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Not that long ago, a lot of museums were concerned that opening up collections digitally on the Internet and sharing digitized artworks online would have a negative impact on the number of museum visitors. It has proven that the contrary is the case: When people are offered the opportunity to see artworks online, their interest in actually visiting the museum and seeing the real object is sparked. Today, we are living in a hybrid culture; the digital space is increasingly gaining importance. This interconnection of physical and digital spaces touches every aspect of museum activity, including how museum collections are presented and experienced. Cultural heritage institutions are challenged every day anew to embrace innovative technologies in order to enhance the physical experience of exploring art and culture. Quite often this also means the attempt to make the balancing act of bringing together what is new – online databases, social media, mobile applications – with what is timeless. Digital exhibitions are exemplary of the fusion of culture and new technologies. Based on a clear concept, a captivating story line, and a well-thought-out curatorial approach these digital footprints of physical exhibitions have many advantages. Unlike a museum, online digital exhibitions are open 24 hours a day and can be visited by people from all over the world with just a few mouse clicks. The most valuable and fragile works of art and documents can be made accessible to the public without putting the national and international cultural heritage at risk. Moreover, digital exhibitions are excellent learning tools and can generate a deepened interest in a specific topic. The direct inclusion and participation of the audience can enhance and enrich digital presentations even further.



Within the scope of the AthenaPlus project not only 3.6 million metadata records are being contributed to Europeana, but also innovative open-source tools (MOVIO) for the realisation of digital exhibitions as well as didactic applications are being developed. As the President of COMCOL, I am especially delighted to witness this unfolding of Europe's cultural capacities, fostered by memory institutions and technical skill organizations alike.

This issue of the *Uncommon Culture* journal dedicated to the highly relevant topic of digital exhibitions looks into current practices of digital exhibition creation, reflects on technical possibilities, and summarizes the developments of recent years. The *Uncommon Culture* publication at hand is an excellent resource for understanding what digital exhibitions are, as well as a valuable guidance for museums to further open up their collections.

(President of COMCOL)