
Europeana launched Love Transcribathon to crowdsource World War I love stories for Valentine's Day

For Valentine's Day, Europeana launched a special Love Transcribathon, an online crowdsourcing campaign developed to unveil unique testimonies of the First World War by encouraging people to transcribe handwritten love letters from that time.



Source: Europeana - Contributor Catherine Mellor - Drawing of two young children hugging with text TWO HEARTS THAT BEAT AS ONE A. Wells 8th Sherwood F 1915

For Valentine's Day, Europeana - Europe's digital platform for cultural heritage - launched a special Love Transcribathon, an online crowdsourcing campaign developed to unveil unique testimonies of the First World War by encouraging people to transcribe handwritten love letters from that time.

As the First World War raged on, so did the hearts of the husbands, wives, and lovers of Europe. What happened to couples torn apart by war, unknowing of when, or if, they would see each other again? To cope with the separation, many soldiers sent long, romantic letters to their loved ones back home. Written 100 years ago, their correspondence uncovers stories of romance and betrayal, heartbreaks and new beginnings through letters, but also, poems, song lyrics, drawings and even messages written on pressed flowers.

On the occasion of Valentine's day, Europeana invited people to bring the hearts of these men and women of the First World War back to life by transcribing digitised copies of their treasured stories of

love, and to spread the word on social media using the hashtag #WW1LoveLetters.

The Love Transcribathon is an ongoing online challenge starting from Valentine's Day. It will feature over 40 love stories told in letters from the First World War written in 7 languages (initially English, French, German, Dutch, Croatian, Slovenian, and Greek) that can be found on Europeana 14 18. Participants were invited to take up the challenge from 14 February on the Transcribathon website, adding their own transcriptions, geo-tags and other annotations to digitised versions of the handwritten texts, enabling greater understanding and access to these original letters.

Among other genuine handwritten sources is the tragic story of Louise Jayne and Auguste Longinotti whose correspondence lasted from 4 February 1915 to 8 March 1918, a few months before he died. While Louise was working at the pyrotechnics weapons factory in Southern France, her fiancé Auguste regularly sent her news from the front, as well as a song written for her (*Pour Mademoiselle Louise*) and a coded postcard showing his admiration. The young couple's correspondence, alongside photographs, is available on the Love Transcribathon page, waiting to be read, digitally transcribed and translated from French into other languages.

The Love Transcribathon introduces and kicks off Europeana's new pan-European campaign #AllezLiterature working with libraries, archives and the public across Europe to celebrate the written word and texts in 2017. The #AllezLiterature campaign will run from now until June 2017, with a specific focus on love letters, poetry and important European texts respectively celebrating Valentine's Day, World Poetry Day (21 March 2017) and World Book Day (23 April 2017).

The Love Transcribathon is also part of Transcribe Europeana 1914-1918, the online crowd sourcing campaign to unlock important testimonies of the First World War for future generations that will run until the centenary of the end of the First World War in 2018.

Background

Europeana is Europe's digital platform for cultural heritage, collecting and providing online access to over 53 million digitised items from over 3,500 libraries, archives, audio-visual collections and museums across Europe, ranging from books, photos and paintings to television broadcasts and 3D objects. Europeana encourages and promotes the creative re-use of these vast cultural heritage collections in education, research, tourism and the creative industries.

The Commission invests in Europeana through the Connecting Europe Facility. The Commission's recent proposals to modernise Europe's copyright rules help museums, archives and other institutions to digitise their works and make them more accessible across national borders.

Europeana 1914-1918 is a digital archive of the First World War that collects, digitises, and exhibits records of the war from all over Europe. It is a joint initiative between the Europeana Foundation, Facts & Files, and many other European partner institutions. It originates from an Oxford University project in 2008. The archive combines institutional sources with unpublished records from the public, contributed through organised collection days and via online uploads. By bringing these sources together, Europeana 1914-1918 holds not only a vast collection, but also a unique perspective of the historic conflict, telling personal stories from every point of view. The first collection days were held in Germany in 2011, and the events have since expanded to over 24 countries across Europe. Europeana 1914-1918 now holds an online collection of over 200,000 personal items from the First World War.

Europeana Transcribe is a crowdsourcing initiative that allows the public to add their own transcriptions, annotations and geo-tags to sources from Europeana 1914-1918. The project aims to

enrich the stories on the Europeana 1914-1918 archive, while giving members of the public a unique opportunity to engage with original historical sources and old handwritten scripts. The website is free to use, and open to all members of the public. A Transcribathon is an online featured run on transcribathon.eu to transcribe handwritten texts online. Recently, the Christmas edition of Transcribe Europeana 1914-1918 featured selected accounts of Christmas and New year from letters and diaries. In the course of a month, over 1,600 documents in six languages were transcribed.

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