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Learning from the New Member States

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The advantages of being a second rather than a first mover are apparent as the latest project of The European Library, TEL-ME-MOR, comes to a successful conclusion. The aim of TEL-ME-MOR was to bring the digital collections of 9 countries: the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Slovakia into The European Library.

Not only did these countries have proportionally more material digitised they were also able to bypass the legacy non-web technologies of the early adopters. Nearly half of the collections submitted were OAI compliant and thus able to be harvested into a central database and manipulated in a way that remotely held collections cannot. Between them these 9 new member states of the European Union added nearly 1 million digitised items to The European Library.

As well as increasing the sum of material available to the user, TEL-ME-MOR produced several reports of continuing relevance to the creation of a European digital library. The importance of research and development in shaping the potential of cultural institutions and enabling them to be competitive in a European arena was shown in a report on 'Research Activities of the European National Libraries in the Domain of Cultural Heritage and ICT.' This report also underlined that there is no gap in knowledge and research between old member states and new – the playing field is very equal.

Several investigations were made into the necessary multilingual development of The European Library portal. To ensure that all the languages of the participating countries can be searched and displayed, input has to be standardised. The languages of these countries and the material the libraries hold use different character sets. Searching and displaying these character sets means enforcing uniformity in the underlying data through standardisation. The 'Report on TEL Unicode requirements' recommends the use of Unicode, UTF8, for all multilingual portals. Two further reports summarise the state of multilingual search, retrieval and display and make recommendations for prototyping systems to deal effectively with the problems as well as highlighting areas for further research: 'Analysis of cross-language access options in distributed databases' and 'Report on Authorities Options'. The concrete results of these language related reports will be a series of prototypes during 2007 based on the final report in the series: 'Scenarios for Multilingual Access'. The European Library will therefore test the concepts and recommendations proposed in TEL-ME-MOR under the new project www.EDLproject.eu that brings in the remaining EU and EFTA National Libraries as well as continuing the work on multilingualism and interoperability started under TEL-ME-MOR.

All the reports are openly accessible on The European Library at www.TheEuropeanLibrary.org/cooperation/archive/telmemor/results.php as is the complete archive of material for the project.

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Notes for Editors:

TEL ME MOR was a EU funded project under the IST technologies FP6 programme. TEL-ME-MOR supported 9 national libraries from the New Member States, which are partners in the project, to become full members of [The European Library](http://www.TheEuropeanLibrary.org), an initiative, established under the aegis of the Conference of European National Librarians ([CENL](http://www.cenl.org)), providing unified access to the electronic resources held in Europe's National Libraries.

The European Library is a service of the Conference of European Librarians. It is a portal offering multilingual federated searching across and within the collections of the national libraries of Europe. It allows an individual to search for all items on for instance Voltaire within databases of 23 national libraries and retrieve a set of results including, where available, the digitised item. It is a free resource for all and it is the organisational and technical starting point for the proposed European digital library where museums, archives and other holders of digitised and digital cultural heritage material will hopefully participate.