EUROCLIO
European Association of History Educators

25 YEARS

Europeana DSI3

The human impact of World War 1: Living with disability – How to use quality source materials for online learning activities

PUBLIC REPORT

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Scenes from the "One-armed school" in Dresden, Germany. Getting accustomed with a prostheses (Unknown, Europeana, Public Domain).

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Historiana
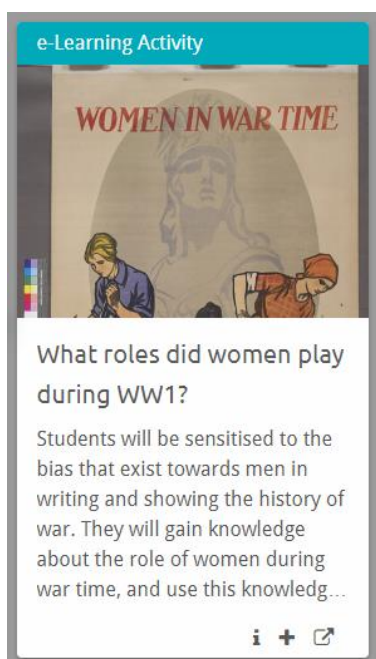your portal to the past

europeana

Executive Summary

This workshop, provided by Steven Stegers (Acting Executive Director at EUROCLIO) and Chris Rowe (Editor of the Historiana historical content team), is the third event in a series of workshops that aim to develop history educators' competence in utilizing the Historiana platform. Historiana, an eLearning platform which makes use of Europeana sources to form historical source collections organised by theme, is a valuable resource for teachers who want to provide online learning to their students.

The development of eLearning content on Historiana is the aim of the Europeana Digital Service Infrastructure phase 3 (DSI3) project, and sessions like this one are crucial to the process. First, they allow teachers to learn how to make use this platform. Second, they allow the platform to be tested by teachers, and thus improved based on their feedback and glitches experienced during the training. This event featured history educators from Denmark, Northern Ireland, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, South Korea, Poland, Hungary, and The Netherlands.

Description of the Activities

Making use of the [Experiencing the War section](#) of the World War I module, Steven Stegers demonstrated step-by-step how learning activities could be built by teachers online with the sources of Europeana collections. The sources in this section include information about recruitment and conscription, casualty numbers, and types of diseases and injuries, and paint a vivid image for students of the human side of the war. Teachers can browse the collections, find the sources most relevant or interesting for their lesson, and select them for their My

Sources from a sample My Historiana collection for demonstration purposes

Historiana collection (pictured right), from which they can then pull these sources to create activities that ask students to sort, analyse, and apply the information in them. During the first half of the workshop, participants were introduced to the sources in this collection so they got a sense of what was available for their use with this tool. The second half, participants worked together to create online learning activities using the sources they had just discovered and the many tools Historiana offers.

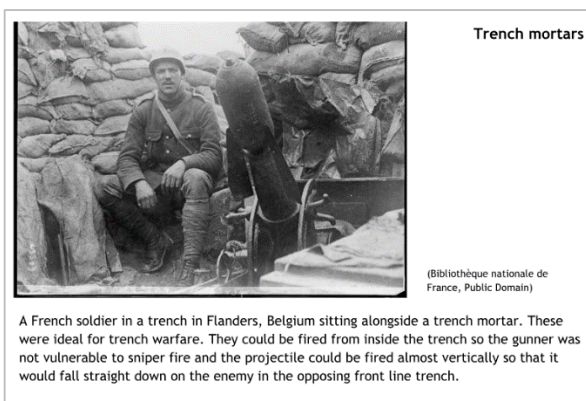

Example activity available on Historiana

For teachers who are having trouble creating learning activities, Historiana provides many examples that can inspire what kinds of learning activities are possible. Those who simple do not have enough time to create their own can also use these examples, as they are available as ready-to-use resources to be instantly implemented in the classroom. One example is pictured left.

Results and Feedback

The Historiana platform grows every time it is tested by new teachers, because every new group of participants brings up different ideas of how the website can be improved. One of the first issues the session ran into was that by searching via the Google search engine for Historiana, some participants came across various secondary versions of the Historiana website, used for demo and development purposes while the live website is not available. The new website had just been launched, and thus it was not yet the first result in the Google search, so different

Trench mortars

(Bibliothèque nationale de France, Public Domain)

A French soldier in a trench in Flanders, Belgium sitting alongside a trench mortar. These were ideal for trench warfare. They could be fired from inside the trench so the gunner was not vulnerable to sniper fire and the projectile could be fired almost vertically so that it would fall straight down on the enemy in the opposing front line trench.

A slide part of the *Life in the trenches* module of Experiencing the War, Historiana

participants were scattered throughout different versions of the Historiana website. This problem has now been fixed, with the secondary websites redirecting users to the new website, but this issue could not have been identified or solved without the initial confusion experienced during the session.

In terms of how the platform itself can be improved, several issues were brought up by the participants. First of all, there is no way to access sources from the main collection when one is already working from the activity builder, which limits one to only the sources one has already selected. If halfway through building a learning activity, you realise that there is another source that would really improve the activity, you must exit the activity builder to find it, add it to your own pool of sources, and start again. Some teachers asked whether it would be possible to embed a completed learning activity onto another website. This is currently not possible, but the idea will be taken into account when the next set of Historiana changes will be introduced.

The feedback to the Historiana e-Learning environment, as well as to the workshop itself, was generally positive. Participants agreed that they found having access to this kind of material to be very useful, because it allows them to draw on a wider range of sources for the classroom. Most participants said that they could imagine using it in their daily practice, either in-class or as homework assignments, because of how easy the tools are to use, how they are multilingual, how the links are shareable, and how clean the online workspace is (there is no distracting clutter). Some potential problems which were brought up inherent to the platform was its dependency on an internet connection (which can fail) and the challenge of keeping the overview (in the long term), especially with regard to the sources that are being used from within the personal account. In evaluations, the event was rated 3 or 4 on a scale of 1-4 (1 being lowest quality and 4 being highest quality) by 93% of the participants.

Historiana

Free historical content, ready to use learning activities, and innovative digital tools made by and for history educators across Europe.

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