APIS AND RESEARCHERS: THE EMPEROR’S NEW CLOTHES?
Preservation and Access

• Differing techniques
  – Need to Preserve vs Need to make data accessible
  – APIs the answer?

• Europeana
  – Labs as main focus for API development
    • Platform not a portal

• “Researchers don’t use APIs”
  – So – skills gap, or information gap (or both)?
Key questions

- Who is developing APIs?
- How are they used?
- How are they promoted?

- How much can researchers be empowered to use the Europeana API?
  - Rather than just developers?
Provision and Use of APIs in CHIs

- HathiTrust Digital Library
  - Bibliography API
  - Data API

- DPLA
  - Apps Library

- Trove (National Library of Australia)

- British Library labs
  - “Footbridges, not Suspension Bridges”
  - Flickr Commons
## Research Behaviours

### Our Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile of Interviewee</th>
<th>Number of people interviewed</th>
<th>Interviewee reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data intensive Humanist and Social Science researchers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>R1, R2, R3 (Humanities) and R4* (Social Science)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developers using Humanities data, including ‘data evangelists’ and participants in API-developed hackathons</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>D1, D2, D3 and D4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarians, infrastructure specialists and curators involved in supporting or promoting APIs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>L1, L2, L3 and L4</td>
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The Outcomes

• **Data:**
  – What researchers want it to be and what they want to do with it;

• **Technical Expertise:**
  – How to develop it or get access to it;

• **Environments:**
  – Social and technical preconditions to data reuse.
Key Findings – Data, Metadata and Content

“Just give me everything!”

• Quality of content is paramount
  – Completeness
  – Accuracy
Key Findings – Technical Expertise

“I’ve come to the belief over the past 20 years that we really have to get over this idea that programming is a foreign occupation for Humanists.”

- Participant R2

- Clarity of documentation
- CHI’s need to inspire people to work with their data
  – Data evangelists
Key Findings – Environments

“Libraries shouldn’t be the gatekeeper. We shouldn’t be making judgement calls …. We can’t be making decisions as to how the data should be used”

- participant L1

• Community driven support
• Graphical interfaces
  – Useful for smaller jobs
  • Can’t reliably predict ways to manipulate data
Limitations to APIs

• Lack of technological know-how
  – unknown unknowns!

• Mismatch between researchers’ needs and developers’ expectations
  – Better communications needed!
Conclusion

“Building an API (...) doesn’t guarantee use of the API or re-use of the data, nor does it fix a bad platform or bad metadata, or implement its own solutions”

- Oyava.com
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Thank You!