

THE EUROPEAN LIBRARY

Press Release

The Hague, 28 September 2010

The European Library features *Reading Europe: Europe's Literary Gems Online For Free*

From 18th century English bestsellers to medieval cookbooks, nearly 1,000 of Europe's most fascinating works are featured in a new [multilingual online exhibition](#) created by [The European Library](#) and supported by [Europeana.eu](#).

The interactive display – “*Reading Europe: European culture through the book*” – offers a rare opportunity to view masterpieces in 32 languages, from [Albanian](#) to [Yiddish](#). Drawn from the collection of 23 national libraries in Europe, many books are in manuscript or their first printed editions.

Visitors to *Reading Europe* can also learn more about the history behind classics such as the first edition of [Don Quixote](#) by Cervantes (in Spanish), and [The Idiot](#) by Fyodor Dostoyevsky (in Russian), through the curatorial information accompanying each book.

In addition to internationally acclaimed titles, *Reading Europe* highlights works which are famous in their countries of origin, but less well known outside their borders.

[Jammers Minde](#) (Memoirs of my Wretchedness) is one such example. Renowned as a masterpiece of Danish literature, it is the fascinating 17th century autobiography of the daughter of King Christian IV, who was imprisoned for 22 years in Copenhagen's infamous Blue Tower.

Other books, such as a French translation of Edgar Allan Poe's [The Raven](#) by Mallarmé, are notable not only for the text, but also for the accompanying illustrations – in this case, by celebrated French painter Édouard Manet. Many [manuscripts](#) also boast vibrant images, created from a palette of colours like rich blues, deep reds and sparkling gold.

Visitors to *Reading Europe* can browse all of the selected books online, and most are available to download.

Reading Europe is supported by [Elfriede Jelinek](#), an internationally renowned playwright and novelist. She won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2004 and gained world recognition for her book *Die Klavierspielerin* ('The Piano Teacher'), which was made into a film. Jelinek is especially appreciative of the exhibition's ability to make works available to visitors in multiple languages, and to highlight Europe's rich cultural history.

The books in “*Reading Europe: European culture through the book*” can also be explored on [Europeana.eu](#).

For further information contact **Aubéry Escande** on 00 31 [0] 70314 0824 or Aubery.Escande@kb.nl

Notes for editors

- The European Library is a free service that offers access to the resources of the 48 national libraries of Europe. Resources can be both digital (books, posters, maps, sound recordings, videos, etc.) and bibliographical.

The amount of referenced digital collections is constantly increasing. Quality and reliability are guaranteed by the 48 collaborating national libraries of Europe. The partners in The European Library are all members of the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL), a foundation aiming at increasing and reinforcing the role of national libraries in Europe.

- Europeana.eu is Europe's digital library, museum and archive. It gives people free access to books, paintings, films, sounds, museum objects and archives that have been digitised throughout

Europe. At present it holds 12 million items from over 1,500 organisations, including major international collections and specialist local resources.

Through Europeana, people can learn more about the writers featured in "*Reading Europe: European culture through the book*", their works and the times they lived in, by searching the thousands of [digitised texts](#) and other cultural material contributed by libraries, archives and museums across Europe.

- Europeana grew out of The European Library, with which it shares an office in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek – National Library of the Netherlands. The European Commission, when developing plans for a European digital library, invited CENL to submit a proposal for funding. The invitation came because The European Library team had successfully built a multilingual portal and had experience of integrating different types of metadata in a range of languages. The European Library is aggregating digitised content from Europe's national and research libraries and channelling it into Europeana.