

Session 2: Digitization: Why, How and For Whom?

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The digital birth and conversion of cultural content into bits and bytes has opened new vistas and extended the horizons in every direction; providing access and opportunities for new audiences, research perspectives, education and enjoyment in ways unimaginable a mere 15 years earlier. Digitisation and the resulting digital resources have a major function to enhance our appreciation or engagement with culture and often lead the way in this new digital domain we find ourselves immersed within. Through digitisation we open the pathways towards enhanced education, entertainment and enlightenment.

We live in an attention economy. The Information Age has been built upon and extended by digitisation but we now find that many people suffer from "information overload". Thus, the scarce resource in this environment is not information but our time to attend to it. Information must be sorted, selected, read or discarded. Thus, users of information are facing a significant challenge in engaging with this rich platter of opportunity.

Collaboration is a key component in digitisation projects, past and future. This paper will consider the benefits for digitisation projects in collaboration both within the projects and with their communities of use. The key reasons for working collaboratively are the renewed nature of digital projects which show the following key attributes:

- Multi-disciplinary / inter-disciplinary
- Multiple technologies
- Multiple source types & formats
- Multiple audiences and uses
- New methodologies
- Stakeholder needs over-ride technical demands

No longer can one institution hope to skilfully encompass every attribute required to succeed in the digital domain. Substantial research demonstrates that successful collaboration leads to more: money, creativity, perspectives, experience, champions and bigger results/audience than could be achieved singularly. Collaboration appears to also show the strongest sustainability profiles.

Future digitisation projects will also need to address the current digital divide. The digital divide refers to the gap between those people who have effective access to digital technologies (and the benefits that may bring) and those who do not. The collaborative models that will be discussed in this paper will be important as levellers of the information domain and provide hope for a reduction in the information gap. The digital divide needs to be bridged for everyone's benefit. Not only as a matter of social justice but a matter of long term collaborative survival for all communities, such as science, that rely upon the sharing of information to stretch, grow and advance.