

Digital Canon Creation in the interest of Libraries, Research and the Public

Dr Anke Hertling

German Libraries have developed individual concepts for gradually making their collections digitally accessible, in part due to the lack of a national digitisation strategy. There is a high degree of responsibility attached to selecting and prioritising which source material should be digitised, as libraries organise and preserve a cultural memory through such practices of canonisation. Although they do not digitise as an end in itself, libraries' digitisation strategies are little known outside their own professional community. The initial premise of this presentation is that the creation of a digital canon is shaped by the interests of a range of stakeholders, among which we can count libraries, researchers and a general public with an interest in cultural assets.

The first part of the presentation will highlight the different interests addressed by libraries in their digitisation strategies: such as their own library interests, which are oriented towards collections and inventories; academia, which focusses on (current) research queries, and the general public, who are looking more for rare or unique digitised items. The second part of the presentation will use the digitisation work conducted by the Research Library at the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research as an example of the challenges facing digitisation practices that aim to satisfy a range of interest groups. The argument is that the digitisation of source material should be viewed as a process of negotiation and epistemological reflection, which libraries should utilise to make the development and expansion of data collections more transparent and agile, especially in terms of identifying gaps and deficiencies.