

# Report on the Workshop Digital Initiatives 2017

Universeum 2017, University of Belgrade, Friday 9 June 2017, 15.30 - 18.30

Chairs: Delphine Issenman, Frank Meijer and Martin Stricker.

The aim of this 3th Workshop Digital Initiatives was to share experiences and discuss a variety of topics regarding the digitisation of academic heritage. Approximately 20 participants attended this meeting.

## Presentations

For the first part of the workshop, we invited the participants to present current projects, websites or digital collections and share experiences, solutions and lessons learned.

Each presenter was asked to answer the following questions: What is your project about?; Why did the project get started?; What are your main goals?; What can people do with the results of your project?; What can we learn from your experience?

### 1. Jalón Ángel's Photographic Archive (Universidad San Jorge)

Pilar Irala-Hortal, Jalón Ángel's Archive

<http://www.jalonangel.com>

Pilar was not able to attend the meeting in Belgrade. Her presentation was given by Martin Stricker.

The project is about an Historical Photographic archive with photo's of every day live. The archive consists of app. 4000 scans. The project started in 2011. Jalón Ángel's family donated the legacy to the San Valero Group (an educational group), and the group deposited it into one of its centres: Universidad San Jorge.

The main goals of the project are conservation, preservation and spreading the value of the archive. People can learn about the ways of living, cities around Europe and the History in Spain from 1926 to 1976.

Social media channels like Instagram, Twitter and Facebook are used for communication with the audiences. Unfortunately, no images of the archive itself are used on these channels.

- *Is this a legal matter?* Was a question during the presentation.
- Copyright issues can be a problem, when presenting modern academic heritage online.

### 2. Virtual Exhibitions using Movio

Lorisa Andreoli, University of Padua

<https://phaidra.cab.unipd.it/>

Lorisa was not able to attend the Universeum Meeting.

She works in digitisation projects and "Phaidra - Digital Collections" with other two librarians and two IT staff. She wanted to share what the team has done on virtual exhibitions since the last meeting in 2016.

The team tested Movio, an open source software for staging virtual exhibitions and realized two virtual exhibitions: Images and Prehistory" <http://mostre.cab.unipd.it/paleo/en/1/home> and Phaidra - Photographic collections" <http://mostre.cab.unipd.it/phaidra-collezioni-fotografiche/>. This last exhibition will also be available in English.

In addition, Iorisa wanted to share that they developed Digitisation Guidelines that are published on the Phaidra – Digital Collections website. These guidelines will also become available in English.

- Guidelines (Italian): <https://phaidra.cab.unipd.it/static/linee-guida-digitalizzazione.pdf>
- Information about Movio <http://www.movio.beniculturali.it/index.php?en/1/home>)

### **3. The participation model of the new UMAC Worldwide Database of University Museums and Collections**

Martin Stricker, Coordination Centre for University Collections in Germany  
<http://university-museums-and-collections.net>

Martin presented the new Worldwide Database of University Museums and Collections he worked on, commissioned by Umac. The new database offers ways to add and curate data without the need to register first. The old database was 15 years old, and participation and data quality was low. Therefore a relaunch was needed. The appearance of the database has been redesigned and the website is now responsive. The database itself has been rebuilt completely.

The main goals of the project are to increase participation by the community and to increase data quality and volume. Visitors of the website can research university museums and collections worldwide, based on a variety of facets, find homepages and other resources of university museums and collections.

The new site has gone online on 12th of April 2017 and according to Martin participation is growing. In two months, 107 records were updated and 85 new records were added.

### **4. Virtual Research Environments (VRE ) for Very Large Collections (VLC)**

Klaus Staubermann, National Museums Scotland  
[www.nms.ac.uk](http://www.nms.ac.uk)

The National Museum of Scotland owns 12,4 Million objects which it aims to make digitally accessible, from conventional online database to 3D print files to Google Street View to an award-winning website. The museum is also an accredited Higher Education Institution (HEI) and therefore has to deliver multiple research outcomes in order to maintain its HEI status. If the Museum loses HEI accreditation it loses access to research funding, which will impact on its research outcomes - a vicious circle.

Klaus stated to be under growing pressure to deliver world-class research which is measured in peer-reviewed publications but also in generated research funding. Because this funding is limited there is significant competition. Also, the museum maintains many research collaborations, from memoranda of understanding (MoU) with universities to collaborative research projects. Furthermore, they actively contribute to academic teaching with several thousand students per year. This means the museum needs to make its collections accessible to a wide range of researchers working with them.

The National Museum of Scotland aims to create a virtual research environment that facilitates easy and effective access to collections data and at the same time helps to generate a maximum of research outcomes based on the collections. Currently, the museum is in the process of carrying out feasibility studies.

If the outcome of the studies is positive, researchers, from students to academics, will be able to access and use collections information easily but also be stimulated and supported to produce collections-based research outcomes. Hopefully, Klaus stated, this in return will benefit the museum's HEI status and potential research funding: fingers crossed!

Klaus is eager to learn from people and institutions across the sector, technically, socially, and geographically, from database projects to social media platforms. Museums depend on the knowledge and experience of others.

- More specifically, Klaus presented a question for the working group: Do you have any experience with Virtual Research Environments and their use in conjunction with museum databases? This question formed the basis of the discussion in part two of the workshop.

## **5. Digital stories: a challenge for the Athens University History Museum**

Elena Kitta, Evangelos Papoulias, Myrsini Pichou

Myrsini Pichou presented two examples from the Athens University History Museum. The first is a permanent exhibit and the other is a digital storytelling application for android devices. The latter was presented at last year's UNIVERSEUM meeting in Amsterdam. During this presentation Myrsini gave the results of its completion in a first pilot form.

The first example Myrsini discussed is an acoustic exhibit on display at the unit dedicated to the history of the Museum's building: the visitors listen to the old tenants of the Museum's building sharing their memories in specific themes from when they lived in the building (1960s). The interviews were conducted in 2012 and 2013.

The second example is the digital storytelling application that was realized in collaboration with the Department of Informatics NKUA, a comics artist and the ATHINA Research and Innovation Centre. This application offers an interactive guided tour of the museum through the eyes of Emmanouil, a prospective student at the University of Athens in 1840.

Both projects started in an effort to incorporate digital technology and interactive exhibits in the permanent exhibition of the museum with the aim to offer a more personalized museum experience to the visitor. The main goals of the projects were to apply new museological approaches and to attract a wider and younger audience.

Visitors can experience a more personalized contact with the museum exhibits and can interact with the objects. The visitors are urged to activate their emotions and learn the stories behind the exhibits with the aid of more modern mediums.

### *Lessons learned*

According to Myrsini the interdisciplinarity of the collaborators' skills is highly important into achieving these kinds of projects. It was also important to be open and conduct various testing sessions with volunteers. Especially for the Android application, they learned that it was very important and difficult to stick to the story and to ensure a smooth navigation within the museum. A third lesson was that it was difficult to be able to deduct the number of exhibits presented through the application (always a

very hard job for a or a curator). As well as to achieve a balance between entertainment and education and to ensure interactivity in each section of the application.

## **6. EMOTIVE H2020 project on emotional digital storytelling**

Maria Economou, University of Glasgow (Hunterian & School of Humanities)

<http://www.emotiveproject.eu/>

The last presentation was from Maria Economou, from the University of Glasgow. She shared some experiences with the EMOTIVE project: Emotional digital storytelling in cultural heritage settings.

The goals of this EU-project are to design appropriate tools suitable for cultural heritage and and creative industry professionals and allow different visitors to interact with collections and exhibition onsite, offsite, and in hybrid ways in an emotionally engaging way.

The results of this project can be used by other cultural heritage institutions to trigger similar initiatives in their institutions about different ways to communication with audiences, create narratives, etc. The tools that are created by EMOTIVE can be tested.

Some lessons learned.

- What do users want? Can digital tools really address this complex task of emotionally engagement interpretation, and if yes, how? What are the best ways to evaluate tools like this.
- Bodystorming workshop: play personas and use them to connect with visitors in the museum
- Focus on group interaction – people are in a museum in a group, do not break that and isolate people.
- How do you appeal to people's emotions and do justice to your collections.

## **Open Discussion**

### **Virtual Research Environments and Crowdsourcing**

The discussion was opened by Klaus Staubermann (National Museums of Scotland) with a project he is planning to undertake: a virtual collaborative research environment. He wants to generate high quality metadata and engagement. What should he develop?

The answer, he was told, depends highly on the scope of his project. As an example, a focused French project for crowd sourcing of open data digitised botany specimen created good results and engaged the already available botany community.

Next, the question arose how known and frequent are crowdsourcing projects in the Universeum community? It was quite known, and that led to the question about motivation to participate. Is it the “gamification” or serious research interest? While one side opinionated that no serious research can come from open participation, another view stated: “Ask the public as a specialist, and you will get expert knowledge. Sometimes the few nerds out there know more than the researcher (or what the researcher wants to know)”. Also: “These people can become ambassadors of your collection!”

Roland Wittje had an example ready from the Deutsches Museum in München, where some outsiders could really help the curators in identifying and valorising unknown loudspeakers from the 30s.

Returning back to Klaus Staubermann's question, it was advised to pick one topic and develop something for it. Like the French botany specimen, which were ideal for a virtual research environment: botany specimen are of interest for a worldwide community and this community of botanists had their networked use cases ready even before the internet existed.

Also: there is unpredictability in the execution, you have to be prepared for various outcomes. And not every digital method or project is useful; not every question can be answered with the help of the internet.

### **Working Group: What should we do? What are you expect from us?**

Next, the working group chairs did a bit of crowdsourcing themselves and asked the community, on what the working group should work in the future. These are some general answers:

- gather insights and case studies and publish them
- create and maintain a bibliography (like the working group of recent scientific heritage is doing)
- create a handbook, a mapping of resources and tools, create other information resources
- publish (short) guidelines and basic principles for Universeum members
- maintain a mailing list

Some specific topics:

- develop "connectivity" as a topic. Not only documentation, other themes and contexts come into digitisation
- is there a special university context to digitisation, apart from the heritage/museum sector? Examples?