

Europe's first national crowdsourced digitization program breaks 25,000 participant mark

Demonstrating global appeal, Microtask's online gaming experience combines entertainment and volunteer work for conserving Finnish cultural heritage

Helsinki, Finland – 17th March 2011 – Europe's first national e-program **Digitalkoot** (Digital Volunteers), launched by the National Library of Finland and Microtask, has broken the 25,000 visitors only after one month of launching. Digital volunteers from around the world have completed over 2 million individual tasks, totalling 100,000 minutes, or 1,700 hours, of work.

Digitalkoot is an e-program for the digitization of Finland's historical documents and material. The first of its kind in Europe, the program harnesses the power of crowdsourcing to mobilize people to help digitize millions of pages of archive material. Online volunteers complete small portions of work, or microtasks, to help correctly digitize historical content. Realized as two online games, the program combines entertainment and volunteer work.

During the first month, the voluntary work and online gaming have been equally appealing to both genders. The majority of the volunteers are between 25 and 44 years of age. Most of the volunteers come from Finland, but the program has demonstrated its global appeal; volunteers from the USA, Sweden and Great Britain have participated as well.

The e-program technology provider is Microtask, whose automated platform splits dull repetitive tasks into tiny microtasks and distributes them over the internet. Once carried out by interested microworkers around Finland or around the world, Microtask puts the results back together into a completed assignment. In the first phase, The National Library of Finland's e-program consists of two online games. The online gaming experience provides both entertainment and the opportunity to contribute to the preservation of Finland's cultural heritage.

"There is a constant flow of material into our national archives, so we have a constant need for digitization. Everyone is welcome and everyone's contribution is important, whether they work five minutes or five hours. I am proud that even such a small nation as Finland is able to launch something like this," says Microtask Managing Director **Harri Holopainen**, "With Microtask technology, repetitive work can be split into smaller components and allocated to numerous people. In the Digitalkoot program, we help turn routine work into fun, almost a parlor game."

The National Library of Finland has millions and millions of pages of historically and culturally valuable magazines, newspapers and journals online. The challenge is that the optical character recognition often contains errors and omissions, which hamper searches. Manual correction is needed to weed out these mistakes so that the texts become machine readable, enabling scholars and archivists to search the material for the information they need.

The National Library of Finland aims to enhance the visibility, accessibility and usability of the Library's unique collections. Digital collections facilitate the use of cultural heritage materials in virtual environments. To date, four million pages of different types of texts from the 18th to 20th centuries have been digitized, but there still remains a huge bulk of cultural heritage archived only in paper files. The e-program enables anyone to contribute converting portions of Finnish cultural heritage into a lasting format. The aim is to crowdsource thousands of volunteers to participate online utilizing modern technology developed in Finland.

In the first phase, The National Library of Finland's e-program consists of two online games. In **'Mole Hunt'** (Myyräjahti), the player is shown two different words, and they must determine as quickly as possible if they are the same. This uncovers erroneous words in archived material. In **'Mole Bridge'** (Myyräsilta), players have to spell correctly the words appearing on the screen. Correct answers help moles build a bridge across a river.

In the next phase, the Digitalkoot e-program will be expanded to target also more serious history buffs.

More information (in Finnish) is available on www.digitalkoot.fi.

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The National Library of Finland is the oldest and largest scholarly library in Finland as well as one of the largest independent institutes at the University of Helsinki. It is responsible for the collection, description, preservation and accessibility of Finland's printed national heritage and the unique collections under its care.

The National Library also serves as a national service and development centre for the library sector and promotes national and international cooperation in the field. www.nationallibrary.fi

Microtask loves the work you hate. We split repetitive tasks into tiny microtasks and distribute them over the internet. Once carried out by volunteer microworkers around the world, we put the results back together into a completed assignment. Our revolutionary platform combines distributed work and computers into a data processing service, which can process ambiguous or inaccurate, even hand-written, input. Our service is highly secure and offers service level guarantees. Microtask was founded in 2009 by four experienced serial entrepreneurs and is funded by Sunstone Capital and strategic private investors. For further information, please visit us at www.microtask.com.