Open Knowledge API

Short project description

The project focuses on the opening up of Memory Institutions’s collections through APIs (Application Programming Interface). One core quality of openness, is that it is possible to change, so that someone else can pick it up and carry one. To that respect, having open data means that someone else can pick it up, and creatively re-use the data accordingly. APIs offer this opportunity (the creative re-use of data). Also they foster the bidirectional relationship between the infrastructure and users. The use of APIs has the potential of increasing user/public engagement to cultural knowledge, allowing innovative opportunities to be developed.

The vision of this project is the production of a social and economic model capable of fostering public’s meaningful and creative participation to cultural knowledge production online, towards openness, fairness and equity.

Exemplary projects for concrete impact development

*Victorian and Albert Museum API*: The museum launched a new developer API (https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/digital/valaunches-new-developer-api) and users started to get creative with different projects like twitter bots online (see here https://twitter.com/vambot2).


*Europeana API*: https://pro.europeana.eu/page/apis

*Finna API*: https://www.helsinkikuvia.fi/

*Harvard Art Museum API*: https://github.com/harvardartmuseums/api-docs

*Smithsonian Institution API*: https://www.si.edu/openaccess

Further information

Opening up knowledge is a crucial element of social inclusion and fairness for our society. Memory Institutions have long been working towards openness of their collections, in an effort to foster public engagement and participation. To put the vision of opening up through APIs into place, Memory Institutions need to embrace openness at the core of their digital (transformation) strategy, and not fearing the “loose of the data”. Opening up through an API, means that they will lose control over the cultural data, meaning that they will not be able know, or control, what or how the data can be re-used. Memory Institutions will need to adopt relevant Creative Commons licences and waive copyright and other intellectual property rights from the collections that want to open up through the API.

For a Memory Institution to develop an API, there are several resources that needed; resources money for the respective infrastructure, experts to design it, build it, run it and
maintain it. For a Memory Institution to use, and be part of a shared API ecosystem (like the Finna API and the Helsinki City Museum), less resources are needed with respect to infrastructure. However there is a need of experts, or people to get relevant training to use the system, and collaborations for working together to maintain this shared infrastructure. The user needs to be able to run the API, they need internet connection, a device (e.g. pc, laptop, mobile phone etc.) and have an advanced digital literacy knowledge. Also be eager to learn or curious about culture.

**Critical measurement questions**

- Is opening up collections through an API creating more opportunities and possibilities for public’s participation, and therefore ultimately be more engaging, participatory and/or inclusive for the public, rather than opening up the collections through portals and platforms?
- Does opening up through an API increases or decreases public’s engagement? (Measuring access to the material-collections for measuring the engagement rate)
- How does opening up through an API enabling or hindering public’s participation?
- What is the API’s impact on the collection’s accessibility? How easy or difficult is it for the user to access the collection? (how inclusive APIs are? Are they excluding users because of the need for advanced digital literacy skills?)
- How does the API impact the possibilities for creative data re-use and meaningful participation, compare to other ways of opening up, like through portals and platforms? (Data re-use and applications developed?)

**Project manager**

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