

Introduction

After four years of activity, the DELOS Network of Excellence on Digital Libraries, supported by the European Union under the Sixth Framework Programme, has reached the end of its funded lifetime. One of the aims of this third DELOS conference will be to try to summarise some of the main achievements of DELOS in this period.

However, the activities of DELOS actually started many years ago, first with the DELOS Working Group at the end of the nineties, and then through the DELOS Thematic Network, under the Fifth Framework Programme, from 2001 to 2003. Over these years, the objective of DELOS has been to fill the gap between current Digital Library practice and the needs of modern information provision. The goal has been to foster the development of technology that will eventually overcome the current restrictions of today's information systems.

We are proud to say that DELOS has been able to play a significant role in

- the formation of an active European Digital Library research community.
- the formulation of a vision for the future of the field.
- fostering collaborative research in the direction of this vision.

Since 2000, the DELOS community has provided significant contributions to many key components of digital libraries. This is evidenced by the vast volume of scientific papers (more than 500) produced by the DELOS community and by the number of projects and applications in which members of DELOS have provided or are providing a contribution. As important examples, we can cite the Digital Library Reference Model and the DELOS Digital Library Management System both presented in this volume.

These online Proceedings contain 33 scientific papers, which provide a good documentation of DELOS activities during the current year. In addition, three invited talks from key players in the field were given: "Technical Computing at Microsoft Research" (Fabrizio Gagliardi) "Ontology-based information access" (Maurizio Lenzerini), and "Interoperable Information Space – moving towards the European Digital Library" (Stefan Gradmann).

The Conference is open to the wider Digital Library Community and indeed we have a significant participation of non DELOS members, indicating the important role that DELOS plays in the European Digital Library scene. It will provides participants with the opportunity to discuss their research activities and results and to exchange information and working experiences.

In conclusion let me wish all the participants a pleasant stay in Tirrenia and a fruitful Conference.

Costantino Thanos