Abstract
Norbert Lossau
Existing and new needs for infrastructures to bring cultural heritage online

Over the last 15 years libraries, museums and archives have digitised many of their collections, making valuable resources principally available to researchers, teachers and students. The focus of these activities has been on the digital conversion of manuscripts, maps, newspapers, journals, photos, a variety of objects from museums etc. For online access each institution has build a specific system, embedded into the local resource discovery and ICT infrastructure.

Despite of the remarkable efforts by content providers, the online access to cultural resources for researchers, teachers, students and the interested public still faces many obstacles. Only a fraction of relevant collections is digitally and online available. Search and navigation for existing collections is hampered by their fragmentation and the proprietarity of access systems. Usage of digital resources outside the content provider system is (at least) difficult and requires time, creativity and advanced IT know how on the user side. There is no infrastructure at all in place, which makes preliminary findings of ongoing research or completed research results on digital objects available in the context of the original digital collection, hence – as part of an iterative process - forming again a resource for re-use in research, academic teaching or education. Long-term storage and accessibility is currently been addressed in a number of initiatives, but still lacks fully operational and scalable services.

The presentation gives a short overview on the described topics, describing challenges and giving some concrete recommendations to address them. Finally it also draws a line between the initiatives to build infrastructures for Open Access to cultural heritage on the one side and to genuine science records on the other, both relying on the concept of worldwide networked digital repositories.