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EPOCH

**Excellence in Processing Open
Cultural Heritage**

Network of Excellence

Information Society Technologies

**Activity 4.8 Publications
D.4.9 State-of-the-Union for IST in CH**

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Executive summary

The present report is an extended editorial outline of Issue 2 of the “State Of The Union” (SOTU) publication. All titles are provisional: small adjustments will be possible when authors will submit their contributions, by the end of May 2006. However, the present report is more than just a placeholder: it provides a description, as accurate as possible, of the content of SOTU-2 and allows its preliminary evaluation as usually done in editorial practice.

After considering the situation in European Member States in Issue 1, the second SOTU issue will complete and update the panorama of the member states and will focus on topics not covered by other similar surveys as the Digicult Reports, Minerva Reports and so on.

The Report will investigate the future of ICT applications to cultural heritage from different perspectives. On one hand, technology appears to be at a turning point. Issues such as quality, access, preservation and users’ involvement pose a grand challenge to researchers, professionals and policy makers. An article by David Arnold will clarify how this challenge is to be intended and which are the expectations, and challenging tasks, of the scientific community that EPOCH intends to represent.

On the other hand, culture itself is re-discussing its role in the contemporary society. Issues such as multi-vocality, multiculturalism and multilingualism are setting new questions to what used to be considered “The Culture” and in fact often neglected to take into account the memory of minorities, communities and individuals. Such a debate makes the application framework of technology a moving target, difficult to hit. However, technology may be substantial to achieve the goal. Neil Silberman’s paper will bring in his vision.

Beside the editorials, SOTU Issue 2 will focus on sustainability of research and cultural technology enterprises. How do member states evaluate and support research in this field? What is the economy of heritage technology applications? Is there a market capable of sustaining enterprise activity? What is the best business model? What is the visitors’ perception of the use of technology? These are the questions that the Report is going to answer.

The schedule for the publication of the volume is the following:

May 2006: contributions by authors (due by May 15, with time for editorial revision)

June 2006: preparation of the editors’ introduction and final manuscript available; definition of layout and cover.

September 2006: drafts available; revision and correction

October 2006: printed copies available for dissemination at VAST. Workshop on SOTU-1 and SOTU-2

The volume is expected to have about 150-180 pages.

State Of The Union on Policies, Practices and Research – Issue no. 2

The Editors

Introduction to SOTU-2

As in Issue 1, editors will present here some general considerations about the themes of the report.

Papers included in the volume will be summarized and comparatively analyzed.

Statistics and other data will be presented, and other relevant information (e.g. surveys or investigations on related issues, reports at European level, relevant publications, research outcomes) will be summarized. In particular, some considerations concerning the viability of commercial companies will be included.

The introduction is intended to give a general, European framework to the papers, which necessarily address individual (local and/or sector) topics and are based on a regional or national perspective. Some overarching features are analyzed here, in general encompassing Europe as a whole.

The introduction may consist in a joint paper or on two (or more) separate contributions.

EDITORIALS

David Arnold

University of Brighton, UK

Grand Challenges for Cultural Heritage Information Technologies.

Technological developments pose challenges to cultural heritage professionals now facing previously unimaginable opportunities and therefore must ask and answer questions on the creation, management and communication of digitized models of artefacts, archaeological contexts, historic monuments, buildings or ruins. Available technologies may re-shape the traditional disciplines and induce methodological shifts. In a virtuous circle, this may pose new questions to engineers and establish new challenges to them. There are, however, significant issues of price/performance in considering the fitness for purpose of data and their processing, among others particularly significant the re-use data collected for one purpose for use in a different context. Different application contexts, scenarios and time scopes will be addressed by the paper.

Neil Silberman

The Ename Center, Belgium

The role of cultural technologies in a time of transition

The paper will highlight the general context of Cultural Heritage in a time of economic, social, and educational transition in Europe—and will discuss the functional and intellectual role that could be played by the EPOCH Network. Three main challenges (and current debates) will be described:

1.) The Politics and Economics of “Cultural Tourism”—because of the large role anticipated for technologies in public presentation in tourist development projects, it is important to note the serious discussions underway across many disciplines about the practical outcomes of cultural tourism. Rather than simply assume that technology can contribute to the sustainable development of heritage sites, the paper will assess critical and supportive perspectives and (hopefully) place this theme in the broader context of European-wide public policy.

2.) CH Technologies and Historical/Archaeological Scholarship—CH technologists must take into account the current theoretical debates within the historical disciplines regarding positivistic, empirical, and post-modern approaches to historiography. Issues of data analysis and interpretation are far from straightforward and represent more than a programming challenge. Several competing epistemologies now exist simultaneously, as is the case certainly in archaeology with “Processual Archaeology,” “Post-Processual Archaeology,” and “Structuralist Archaeology,” to name just the most important. The same data can yield different results according to the theoretical orientation of the researcher. How will—or can—CH ICT respond to this intellectual/scholarly challenge?

3.) The Role of Communities in Heritage—In the fields of sociology and urban planning, the living context of archaeological sites and historical monuments is being studied intensively. Issues of “gentrification” of historic districts, of minority heritage, and of social exclusion are the foci of a huge scholarly literature. What role does CH technology play in articulating new community landscapes? Is it part of the process of social engineering? What can it offer to (poor) communities living in the proximity of sites who have little or no experience of digital technologies?

4.) Media and Messages: Beyond fact-based content, what kinds of messages are communicated through CH ICT? The paper will present the basic debate over the nature of historiographical narratives and their connections with contemporary ideologies. The work of Lowenthal, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, Hodder, al-Sayyad, and others will serve to highlight the main issues in recent scholarly discussions issues of historical “significance” and “focus” that CH technologists should be aware of.

The paper will conclude with some general conclusions about the ways in which CH Technology may be able to respond to these challenges.

FOCUS ON ECONOMICS

Ilde Rizzo

University of Catania, Italy

The economics of cultural heritage

Starting from case studies, the paper presents some considerations about the macro-economics of cultural heritage and sets the foundations for further work. Although the theme is not strictly related to technology applications, it however defines the economic framework in which they are deployed. It is a premise to further analysis from the users' perspective, i.e. from the point of view of decision makers and culture managers. The goal is to raise awareness among them on the economic implications of heritage, and to suggest heritage professionals to take such implications into due account in their activity.

Franco Niccolucci and Sofia Pescarin

PIN, Italy

Cultural heritage and land use planning: the European panorama

The paper surveys the current legislation in several European countries concerning so-called "Preventive Archaeology" and the information technology currently used, or potentially useful, in this domain. The assumption is that heritage is assuming increasing importance in the planning process and efforts are ongoing to take into account the so-called "archaeological impact" when performing major works. The authors claim that technology may be proactively helpful since a very early stage, that is land planning. Examples and reports of ongoing activity are included in this paper.

Jim Mc Loughlin et al.

University of Brighton, UK

Technologies for Cultural Heritage: business models and models for sustainability.

As a result of EPOCH activity, authors have carried on a number of case studies to investigate the socio-economic impact of the use of technology for cultural heritage. The outcomes are here presented in reverse order, that is starting from results, whenever possible of a general character, and supporting them with evidence from on-field investigations. It is expected that this approach will raise heritage professionals' interest, in particular when they will be able to recognize their own conditions and problems in some of the diverse case studies developed by authors.

Maurizio Forte et al.

CNR-ITABC, Italy

Evaluating users' reactions to technology applications: the case of Musei Traiani in Rome

During 2005 a successful exhibition on virtual reality and 3D applications has taken place in Rome. The exhibition titled "Guarda Roma da Romano" (Look at Rome as a Roman) has hosted 42 different applications of computer graphics cultural applications in the Thermae of Traianus. Visited by several thousands of tourists, Romans and students, the exhibition has shown the best of current research in the domain. During the exhibition, a questionnaire was compiled through interviews to visitors. Preliminary results of users' reactions will be given in the paper with a first attempt to understand the visitors' reactions to technologies in a heritage context. This will provide the necessary framework for further analysis on the impact of technologies on the attractiveness of heritage.

The Editors

Make a living from heritage economics

In these “minutes” of a virtual round table – to be held on-line in the month of May – the editors will ask questions to a number of managers of small and medium enterprises (EPOCH partners and non-partners) working on information technologies for cultural heritage in different European countries, about their core business, the technologies they use more, the difficulties they experiment, what are their perspectives and expectations for the future. Invited participants include companies from Italy, Belgium, UK, Cyprus, Israel and Austria. Assuming that the market of ICT for CH is still very local, the paper aims at providing a view “from the inside” of the actual heritage ICT market(s), as perceived by actors, what are the differences among EU countries and how European policies should be differentiated to take into account local, but nonetheless very important, issues and problems.

FUNDING RESEARCH: OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

Research Assessment is nowadays a common practice in most European countries. Modelled after the UK model of RAE, it is one of the most important ways of providing insight into a country’s current level of research. However, since its results are (or should be) the basis for orientating the distribution of funds, they are also an important tool to guide basic and applied research. So, if the outcome of a national RA establishes a ranking of institutions, the underlying philosophy and evaluation criteria determines a nation’s research policy at least as much as specific programmes and calls.

Some Research Evaluation and Assessment systems will be examined and compared as far as the relevant domain is concerned, through the editorial analysis of official documents, final reports of exercises and results, and interviews with/contributions by key figures in committees in charge of such evaluations. The results will be compared with general policies and programmes, producing a profile of the attitude, often unspoken, of national scientific communities and their leading figures towards ICT applications to CH. In other words, we expect that the philosophy of RAEs gives indirect hints on the overall consideration and attitude of scholars involved or related with this kind of applications.

It is expected that such an analysis will facilitate understanding the future of an important part of the market for ICT applications, where public expenditure is influenced by the attitude (explicit or implicit) scholars and opinion makers have towards it.