

A-2. TRANSFORMING ACCESS TO CULTURAL HERITAGE: ENSURING AN ONLINE FUTURE FOR LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

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The role of the library in democratising access to cultural heritage is not new. For example, the great 18th-century projects such as the British Museum and its Library or the Zaluski Library founded in Warsaw were set up for the common good, to enable access to knowledge for those who were not part of the book-owning elite or closely linked to institutions which traditionally acted as gatekeepers to cultural heritage and knowledge such as the Church or academe. However in the 21st century, digitisation of collections and projects based on this digitised content have given libraries the opportunity to widen access to their collections in revolutionary ways and remain relevant by addressing a far wider and more diverse public than could ever walk through their doors. Users are empowered by the capacity to interpret, share, reuse and create new content.

This presentation will focus on the British Library as a case study of how a major heritage institution rises to the challenge of opening up its collections in times of economic restraint. It

will look at a number of issues including user needs, partnership models for digital projects, political and economic imperatives and the approach to up-dating staff skills to meet the challenges of digital librarianship.

List of recent publications [1-3].

References

1. "The history of the book in Poland" The Oxford Companion to the book edited by Michael F. Suarez and H.R. Woodhuysen, Oxford: OUP, 2010, pp. 288-293;
2. "National Bibliography of Georgia: past, present, future" (with Anna Chelidze) Slavonic and East European Information Review Vol. 11, nr1, Jan-Mar 2010;
3. "Baltic states" Breaking the rules: the printed face of the European Avant Garde, 1900-1937 edited by Stephen Bury, London: British Library, 2007, pp. 66-70;