

International Image Interoperability Framework @ KU Leuven (Belgium). Current applications and future projects

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There is an increased use of digital resources in humanities research and the expectations towards accessibility are high. Researchers want their material to be available faster, in higher resolution and multiple formats. They want tools for swift deep-zooming on the artworks and manuscripts, for browsing through complex objects in a heartbeat, and for comparing multiple image-based resources stored in digital repositories all over the world. In this context LIBIS, the Library information service of the University of Leuven (Belgium), implemented IIIF and the Mirador viewer for the interoperability and visualisation of the digitised manuscripts stored in the university's long-term preservation repository.

IIIF or the International Image Interoperability Framework is a community-developed framework for sharing high-resolution images in an efficient and standardized way across institutional boundaries by offering a set of shared API specifications for the interoperable functionality in digital image repositories. Using a IIIF manifest URL, a researcher can simply pull the images and related contextual information such as the structure of a complex object or document, metadata and rights information into any IIIF compliant viewer such as the Mirador viewer. Simply put, a researcher can access a digital resource from the British Library and from the KU Leuven Libraries in a single viewer for research, while allowing the institutions to exert control over the quality and context of the resources offered. KU Leuven implemented IIIF in 2015 in the framework of the idemdatabase.org project and has since been using it in a number of Digital Humanities projects with a focus on high-resolution image databases for research. By now the IIIF community has grown considerably with institutions such as the 'The J. Paul Getty Trust' and the 'Bibliotheca Vaticana' implementing it as a standard and providing swift and standardized access to thousands of resources. Its potential has however not reached its limits with ongoing work on aspects such as IIIF resource discovery and harvesting of manifest URLs, annotation functions and an extension to include audio-visual material.

The Mirador viewer has also realised an increasing amount of interest and willingness with Digital Humanities researchers to preserve research material in the university's digital archive and make it available for reuse. But with the increasing number of requests to use Mirador for research and digital collection showcases, it's important to keep investing in the infrastructure to ensure speed, quality and continued innovation. New collaborative projects with humanities researchers will continue to define the development roadmap and finance the enhancements of the viewer, such as the possible addition of multi-spectral image viewing options.

The presentation will introduce IIIF and its concepts, highlight KU Leuven projects and viewers, and give an overview of its current and future application options for image-based research in the Digital Humanities.

More info:

libis.be/mirador-iiif-en ; iiif.io ; projectmirador.org

Topic Area

Interoperability

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