EURO-Photo project

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Interview with Mr. Maurizio Lunetta, ANSA by Valentina Bachi

Very short presentation: who are you and what was your role in EURO-Photo?

I am the EURO-Photo project co-ordinator, on behalf of ANSA (**Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata**), the leading Italian news agency. The Euro-Photo project aimed to digitise historical pictures from the archives of 10 leading European news agencies and make them available to Europeana, together with a huge number of their historical pictures already digitised in the past.

What are the biggest challenges that you had to cope with in EURO-Photo?

We had to cope with several challenges in the EURO-Photo project, linked to different areas: technology (interoperability among all the archives and with Europeana), digitisation and cataloguing activities (very time-consuming), sustainability of the project over time (based on revenues generated by our portal) and the related business model and legal (IPR issues). In any case all the partners had managed similar activities in the past, so we had a common background and experience that helped us to have a good approach for managing these challenges.

The IPR issue is quite often one of the biggest problems to be solved by anybody who wishes to open his resources for online use. How did you solve this problem within the EURO-Photo consortium?

The project's partners are European press agencies who took these pictures in the past decades during their day-by-day activity. Now this material is considered "historical" and the partner agencies have the copyright related to all pictures on the EURO-Photo portal www.eurofoto.eu.com. Of course IPR issues have been deeply discussed during the project and we decided to put online only the small resolution ("thumbnail", the output of a search on the portal) and the medium one with watermark. The watermark is not invasive and doesn't impair the visual appearance of the picture. With reference to the CC0 (Creative Commons) declaration domain requested by Europeana, luckily images are excluded and we uploaded onto the Europeana portal as metadata only a short description for each image. A more detailed one is available to users on our portal.

What do you think is the most valuable outcome of this project and what is the impact of EURO-Photo's content into Europeana?

Around 1 million historical pictures are now available to European citizens through the Europeana portal www.europeana.eu. It seems like a good impact!

Maurizio Lunetta, ANSA by Valentina Bachi

1954 - Ava Gardner a Roma,
courtesy of ANSA,
for editorial use only, no sales.

1963 - Il presidente Kennedy in trattoria a Roma,
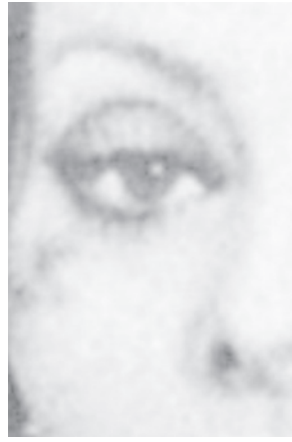courtesy of ANSA,
for editorial use only, no sales.

*Collecting Ice
on Lake Balaton*,
MTI,
editorial use only,
no sales.

Russia Parade Rehearsal, EPA, editorial use only, no sales.

Visit of Ronald Reagan to Portugal, courtesy of LUSA, for editorial use only, no sales.

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We reached our general objective for the project, which was to improve the quantity and quality of digital content available in Europeana, thereby providing European citizens with more insight into the differences in European history, cultures, religions and viewpoints, to create mutual understanding and support a united Europe.

Pictures in our historical archives are among the most valuable historical documents of the last century. They record major domestic and international events (political, social, cultural, sporting), celebrities and daily life from the turn of the century to the mid-1990s.

What are the benefits that the EURO-Photo project brought to the project's partners?

Digitising our historical archives is a long and hard effort (the 10 agencies involved have more than 70 million pictures in their historical archives). The EURO-Photo project was an opportunity for digitising over 3 years. At the beginning of the project a list of the most important historical events and personalities was prepared in order to choose pictures to be processed. In principle the most important part of our archives has been digitised during the EURO-Photo project.

We hope also to have benefits in the future with reference to our core business. The EURO-Photo portal is a business one, a showcase for professional picture buyers to find and buy historical pictures.

Of course we are aware that at present the market is in a bad situation with falling prices. However, let's try!

There is a strong incentive from the EU towards the digitization of cultural heritage and its creative re-use: what are in your opinion the possible future scenarios, both for historical and contemporary photography?

Digitisation of the historical cultural heritage is necessary in order to let European young people know their common history. With digital technology the approach to photography has changed and all people are able to take good-quality pictures; the content generated by users is the emerging issue.

The cultural value of historical pictures will increase in the future and we should continue to digitise new content. I hope that people will continue to look at these pictures with the same emotion we had during the project when we encountered visual evidence of the life of our grandfathers. It is not by chance that our payoff is: Remember us, remember history.
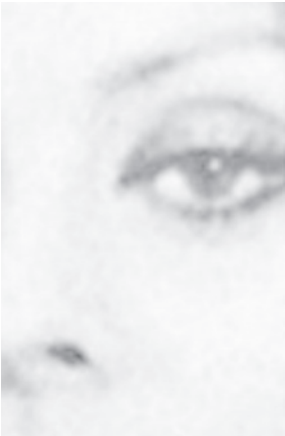
Sophia Loren Christmas, courtesy of ANSA, for editorial use only, no sales.