Digital co-creation: The Archive reaching out to volunteers, stake-holders and urban developers

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ICA, Workshop, Mexico, 2017
“Being a democratic institution means taking an active stance towards accessing archives in order to facilitate learning and development for everyone”.

Swedish archivists Sara Grut and Maria Press
How do we use the advantages and possibilities of digital archiving and communication to broaden the impact of the archive and attract more users and partnerships?
Technical requirements

• Open your archive system and let your data be transferable to others and to other websites:
  • A website that is open for external calls – to allow for external use of your data. Open API’s.
  • License descriptions of all records held in your collection (Common Creative-system)
    • Full control of user-rights, copyrights and legal, physical and digital accessibility.
  • Permanent URLs
  • Allow for easy entrance for digital records in your online catalogue
  • Prepare your archive system so that you can add special tags, that can be used for filtering the content for exports or transfers.
Collecting the records and stories of a department store

- **The case**: how do you supplement the business records of department store with the voices and stories of people?
- Stories and records were collected from staffs, managers and customers of a department store. **ONLINE and out-of-the-office collection.**
- These are mixed with records, attributed with relevant tags in the digital archive system of the City Archive.
- and transferred to a special website with the API.
- Designed product for a special user-group.
Adding history to an urban development project

• The case; a grand scale transformation of a prior hospital area into dwellings – how can history enrich that process? How can architects and planners be informed of the history and relevant place identities?

• Captured records and oral histories from patients, staffs, and neighbours. ONLINE and out-of-the-office collection.

• Mixing the incoming records with records, attributed with relevant tags in the City Archive

• and transferring to a special website with the API.
Capturering life-stories

- The case; capturing digitally life-stories of citizens of all kinds in a relatively well-structured way. Informatics.
- Method; engaging citizens in using online thematic formulas to tell their story or tell someone else's story.
- Documents are first presented on the website and then transferred to the archive system and indexed.
- Great public interest. A co-project of all Danish local archives. 900 life-stories collected
- Part of Aarhus 2017 European Capital of Culture
Digital volunteering and Citizens Science

• **The case:** Archives have a special advantage thinking of the longstanding tradition for volunteering, that now is developing into digital citizen science or digital citizens archivists.

• People have competencies. How do we match these with the potentials of the City Archive holding the digital records?

• **A fruitful, meaningful and modern partnership**
Digitizing and indexing printed minutes of Aarhus City Council (1866-1997)

• The case; making available city council’s decisions and deliberations;
  • Linked to the archive’s analogue and digital collections.
  • Used for contraction of central entities (individuals, organizations, and locations)
  • Will a ‘digitization open up the archive’?
    • Ambition: to create a layer of narrative documents to raise awareness of the content of the archive.
• The minutes represent 65,000 file cases and 6,227 meetings

• Volunteers: transcribed and/or proof-read texts and annotated (marked) names of persons, organizations and locations.
Each case or agenda item from the city council opens in a separate document, with tags that generate automatic searches in the full digital archive register.
Transkribus, An EU-financed project
Machine-learning and text recognition

• More specific: develop software that can read and structure handwritten text.

• Success rate depends on the quantities of recognized documents (and many more factors...)

• Involving digital volunteers to digitize a critical amount of Ground Truth material (transcribed documents to be used as reference for automatic recognition)
RETRO – digitization and indexing of parish council protocols and city council minutes from all DK in collaboration between volunteers and archives.

Data will be transferred to the participants for these to produce their own digital environments to make use of the sources as they please.
Providing a text base to enable machine learning and handwritten text recognition.
Mission Statement of Aarhus City Archives

• Aarhus City Archives’ mission is to give the citizens of Aarhus facilities for reflection on the past and the past's role for the present and on a critical basis, create co-ownership to the city and support the city’s brand.