

Websites as an issue of records management

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1) The Internet – not a really new medium

- 1960s: Development in the context of university and military research
- 1972: Public demonstration of the ARPANET in Washington
- 1991: Start of the Internet-service World Wide Web
- 2010: User figures of the Internet (source: Statistisches Bundesamt, https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/LaenderRegionen/International/Thema/Tabellen/Basistabelle_Internet.html):
 - China: 34,3 of 100 persons
 - Russia: 43,0
 - USA: 74,0
 - France: 80,1
 - Germany: 82,0
 - The Netherlands: 90,7

2) Internet vs. World Wide Web: Definitions

The Internet and the World Wide Web are not the same, although colloquially, both terms are synonymously used:

- The Internet (Interconnected Network) is a network of computers
- The World Wide Web is a service that runs via the Internet. It is the most successful Internet service and based on the markup language HTML
- Another major Internet service is E-Mail

3) Characteristics of websites

Among other issues, websites are characterised by several major qualities:

- Regular technical changes, updates and advancements
- Quick change of websites as regards contents and outer appearance
- No unique representation of website – dependent on the used browser, screen and interaction (dynamic websites)
- Visible and invisible web – major parts of the web are not visible to the user, e.g. the databases that generate information
- Interactive processes between users

4a) Unique representation of publications?

It is one major attribute of printed publications that they are not unique:

- Unlike records, many publications are regularly re-printed, re-issued, re-edited, etc.
- This does not necessarily mean that the outer appearance or other features (paper quality, hardcover vs. paperback, but also the contents) will be changed, but it might be the case
- Such changes are quite often not controlled by the author, but by editors, publishers, organisations, etc.
- Occasionally, a publication is intentionally published in variations

4b) Unique representation of publications?

The book production prior the invention of letterpress printing:

- Although books were already (manually) produced in series before the invention of the printing, no handwritten object looks like another
- In this respect, manuscripts-books were more alike records than printed books since Gutenberg's invention

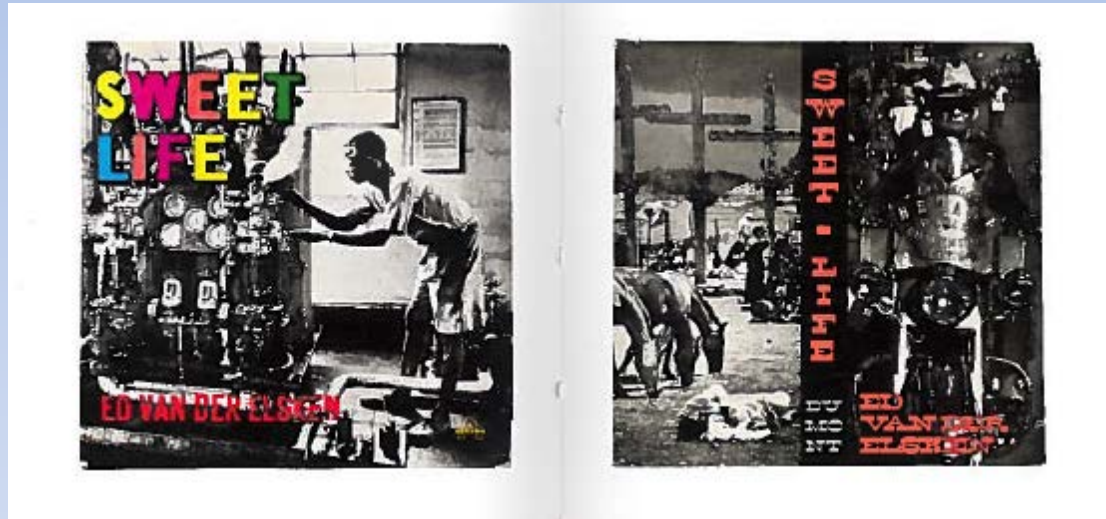
4c) Unique representation of publications?

One example: Ed van der Elsken (1925 – 1990): Sweet Life:

- This photo book of the Dutch photographer Ed van der Elsken was issued in several editions at the same time in 1966: Dutch, American, German (trade and bookclub), Spanish; 1968: Japanese and French
- The differences are not limited to the language (original vs. translations), but also to some other features of the volume

4d) „Unique“ representation of publications?

One example: Ed van der Elsken (1925 – 1990): Sweet Life:



US edition

German edition

4e) Unique representation of publications?

One example: Ed van der Elsken (1925 – 1990): Sweet Life:



German edition (Bookclub)

Spanish edition

4f) Unique representation of publications?

One example: Ed van der Elsken (1925 – 1990): Sweet Life:

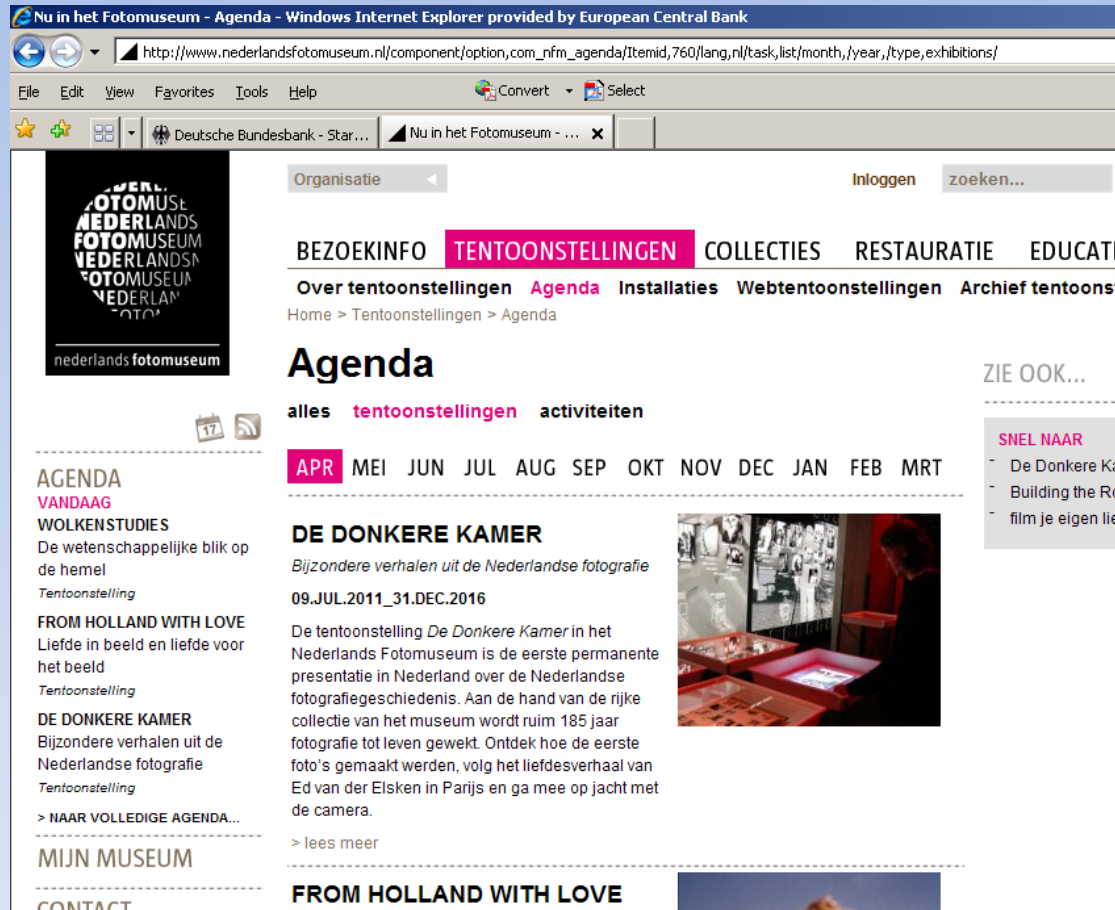


French edition

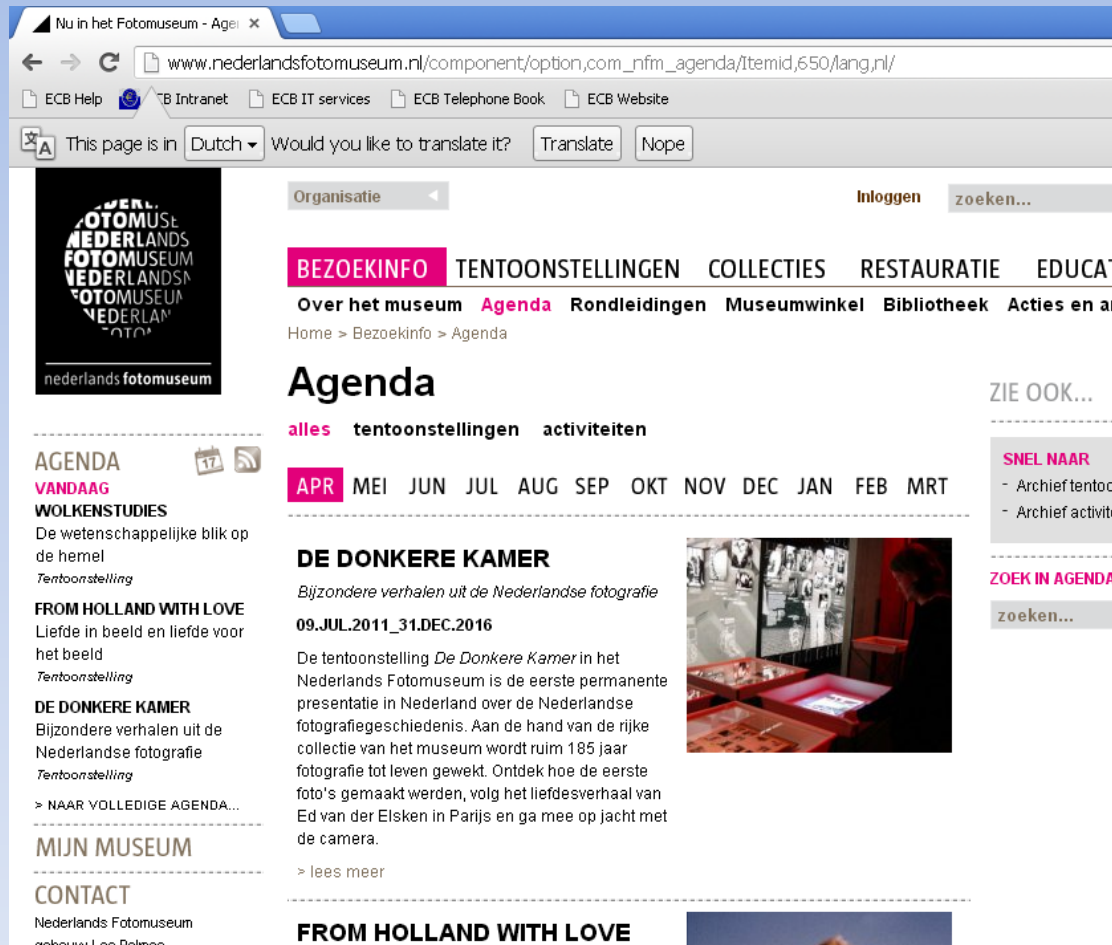
Japanese edition

5a) Unique representation of a website?

Internet Explorer 7:



5b) Unique representation of a website? Google Chrome (2013):

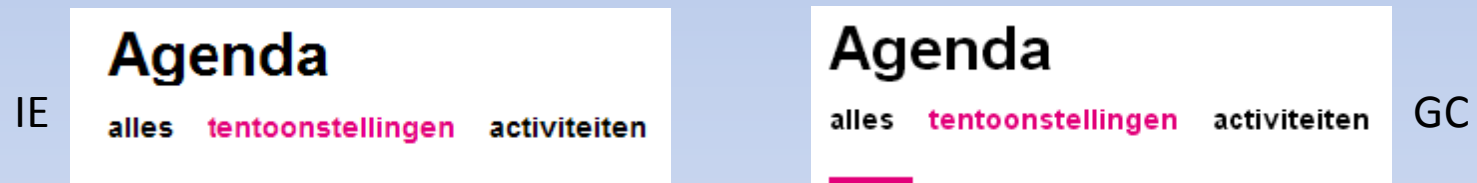


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5c) Unique representation of a website?

The appearance of a website depends in many respects on the browser:

- Look at the previous screenshots: The fonts of the Internet Explorer look more blurred than those shown by Google Chrome:



- The set-up of websites is different:



- Occasionally, also the colours can be differently presented

6) Unique representation of paper records?

Traditionally, handwritten paper records were unique:

- The introduction of copy measures (e.g. carbon copy for typewriters, copy machines) especially used for machine-written records was a first restriction of this archival axiom. Still, original and copy were quite easily distinguishable
- Later, computer system paper printouts of the same (digital) record looked fully identical and made a distinction between different printouts impossible

7) Websites: Records or publications or...?

Adrian Brown: Adrian Brown: Archiving websites. A practical guide for information management professionals, London 2006, S. 26:

"Although concepts as 'publication', 'record' and 'artefact' can still hold true in some cases, such distinctions are increasingly becoming blurred, or even meaningless."

8) Websites as records

Erika Hokke: “Blijvend beschikbaar”. Onderzoek naar de archivering van websites. Eindrapport, Amsterdam 2003, S. 29:

“The conclusion of this research on the archiving of websites is that websites can comprise and create archival information, i.e. information bound to processes which is generated as result of work processes. An organisation which makes use of websites to perform its tasks will create archival information in or by way of these websites.”

(http://www.archiefschool.nl/onderzoek/onderzoeksprojecten/blijvend_beschikbaar_Archiefschool_2003.pdf: Original in Dutch)

“De conclusie van dit onderzoek naar de archivering van websites is dat websites archief kunnen bevatten en genereren. Archief is procesgebonden informatie, het ontstaat bij de uitvoering van werkprocessen. Een organisatie die websites gebruikt bij de uitvoering van haar taken zal in of via die websites archief creëren. “

9) Which websites are especially interesting for RM?

For records management, websites are especially interesting provided that:

- They contain process-generated information, or
- This information is meaningful for the organisation, or its customers, clients or other professional context, or
- This information or the context to which it is connected is unique, or
- Websites can help to satisfy legal, financial and compliance requirements, or
- Websites can be useful for public relations reasons

Thank you for your attention!

