

Report of the Workshop Digital Initiatives 2018

Universeum 2018, Glasgow University , Friday 15 June 2018

Chairs: Delphine Issenman, Frank Meijer and Martin Stricker.

Introduction :

This working group has been existing since three years now. Its main objectives are :

1. to stimulate knowledge exchange on digital academic heritage among the Universeum community and with the broader culture sector;
2. to identify and act on upon specific issues related to digital documentation systems at object, collection and heritage level;
3. to compile and provide access to existing digital resources – tools, standards, best practices and literature –;
4. to provide consulting, training to university museums, collections and heritage professionals;
5. to stimulate collaborative projects and develop simple digital tools to increase long-term visibility and sustainable management, access and use

This year, we wanted to explore a new area and experiment with our attendees a new format for the workshop dedicated to **The Human Factor**.

After 20 years of digitization, 'the digital' is everywhere. The cultural heritage sector is no exception: there is always a need for a new project, a better online database, an improved strategy. At the same time, digitization is no longer solely the domain of IT professionals, it has influenced our work on all levels. And it has fundamentally changed the way in which we interact with each other and our audiences.

However, digitization is mainly approached from purely technical point of view and the human factor is most of the time neglected.

This year, we focussed on this human factor in digitization. Our approach was simple: stop for a moment and reflect upon the impact of digitization. How did it change our live, our work and work environments, our institutions and academic heritage as a whole? What is good and should be strengthened, what is bad and how can these problems be solved?!

The aim of the 4th Workshop Digital Initiatives was to create a catalogue of Dos and Don'ts, based on the personal experiences of the participants, that can help to shape personal and institutional strategies.

Setup of the workshop - the 2-4-8 method ®



At the start of the workshop, each participant was handed 'memory card' with an image of an academic heritage object.

2 - After that, the participants were asked to join up with their object image buddy and discuss the following question:

- Imagine there was no internet and no computers: What would your work look like?

4 - Next, the pairs were asked to join another pair and build a quartet and discuss another question:

- How are your experiences with digitisation (in the broadest sense) in academic heritage?
- Write down pros and cons on a piece of paper or notepad

8 - The quartets were finally asked to join another quartet and build a group of eight:

- Compare and discuss your pros and cons
- Identify the most important or urgent items, contextualise them
- document your results on poster as preparation for a short presentation to the workshop.

From this the group identified **three topics** to discuss further after the break:

1. **Access** (Moderated by Martin Stricker)
2. **Preservation** (Moderated by Delphine Isсенman)
3. **Connecting/Collaborating** (Moderated by Frank Meijer)

Each group was asked:

to discuss and develop advice you'd give to interested UNIVERSEUM members on the given topic.

- What do you consider good practice and recommend to be strengthened and further developed?
- What would you consider bad practice or strategy? How can these problems be solved?



« Preservation » Group :

Moderated by Delphine Issenman

Connexion between preservation and digitization was discussed according two complementary perspectives :

- digitization as a way to preserve academic heritage : digitization revolutionized the preservation of heritage and achieved great results. But it also raised new issues. Attention was drawn on the relevance of having a digital strategy –

1) before : size the project from the beginning, even it is still possible to adapt on the course of the process. It will be helpful to anticipate the needs related to development, maintenance and qualification.

It is highly recommended to involve different skills and people (IT, end-users...) as soon as possible.

2) during : in this regard, the choice of technology is crucial too : using mature technology is preferable to personal technology, more energy and resource consuming.

3) after the process. Indeed, there is a need to maintain the system when you finish your tool. Hence also the necessity to document the procedure, the actors (who is doing what), the protocol... and to preserve this documentation.

Counting on other university department for working on long time life on the project for helping us to maintain the project can be a solution.

- preservation of native digital resources/data as a challenge for university museums : how to anticipate issues related to this question (Big data, Open access context...)

Connecting / Collaborating

Moderated by Frank Meijer

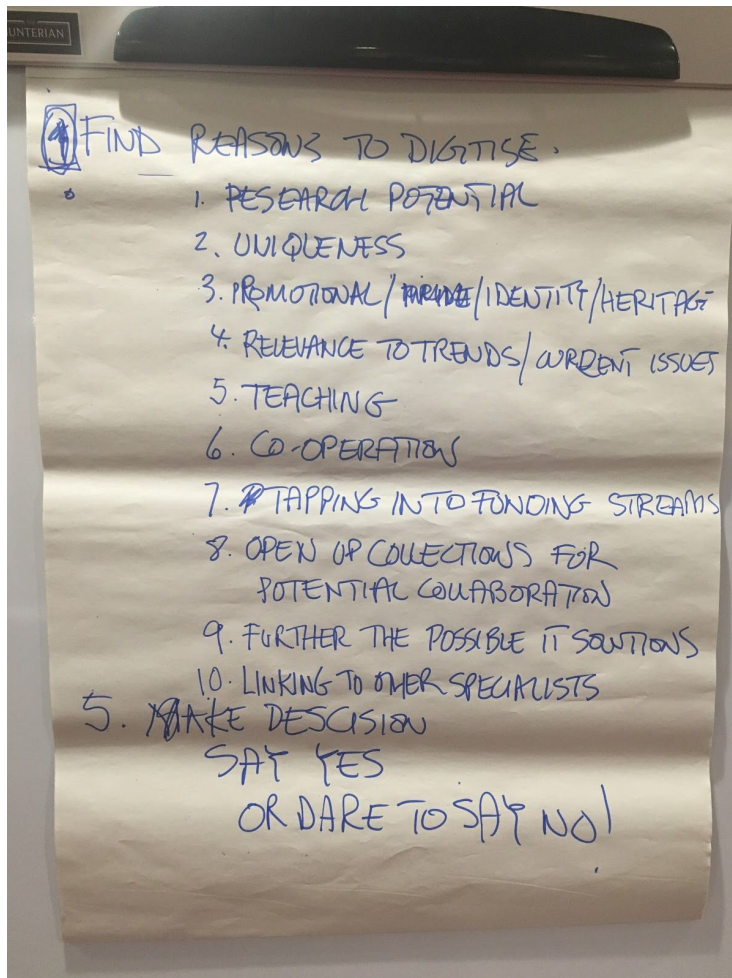
5 steps to success

The discussion on collaboration quickly resulted in building a checklist for successful digitization projects. In this document, a first version of the “5 steps to success” is presented. This is a work in progress and is open for comments and updates.

The aim of the 5 steps to success is to help collection specialists in thinking about digitization during the first stages of decision making. ...

Step 1: Find reasons to digitize

Make a list of reasons to digitize the collection you have selected and prioritize this list. Knowing why you want to digitise a heritage collection is crucial for the success of your project. Therefore, try to be honest when you identify the reasons for digitization. There is no bad reason to digitize.



Possible reasons are:

Research potential

Teaching potential

Uniqueness

Promotional / identity / heritage

Relevance to trends / current issues

Funding opportunities

To open collections for potential collaboration

Further the possible it solutions

Linking to other specialists
To reach a new audience

2 Look for partners

Manage sustainability of your project via partnerships. Who helps you with the technical part of the project, who helps you with the publication of the results.

- Institution
- Outside
- IT-department / information science
- University wide strategy
- Nationally
- Globally
- Fachgesellschaft / assoc of specialists

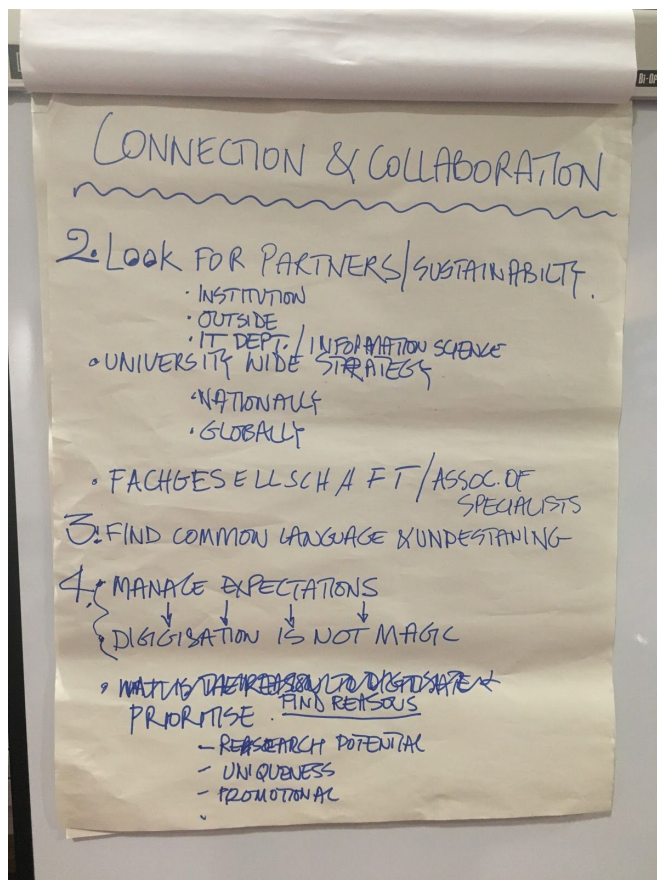
3 Find common language

4 Manage expectations

Digitisation is not magic

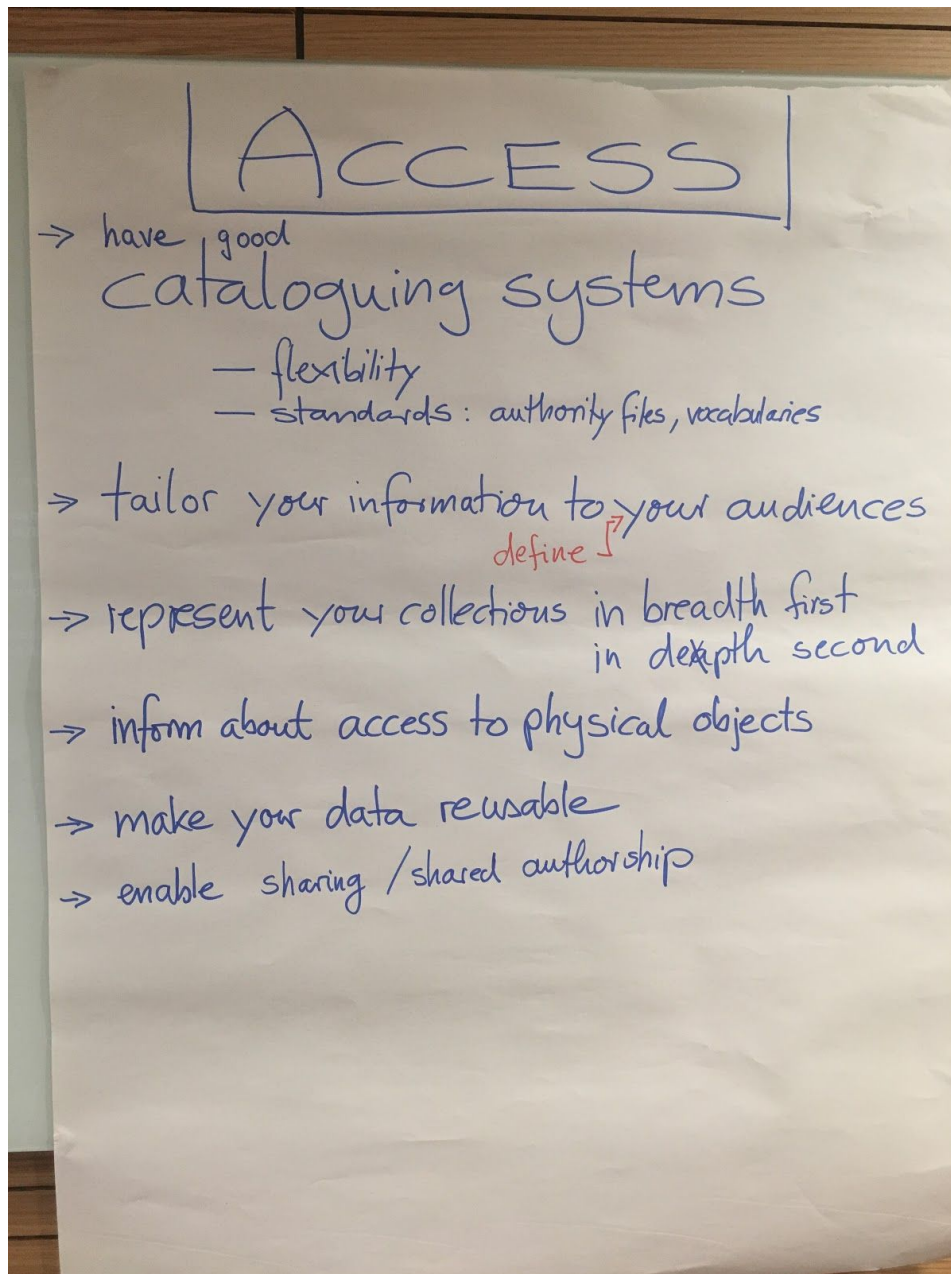
5 Make a decision

Say yes / or dare to say no!



Access

Moderated by Martin Stricker



Access means online databases on the internet, and much energy went into trying to define what it means to have a good online database or cataloguing system. Time was short – this list is a beginning for a much deeper and longer discussion, to be had in the working group, in communities and in museums and universities:

- you should have a flexible system which adapts to different and evolving needs and goals

- you should implement all the relevant standards: metadata standards, quality standards, authority files, controlled vocabularies
- define your audiences and tailor your information accordingly for them
- represent your collections in breadth first, in depth second
- inform about access to the physical objects (important for researchers!)
- make your data reusable (open standards, open licenses, open access)
- enable sharing of information and resources
- enable shared authorship