



EPOCHnews

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The Stadhuys at Oudenaarde, venue of the EPOCH Assembly at VAST2004

Turning around the first mark

EPOCH recently reached its first milestones, completing the first semester and delivering the first batch of reports to the Commission. Activities are also starting to produce impact on the partner integration and results of collaboration and sharing resources are emerging. Whilst in the first stages much of the effort has been put into organization, we now see outcomes starting to be produced, adjustments made to deliver the JPA objectives more effectively and to improve the speed of dissemination inside and outside the network.

The next milestone is the **VAST2004 Conference** (page 6) taking place in Brussels from 7 to 10 December, but beginning on Dec 6th for EPOCH activities.

At VAST2004 many of the deliverables for year 1 will be either be available in preliminary form or preliminary results will be discussed to help shape the deliverables due late in the first year.

Most notably the EPOCH **showcases** (page 4-5) will be available for display and presented by teams involved in them. The area where showcases will be on display will be open to the public and it is hoped that VAST delegates coming from outside EPOCH and local professionals will visit and realize the potential of the applications dealt with by EPOCH.

At VAST all the activities of the first semester will come together. Amongst others, the preliminary version of the **stakeholders needs** report will be available for discussion. This represents a starting point for EPOCH, moving away from the "technology-push" which has characterized much ICT research in the past to seeing basic technology research as needing to be user-driven. Having the **Review College** in place will allow EPOCH to develop an agreed Research Agenda to help define

next year's priorities and goals. These will underpin the design of the **NEWTON's** plan, with work starting in year 2, to plug the gaps and reduce bottlenecks in the communication pipeline. Such issues will be dealt in EPOCH's meeting during the pre-conference stage.

In parallel with them, tutorials on standards and usability will take place, continuing a **training activity** which has already started during the Summer (see page 3) and addressing an important topic as **standards**. The standard issue has many facets which must be all taken into account. On one side there are the technical standards (two tutorials will deal with them) or the documentation standards (EPOCH is committed to refer to the CIDOC-CRM as the basis of its proposal for documentation); on the other hand there will be questions related to methodological standards that require attentive consideration as well.

Finally, the EPOCH assembly will take place at VAST.

So the conference will be a lively event that partners should not miss.

However, the world does not end at VAST: the Network's **diary** (page 7) already lists forthcoming tasks, with lots to follow on from VAST. The event **calendar** (page 8) shows that an active presence in the scientific community needs continuous commitment. In the first six months EPOCH has attended several international **events** and has disseminated its perspective and the roadmap to its goals (page 2).

From now on, the presence must remain at a high level with the first achievements giving evidence of the excellence that is in the Network's name.

EPOCH presented at international events

During the first months of its life, one of the goals of EPOCH was to make the Network known to researchers, cultural professionals and institutions. For this reason EPOCH representatives have attended several meetings presenting the Network program and activity plan.

The very first event attended by EPOCH was **EuroIndia** in New Delhi, where EPOCH managed a stand upon invitation of the European Commission. All other FP6 projects were similarly present and they were presented to the Indian audience during a special session. Another early presence was at **EVA Florence** in late March. EPOCH's lecture raised a considerable interest among the audience here and joint actions were established among FP6 Integrated Projects and Networks of Excellence, EPOCH being the only one on tangible heritage. During **EVA Florence** EPOCH was also presented to the MINERVA meeting.

In June, EPOCH has been presented at the Berlin meeting of the **European Heritage Network**. The European Heritage Network (formerly also known as HEREIN), is a permanent information system gathering governmental services in charge of heritage protection within the Council of Europe. The European Heritage Network focus is on cultural heritage, particularly on architectural and on archaeological heritage in the context of the activities under several international Charters concerning Cultural Heritage. Widely accessible (to conservation professionals, heritage mediators, research workers, members of associations, young people, etc), the Network exists to encourage and facilitate the starting of projects and partnerships. It is an international catalyst for initiatives and an ideal "meeting place" for the heritage family and a number of professions and persons active in this sphere and awaiting ways of improving their co-operation. As such, it has been considered as an ideal place to meet culture professionals and government representatives. **EVA London**, at the end of July, was attended by an EPOCH delegate who lectured on the Network to the UK audience. Another short presentation was given at the **International Museology Conference** in Mytilene, at the end of June.

In September, EPOCH attended the **EAA** (European Association of Archaeologists) yearly Conference in Lyon, managing a stand where EPOCH panels showed for the first time. These panels are part of movable equipment that has been prepared to facilitate participation in Conferences, exhibitions and any kind of events. Leaflets concerning the ongoing preparation of EPOCH showcases were distributed to participants. An EPOCH presentation was also lectured at EAA.

In the same period, EPOCH representatives attended the

EAHTR (European Association of Historic Towns and Regions) meeting at Norwich, where EPOCH's coordinator David Arnold gave an invited lecture on the project. The EPOCH stand could not be permanently on display here for space reasons, and it proved the effectiveness of being easily movable. It was mounted (and unmounted) to be successfully displayed where social events took place – an experience showing that sometimes it is easier to communicate with participants when they are relaxed and more willing to listen.

October saw EPOCH crossing the Mediterranean Sea to participate in **EVA Jerusalem**. Here EPOCH had an entire session, which however was hardly sufficient to reply to the numerous questions raised by people attending it.

This year's most important European Information Society Technologies (IST) event was the **2004 IST EVENT**, organised under the EU's Dutch Presidency in The Hague, NL, on 15-17 November 2004 by the European Commission in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs. The event included a conference, an exhibition of research results and networking facilities for the about 4000 participants. EPOCH attended the Networking sessions and presented the Network's goals and activities.

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Virtual humans used in showcase *Avatar-Based Interactive Storytelling*

Evaluating the first six months of EPOCH presence at international events, we may conclude that it allowed us to reach some 2000 stakeholders. Apart from contractual obligations – we agreed in the contract to spread EPOCH's excellence on the international scene – many of the contacts established during these events may enable the Network to achieve a greater impact in establishing policies and good practice. They may also be the starting point of new initiatives, implementing EPOCH results or developing new projects with EPOCH partners.

EPOCH Summer courses in Eastern Europe

In Summer 2004 EPOCH started the series of supported courses. There were four such courses, selected for having submitted to the June bid for the Interim Bursary Plan, two of which were placed in Eastern European countries. Practically all the partners organizing courses had no budget (one had a very small sum for other tasks) and course support was a concrete advantage of partnership. In practice, EPOCH support for at least one of the organizers really made the difference, allowing to reach the minimum number of participants with the substantial number of EPOCH supported ones. Supporting training in Eastern European New Member States is one of the goals of EPOCH and is explicitly quoted in the contractual arrangements.

Two of the four courses were organized by the *University of York*, the well known home of the Master in Archaeological Information Systems and ADS. They were titled "Managing digital archives" and "Think globally, act locally" and took place in late June and September.

One of the Eastern Europe courses took place in Hungary at Százhalombatta under the supervision of the *Archaeolingua Foundation*. This city with a hard-to-pronounce name (even our Hungarian colleagues sometimes shorten it as Batta) is the home of an archaeological park focusing on Iron Age. Some reconstructed huts and a multimedia instalment guide the visitor in understanding the life of this period. The course was titled "Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Preservation within the Light of New Technologies" and was aimed mainly at young researchers, most of them coming from Hungary with some students from Germany, Greece, and Romania. Several teachers came from Hungarian Universities, with a presence of lecturers from abroad. It is planned to publish the lecture notes of the course in the series of EPOCH publications, due to appear soon. The archaeological park and the nice "Matrica" archaeological

museum were the natural destination of one of the students' excursion, the other being the Lake Balaton.

The other Eastern European course was organized in Romania, in the tourist mountain city of Busteni, which also hosts a state training centre where the course took place under the management of *CIMEC*. The course titled "Museums and the Internet. Presenting Cultural Heritage Resources on-line" was aimed at museum directors and curators and was attended by some 30 participants, coming from all the Romanian museums. Additionally, there were students from Croatia,



The Caraiman mountain, logo of the Busteni course

Bulgaria, Greece, Israel and Finland. The faculty was international, including some outstanding Romanian lecturers. The social activity included a visit to Peles Castle, the 19th century residence of King Carol I and walks in the surrounding mountains. Also the lecture notes of the Busteni course are planned for publication in the EPOCH series.

EPOCH funded partially the organization of both the Eastern European courses and provided grants for 12 participants, 7 of which were women. In all, EPOCH supported courses totalled more than 100 hours and more than 100 participants. EPOCH fellowships supported more than 20% of course attendants in Eastern Europe courses.

The results of the first EPOCH call for course support are satisfactory. Together with some very positive results, some drawbacks have been evidenced, as it was expected, in this first experience. Perhaps some partners were discouraged from organizing courses by the necessity of advance planning with short notice, and information about EPOCH support did not reach all the perspective fellows. Some eligibility limitations proved to be too strict and will be relaxed as much as possible in next calls. Nonetheless, the overall conclusion is that EPOCH course support is a great opportunity that partners should not miss.



School children activity at the Százhalombatta Archaeological park

Showcases: putting technology to work

Among its contract obligations, EPOCH has to complete in the first year 8 showcases in which technology is immediately applicable to case studies to serve as demonstrators of the potential of IT. Showcase preparation has started early and is now being finalized. Most of them will be ready, possibly in a preliminary version, for VAST2004 and will be shown there. Others have been delayed for different reasons and will be ready in time for delivery, later on in year 1.

Showcase 1 presents an AR (Augmented Reality) system where visitors see virtual reconstructions of ancient monuments superimposed on the scene through AR glasses. This gives visitors and researchers a feeling for the original appearance of a site, and this experience is provided *in situ*.

The mobile unit is based on a Head Mounted Display, a camera and a laptop. A visitor wearing such equipment is



The nymphaeum at Sagalassos reconstructed in Showcase 1

shown on page 2. It has been applied to the *nymphaeum* (ornamental fountain) at the upper agora of the ancient city of Sagalassos, about 100 km to the north of modern Antalya in Turkey. Sagalassos was a prosperous city from early Hellenistic times until it was struck by a devastating earthquake in the 7th century. Similar applications to other sites require detailed data acquisition and 3D reconstruction of monuments, which nowadays are available for a number of ancient monuments and whose use would be greatly improved – with little additional costs – by such a technology.

Showcase 2 deals with fragile objects, and proposes to use a replica of the object which serves as the interface to explore the object. Through the use of an orientation sensor integrated in the replica, the object can be visualised on a computer screen in precise coordination with the angle it is held or rotated by the visitor/user. In this way, the user feels the shape and details of the object and sees the virtual representation of the object in the screen, behaving exactly the same way as the replica. It has been applied to a rare carved ivory head for an abbot's ceremonial staff from the end of the eleventh or

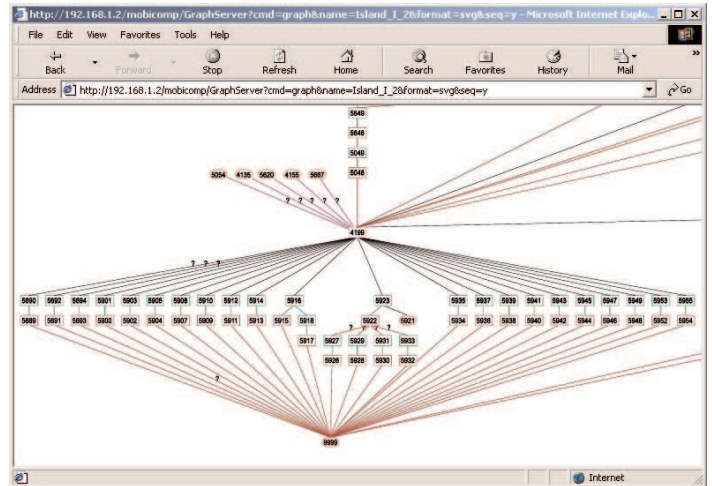
beginning of the twelfth century, displayed in the Provincial Archaeological Museum in Ename, Belgium. There are many similar fragile and precious objects in archaeological museums



The ivory object used for Showcase 2: the original, the replica and the computer model

that could benefit of such an application, while the production cost of the replica, using an industrially widespread technique known as “rapid prototyping” and 3D scanning, is within the economic reach of most cultural institutions.

Showcase 3 introduces the possibility of storing the stratigraphic relations within a site and to show them with the help of the Harris Matrix and in a 3D representation. It is something very much interesting for researchers because it memorizes and reproduces the intimate structure of an excavated site after it has been destroyed by the excavation itself.



The Harris Matrix created in Showcase 3

Applications of this technology to any archaeological stratigraphic excavation is straightforward.

Showcase 4 employs avatars to populate a city reconstructed in detail as far as important buildings are concerned, while the background houses and the vegetation is generated in a simplified way.

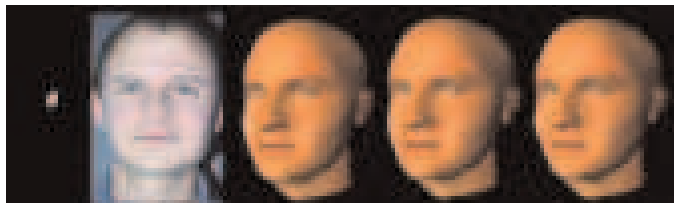
Some of the avatars will interact with the visitor, being enabled to communicate in several languages information taken from the same knowledge base. While the showcase application concerns Wolfenbuttel, a Medieval German city, many other cities have similar features and would benefit from a relatively simple applications of these multilingual avatars.



Reconstructions of Medieval Wolfenbüttel in Showcase 4

Avatars are also the core of showcase 6, using interactive storytelling, which allows the visitor to choose from a large

selection of subjects and themes to create a personalized “story”, appropriate to his or her interests and the time available for the visit. Such stories will be spoken by avatars, which will also populate virtual reconstructions, addressing (possibly through alternative versions) still unresolved questions about



Creating avatar expression in Showcase 6

the ancient inhabitants of the site – their dress, their behavior, and their physical stature and appearance.

Showcase 7 is more concerned with archaeological research as it plans to produce models for archaeological documentation compliant with the CIDOC-CRM and applicable excavations, survey and collections. It does not ignore visual communication issues, aiming at recovering past images for this goal.

Showcase 8 uses images for 3D accurate and photo-realistic modelling. It is being applied to such famous examples as the destroyed Bamiyan Buddha statue, of which very little documentation exists – and no physical remain at all, after the Taliban destruction. This showcase uses a world famous example to demonstrate that even so difficult cases can be managed.

Whenever presented, showcases not only have increased the awareness among culture professionals of the IT potential, being very well accepted; but also new proposals were suggested for further applications.

Showcases are a great challenge for EPOCH to involve users and for partners to participate in the Network's activity. Even if their budget allocation is limited, showcases may create new opportunities for partners – directly involved in their development or not – for new joint activity with cultural institutions needing similar applications. For this reason, the bursary program includes the possibility of short secondments for young researchers to be involved in showcase development. According to this plan, young researchers from any partner may temporarily move to work with another partner involved in a showcase, to improve their training and develop a similar application at their home institution. This has happened in Summer 2004 for showcase 5 and the related additional application will be reported at VAST2004. It must be noted that the home partner of the participating researcher has zero budget within EPOCH. In this case, EPOCH funds travel and accommodation for the young researcher, enabling her or him to move and stay with the host partner for a period of up to two months. Without such support, the secondment costs should be supported by the home institution or by the researchers themselves.

This opportunity is one of the advantages available for all EPOCH partners, in particular for those partners that are not directly involved in budgeted activities. Others are support for EPOCH-approved course organization and scholarships for course attendance. The latter may facilitate own students to go abroad and improve their training, or provide an additional international audience to own courses. The two Summer courses in Hungary and Romania are examples of how partners not participating in funded activities may benefit of EPOCH partnership. EPOCH also provides support for events related to its scope organized by partners, individually or jointly.

Brokerage is finally another concrete example of an opportunity for partners to be further involved and receive funding from EPOCH.

Apart from financial support, all EPOCH partners benefit from being in the Network, concurring to shape the Research Agenda and forming Network's plans. As always in life, this requires some initiative on the partners' side, submitting proposals and pointing out new fields of intervention. For active institutions, the Network may be a valuable way for extending their activity by establishing new contacts and starting new projects.

VAST2004: The Best of Both Worlds

VAST2004, the 5th International Symposium on Virtual Reality, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage, incorporating the Second Eurographics Workshop on Graphics and Cultural Heritage will take place from 7 to 10 December at the Conscience-auditorium, Brussels and Ename Center, Oudenaarde, Belgium.

This year's VAST Symposium will be dedicated to the theme: *Interdisciplinarity or "The Best of Both Worlds": The Grand Challenge for Cultural Heritage Informatics in the 21st Century*

Following the discussions of previous VAST Symposia and the first Eurographics Symposium on Graphics and Cultural Heritage, the 2004 VAST Symposium will focus on the interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary research interests including those of monuments, sites and museums as manifest in the EPOCH Network, covering every phase of cultural heritage informatics, from initial data capture to information processing, and the dissemination of results to the scientific community and the general public. In addition, the wider legal and ethical responsibilities of Cultural Informatics (set out in the draft ICOMOS-Ename Charter) will be discussed.

Thus, subjects dealt with at VAST2004 will include among others:

- Data Capture and Processing
- Data Management
- Standards and Documentation
- Innovative Graphics Applications and Techniques
- Digital Reconstructions and Visualisation
- Archaeological Analysis and Interpretive Design
- Interactive Environments and applications
- The Economics of Cultural Informatics and Tourism
- Story-telling and design of heritage communications
- Novel internet applications in heritage
- Usability, effectiveness and interface design for heritage applications
- Cultural Informatics Education and Training
- Professional and Ethical Guidelines

The Ename Center for Public Archaeology and Heritage Presentation, and the Flemish Heritage Institute (VIOE) are hosting this conference.

The Conference Chair is Daniel Pletinckx, of the Ename Center. The Conference Secretariat is effectively headed by Eva Roels (eva.roels@enamecenter.org), who can be contacted for any organizational issue.

The International Program Committee is co-chaired by Yiorgos Chrysanthou (University of Cyprus), Kevin Cain (Insight Ltd.), Neil Silberman (Ename Center), and Franco Niccolucci (PIN).

As yet, the provisional Conference program is the following (details/updates and the registration form may be found at http://www.enamecenter.org/pages/VAST_schedule.htm).

MONDAY, 6 DECEMBER – PRE-CONFERENCE: TUTORIALS AND EPOCH MEETINGS

- Usability Tutorial
- Standards Tutorial: CIDOC-CRM, MPEG, OpenSG
- EPOCH activity meetings: Integration, Common Infrastructure, Research Agenda, NEWTONs

TUESDAY, 7 DECEMBER – CONFERENCE

Plenary session – Invited lectures

Patricia Manson, DG Information Society, European Commission, Head of Unit Technology-enhanced Learning & Cultural Heritage: *Accessing our digital cultural heritage: the challenges and opportunities for ICT-based research through European Commission initiatives.*

Neil Silberman, Coordinator of International Programs, Ename Center: *Beyond theme parks and digitized data: what can Cultural Heritage Technologies contribute to the public understanding of the Past?*

Parallel sessions

- ◆ Full papers on
 - Avatars and virtual humans
 - Museums and public archaeology applications
 - Data capture and 3D visualization
- ◆ Short papers on
 - Data Management
 - Internet and Cultural Heritage Communication
- ◆ EPOCH showcase presentations

WEDNESDAY, 8 DECEMBER – CONFERENCE

Parallel sessions

- ◆ Full papers on
 - Multimedia and archaeological interpretation
 - Shape reconstruction and modelling
 - Storytelling and Learning
 - User Interface
- ◆ Short papers on:
 - Excavation Recording and Documentation
 - Museums and Public Archaeology Applications
 - Data capture and 3D Visualisation
- ◆ EPOCH showcase presentations

The program includes also a Panel on the ICOMOS Ename Charter and an EPOCH workshop on socio-economic models and SME involvement. Also a public meeting to illustrate the CHIRON Marie-Curie project will be held on this day.

THURSDAY 9 DECEMBER – SOCIAL ACTIVITY AND EPOCH ASSEMBLY

The Conference will move to Oudenaarde with a visit to the city and to the Ename 974 project. For EPOCH partners, the morning will be dedicated to the Network's Assembly.

FRIDAY 10 DECEMBER – OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Guided visits to monuments organized for VAST delegates.

VAST2004

Registration for VAST2004 is now open, using the form downloadable at

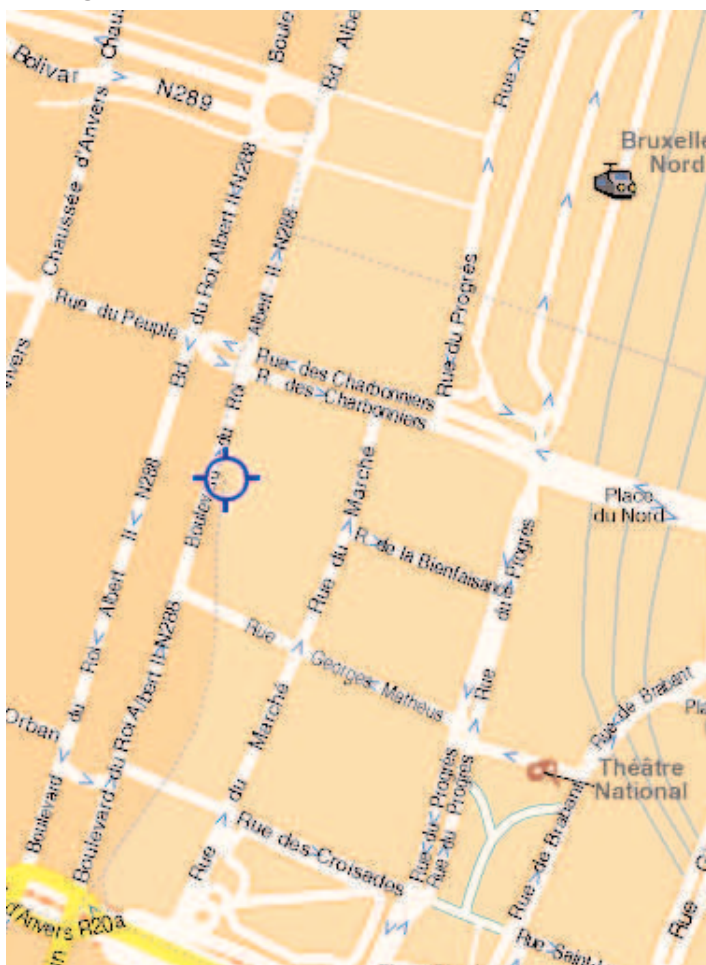
http://www.enamecenter.org/pages/VAST2004_registration.htm

All the information about fees is available on the above web page. Payment can be done by credit card or bank transfer. EPOCH partners have a discounted fee to VAST2004, with students having additional reductions.

Attendance to tutorials and other EPOCH meetings is free for partners. Attendance to the EPOCH Assembly on Friday in Oudenaarde does NOT require registering at VAST2004.

Access to showcases display is free to everybody.

The Conference venue is located in central Brussels very close to the Brussels North railway Station. The address is
Conscience Building
Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap
Koning Albert II-laan 15



Accommodation in Brussels may be difficult or expensive to find. The organizers have placed information and organized booking on the web site, check the hotel page:

http://www.enamecenter.org/pages/VAST2004_hotels.htm

WINTER BURSARY CALL

The bursary call for Winter 2004/2005 is going to be issued in short. It will be distributed to all partners by email and published on the web site as usual.

In summary, as the previous one it includes provisions for bursaries for attending EPOCH-approved courses, organized by EPOCH partners. Eligible beneficiaries are young researchers within 4 years since graduation and PhD students regardless of their graduation date. The latter criterion is a change from the first call, because it was noted that researchers may delay their involvement in PhD studies and so become uneligible for EPOCH support. Short secondments of young researchers, defined as above, are supported as well.

To have a course approved by EPOCH and gain eligibility for support, partners must provide some essential information about it using a form which will be also downloadable from the web site. It includes the title and program, the faculty and the planned period. Courses must be interdisciplinary and foster cross-fertilization, aiming at providing culture professionals valuable information about technology or addressing technologists to provide them the foundations of heritage-related issues. If partners have already planned such a course, it will be easy and quick for them to collect the information and fill the forms. The deadline for submission will follow VAST2004 in order to allow giving advice there to those requesting further information. As proven by the previous semester, managing an EPOCH course may be highly rewarding in terms of visibility and financial support.

Candidates to bursaries will have time to submit their bid after courses have been approved. The necessary documents are a simple form with personal data and a CV, plus acceptance by course organizers. All forms and submissions will be available online. The forecast deadline is in December

As usual, the bursary plan includes a mobility program for partners' employees. This has a continuous submission scheme. Further details may be obtained from the web site which is recommended to consult for updated information.

EPOCH PUBLICATIONS

Selected papers from VAST2004 will form the content of the first volume of the forthcoming EPOCH book series. These will include a Lecture Note series, a series of Reference Manuals and one of User Manuals. Publication and printing will be managed by the partner *Archaeolingua Foundation* (Hungary), a well reputed publisher in the archaeological field.

The plans for publishing a journal are in progress, while the well known international journal *Archeologia e Calcolatori*, managed by the Italian partner CNR, which declared their willingness to host sets of papers concerning EPOCH-related issues. *Archeologia e Calcolatori* accepts papers written in several European languages, but most of its articles are in English.

More information about EPOCH publications and how to submit proposals will be available at VAST2004.

Calendar

Forthcoming EVA Conferences

EVA Conferences (Electronic Imaging & the Visual Arts) act as a cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary, local & global set of events for people interested in new technologies in the cultural sector

London 3D Imaging Technology Conference & Application Workshops

London, UK, 15-18 February 2005

From Education, Engineering & Entertainment to Marketing, Manufacturing & Military: encouraging cross-sectoral interdisciplinary experience exchange.

Home page:

<http://www.eva-conferences.com/threeDConferencesWorkshops/london05/>

Call for papers open until 30 November 2004

EVA 2005 Florence

Florence, IT, 14-18 March 2005

The Mother of all EVA Conferences will take place as usual in Florence in next March. An **EPOCH presentation is planned.**

Home page:

<http://lci.det.unifi.it/>

EVA 2005 London

London, UK, 25-29 July 2005

Innovative Technology Applications in: Museums, Libraries & Archives; Archaeology, Architecture & History [ARCH-IT]; Music, Dance & Opera; Theatre, Film & TV; Advanced 3D & VR; R&D Projects for Culture x Technology; Strategic Issues & New Directions

Home page:

<http://www.eva-conferences.com/eva/london/london2005/>

Call for papers open until 30 November 2004

CAA2005

The world is in your eyes

Tomar, PT, 21-24 March 2005

The annual CAA Conference will be hosted in 2005 by the Polytechnic Institute of Tomar (IPT) in Portugal. **EPOCH will organize a special session in coincidence with the Conference that will host, as usual, the yearly EPOCH Assembly.** More detailed information will be sent to partners in due time.

Tomar is about 1 hour far from Lisbon, by car or train.

There is an early bird reduced fee until 31 December 2004.

Home page:

<http://www.caa2005.ipt.pt/>

Call for papers open until 31 January 2005

RESTAURO 2005

Trade Fair on the art of Restoration and Conservation of the cultural and environmental heritage

Ferrara, IT, 7-10 April 2005

This Exhibition is the most important event concerning restoration and conservation in Italy, with sections addressing cultural tourism, museums, sites and landscape. In 2004 it was attended by more than 28.000 visitors and 135 accredited journalists. It is co-organized by the EPOCH partner *IBC*. In 2005 it will host an **official presentation of the EPOCH network to the Italian public and national authorities.** Of course also partners from abroad are welcome!

Home page:

<http://www.salonedelrestauro.com/eng/homenglish.html>



A visitor of an archaeological site using an AR display

*Information on forthcoming events is available on the EPOCH site:
<http://www.epoch-net.org>
in the News & Events section.
If you want to submit information concerning an event please email:
events@epoch-net.org.*