IST-2002- 507382

EPOCH

**Excellence in Processing Open
Cultural Heritage**

Network of Excellence

Information Society Technologies

D1.2.2: Plan for Dissemination and Use of Knowledge-v6

Due date of deliverable-v1:	29 October 2004
Actual submission date:	29 October 2004
Start date of project:	15/03/2004
Duration:	4 Years

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Contents

1.   Executive Summary

This report describes the strategy and tactics adopted by the EPOCH network in the Use and Dissemination of Knowledge.

The paper starts from the EPOCH's perspective on the mission of integration applied to a sector centred around the interaction between cultural heritage and technology. From this starting point the paper develops the basis of a strategy to implement the mission's vision.

Based on the principles incorporated in the strategy a number of tactics are developed and the results of EPOCH's dissemination activities to date are related to these. EPOCH has a major commitment to using two events annually as foci for EPOCH project meetings and as venues for dissemination of the project results – VAST and CAA. Progress and developments in these activities are reported.

Other components of the dissemination and use plan include the enhancement of knowledge and skills of workers in the sector; dissemination through the website; provision of resources for other researchers and reporting experience of the use of standards to the appropriate bodies.

Finally plans for the future are outlined and there are brief conclusions.

The details of events and publication activities undertaken by EPOCH are documented in D4.5.2 2 ("Report on Events and Publications") in detail and summarised in the Periodic Activity Report D1.2.4. Education, Training and Mobility activities are detailed in D4.4.2 ("Report on Training Activities") and D4.3.1 ("Report on Mobility and Bursaries").

2. EPOCH Mission and the Relationship to the Dissemination Strategy

EPOCH is based on the premise that the cultural heritage domain and its interaction with Information and Communications Technologies are multi-disciplinary, but to date the sector has not managed to create a sufficiently integrated inter-disciplinary view. In each disciplinary area the levels of knowledge of cross-disciplinary areas are variable and any strategy which seeks to enhance integration must also use dissemination to raise cross-disciplinary know-how.

Two models of integration have been suggested in the context of NoEs – an inclusive model which seeks to influence the direction of as many significant players in the field as possible and an exclusive model which seeks to establish the EPOCH consortium members as an exclusive elite which becomes a dominant force in the "market". Dissemination strategies will be very different depending upon which of these views is dominant and there is little scope for co-existence. The first model requires ready access to information and expertise in order to spread this knowledge as widely as possible. The second requires ideas to be protected and only shared after patent has been established.

The EPOCH consortium was based on bringing together as many organisations as had significant expertise in the aspects of bringing technologies and cultural heritage professionals together. In fact most of these organisations have their origins and expertise centred in one of the constituent disciplines (technology, archaeology, curatorship, policy studies, etc.) or interest groups (geographic, temporal, cultural, etc.) and have developed some expertise in other areas from that starting point. Their centre of interest is coloured by their origins and their levels of expertise in other areas often needs further development.

This EPOCH model of integration was undoubtedly the inclusive model of using the NoE to create or strengthen the cohesion of a European Research Area. The number of organisations which could claim to be able to contribute to the ERA is probably measurable in the thousands, whereas the EPOCH consortium has less than 100 members, so the challenge of influencing the direction of development of an ERA in Cultural Heritage and ICTs is inevitably linked to dissemination activities.

EPOCH has identified an integration agenda at a number of levels and from a number of perspectives. EPOCH's perspectives on integration were presented in the proposal and restated in the Technical Annex. The following needs for integration were identified, in order to establish the basis of the European Research Area:
- Integrating the disciplines themselves to create common perspectives and a solid interdisciplinary field.
- Integrated research agendas to provide an agreed set of priorities for future developments
- Integrating the Cultural Heritage "sector" to bring the business/operational perspectives together

- Integrating the technological underpinning so that tools developed in one context may more easily be integrated into the operations of other organisations
- Data and data format integration so that data collected for one purpose may be re-purposed for other contexts and integrated with existing datasets and data collected in other exercises.

In addition to the groups that have developed some expertise spanning different parts of the inter-disciplinary spectrum, EPOCH is also keen to produce useful information which can be disseminated to groups which are still focused in very specific areas – addressing directly constituencies such as museum curators, archaeologists, policy makers, etc. with little current exposure to other components of the overall picture. The numbers of organisations involved in these categories makes a systematic strategy to address them all impossible even for a network of the size of EPOCH, but it is important that some materials produced by EPOCH are targeted at less involved groups and provide them with useful information on strategic directions.

The dissemination strategy is an essential component of bringing the various communities together, with events seen as one mechanism to bring different communities face to face. However events have tended to develop their own disciplinary communities and perspectives and to provide limited interdisciplinary interaction.

The EPOCH strategy for dissemination and use of knowledge therefore has the following components:

(i)   To reinforce and extend interdisciplinary aspects of events, focusing resources in embedding the EPOCH interdisciplinary agenda into some key events.
(ii)   To encourage partners to share the EPOCH message when attending events which EPOCH was not using as flagship meetings.
(iii)   To make the EPOCH website a strategic source of information for partners and others to encourage the sharing of information and promotion of the interdisciplinary agenda.
(iv)   To support specialist education and training by subsidising courses and staff mobility programs to improve informed take up of inter-disciplinary knowledge.
(v)   To disseminate technical experience gained in the use of standards.

3. Levels of EPOCH involvement

There are at least three levels of EPOCH involvement in all types of dissemination:

a. Core activities which form part of EPOCH's funded actions to promote integration.
b. Activities which EPOCH partners would be undertaking anyway, but where the EPOCH agenda is furthered by the partner because of their belief in that agenda and without assistance.
c. Activities where EPOCH partners are supported in undertaking additional work with marginal support from EPOCH.

Each of these can make a valuable contribution to the EPOCH agenda of integration although it is clear that EPOCH cannot practically censor or control partner's engagement in activities where they not in fact receiving much practical assistance in engaging in the activity.

4. EPOCH events

Two events were to have been the cornerstones of EPOCH event activities - VAST (Virtual Reality Archaeology and Cultural Heritage) and CAA (Computer Applications in Archaeology). However two factors have made EPOCH consider alternatives to the association with CAA in 2006. Firstly CAA2006 is to be held in the United States of America which makes it inappropriate as a major venue for an FP6 event. Secondly the EPOCH Executive and Board of Directors had decided that it would be a good ides for one of the two EPOCH events to be more focused on the museums sector. It has as yet proved difficult to identify a suitable event in the Museums field at an appropriate time of the year and current plans are to use the EVA Florence event as the Spring EPOCH meeting in 2006.

The Network will continue to focus a large amount of effort in the dissemination and networking at two events annually - the annual VAST and CAA (or alternative) events. These give concentrated opportunities to discuss the best outputs from EPOCH and compare them with benchmarks elsewhere, as well as providing the environment for formal and informal meetings to progress the integration agenda for the EPOCH partners. Increasingly EPOCH is invited to help plan the programs for events, which allows EPOCH to assist in developing the cross-cultural value of these events.

5. EPOCH attendance at other events

Epoch seeks to be active in meetings of appropriate groups spanning other interest groups. For example the project has been represented at policy/agenda setting meetings at national (e.g. UK information day in March 2005 on cultural heritage funding opportunities within the EU) and international levels (the eCulture Symposium in Graz in late 2004 and Symposium on "Heritage for the Future – Realising the Economic and Social Potential of a Key Asset" run by the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions in Sept 04)

Thus EPOCH's dissemination and publication plans are not limited to VAST/CAA and a significant number of other opportunities to spread excellence have already been taken or are in the pipeline (see D1.2.4 "Periodic Activity Report" or D4.5.2 "Report on Events and Publications" for more information). The approach here is largely tactical, seeking to combine opportunism to capitalise on partners' existing dissemination activities and plans by adding an EPOCH component, whilst being prepared to use small in-kind or financial support to secure good coverage of cultural heritage sectors and geographic regions. Decision on use of EPOCH resources in this way are taken by the Executive Committee in consultation with the WP 4 leader.

Special mention is worth making of the plans for showcase dissemination. The EPOCH showcases developed in year 1 were undertaken partly as an integration exercise in their own right and partly to stimulate discussion with potential

stakeholders. It is planned that the showcases will continue to be used in this way in a variety of forms. In particular a DVD describing the showcases has been produced and will be sued to consult other audiences.

6. EPOCH "In collaboration" events

A process will be established to allow those planning events to apply for "in cooperation recognition by EPOCH and to use the EPOCH logo in publicity/web-sites etc. Potentially this recognition could be related to other aspects of EPOCH operations – for example including the potential of partners to apply for bursaries to allow suitably qualified people to attend the courses programs associated with good quality conferences.

Two stands have been designed and built to allow EPOCH to be represented at other events. These stands have been used regularly at events (as reported in the Periodic Activity Reports) and will normally be present when EPOCH showcases are being exhibited and at "in collaboration" events.. Papers and Publication Plans

7. Publications

EPOCH publishes material in a variety of ways. There is an EPOCH branded book series which uses materials produced for courses or material produced for some conference. The essential mechanisms are similar to those for the events. Materials are either piggy backed off partners' non EPOCH publication activity or may be generated from other EPOCH activities. For example the EPOCH Heritage Impact Symposium (Brighton July 2005) and the course materials for EPOCH courses have been produced as an EPOCH publication. See D4.5.2 ("Report on Events and Publications") for details to date.

An electronic Newsletter has also been started and initial versions have been produced. The target audience for this is mainly the partners, but the newsletter has been distributed more widely.

Decisions on allocations of prioritisation of opportunities and application of resources are again taken by the EPOCH Executive with advice from the Workpackage 4 leader.

8. Education, Training and Mobility

This range of activities is intended to help better inform professionals form one aspect of the multi-disciplinary field about the state-of-the-art in other aspects. At the same time those receiving support this way are also benefiting from the interaction with other professionals in similar situations and with the lecturer or host. The key differences between the three headings concerns the level of program and the staff:student ratio and period of education or training.

Decisions on allocations of prioritisation of opportunities and application of resources are again taken by the EPOCH Executive with advice from the Workpackage 4 leader. The Policy and Procedures manual lays out conditions for this purpose, including the specifications of the circumstances which would be given priority support. At preset eligibility criteria include the requirement for the candidate to be studying in a different country.

Priorities between different areas of potential education, training and mobilities are defined in part by the stakeholder needs activity, partly by the report on Training Offerings and Needs in Europe (a study undertaken in WP4).

9. Dissemination via the website and internet

The presentations made by EPOCH partners will be routinely placed in the document section of the EPOCH website or in the case of VAST full papers in the EUROGRAPHICS digital library. In addition the website will be used for other forms of dissemination both within the consortium and more widely. For example the first data sets have been entered into the repository during the first semester and other data has been added as it is produced by brokerage activities. A portal to open source software is also being developed.

The strategic importance of these repositories lies in the opportunity for cross-fertilising good practice, ideas and tools between research groups, and in the case of data sets, providing potential benchmarking for comparison of algorithms and results of novel methods of processing data.

10.   Results

Around three quarters of the full papers presented at VAST2004 involve researchers named in the technical annex and in addition a number of papers have been submitted by organisations originally named as associate partners and now listed as potential subcontractors. Interestingly many of the partners' papers have been co-authored by researchers from organisations which are not part of EPOCH. This suggests that the Network is indeed drawing closer together by coming together for the VAST annual event, but is also having a significant impact beyond the bounds of the immediate membership.

Many people have commented on the "buzz" they experienced at VAST2004, including comments on the interesting mix of disciplines present.

Similar levels of involvement are expected at the VAST 2005 event in Pisa in November. The involvement in the CAA2005 conference in Tomar was a rather smaller proportion of the event.

It is EPOCH policy to obtain feedback from participants on all events run with subsidy from EPOCH. This is used both to monitor the participation rates in order to detect trends and monitor integration progress and also to improve the benefits for attendees.

The details of dissemination and use of knowledge undertaken by EPOCH are documented in a number of detailed reports

D4.5.2 Report on Events and Publications
D4.4.2 Report on Training Activity
D4.3.1 Report on Mobility and Bursaries
D4.6.1 Report on Showcase Dissemination

and summarised in the Periodic Activity Report D1.2.4. These reports document all EPOCH courses run, all bursary distribution and events attended. Details of the website contents and use are included in the website reports D4.1.1

11. Conclusions

This report demonstrates that the Dissemination and Use of Knowledge plays a core part in meeting the EPOCH challenge of achieving a new, genuinely interdisciplinary field. EPOCH partners have substantial and continuing plans to disseminate the knowledge gained from, and the results of, their work. These plans will continue to be kept under review and adapted in the light of experience and feedback.