Content Case III: E-Publishing MECH/TARX

<u>Interactive multimedia production: "Faydherbe's traces in Mechlin"</u>

For the demonstration phase of the REGNET project MECH and TARX evaluated different types of demo-candidates. From the beginning of the project the thematic approach prevailed. The most elaborated theme with MECH Cultural Heritage data was "SAINTS" and to a lesser extent "GILT LEATHER" and the "TOUR d'HORIZON" (top ten pieces of art). In order to combine as much as possible earlier efforts within the REGNET project with a very practical, useful demonstration with clear relationship to the region of Mechlin and also aimed at a broad range of end users, it was decided to go for an interactive multimedia production: "Faydherbe's traces in Mechlin" designated to be installed in a kiosk or public terminal.

The basic rationale behind this is quite obvious when you consider the fact that Faydherbe was a Mechlin sculptor and architect being extremely active in religious related works of art in the 17th century. Many of his realizations are still visible and can be visited in the streets, museums and churches of Mechlin. So, the above-mentioned "SAINTS" theme delivered already a substantial part for the input material of this production. A natural inclusion of this production into the existing workflow of the museum activities could be achieved.

A second reason to go this way was the strategy of MECH to boost the city of Mechlin as one of the Flemish "Culture cities". This production could be as well a supporting aid for visitors as a marketing tool to attract interested persons or organizations.

The third reason relates more to the educational and scientific applications of such productions. Initially the production is aimed for the "standard, interested" visitor. The way the underlying structure and data are build up allow to extend easily the current level to a level suited for educational or scientific purposes.

Once decided on the theme and the objectives, MECH and TARX started to develop respectively the content and the content structures (MECH) and the multimedia authoring and the Dutch-English translations of the texts. In surplus of the existing material in the REGNET database, supplementary items had to be generated in order to comply with a pleasant look and feel and a comprehensive navigation structure.

The "Faydherbe's traces in Mechlin" multimedia production is fully bilingual Dutch-English. This means that at any moment and at any place during consultation the language can be switched from one to the other.

There are four main parts constituting the main menu:
1. Traces in Mechlin
2. Life and schooling of Faydherbe
3. Faydherbe the sculptor
4. Faydherbe the architect

The main focus lies on the first part: "Traces in Mechlin". Starting from a city map of Mechlin, different places, containing "traces" of Faydherbe, can be chosen. On clicking on the name in the list of locations or the location itself on the map, an image of the location will appear. Every location can then be "entered" by a simple click. The same scenario applies for visiting these individual locations. A map or ground plan is presented wherein a specific location can be chosen. On clicking on the location or the name in the list, an image and an accompanying text is shown.

The three other parts, life and schooling, sculptor and architect, are more contextual contributions concerning the person of Faydherbe and his works and serve as supporting material for the interested visitor or navigator.

At the final stages of the production cycle and after thorough testing, MECH and TARX realised that the result surpassed the pure demonstration level. It was decided to put the production immediately at the disposal of the public in one room of the Busleyden museum, Busleyden being the museum that contains most of the Faydherbe sculptures.

Because the production spans locations all over Mechlin, copies or part of the production could also be installed at other places. This pertains mainly to other museums, main churches and buildings and tourist offices.

At the same time another decision was made to reuse the same scenario with minor adaptations for other productions characterised by great similarities. Possible candidates are:

- same city but other artist and his works of art
- same location with all the residing works of art (not only Faydherbe)
- same city but other topic (archaeological findings)

The most urgent following step is to make the current production available on the Internet. This will be realized though the Cultural Service Centre Low Countries wherein TARX and MECH are founding members. This CSC will offer the means and experience to cultural institutions to realise, among other functions, similar productions.

The experience gained with this e-Publishing effort allows as well MECH as TARX to extend their current potential to realise their objectives in the Cultural Heritage World. Commonly developed (virtual) exhibitions with partner museums and delivery of new productions for other cultural institutions are only two of the potential benefits that both partners can realise.