

# TOWARDS AN AFRICAN DIGITAL LIBRARY

Roger Layton, CEO, The ETHER Initiative  
[roger.layton@ether.co.za](mailto:roger.layton@ether.co.za)

SAMA 2013 Conference, 22-24 October 2013  
Horseshoe Inn, Kimberley

# OUTLINE

- The **Digital Context** for Museums
- A **Maturity Model** for Museums+Web
- Lessons from **EUROPEANA**
- The Vision for an **African Digital Library**
- **Critical Success Factors**
- An Initial **Plan**
  
- Where does the African Digital Library Fit?
- **QUESTION: Do we have a choice?**



*“if you are not visible  
on the Internet,  
you do not exist”*

**WHEN WILL THIS STATEMENT BE TRUE?**

# DISCOVERABILITY

*an increasingly important element of future relevance*

**“If you build it, they will come”** (*Field of Dreams*)

**“If you build it, (let us all hope and pray) they will come”**



# WHAT INFORMS THE DIGITAL?

SAMA PSTI: **No mention of online collections or web sites**, only databases for collections management

ICOM: Definition of museum – **no mention of digital access – assumes physical visitors**

ICOM Museum Guidelines: **No mention of online collections – assumes physical visitors.**



# DIGITAL CONTEXT

scholars  
visitors  
tourists

web site  
mobile/tablet access  
Virtual Tour Guide

## 3 : USER EXPERIENCE

physical exhibitions  
virtual exhibition

friends  
community

digitising /  
repositories

staff

## 2 : COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

**SPECTRUM** procedures  
documentation +  
databases,  
CMSs – ETHER Base  
data standards,  
electronic inventories

Senior  
management

## 1 : GOVERNANCE

Constitution  
Forward plan  
Strategy, policies  
Digitisation Strategy

board

owners



ETHER

# MATURITY MODEL: MUSEUMS+WEB

**LEVEL 0** : no own web site of any form

**LEVEL 1** : basic own web single page and perhaps web pages on tourism web sites

**LEVEL 2** : own web site with pages for governance, collections, location, contact details

**LEVEL 3** : access to items within collections and digital reproductions, but only primitive search capability

**LEVEL 4** : full online collections with powerful search and access to digital content, sustainable + persistent identifiers

**LEVEL 5** : DISCOVERABLE: metadata and preview images pushed to / pulled from aggregator search engines, such as BHL / EUROPEANA







## WESTON CARAVAN



John Weston lived for the greater part of his life on a neighbouring farm. He was born in an ox-wagon near Vryheid in 1873 from a Scottish father who was a geologist and an English mother. When he was 7 years old the Weston family moved to Somaliland where old Weston was for 3 years engaged in training the Somalis to fight slave trader Hameb ben Mahommed.





## Voices of Boipatong

search

On the night of June 17, a posse of armed Zulu men crept out of a migrant workers' hostel near a township called Boipatong, south of Johannesburg, and in an orgy of slaughter hacked, stabbed, and shot thirty-eight people to death in their homes. This web site is a digital memory of this event...[read more](#)

About

Persons

Image Gallery

Archival Sources

Archival Materials

Maps

Timeline

# BOIPATONG MASSACRE

Aggregating information from

- a variety of online sources (digitised and born digital)
- and access to where to find offline sources.

Project conducted by  
KHULUMANI SUPPORT  
GROUP

ETHER built the database  
and mobile web site

Funded by NHC





europeana.eu

- Commenced 2005
- Formerly = The European Digital Library
- **29 million items** online
- From **2200 contributing institutions**
- From **36 countries**
- Funded by the European Commission and National Cultural Ministries
- EXAMPLE: Search for items on Oliver Tambo



ETHER

# (1) SEARCH

Search


ONLY 52! Among  
29m records!

Results per page:


Results 1 - 24 of 52

of 3



ANC president Tambo  
op bezoek in N... 




Dick Oosterbaan  
(links) overhan... 



Manifestatie KZA,  
Kairos e.a.&qu... 



Gruppenaufnahme  
mit SPD-Ehren... 



Type: AUDIO,  
VIDEO, IMAGE, TEXT

## (2) DETAILS: METADATA

**Description:** Conference of maritime trade unions for an oil embargo against South Africa. F.I.t.r.: Garba (UN Special Committee against Apartheid), Møller Hansen (Danish sailors' union), Kinnock (British Labour Party), Tambo (ANC South Africa).

**Creator:** Cagnoni, Stefano,

**Geographic coverage:** London (United Kingdom)

**Time period:** 1985-1985.

**Date of creation:** 1985, October

**Type:** item; Photo.

**Subject:** Kinnock, Neil.; Garbo, Joseph.; Møller Hansen, Preben.; Tambo, Oliver.; Conference of Maritime Trade Unions "Stop oil supplies to South Africa"; Group portrait.; Trade policy.

**Identifier:** <http://hdl.handle.net/10622/75DAF476-BCE0-4EC5-97C6-4AC61B42B3D4>; 30051002894175

**Relation:** <http://www.peoplesheritage.eu>

**Rights:** ~~Stefano Cagnoni/Report (London)~~

**Data provider:** International Institute of Social History

**Provider:** ~~HOPE - Heritage of the People's Europe~~

**Providing country:** Netherlands

[Garbo, Joseph.](#) (1)  
[Møller Hansen, Preben.](#) (1)  
[Tambo, Oliver.](#) (33)  
[Conference of Maritime Trade Unions "Stop oil supplies to South Africa"](#) (1)  
[Group portrait.](#) (12190)  
[Trade policy.](#) (137)

### Provider

[International Institute of Social History](#) (158262)  
[HOPE - Heritage of the People's Europe](#) (917333)



# (3) INSTITUTION SOURCE RECORD



international institute  
of social history

Search the integrat  
Over 1.000.000 items from the  
IISH, NEHA and Persmuseum

All Fields  [Advanced search](#)

[Home](#) > [Conference of maritime...](#) > [Holdings](#)

[Order reproduction](#) [Cite this](#) [Email this](#) [Export Record](#) [Search History](#) [Share](#) [Bookmark](#)

Conference of maritime trade unions for an oil embargo against South Africa. F.I.t.r.: Garba (UN Special Committee against Apartheid), Møller Hansen (Danish sailors' union), Kinnock (British Labour Party), Tambo (ANC South Africa).

[Visual Documents](#)

Photographer: [Cagnoni, Stefano](#)

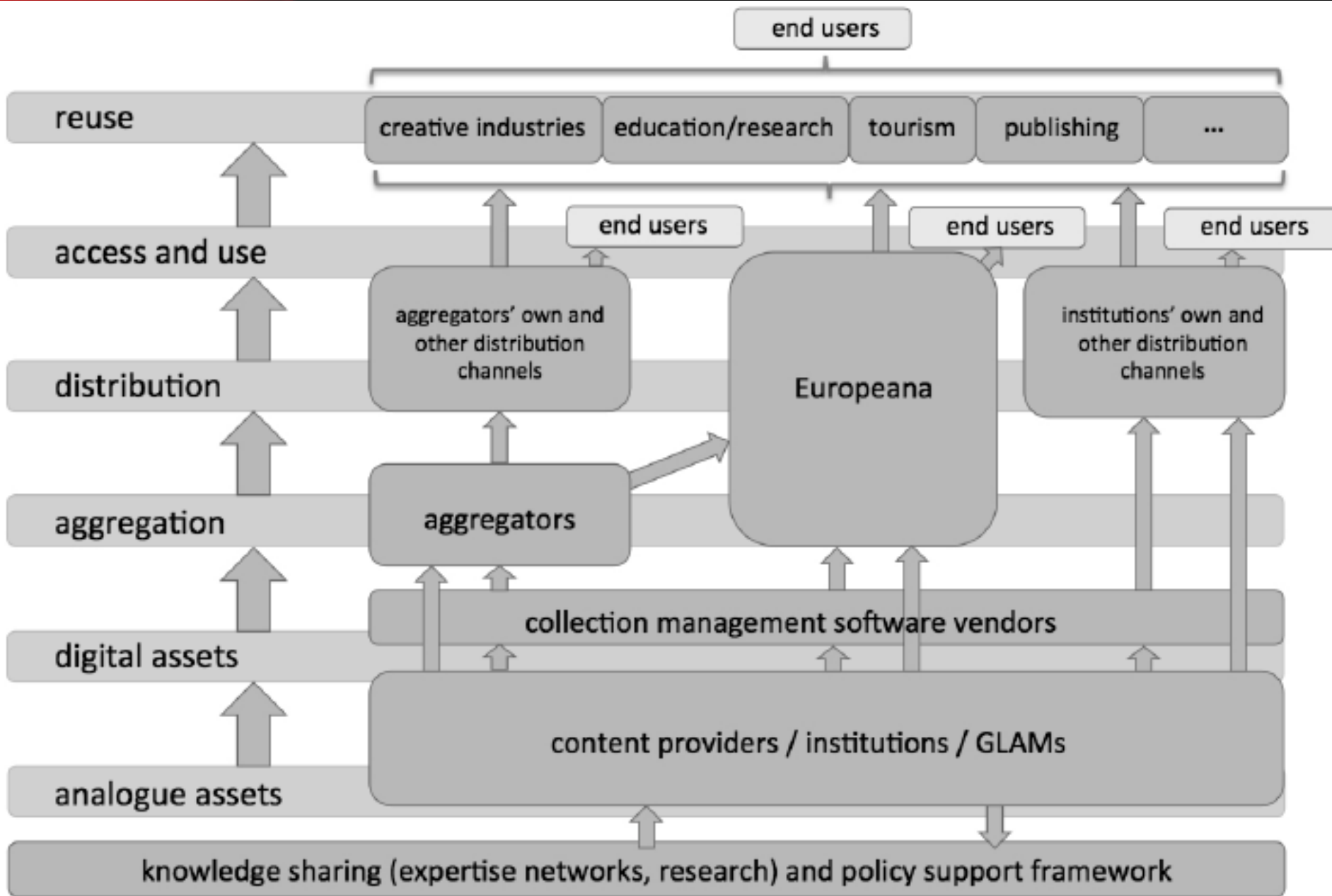
Collector: [Nederlands Instituut voor Zuidelijk Afrika \(Amsterdam\)](#)

Period: 1985-1985.

Published 1985, October



# EUROPEANA INSIDE



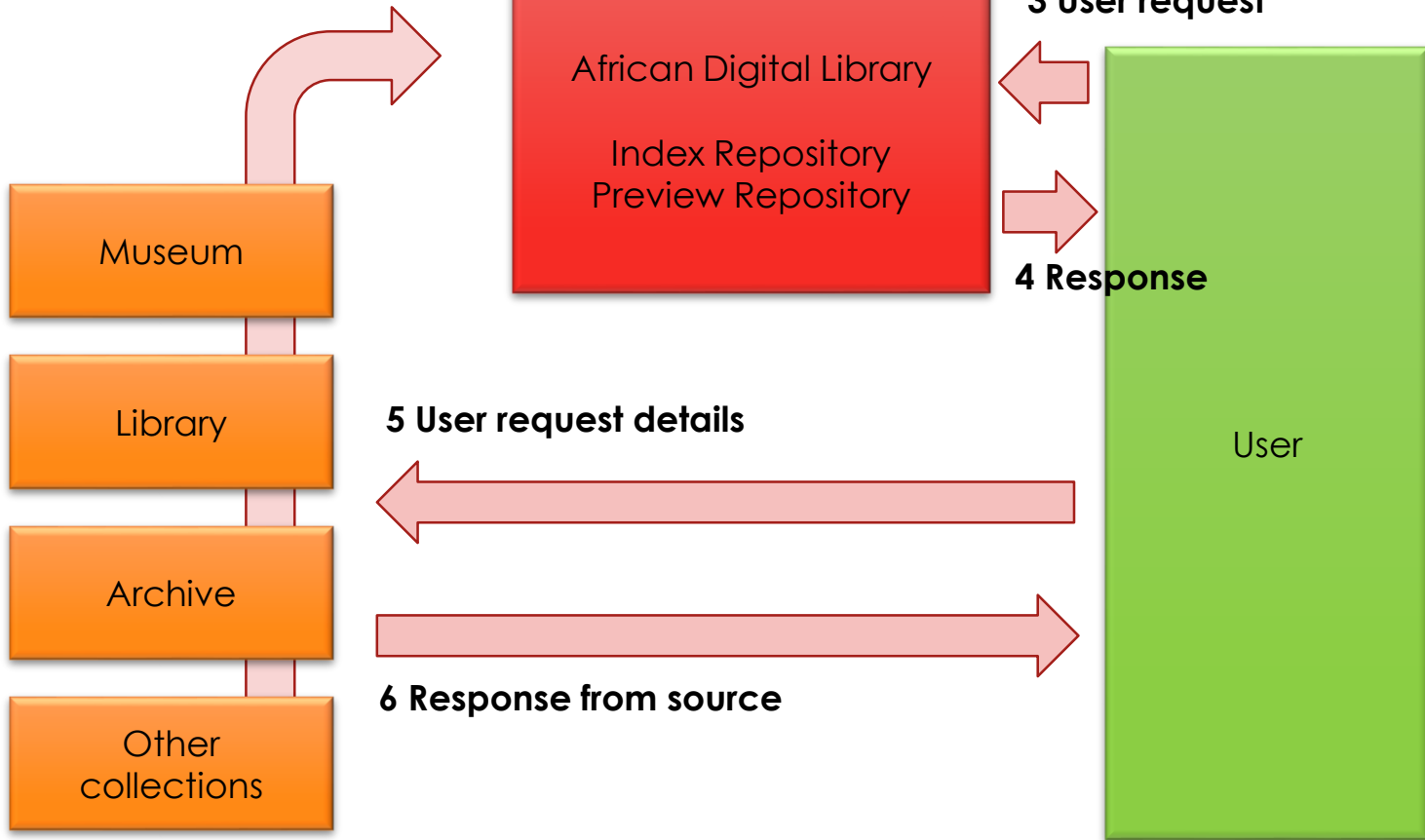


# AFRICAN DIGITAL LIBRARY VISION

## 1 Push content to ADL

## 2 ADL organises content

## 3 User request



# AFRICAN DIGITAL LIBRARY : PRINCIPLES

GOAL: To be the national aggregator of all heritage digital content from all disciplines

- **INCLUSIVE:** all disciplines
- **AFRICAN:** focus on RSA
- **TRUSTED**
- **INDEX ONLY**
- **OPEN:** FREE content – CC0
- **AGGREGATED**
- **SUSTAINABLE**
- **ADAPTING**
- **INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT**
- **STANDARDS-BASED**



# CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS (CSF)

1. **CAPACITY**: Institutions to **build capacity** in electronic inventories + catalogues + web presence
2. **ONLINE**: Institutions to **enable online collections**
3. **IDENTIFIER**: Institutions to provide for **Persistent Identifiers** and Addresses to objects
4. **UPLOAD**: **Easy and rapid uploading** of index/preview information
5. **STANDARDS**: **Common standards** for metadata fields, and common **vocabularies**
6. **BUY-IN**: **Buy-in from each discipline** : MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES, SITES, BUILT HERITAGE, ORAL HISTORY



# CSF 1+2 : INVENTORY + ONLINE

**Audit the Status Quo in All Institutions**

**Museum Web Maturity**

**Collections**



**COLLECTION OF  
COLLECTIONS**

All collection-level  
information online as FIRST  
PASS of African Digital Library

**COLLECTION MANAGEMENT**

Institutions implementing  
best-practice collection  
management





# THE MISSING LINK

The image shows two taxidermy models of hominids, likely Australopithecus, standing in a museum exhibit. They are surrounded by green foliage and branches. The model on the left is smaller and has a more pronounced brow ridge, while the one on the right is larger and more muscular. Both have reddish-brown fur and are looking upwards. The background is a museum display with informational panels.

## Not Found

The requested URL /abd.html was not found on this server.

*Apache/2.2.22 Server at www.234.com Port 80*

Maropeng, Cradle of Humankind

# CSF 3 : PERSISTENT IDENTIFIERS

- All museums / institutions to create adopt PERSISTENT IDENTIFIERS for ALL of their objects
- Which DOES NOT CHANGE over time
- Human readable
- Resolves to actual physical address of item
- All references to object use this IDENTIFIER at all times in the future
- Resolves the problem of the MISSING LINK

*Statement on Linked Data identifiers for museum objects.  
ICOM. CIDOC 2012 AGM, 2012-06-13, Helsinki.*





# CSF 4 : EASY+RAPID UPLOADING

- **EUROPEANA INSIDE**: The uploading feature must be BUILT IN to the Collection Management System
- **ONE-CLICK uploading** to African Digital Library
- Tracking of all uploads



# CSF 5 : CORE METADATA/VOCABS

Common and SMALL set of metadata elements

Using widely used standards:

- SPECTRUM: Data for Collections – approx. 550 data fields
- Dublin Core : resource description and context
- FOAF : persons/organisations
- ORE : aggregation / part-whole
- LIDO : information interchange to aggregators

The need for common vocabularies

- WHO : Persons/organisations/families : COMMON
- WHAT : Subject matter – COMMON
- WHEN : Date and time standard. Named events - COMMON
- WHERE : Places information - COMMON



# CSF 6: BUY-IN BY DISCIPLINES

- No single point of authority
  - Perhaps National Department of Arts & Culture?
- Archives / Oral History
  - National + Provincial Archives
  - Archival Collections
- Libraries
  - National Library + Provincial Libraries
- Museums
  - SAMA
  - National + Provincial Museums
  - SAHRA/NHC
- Universities / Research Organisations



# OUR PLAN TO GET STARTED

1. Selection of **PILOT institutions** (museums, libraries and archives)
2. Construction of **PILOT African Digital Library**
3. Establish **Standards** for UPLOAD, RETRIEVAL, LINKAGE BACK TO INSTITUTION
- 4. Embed into Collection Management Systems**
  - We are busy with this for ETHER Base, our own CMS.
5. Move towards critical mass



# WHO OWNS THE ADL?

- GOAL: This is eventually a community-run and community-owned service – from ENTIRE heritage community.
- IDEAL: Funded by government.
- NO COMMERCIAL INCOME.



# QUESTIONS

**Do we have a choice?** RISK ANALYSIS

**WHAT IF:** We do not build it.

**WHAT IF:** Multiple uncoordinated attempts

**WHAT IF:** Apathy from institutions.

**WHAT IF:** Lack of funding.

