

Cultural Heritage Data: Challenges, Dilemmas and Opportunities

Round Table

This pioneering round table will bring together specialists working at the intersection of digital technologies with the cultural heritage sector to discuss and debate the future of heritage-related data, and with an accent on remote sensing and big data. Challenges, dilemmas and opportunities abound. With practitioners operating in a continuously evolving environment of digital integration, how sustainable is our current state of digital practices? Are we simply contributing to existing data deluge or aspiring to more open, usable and useful data with resilient information infrastructures and data repositories underpinning it? Sustainability, in our understanding, should take an even broader focus: sustainability of practice, including sustainability of approaches and derivatives, but also the sustainability of competencies, costs and commitments. With our institutions continuously facing a range of uncertainties, how can we promote commitments and provide resourcing to ensure more sustainable data and digital practices? How do we win the institutional argument that a commitment to universal sustainable formats, standards and practices, at the everyday level, is beneficial for the institution and the related communities? The long-term sustainability of the ever-growing flow of born-digital and later digitised data and the heavily computational processing of spatial and often remote-sensed data should also be discussed from the point of view of the climate crisis.

How do we assess our energy footprint, and are we continuously creating data derivatives that require further energy input?

This round table will consider opportunities for developing standards and guidelines, and promoting work practices that embrace and promote ethical collection and open processing, cultural respect, privacy and equity, diversity, fairness and climate consciousness to enhance the digital heritage sector as we embrace the data-driven future.

Motivation

As a group of specialists in different stages of careers that embrace technology, operating in different geographical areas globally, and also covering a wide breadth of activities that broadly fall under the Digital heritage/Digital Humanities umbrella, we are motivated by our joint observation: namely, the digital technologies have been omnipresent in the cultural heritage sector for a long time, but we are not advancing enough in our academic discourses or professional endeavours about the 'how and why' of these practices.

The increasing focus on decolonisation, indigenous and community rights, ethics, and armed conflict, motivates us with numerous examples of ways in which digital technologies have enhanced diverse heritages, and how in conflict and post-conflict situations, assisted - in a tragically all too modest way - in ameliorating damage, and devastation. While respecting the positive contributions of heritage data, there is a need to encourage discussion and debate and have a broad overview as we confront the current challenges and dilemmas, and consider future opportunities.

This round table is a follow-up on the paper by ICOMOS Group ECHO at the CHNT-conference 2022.

Target Audience

Heritage professionals; technicians; students; academics; policy-makers

Keywords

#Digital Heritage #sustainability #ethics #stewardship #remote sensing