The virtual exhibition "Places of Transition" is an outcome of the Europeana Collections 1914-1918 project. The overall aim of the project was the digitisation of more than 400,000 sources originating in the First World War between 1914 and 1918 from European national libraries. The exhibition is both a showcase for the material digitised during the project and a self-standing work to be visited independently of the digitised collections.

Based on the project's main theme The First World War and Everyday Life, the virtual exhibition “Places of Transition” (“Orte des Übergangs” in German) focuses on places and spaces of war and in concrete, on places and spaces of transition. “Places of Transition” describes nine scenes in the First World War. These are spaces like train stations or field hospitals, where people changed under the exceptional circumstances of war, but also places, like the laboratories or the military headquarters, where people actively changed the conduct of war. A place of transition - as perceived at the exhibition - can also be a place that changes through wartime itself, like the street, or a place that exists only in wartime, like the trenches.

The concept of this virtual exhibition was elaborated by project partners, and especially Dr. Frank Reichherzer from the Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr (at this particular time of the student courses at Humboldt-University of Berlin).
who developed the concept of the “places of transition”, and held student courses for the selection of content and creation of texts. It is available at the Europeana Exhibition Space in English and German language:
The exhibition in English:
http://exhibitions.europeana.eu/exhibits/show/14-18-collections-en
The exhibition in German:
http://exhibitions.europeana.eu/exhibits/show/14-18-collections-de

The exhibition "Places of Transition"
1.1 Idea and concept
The wish to create a virtual exhibition with the content digitised in the Europeana Collections 1914-1918 project originated in the idea to showcase the rich content within a curated context. Based on the project's leading issue The First World War and Everyday Life and the idea to present content not only as collections, but under one topic, a concept for the virtual exhibition focusing on places and spaces of war, and concretely, on places and spaces of transition was drafted.

Accessing the First World War through places of transition makes it possible to access history in a transnational way, through different sources and their creative connection. The First World War becomes visible as a European, as a worldwide event, and people playing the major role in it. The places describe junctions of people and history. The approach is a new one, not dividing between nations, rivalries, history from above or from below.

The idea of places allows an unusual perspective upon the wartime scenario between 1914 and 1918. In recent years, international historical research into the First World War often focused on individuals during wartime and the individual war experience. The chosen approach connects these individual perspectives and experiences with the spaces and places they belong to. Hence, the chosen places are junctions between general and individual history, collective and personal remembrance.

The idea of entering the war through its places and spaces turned out to be especially suitable for the Europeana Collections 1914-1918 project. A train station or a field hospital can be found in every war theatre - whether on the Western or Eastern front - and in almost all countries, whether neutral or involved in the conflict.

The experience of places in wartime can be found independently of nation, function, social or political affiliation, gender and age. Every soldier and every civilian has at least entered one of the chosen places during the war years. Thus, a multitude of stories can be found and narrated. The places are junctions of history and individual biography. They are also junctions in time - through changing during war and by existing in our times as well. These places connect the time of war with today and today's people who want to know more about what the war was like.

Nonetheless, the chosen approach allows a sustainable use of the material digitised during the project. A place like the train station can be made accessible not only through photographs and
individual descriptions in wartime diaries, but also through articles in different European media, through manuals and official documents. By choosing a transnational approach to the First World War, relations between the different collections can be found aiming to show Europe’s diversity and commonalities that even existed in times of hostility and opposition.

The topic “Places of transition” yields a narrative for the virtual exhibition. On another level the First World War is the place of transition itself where everything changed.

1.2 An insight into the exhibition
The exhibition consists of nine so-called themes, which represent the individual places of transition: the train station, the back area (behind the lines), the camp, the headquarters, the laboratory, the military hospital/field hospital, the trenches, the streets, and the barrack yard. These are all places or spaces where the First World War actually „happened“, where something happened to people.
A visitor may approach only one single place of the exhibition or may approach the single places one after the other in an order free of choice. Each theme is built by three stories and introduced by a short text and one digital object (picture, text). Each of the stories is assembled by a minimum of one up to three different objects from all consortium partners.

Some examples:

- The train station is a place of farewell and goodbye from the world one knows and at the same time, it is the place where one arrives in new surroundings, a new world, the war with its dirt, the world of dying, of drilling, but also a world that offers new liberties and new forms of collectivization.

- The field hospital is the place when one changed from sane to insane, when a body has changed from healthy to crippled.

- The back area is the place of refuge, a refuge offering rest and regeneration, a place of fun where contact between the sexes is possible, and a place where friend and foe meet each other.
2 The approach chosen – from concept to publication

2.1 Student courses - The project inside the project
The conceptualization and realization of a virtual exhibition is a complex task, requiring expertise in the subject of the exhibition and great overhead of searching, inspecting and classifying content. Likewise, it is necessary to create a lot of text describing the objects and assembling them into a clearly structured narrative or story board.

The exhibition was curated within two lectures held at the Department of History at Humboldt University. Several students selected topics, searched for fitting materials within the collections digitised within the *Europeana Collections 1914-1918* project, and wrote accompanying texts based on scientific standards for the exhibition.

An introductory course on the history of the First World War, held by Dr. Frank Reichherzer, took place in winter 2012/2013. A complementary course was offered to share a closer look with the students on the digitised content from *Europeana Collections 1914-1918* for preparing the virtual exhibition. In the following semester a second course took place. This course focused on the content selection and on the writing of texts. More than forty students supported the development of a prototype of the exhibition and the realisation of the final version of the virtual exhibition.

2.2 Implementation on exhibitions.europeana.eu
The virtual exhibition is hosted within the context of many other exhibitions on the *Europeana Exhibition Space*. The *Europeana Exhibition Space*, available at [http://exhibitions.europeana.eu](http://exhibitions.europeana.eu), is run by the Europeana Foundation and showcases the content available on *Europeana.eu*. As the *Europeana Collections 1914-1918* project was a temporary cooperation, a solution had to found to guarantee the sustainability of the virtual exhibition even after the project had ended.

The *Europeana Exhibition Space* is based on *Omeka*, a free open-source content management system for presenting digital collections online. *Europeana* runs the system, and projects are invited to provide exhibitions based on design templates in the *Europeana Collections*.

The Open Source *Omeka Software Package* is developed and maintained by the *Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media* and includes features not only for the presentation of objects including their metadata, but also plugins for the visualization of content, e.g. timelines and maps. The current presentation of the virtual exhibition is based on a simple display of the objects together with its metadata, embedded into a story-concept and a structure, and complemented with texts.

3 Results and perception of the exhibition
Accessing the First World War through “places of transition” makes it possible to access history in a transnational way, through different sources and their creative connection. The First World War gains visibility as a European, even a worldwide event, together with the people playing a major role in it, as the chosen places are junctions of people and history. It is a new approach not to divide between nations, between rivalries, or between history from above and from below.
Thorsten Siegmann, Thomas Meyer
“Places of Transition” - An Online Exhibition about the First World War

The cooperation between the project partners with the Department of History at Humboldt University has provided scientific standards in elaborating the exhibition. Furthermore, it connects the exhibition to recent questions and ways of historical research on the First World War.

During the implementation phase and also in the student courses some problems were identified and documented: It is difficult to create descriptive texts for objects, because objects are often bound to their “native language”; likewise it is difficult to keep the balance of the presentation of items of each consortium of digitisation partners. Particularly in the student courses a wide range of issues regarding searching and harvesting objects in Europeana were identified (in 2013), and also some metadata issues. The search facility lacks time / date ranges, fulltexts are rarely OCR recognized, and many objects lack general metadata and object information in one comprehensive language (English).

Nevertheless, the exhibition "Places of Transition" was ready for publication at the end of the project and does not need any further editorial work. Except for further translations of the text to other languages, which could be added without much effort, the product is in a final state. During the launch phase, Europeana has documented more than 3,000 visitors per month.

The intended visitors of the exhibition are ordinary people with a general interest in the history of the First World War. Since different users need different approaches to different subjects, access to history demands complementary offers like the Europeana 1914-1918 portal providing access to digital objects on the item level and to curated offers like this exhibition. Besides that, the exhibition can be particularly useful, e.g. for educational purposes both for schools and universities.

1. Project Website:

2. Europeana Exhibition Space:
   [http://exhibitions.europeana.eu/](http://exhibitions.europeana.eu/)

3. Europeana 1914-1918: