

Open Culture Data position paper

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Using Open Data workshop

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Open Culture Data is an initiative of the members of the Dutch Heritage Innovators Network and Hack de Overheid, and is supported by the digitisation programme Images for the Future and Creative Commons Netherlands.

Abstract: The cultural heritage sector is becoming more aware of the power of open data. GLAMs (galleries, libraries, archives, museums) realise that open access to data helps drive users to online content and that it enables the creation of new innovative services. Hence it supports cultural institutions in the fulfilment of their public mission to open up access to our collective heritage. Secondly, it stimulates collaboration in the GLAM world and beyond. This allows the creation of new services and supports creative reuse of material in new productions. Based on these developments, the Dutch Heritage Innovators Network and Hack de Overheid (Hack the Government) launched the 'Open Culture Data' (Open Cultuur Data in Dutch) initiative in September 2011. We are a network of cultural professionals, developers, designers, copyright specialists and open data experts with the aim to make cultural datasets available under open conditions and stimulate the creation of useful and innovative applications in which these are incorporated. The initiative promotes dialogue and the sharing of experiences on how to get more cultural data openly available. In this context, we organised, a hackathon in 2011, which resulted in the creation of 13 Open Culture Data apps. Based on the success and great enthusiasm of the pilot phase, we have been able to continue with our initiative on a structural basis in 2012, thanks to the support of the large-scale digitization programme Images for the Future and Creative Commons Netherlands. In April this year, an Open Culture Data masterclass started in which 17 institutions get practical, technical and legal advice on how to open their data for re-use. Furthermore, we are organising two hackathons this year (one in June, one in October) in conjunction with our own app competition, in which developers are again stimulated to re-use Open Cultural Datasets in new and innovative ways. Based on the outcome of the masterclasses, we will provide a series of open culture data case studies, that will inform heritage institutions with real-life quantitative and qualitative experiences, best practices and guidelines of their peers with opening up data and the ways in which this data is reused. Since the open culture data field is still relatively young, this is highly relevant information needed to stimulate others to join the open data movement. To this end, we are already taking steps to cross the borders and let Europe know about the initiative, on both a practical and a policy level.

Keywords: cultural heritage, open data, app competitions

INTRODUCTION

The cultural heritage sector is becoming more aware of the power of open data. GLAMs (galleries, libraries, archives, museums) realise that open access to data helps drive users to online content and that it enables the creation of new innovative services. Hence it supports cultural institutions in the fulfilment of their public mission to open up access to our collective heritage. Secondly, it stimulates collaboration in the GLAM world and beyond. This allows the creation of new services and supports creative reuse of material in new productions. In short: collaboration supports innovation. As Bill Joy notes in his 'Joys law': "No matter who you are, most of the smartest people work for someone else". Thus, encouraging external parties to re-use publicly available sources stimulates innovation in the GLAM sector and results in services of higher quality and diversity. Based on these developments, the Dutch Heritage Innovators Network and Hack de Overheid (Hack the Government) launched the 'Open Culture Data'¹ (Open Cultuur Data in Dutch) initiative in September 2011. We are a network of cultural professionals, developers, designers, copyright specialists and open data experts with the aim to make cultural datasets available under open conditions and stimulate the creation of useful and innovative applications in which these are incorporated. The initiative promotes dialogue and the sharing of experiences on how to get more cultural data openly available. In this context, we have organised a masterclass for cultural institutions, a series of hackathons and an app competition. So far, the outcomes of Open Cultural Data have been very positive, and in January we were awarded with the European Public Sector Information Platform Trailblazer award².

THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS OPEN CULTURE DATA IN THE NETHERLANDS

In order to stimulate re-use, we collected and contributed datasets for the national app contest Apps for the Netherlands organised by Hack de Overheid that was held from September 2011 to January 2012 and which was primarily aimed at re-using open governmental data. For this, we defined rules and tips in order to make clear to contributors what principles open culture data should at least adhere to, such as not excluding commercial re-use and making clear that there is a distinction between licenses for open data and open content:

1. Open Culture Data is knowledge and information of cultural institutions, organisations or initiatives about their collections and/or works
2. Everyone can consult, use, spread and re-use Open Culture Data (through an open license or by making material available in the Public Domain).
3. Open Culture Data is available in a digital (standard) format that makes re-use possible.
4. The structure and possible applications of Open Culture Data are documented, for instance in a data blog (some examples in Dutch here³).
5. The provider of the Open Culture Data is prepared to answer questions about the data from interested parties and respects the efforts that it costs that the open data community invests in developing new applications.

With these principles in mind, we hit the road, organised workshops spurred on our colleagues in the Dutch cultural heritage world to open up datasets. In total, eight datasets were made available under open conditions from the collections of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam Museum, EYE Film Institute Netherlands, National Archives, the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision and a dataset containing information on the National Heritage Sites of the Netherlands.

SUCCESS STORIES SO FAR - RE-USE OF OPEN CULTURE DATA IN APPS

These datasets were presented by representatives from the institutions at a hackathon event in November 2011, that was organised within the scope of the Apps for the Netherlands⁴ competition. In total, 13 'culture' apps were made, 8 of which were deemed advanced enough by their developers to be submitted for the competition. The total number of apps entered in the competition was 48, so the number of Open Cultural Datasets used was relatively high, especially for an app competition mainly aimed at the

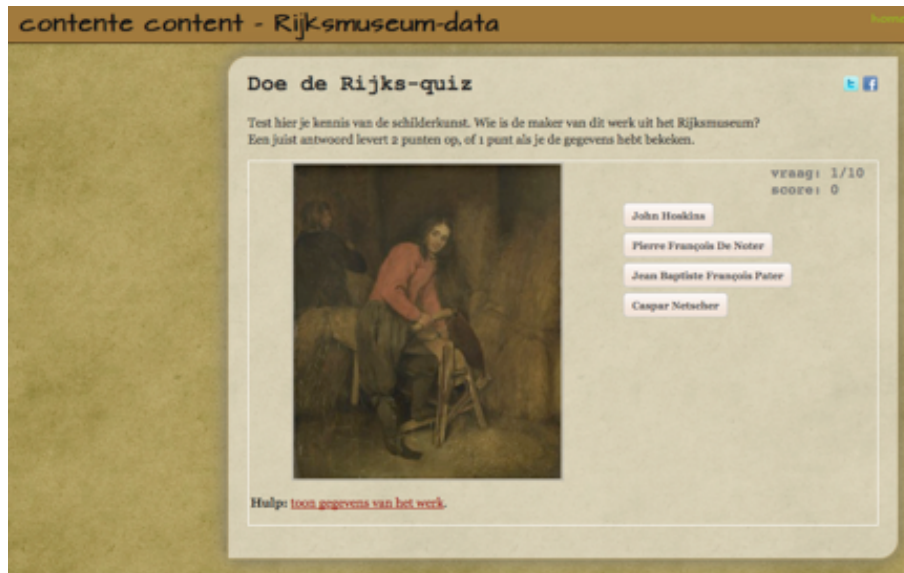
¹ <http://www.opencultuurdata.nl/about/>

² <http://www.opencultuurdata.nl/2012/03/open-cultuur-data-wint-epsi-trailblazer-prijis/>

³ <http://www.opencultuurdata.nl/datasets/>

⁴ <http://www.appsvoornederland.nl/>

re-use of governmental data. The apps were very diverse, ranging from a cultural history quiz based on the Rijksmuseum dataset to historical videos enriched with various open datasets.⁵



Rijks-quiz, made by Ronald Klip from ContenteContent, in which the user has to pick the correct maker of an artwork.

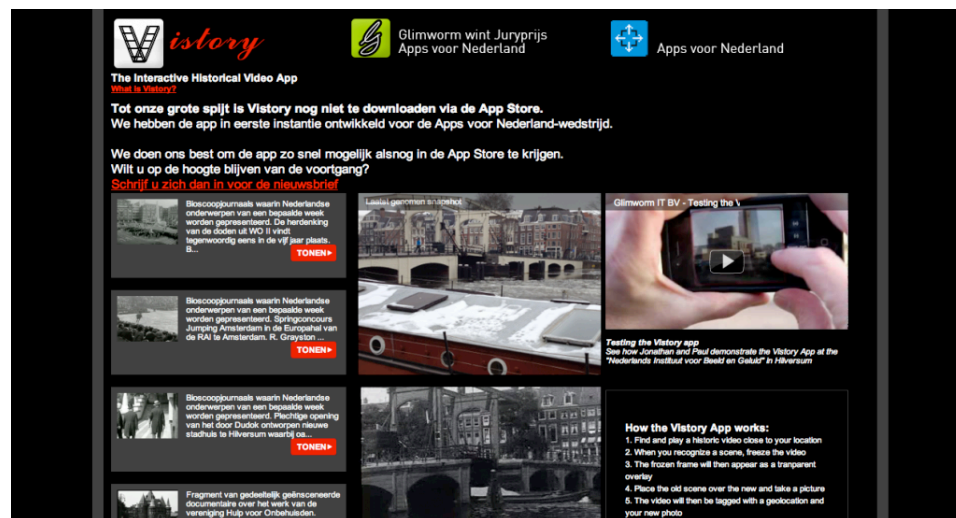


Open Images videos enriched with open data from e.g. Wikipedia and the Amsterdam Museum, made by Jaap Blom from the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision's R&D department.

The Apps for the Netherlands prizes were awarded in January and handed out by the Minister of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation Maxime Verhagen. Three apps made with culture data won prizes. The app that went home with the overall gold prize was 'Vistory', built and designed by Glimworm IT. Vistory combines videos from the Open Images dataset (videos from the collection of the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision) with contemporary photos by utilizing a smart phone's GPS technology. The app retrieves videos from the Open Images database, based on a user's geographical location. This means a user can see which videos were recorded in his or her close proximity. When the user views the videos and recognises a location shown in the video, he or she can freeze the video. Then, the user can use the app's overlay "reverse augmented reality" function to match the frozen frame of the video with the image he can see on the mobile phone camera. When the frozen frame matches the current image on the screen, the user can take a picture. This image is then added to the Vistory database, including the time code of the frame in the video used for the overlay and the exact geo-location. This results in a

⁵ <http://www.opencultuurdata.nl/apps/>

historical “then and now” effect that allows users to compare how locations used to look in Open Images’ historical videos in comparison with the current situation.



Vistory website⁶.

We asked all the developers that had made an app based on one or more Open Cultural Datasets to write a demo blog⁷, documenting how they made them, in order to further disseminate knowledge about open data re-use.

ADDED VALUE OF OPEN CULTURE DATA AND LESSONS LEARNED

Our experiences so far have been very positive. The cultural institutions that have contributed datasets have experienced that the added value of doing so lies primarily with their public mission and their aims to make their collections available and meaningful to the public. Furthermore, by opening up datasets, they are making themselves more findable and relevant online, since their data can be shared and accessed on multiple locations, such as Wikipedia. Also, the apps that have been made so far have provided novel insights into how open culture data can be re-used, enriched and connected in ways the institutions themselves could not have imagined.

In order to continue the initiative, make sure the datasets are re-used even more and gain more experience with the added value of open culture data for all parties involved we have determined the following lessons learned that we feel are critical for our success, and that for similar initiatives.

Firstly, we have learned that innovators lead the way! By gathering the right group of professionals in the cultural domain who believed in the (potential) power of open and were willing to experiment, we created a small but very powerful vanguard. For example: When the prestigious Dutch Rijksmuseum joined the initiative, this inspired other institutions like the National Museum of Antiquities to also participate.

Secondly, creating practical examples really helps. The fact that cultural institutions are hesitant to join the open data movement has a lot to do with either a lack of knowledge or a fear of the consequences for their current way of operating. Fear that their business model might be endangered and fear of people abusing their data, or re-using it for purposes they don't agree with, like misrepresenting the data. These fears are not per se grounded in fact and experience (see for instance the recently published white paper by Europeana on open data business models for the heritage sector: The Problem of the Yellow Milkmaid⁸) and it withholds institutions from what you can gain by opening up, like experimenting with innovative concepts for new services or applications. We have learned that by putting open culture data in

⁶ <http://www.vistory.nl/>

⁷ <http://www.opencultuurdata.nl/tag/demos/>

⁸ <http://pro.europeana.eu/documents/858566/2cbf1f78-e036-4088-af25-94684ff90dc5/>

practice and actively stimulating the re-use of the data, cultural institutions can be convinced to join the movement.

Third and lastly, thinking about open culture data requires a multidisciplinary perspective. Many cultural institutions have particular ideas about new applications and services for their data. But this is only one way of looking at it. We have learned that connecting cultural institutions with the 'outside world', the world of hackers, designers, students, but also other data providers and commercial companies is not only a lot of fun, but is also very helpful to institutions in finding new ways to make arts and culture meaningful in the digital era.

NEXT STEPS

Based on the success and great enthusiasm of the pilot phase, we have been able to continue with our initiative on a structural basis in 2012, thanks to the support of the large-scale digitization programme Images for the Future and Creative Commons Netherlands. In April, an Open Culture Data masterclass started in which 17 institutions get practical, technical and legal advice on how to open their data for re-use. Furthermore, we are organising two hackathons this year (one in June, one in October) in conjunction with our own app competition, in which developers are stimulated to re-use Open Cultural Datasets in new and innovative ways. Based on the outcome of the masterclasses, we will provide a series of open culture data case studies, that will inform heritage institutions with real-life quantitative and qualitative experiences, best practices and guidelines of their peers with opening up data and the ways in which this data is reused. Since the open culture data field is still relatively young, this is highly relevant information needed to stimulate others to join the open data movement. To this end, we are already taking steps to cross the borders and let Europe know about the initiative, on both a practical and a policy level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Open Cultuur Data is an initiative of Hack de Overheid⁹ and the Dutch Heritage Innovators Network¹⁰. The activities in 2012 are made possible by a contribution by the mass digitisation project Images for the Future¹¹ and Creative Commons Netherlands¹².

⁹ <http://www.hackdeoverheid.nl/>

¹⁰ <http://inerfgoed.nl/>

¹¹ <http://beeldenvoordetoeekomst.nl/en>

¹² <http://creativecommons.nl/>