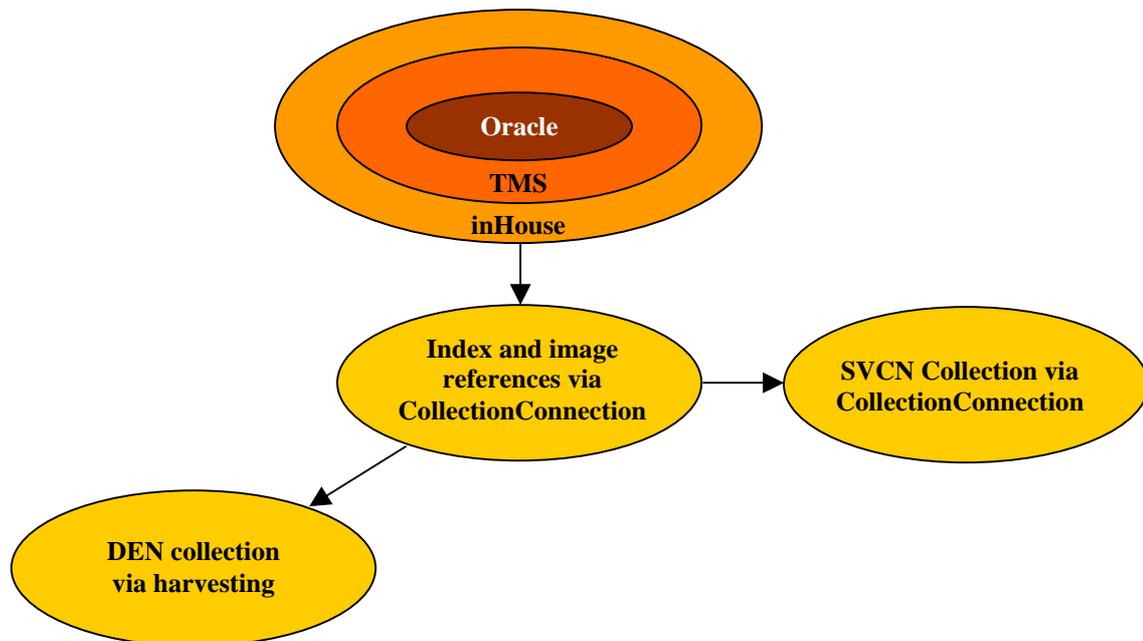
RMV has already achieved a high standard of digitizing its collections and offering parts of it via the web. The basis of the internal work of the archivists is a database system called TMS (The Museum System), a commercial system provided by Gallery Systems and based on the ORACLE relational data bases management system. TMS is used to enter all descriptive codes of digital objects. This database is also used for the presentations in the museum itself, i.e. at different places in the museum one can find touch screens that can be used to navigate along images and also to get textual information. This type of information is available for about 2000 objects. However, the total holding of RMV covers about 200.000 objects (sculptures, graphics, other artifacts), and 300.000 photographs. The photographs are not yet fully digitally exposed. Data entry is done with the help of TMS input screens, however, modifications on larger numbers of MD records often is done via Access. However, only one person has the technical skills to do that safely.

Another commercial system "Collection Connection" is used to export selected data from TMS to create an index of the objects including references to the digital images. The search engine can operate on this index to find the objects quickly. Further, at the web site one will find the same HTML pages that are available within the museum. They allow a multilayer access to the collections. The reason that TMS and the Web Site are kept separately has to do with hacker and speed considerations.

Further, all 8 ethnology museums in the NL are collaborating in the SVCN. Here they agreed on using the same system "Collection Connection" to use the indexes of all museums and to use the same thesauruses to describe their objects. This access shell is in the building phase, since many digital descriptions of the collections are in a bad state and have to be cleaned. What was also discovered is that the interpretation of the categories used by all shows a high degree of variation and therefore deviation.

RMV also contributes to the DEN catalogue that is based on a CMS (Content Management System). DEN harvests selected metadata descriptions from various Dutch cultural institutions and offers a general access framework. When found hits it offers links to the web sites of the institutions itself. DEN offers an interesting feature in so far that it offers an organized map (seems to be a Kohonen_Map type of algorithm) of terms phonetically similar to the one entered in the search field that are also known by the system. The user can now click on one of the other terms.

Currently, all museums in Leiden try to collaborate to create one joint portal in the Leidse Poort project. Nothing can be said yet, since it is in the beginning state.



Three levels of metadata encodings are agreed upon:

- It is an agreement with the ministry that all objects have to be described at least with 5 elements.
- In the SVCN collaboration it is agreed to use 8 descriptive elements.
- In the RMV itself it is agreed to use at least 12 elements.

The RMV elements are: cultural identity, date, presentation title, object name, material type and process type, physical size, special physical marks, description, pedigree, geographic identity, category type. The intention is to describe per year about 3500 digital objects with RMV type of metadata.

Three thesauri are in use by RMV:

- The OVM thesaurus is based on a Dutch version of the Getty AAT thesaurus that is extended by SVCN for the purposes for the ethnology domain.
- A geographical thesaurus
- A name thesaurus (in preparation)

DOGON Project

In the framework of the ECHO project the DOGON project was started. It was chosen since the NME holds a significant collection of Dogon objects, and also has undertaken extensive research on the Dogon, which is available in a range of data types and formats, e.g. Excel, Access, PPT, jpgs, html - so there is already a rich set of available digitised material. The idea is to use the DOGON project to test new possibilities and ways for ethnological web-presentations. They want to turn this material into a rich documentation that makes use of their normal IT environment (TMS, interaction with SVCN via Collection Connection), but that also interacts with other collections and gives more flexibility.

It was discussed whether it is necessary to have technologies that allow various experts (so not only the experts from the museums) to create their own personal (or probably group) perspective on collections from different institutions. There was a principle agreement that this would be a useful future scenario.

This project wants to participate in ECHO tests to:

- check out the usefulness and requirements to use DIGILIB
- check out the usefulness and requirements to use ELAN
- check how material created via this ways can be presented in the web
- integrate their collections at metadata level with non-Dutch institutions
- integrate the digitised material to allow new types of research

The goal within ECHO must be to test various possibilities such as comparing structured search with content search etc and to finally write a comprehensive report that includes guidelines for future work.

Agreements

It was agreed that the specialists from MPI and RMV will continue to interact about the ways to achieve the mentioned goals. In particular, it has to be sorted out in detail how the different databases at RMV can be interfaced to harvest metadata and to access perhaps images etc. It was further agreed that there should be a joint presentation about the interoperability issue at the Lund workshop.