Project HOPE
(2010-2013)

Heritage of the People's Europe

Final Report

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1. Introduction

The main goal of the HOPE project was improving access to the scattered digital social history collections of Europe.

HOPE started up in May 2010 as a three-year cooperation project and is being co-funded by the EU through the ICT Policy Support Programme (Information and Communication Technologies - ICT / Policy Support Programme - PSP). 15 institutions from 11 European countries are linking their digital collections with Europeana, Europe's multilingual digital library, museum and archive, as well as making them accessible through the Social History Portal. Digitised documents of all types can be searched and researched: text, image, audio and video documents.

The HOPE databases document more than 200 years of European history: from the French Revolution to the beginnings of democracy and the labour movement, the world wars, European unification, the emergence of new social movements and the end of the division of Europe into East and West.

This Final Report will inform you on the background of the project, its achievements and relevance. More information can be found on the project website (http://www.peoplesheritage.eu/), the Social History Portal (http://www.socialhistoryportal.org/) and in the Best Practices for the Social History Domain wiki (http://hopewiki.socialhistoryportal.org/).

2. Project Description

2.1 Background

Most of the social history collections of Europe are not collected and preserved by official state archives, but by smaller more or less independent archives, libraries and research institutions. And this is because social history collections are often about movements and persons who opposed the state and the established order. We are talking for instance about trade unions, left-wing political parties, revolutionaries and anarchists, but also environmental activists, women's rights movements and so on.

Quite often these are collections of people and organizations who had a great impact on how we live our lives today. From a historical point of view we are talking about highly significant collections, that however have been scattered between many different institutions in many different countries. Often these people and organizations were persecuted and sometimes they were forced to leave their countries. Often their archives and their libraries were threatened with being confiscated or destroyed, for instance in the years before the second world war; archives or parts of them were smuggled to other countries. And this way a lot of this material ended up in all kinds of archival institutions all over Europe.

The idea of virtually integrating these scattered collections is a very attractive one from the viewpoint of a researcher as well as for the general public. Now, for the first time, one can search for - let's say - documents on August Bebel, or the Paris Commune, and does not have to go to the catalogues of tens of archives and libraries of which one might not have even heard of. One search in Europeana or the Social History Portal and we get results from many different institutions from many different countries.

In order to improve access to the scattered digital social history collections of Europe, we needed to:

- Ensure that the metadata and the content became available through Europeana, increase the quantity of quality content available through Europeana.
- Implement a full scale discovery-to-delivery model.
- Promote the adoption of standards and best practices for digital libraries amongst our partners.

These goals were achieved by:

- Developing a shared content repository.
- Developing a metadata aggregator.
- Developing services to discover, showcase and deliver the collections to Europeana and the Social History Portal.
- Creating a sustainable Best practices Network.

2.2 The Consortium

Lead partner of the HOPE project was the International Institute of Social History (IISH) of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. In total the consortium consisted of

fourteen partners, from eleven countries[1]. The partners included content providers, a technology partner, who developed most of the technical infrastructure and services, and the European Library Foundation. On top of this there is a multitude of associate organisations connected through the global IALHI network: the International Association of Labour History Institutions.

Picture of a HOPE presentation at an IALHI conference (Lisboa, September 2012)

2.3 Outline of the Project

The project consisted of seven interconnected parts ('workpackages'), each dealing with a specific aspect.

Users, content and IPR looked at the users of the social history collections and how they were using collections. We gathered requirements on functionalities that the Social History Portal should provide to the main targeted audience groups and on the themes that would suit our collections.
A content policy and a supply roadmap were set up to be able to manage the process of the collections that were meant to be part of the HOPE project.
During this whole process access and use restrictions (IPR, copyright, privacy) had to be taken into account. Detailed guidelines on how to cope with these rights, which are very often unclear in the domain of social and labour history, were made available in the Best Practices wiki, which is accessible to everyone (not just to project participants).

Agreed standards and best practices were discussed extensively. On the basis of the consensus reached the HOPE system was designed, enabling institutions with their individual systems and collections to contribute their collections to Europeana and the Social History Portal. This called for a technical infrastructure to gather all the metadata and bring them together in a standard that would fit them all, and for a storage service where the digital objects could be stored.
It was important for all participating institutes to reach a common level of expertise and to agree on the best practices and standards to be adopted. In order to achieve this, documentation on agreed standards and best practices was prepared, as well as guidelines for local implementation. This documentation was used in local workshops to assist the partners in preparing for the technical phase of the project. The documentation is available in the Best Practices wiki as well.
To ensure commitment to the user and to guarantee persistency of the descriptions and the objects, it was decided that all metadata records and digital objects should be assigned a Persistent Identifier.

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[1] A complete list of partners can be found in the annexes.

Improvement of content, metadata and service delivery led to adjustments in the local workflow of institutions, and in some cases to the implementation of newly agreed standards and best practices in their systems to be able to deliver the collections to the HOPE system and onwards to Europeana and the Social History Portal.

Each institution had to prepare their metadata records and digital objects. To ensure that users can find what they are searching for, the descriptions of the collections' items needed to be harmonised between the partners. Metadata of colelctions or parts of collections were even enriched, especially with keywords from the common list of themes, generally covering the field of social and labour history. This will improve cross-collection search and discovery in the Social History Portal.

The HOPE Aggregator Service was developed in a separate workpackage by the HOPE technology partner. It is a set of open source software tools, based on state-of-the-art technology developed in and used by several other European projects. The Aggregator Service enables content providers to map their metadata to the common HOPE metadata scheme, to transfer their collections to other portals and websites such as Europeana and the Social History Portal, and to further harmonize and enrich their metadata according to improve the quality of the results from user's queries.

The HOPE Shared Object Repository was designed as a service for the secure storage of digital objects. It is based on the best practices defined within the project, to assure trustworthiness and sustainability of the system. The Shared Object Repository enables institutions to upload their digital objects (images, text, video, audio etc) to the repository, to set Access and Intellectual Property Rights restrictions on those objects, to specify if and which derivatives like thumbnails should be created by the system. The system stores the digital objects with their technical metadata and persistent identifiers, and duplicates the object for backup. The objects that are stored in the Shared Object Repository can be retrieved – if allowed – by users and portals like Europeana or Social History Portal by using an url. Institutions have full access to their stored objects through an administrator interface.

Attracting users, new network partners and content providers was done by means of a project website, a newsletter, and a large number of presentations and publications. Besides the original project participants, an impressive number of institutions became part of the Best Practices Network and expressed an interest in contributing collections to Europeana and/or the Social Histoy Portal. Two of them (CEDIAS/Musée Social, france, and Persmuseum, the Netherlands, already contributed during the project period.

This part of the work obviously has not finished with the end of the HOPE project as such, but will be an ongoing effort.

Finally, **Project Management** provided coordination and facilitated teamwork among all project partners. An important aspect was also to work on the sustainability of the project's results and the network as such.

2.4 The Project's Achievements

The project started on Labour Day (1st of May) 2010 and lasted for three years. The main achievements are:

- Over 900.000 digital items from the field of social and labour history accessible in Europeana, Europe's multilingual digital library, museum and archive for the general public.
- The Social History Portal, that brings the collections of 15 different institutions together for specialised researchers.
- A Best Practice Network of institutions in the field of social and labour history that face similar challenges. Partners with very different sizes and levels of experience have been working together on using best practices and sharing their knowledge, and will continue doing this in a Network whose number of Partners is expected to grow.
- The practical implementation of standards and best practices by all project partners, and the availability of services and tools and services for future use (e.g. the persistent identifier service, prividng reliable long-term access to online resources; the new tools for themeing and tagging collections and even individual items).
- A service that enables institutions to contribute their metadata (coming from their own local systems) and their digital objects to portals like Europeana and the Social History Portal. For (future) partners guidelines and supporting services on how to join are available.
- A shared storage service, called the Shared Object Repository, has been built for partners that needed a shared service to safely store their digitised objects. This object repository service continues after the project ends and its use is not limited to HOPE digital collections.

2.5 The Target Groups

The HOPE project has different target groups.

For the broad public, interested in history, the availability of large numbers of digital collections from the field of social and labour history in Europeana will provide the opportunity to discover sources and information it would not have found otherwise.

For researchers in the field of social and labour history, the Social History Portal provides access to a large and domain specific pool of collections. Digital collections will be complemented with non-digital collections, metadata are aligned and enriched by means of thematic tagging.

The third target group consists of organisations that can benefit from the project's outcomes – both the Best Practices Network, in which knowledge and expertise are shared, and the technical infrastructure, such as aggregator service, the persistent identifier service and the shared content repository. Especially smaller organisations might not have the means or expertise to make digitised collections available to the scientific community and the general public and provide for trusted, long-term preservation of digital objects. By pooling expertise and finding economies of scale, especially the smaller archives will be able to upgrade their services to a level that would otherwise not have been possible.

2.6 Conclusions and Possibilities for Future Work

During the last year of the project, much thought was given to the conclusions we could draw from the HOPE project and to the possibilities to sustain the project results after project funding would end. In close cooperation, the group of HOPE participants and the International Association of Labour

History Institutions (IALHI), saw the evident need to shift attention from building a technical infrastructure to 'anchoring' the results in the social history domain, and to engage a larger number of institutions. The differences in size, existing experience with complex IT-projects, language and even culture between the different institutions are not to be underestimated, but three years of experience within the HOPE consortium should prove a solid ground upon which to take the next steps.

Four main objectives were identified to be sustained by and within IALHI, with the following main concrete activities:

1. Preserving the expertise and sharing it with the entire IALHI community.

    - The Best Practices and Implementation Wiki
    - An annual 'experts meeting' at the IALHI Conference

2. Maintaining and developing the Social History portal, which provides central access to the digital collections of the IALHI network.

    - The socialhistoryportal.org website and Content Management System
    - Implement results from User Acceptance Testing to improve access by September 2013
    - Hold a second round of User Acceptance Testing after September 2013

3. Maintaining the aggregation system and process(es).

    - To continue using the software and services developed, to be hosted by one of the project partners with support services from the HOPE project's technology partner
    - To integrate at least 20 new collections and at least two new content providers, to be distributed as much as possible to Europeana as well
    - To integrate metadata non-digital collections, at least reaching the number of 3 million records promised in the HOPE-project plan within a year

4. Providing access for IALHI members to a Shared Object Repository (SOR), preferably a Trusted Digital Repository (TDR), on a cost recovery basis.

    - To finalize an agreement with the IISH, which will maintain the SOR and develop it into a TDR, guaranteeing use by IALHI members on a cost recovery basis
    - To establish a SOR/TDR Partner Group, that will participate in the development of a roadmap towards a TDR
    - To engage IALHI members via free test accounts

In order to carry out these objectives, IALHI set up a legal body (the IALHI Foundation), and a structure for the governance, with IALHI's General Assembly as highest authority. For the next year, HOPE-partners have committed themselves to providing staff hours to carry out these tasks. Liasing with Europeana and other relevant networks, such as APEX, will continue. Contacts with educational and research networks and initiatives, such as Euroclio, the European network on migration and DARIAH, will be explored further. The Social History Portal and its network will be present or represented at relevant congresses in the field of social history, with the European Social Science History Conference, 2014, as one of the most important events. The IALHI Coordination Committee

has committed itself to investigate the possibilities for future project funding and to set up a sustainable organisational infrastructure for the longer run.

2.7 How to use HOPE and Further Information

The scattered collections of all participating institutions are now accessible through one single point of entry as well as through Europeana. The Social History Portal (screenshot below) enables one to search through all collections. At present you can find 134 digitised collections there, comprising more than 900,000 digitised objects (archives, books, brochures, leaflets, photographs, posters, prints, cartoons, sound, films and videos). Most collections are European.

For institutions that have collections in the field of social history and are eager to expand the visibility of these collections through Europeana and the Social History Portal, they are welcome to contribute their collections. HOPE partners can assist with technical issues and offer guidelines, advice and support that will help in the process of content provision. Please do not hesitate to contact IALHI (info@ialhi.org) or browse through the project's public wiki, a treasure chest of information (http://hopewiki.socialhistoryportal.org/).

3. Annexes

List of partners

1. International Institute of Social History, the Netherlands, http://socialhistory.org/
2. AMSAB, Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Belgium, http://www.amsab.be/
3. Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro, Italy, http://www.cgil.it/
4. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Germany, http://www.fes.de/
5. Fundação Mário Soares, Portugal, http://www.fmsoares.pt/
6. Schweizeriches Sozialarchiv, Switzerland, http://www.sozialarchiv.ch/
7. Tyovaen Arkiston Saatio, Finland, http://www.tyark.fi/
8. Verein für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung, Austria, http://www.vga.at/
9. Open Society Archive, Hungary, http://www.osaarchivum.org/
10. Consiglio Nazionale delle Richerche, Italy, www.cnr.it/
11. Europeana, the Netherlands, http://www.europeana.eu/
12. Universite de Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne, France, http://www.univ-paris1.fr/
13. Génériques Association, France, http://www.generiques.org/
14. Centre national de la recherche scientifique, France, http://www.cnrs.fr/

Additional Content Providers

1. CEDIAS / Musée Social, France, http://www.cedias.org/
2. Persmuseum, the Netherlands, http://www.persmuseum.nl/

Contact details for further information

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Related websites

http://www.europeana.eu/

http://www.peoplesheritage.eu

http://www.socialhistoryportal.org/

http://hopewiki.socialhistoryportal.org/

http://www.ialhi.org/

List of public project reports

Below you can find links to the public reports from the HOPE project, as PDF files:

Best Practices for Trusted Digital Content Repositories (last modified 29/05/2012)

IPR Best Practice Guidelines (last modified 02/05/2012)

The High Level Design - The technical implementation of the HOPE project (last modified 31/08/2010)

The Common HOPE Metadata Structure, including the Harmonisation Specifications (last modified 31/05/2011)

Service Infrastructure Detailed Design & Aggregator Infrastructure Detailed Design (last modified 31/03/2011)

Repository Infrastructure and Detailed Design (last modified 01/04/2011)

Repository Infrastructure and Detailed Design - Appendixes (last modified 01/04/2011)