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# Poster 'Preservation through access: the AHDS Performing Arts collections in ECLAP and Europeana'

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This poster provides an overview of the ongoing rescue of valuable digital collections that had been taken down and consequently lost to general access.

The University of Glasgow was home to the Arts and Humanities Data Service Performing Arts (AHDS Performing Arts) [1], one of the five arts and humanities data centres that constitute the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS). Since 1996 AHDS supported the creation, curation, preservation and reuse of digital materials for the UK Arts and Humanities research and teaching community. AHDS Performing Arts, based in Glasgow, supported research, learning and teaching in music, dance, theatre, radio, film, television, and performance for thirteen years. Working with the AHDS Executive, relevant performing arts collections have been ingested, documented, preserved, and where possible made available via the AHDS Cross Search Catalogue and Website to researchers, practitioners, and the general public. Furthermore strong relationships were developed with research and teaching community upon a scoping study investigating user needs [2].

In 2007 the co-funders of the AHDS - Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for the UK and the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) - withdrew their funding. A detailed risk assessment report was produced in response to the withdrawal of core funding [3], but to no avail. When the AHDS funding stopped, online access to these cultural resources eventually became discontinued [4].

In 2010, the School of Culture and Creative Arts at the University of Glasgow joined the EU-funded ECLAP project to ensure that at least part of these resources could be accessible for the long term by scholars and practitioners in the performing arts arena, and by the general public. Below we briefly describe the ECLAP project, the AHDS Performing Arts collections progressively available through it and some thoughts on providing preservation through access for this type of digital cultural resources.

## 2. ECLAP project

ECLAP (European Collected Library of Artistic Performance, [www.eclap.eu/](http://www.eclap.eu/)) is an EU-funded Best Practice Network infrastructure and a service portal providing a large, collaborative and multilingual online library for performing arts institutions and users in Europe and beyond. Through its portal and services ECLAP aims at enriching and promoting performing arts heritage and culture, and supporting advances in learning and research in the field of performing arts. The project Consortium, led by is Prof. Paolo Nesi at DSI University of Florence, is composed by European leading national performing arts institutions, universities and research institutes [5].

ECLAP offers a wide range of innovative solutions and tools to support performing arts institutions in managing, providing access to and disseminating their online collections to a large number of users. This initiative is bringing together hundreds of thousands of Europe's most relevant performing arts content (previously often inaccessible online), including collections on theatre, dance, music, cinema and film, performances, lessons, master classes, teaching, festival, costumes, sketches, production materials, lyrics, posters, locations. File formats include video and audio files, documents, images, animations, playlists, annotations, 3D, interactive content, e-book, slides. ECLAP is fully integrated with Europeana, the portal endorsed by the European Commission providing a single access point to millions European cultural and scientific heritage digital objects [6].

## 3. AHDS PERFORMING ARTS COLLECTIONS IN ECLAP

### 3.1 Value and challenges for performance digital content

Performing arts represent a valuable cultural resource, and also an important economic sector in the Creative Industries. According to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's annual analysis of the impact of the creative industries on British economy [7], the Music & Visual and Performing Arts sector is the Creative Industries largest contributor, employing in 2009 some 300,000 people and contributing £3.7 billion of Gross Value Added (GVA) to the economy. As Seamus Ross noted, for the performing arts community 'the process of creative activity is itself a core deliverable. While we need to document performance, giving preference to print and text as a way to describe performance is not adequate' [2, Preface]. However performing arts outputs are often constituted by 'rich audiovisual resources that are complex to preserve from both a technical and intellectual point of view' [3]. Furthermore, typically performance collections have an online bibliographic catalogue, through which users can sometimes access a limited amount of digital content, often restricted to textual materials.

### 3.2 Migration challenges

Considering the complexity, heterogeneity and diversity of types and formats of AHDS PA collections, their migration from one environment (especially a lost one) included a number of organisational, semantic and technical challenges. Some examples are mentioned here.

*Conflicts in selection and appraisal.* We had originally selected for ingestion into ECLAP and Europeana about half of the sixty-one AHDS PA deposited collections, that is the collections made

available for public dissemination. Our selection paid particularly attention to the collections that were categorized as ‘Medium risk’ and ‘Relatively high risk’ in the risk assessment conducted in 2007, when AHDS withdrew its funding [3]. However Europeana does not accept intellectually produced content derived from research in the form of databases, as they are considered at the same level of library catalogues despite the substantial intellectual endeavor behind them. After a failed attempt to negotiate the ingestion of such resources, we had to further reduce the selection of AHDS PA collections to eleven (Adolphe Appia at Hellerau, Anatomical Exoskeleton, Cheap Flight Show, Citywide, Designing Shakespeare, Fabulous Paris, Five Centuries of Scottish Music, From Jayaprana to the Abduction of Sita, Imago, Imago lecture notes, King Lear Performance Photographs).

*Physical rescue of the collections.* The AHDS PA collections, which were originally physically stored at the University of Glasgow, had been moved to King’s College in London during the lifetime of the project. The rescue of the collections included an onsite journey to King’s College, where the files were physically stored but no longer made available online, and three attempts over a period of time longer than expected to migrate the large amount of data onto physical storage media and in a secure online environment. Validation procedures were performed to ensure data integrity not only for discrete entities via checksums, but also manually to safeguard the integrated nature of these collections and the context provided to individual objects.

*Metadata transfer.* The AHDS PA metadata format precedes the Europeana data model by about a decade. AHDS PA metadata format was an in-house metadata structure that has come to be known as the Common Metadata Framework (CMF), developed by Malcolm Polfreman and adopted for all AHDS collections in order to display metadata from all its centres via a single interface. CMF can be mapped to a looser metadata structures such as the Dublin Core underlying the Europeana Data Model (EDM). But while initially EDM was very library-oriented (Dublin Core plus a few fields), the current EDM version draws more on the CIDOC CRM model, predominant in museum. Furthermore, Europeana attempts to enrich data by adding standard multilingual terms and references from thesauri or controlled vocabularies. However there is currently no standard classification scheme for performing arts; the effort of ECLAP Consortium to produce and then use a new classification proved rather challenging.

### 3.3 Benefits for AHDS Performing Arts collections

Rather than a scattered group of host institution’s websites, the ECLAP portal represents a central point which allow European-wide institutional collections be described, cross-searched and compared. Collection holders can maintain rights and access restrictions as appropriate, while benefiting from the greater visibility provided by the search, discover, retrieve and access via ECLAP and Europeana. In addition, this portal offers a number of search, content enriching, social networking and distribution services through which we can ‘market’ the AHDS PA collections. Services include search and retrieve of multimedia content via a multilingual interface in 21 languages; possibility to enrich, contextualize, annotate, rate and aggregate content;

possibility to share content, including collaborative indexing and creation of forums; distribution and access all content also via mobile devices; e-learning support .

In terms of sustainability, the portal centralised access point, ECLAP strategic planning and its Europeana connection also provide individual performing arts collections with a supporting environment for the long term curation and preservation of their digital assets. For example recent developments in Europeana, the cultural and scientific heritage portal endorsed by the European Commission, are promising in terms of digital preservation (the ASSETS project [8] includes Europeana software services for preparing ground for digital preservation).

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

In this poster we have provided an overview of the University of Glasgow efforts, via the ongoing EU-funded ECLAP project, to ensure that at least part of the AHDS Performing Arts collections can continue to be accessible for the long term by scholars and practitioners in the performing arts arena, and by the general public. It is our hope that in doing this we will contribute to facilitating discovery, access, understanding, and use of digital performing art resources for current and future generations.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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