



ANA LUISA SÁNCHEZ LAWS

Digital Significance

This chapter proposes the idea of ‘digital significance’ as a governance and decision-making process for assessing the value of digital collections. This concept is inspired by Australian approaches to valuing heritage, which have had an important international impact in providing an alternative to the built-fabric conceptions of heritage (e.g., Venice Charter) that have dominated the field. Specifically, Australia’s 1979 Burra Charter helped establish a set of guidelines for assessments that amended the bias towards the built fabric (a bias that favored the heritage of colonizers) implicit in the 1964 Venice Charter. The Burra Charter introduced the concept of ‘significance’ and became a step in creating pathways for the recognition of Aboriginal heritage, for which criteria based on the Venice Charter proved insufficient. I would like to argue that the focus on significance should also play a role in digitisation policy.

The structure of the chapter is as follows: I begin with a brief presentation of the concept of significance, to then discuss how digital significance could be an extension of this approach. I then look at key aspects of digitisation in the EU to then present in more detail the case of Norway, where I worked for a brief period as senior advisor on museums and digitisation issues at the Arts Council of Norway in 2018. I end the chapter by reassessing the idea of digital significance presented above and how it could aid in further developing collection digitisation policy.

Significance

According to RUSSELL and WINKWORTH (2009), significance “refers to the values and meanings that items and collections have for people and communities.” Significance is an analytical standpoint that approaches a collection item from the point of view of the network of values that communities attribute to it. It is a decision-making method to collectively find the most compelling story about an item and use consensus to reach a conclusion about its worth. Speaking about significance, MASON (2003) argues that one of the things to bear in mind in heritage work is why we preserve. For him, preservation has its origins in our desire to highlight the connection between memory and environment and adds that this connection is dynamic. An important point Mason makes in his evaluation of the concept of significance, however, is that it tends towards exclusion, as it leaves the task solely to experts that often fail to acknowledge community voices. Mason argues that if one wishes to undertake a complete significance assessment, it is necessary to establish a dialogue between architects, historians, city planners, community members who are experts on the site because of prolonged relation to it, and stakeholders may

have little direct contact with a site but still value it highly. He calls for a more open process in which both the community and the experts have a dialogue to come to a fuller understanding of the reasons why a particular site should be preserved. In a review of the way in which the Australian NSW Heritage office was conducting its assessments of heritage value, BYRNE, BRAYSHAW and IRELAND (2003) made a similar call, stating that “the Service should encourage a culture in which the questions ‘Who values this heritage and how do they value it?’” should be the starting point.

Briefly, ‘significance assessments’ involve the non-hierarchical evaluation of aesthetic, historical, scientific, and social value (AUSTRALIA ICOMOS 2000, and interview with IRELAND 2012₁). The definition of social value explicitly states that “social value embraces the qualities for which a place has become a focus of spiritual, political, national or other cultural sentiment to a majority or minority group” (AUSTRALIA ICOMOS 2000, emphasis added).

The spirit of the Australian approach is echoed in other countries around the world.² In the UK, for example, the matter of more inclusive policies for heritage has recently been in the agenda. Several instruments have helped guide heritage policy to better address the issue of unequal power that biases in heritage protection reflect. Since 2000, the Race Relations Amendment Act has required public authority heritage institutions to promote racial equality (CHEDDIE 2012). As CHEDDIE (2012) has written, in the GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY’s Report on *Delivering Shared Heritage: The Mayor’s Commission on African and Asian Heritage* (2005), the case for more inclusive heritage policy needed to address a variety of fora: the legal, ethical, human rights, intellectual, business, and corporate responsibility. It was also based on international frameworks (UN conventions that the UK abode to) as well as legal and business frameworks. As a result, definitions of heritage proposed by the commission “moved away from concepts of materiality towards concepts of the ritual, memory, transmission and orality” (CHEDDIE 2012). The resulting expanded idea of heritage “guardianship” gave impulse to new spaces for dialogue about cultural diversity in the sector (CHEDDIE 2012).

The Australian experience shows that the task is not only to establish concepts as significance within policies, but also to create clearer guidelines that ensure that participation from a broad range of stakeholders is embedded in the process – and this seems to be very much needed in the domain of digital heritage. Moreover, the

1 Personal Conversation with Tracy Ireland 2012 in Canberra.

2 For examples of the Australian context see the other contributions in this volume: for the application of digital resources in the repatriation of ancestral remains, see Paul TURNBULL: *Restoring Dignity*, pp. ###-###; for digital interpretations in the context of Australia’s difficult and traumatic pasts see Paul Longley ARTHUR and Isabel SMITH: *Digital Representations of Slavery in Australia*, pp. ###-###; for the pathways onto which items of Indigenous Australian origins were sent, see Friederike SCHMIDT: *Retracing the Mobile Object*, pp. ###-###.

questions of unequal power in any dialogue about the significance of heritage, be it analogue or digital, must be explicitly addressed in policy.

Significance in the Digital Domain

Digital participation has been on the agenda of policymakers for at least a decade now. Perhaps as in the case of the significance of built heritage, the dream of open participation has not been realized in the digital domain also because the existing social infrastructure has not been disrupted enough for this to happen. As the review of European and Norwegian digital collection policy documents in the next sections will reveal, digital media has transformed museum functions, yet has in many cases left the deeper governance infrastructure of museums intact. For digital heritage, it would seem straightforward to make an approach such as significance central to digitisation policy.

An inclusion of social values also in what concerns digital heritage, such as is done in Australia for other types of heritage via significance, would help mend some of the current gaps in policy formulations regarding the digitisation of collections. While museums and collecting organizations have made of significance assessments for material items or the built environment a common practice, these (at least in the author's experience) are less used in the process of digitisation. Since many digitisation processes revolve around creating digital copies of existing material items, it is understood that the significance assessment accompanies the object. However, for born-digital objects, attempting to simply transfer significance assessment practices directly from the physical domain may not be appropriate, or even feasible. I will come back to this issue at the end of the chapter.

The next sections leave the topic of significance aside for a moment to concentrate on what has been the trend so far in collection digitisation policies in Europe. A brief look at European and especially Norwegian collection digitisation policy whitepapers shows that the focus of policymakers has been on practical matters such as platforms, standards for metadata, and speed, and amount of digitisation. These practical matters related to the physical process of collection digitisation may have been the focus attention because material conditions slow down progress in some areas hindering the more ambitious social goals of policymakers. However, as digitisation efforts continue to improve in terms of the technical aspects of digitisation (in speed, amount, and interoperability), other areas of policy that have already received much attention in the physical spaces of museums (for instance, the social significance of a collection) will also need to be addressed more explicitly in digital collection policies, which I propose could be done through the idea of digital significance as an explicit part of the frameworks for the work that museums, archives, universities, and other public and private heritage organizations can conduct in the field.

Collection Digitisation Policy in Europe



At a governance level, the European Union's (EU) structure presents several challenges for digitisation of museum collections: Member States balance digitisation policies between centralized and decentralized approaches, sometimes relying on both regional and sectoral directions, even though about two thirds of Member States centralize the country's digitisation strategy for cultural heritage at the Ministry level (European Commission 2013). However, coordination efforts have a long history, and are strongly anchored in the democratic structures of the EU as a whole and of EU Member States. Nevertheless, one can also see that this democratic structure may prompt individual organizations to choose their own approach (platforms, policies, practices) over a collective effort such as Europeana, since the collective strategy remains too diffuse or too distant.

One of the key documents for digitisation policy at an overarching level (though not necessarily binding for individual museums) in the EU is *Cultural Heritage: Digitisation, Online Accessibility and Digital Preservation – Consolidated Progress Report on the implementation of Commission Recommendation (2011/711/EU) 2015–2017* (EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2013). This policy document states that EU policy is to make the European cultural heritage accessible to all EU citizens. Precedents for this document include the *eContentPlus (2005–2008) programme* and *i2010 – A European Information Society for growth and employment (2005–2010) strategy* (PUBLICATIONS OFFICE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2010). Amongst the issues of concern pointed out in this progress report, are long-term storage, access, and copyright issues. Investments in this regard include Europeana, which has been the flagship initiative in the EU. This platform is meant to address the need for a common digital arena for cultural heritage in Europe, yet while policies and investment in Europeana promote growth of digital heritage collections, they seem to be inward looking: the public does not access Europeana as much as they access other collections of cultural digital media. In Europeana's 2016 benchmarking study *Europeana as Online Cultural Information Services*, the author found that Europeana ranked “in the mid to low range popularity among services for online cultural content, making it comparable to the World Digital Library and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam” (NAVARRETE, 2016).

While the EU cultural heritage report from 2011 called for investment in open-source technologies and open access such as Europeana, it also considered how to include commercial actors in the digitisation effort. Service providers and technology companies seemed to have had limited emphasis on how regular citizens may use such services, and users were seen mainly as providers in the digitisation chain, so one question asked in the report was how to create policies that addressed this participation imbalance.

The question of how to promote open, fair, and secure access also through commercial services operating in the EU is tightly connected to changes in policies

regarding digital privacy and security, and the turn towards stronger regulation (e.g., GDPR). The policy, economic, social, and political factors within which the EU operates are said to call for a heterogeneous yet coordinated approach, where concerns with the democratic function of information access and exchange are central and equally important than economic concerns. The emphasis so far has been on open source, free services, and open data. How this is planned to happen is still unclear. Perhaps it is here that a concept such as digital significance could become an organizing principle for further coordination.

The heterogeneity one sees at EU level is also present at national levels, and this is well exemplified by the case of Norway. Three widely different types of organizations administer the country's Government-managed digitisation of collections, a) the National Library, which has the main responsibility for printed material and leads the national network of libraries, b) the National Archives, which manage material from a variety of government agencies, and c) museums, which manage artifacts, specimens, buildings, monuments, printed materials, photographs, artworks, and immaterial heritage.

The museum sector is very heterogeneous. It is composed of large, medium, and small museums organized as private/public businesses with a board of directors, inter-communal partnerships, or ideal organizations grouped into regional networks under the jurisdiction of the Culture and Church Department. There is also a strong university museum sector that falls under the jurisdiction of the Knowledge Department. In addition, several local private small collections operate independently yet receive State or municipal funding for their activities.³

In Norway, digitalization strategy started early. Already in the late 1990s, the *Research whitepaper* (St.meld. nr. 39 (1998–1999) *Forskning ved et tidsskille*) spoke about the knowledge commons (building on HESS and ÖSTROM's 2007 view of the growing online shared knowledge resources as a 'commons'), as a vision of "an open and accessible shared space" which should be the first priority of the public sector, and the *ICT whitepaper* (St.meld. nr. 17 (2006–2007), *Et informasjonsamfunn for alle*) stated that "Everyone should be able to participate in the Information Society."

3 The museum sector in Norway has in recent years opened for for-profit projects that would not fit with the definition of museums that is currently under debate at ICOM, where it is proposed that museums should be defined as "democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures [...] Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing." (ICOM 2019). The museums in the network supported by the Department of Culture and the university museums supported by the Department of Knowledge would fit with this proposed definition, but other privately run organizations that run on a profit-based, non-participatory model may not be allowed to continue to call themselves museums if such definition is approved and later enforced through legislation and policy in Norway.

To this end, the Norwegian government should invest in the development of a digital commons, which should be as large as possible and have high quality information. Meeting user's needs (as defined by users themselves, for instance in terms of access to information, participation, accessibility and ease of use, type of information made available, language requirements etc.) should be the focus. There should be access to free non-commercial use of digital materials, albeit respecting existing copyright arrangements.

For Norwegian museums, the purpose, scope, and pace of digitisation was discussed more specifically in the *Museums of the Future* whitepaper (St.meld. nr. 49 (2008–2009), *Framtidas museum – Forvaltning, forskning, formidling, fornying*). This whitepaper defined four key aspects of museum work: management, research, dissemination, and renewal (renewal hereby understood as the way in which museums must constantly work to make their collections relevant to their publics). Two key factors were identified as crucial for the pace and form of digitisation in Norwegian public collections: the first was the public's high trust in government, which led therefore to high expectations of quality and accuracy of digitisation; the second was having to deal with very large collections. In the chapter about digital dissemination, the government was concerned with the balance between dissemination activities for the public visiting the physical museum and for the public visiting the museum online. The discussion was that many museums were just at the start phase of preparing their digital offers, and so, a confusion could be seen amongst museums in relation to the digital administration of the museum vs the museum's digital public outreach, where they were mixing the broader idea of digitalization of their organizations with the task of digital dissemination of collections. The main problem was a misunderstanding of what digital dissemination should accomplish.

The technical discussion in this whitepaper was very detailed when it came to specific needs for digital collection management. Amongst other things, the Department was interested in good metadata, good authority registers, and standards of practice. The way in which prioritization of what should be digitised would take place was up to the regional networks and to individual organizations. The main request from the Department was in terms of the number of items to be digitised, with an expectation of a strong increase in the next decade. This was partly connected to a report by the Auditor General (Riksrevisjonen), which stated that the pace of digitisation of collections was too slow and argued that the Department of Culture and Church had not followed up appropriately the digitisation process, museums and archives were not doing enough and that there was no plan for long-term storage.

To address some of these issues, the Department created *digitaltfortalt.no*, a national dissemination channel for museums, libraries, and archives, which was meant to stimulate to new thinking in terms of digital dissemination (now discontinued with content moved to Digitalt Museum). The idea was to encourage the creation of channels where the museum and the public could engage in dialogue

about collection items. In *digitaltfortalt.no*, any regional cultural network member could publish a story based on collection items. For the Department, this was the way forward in terms of innovation in museum dissemination practices. The Department also highlighted a second example of innovation in digital dissemination which aimed at making the online virtual museum a rich embodied experience: *Rockheim*, the national center for rock and pop, part of the network of Museums in Sør-Trøndelag, planned to have a virtual offer where the museum would offer spaces very similar to those of the physical museum, with museum employees also walking around those virtual spaces, and with the public being able to choose an avatar, put on their favorite costume from the collection, and walk around exhibition spaces to learn more about Norwegian rock and pop (St.meld. 49 (2008–2009), 107–108).

When it came to digital collection management, the Department identified as the biggest challenge a lack of full registration of collection items in ICT infrastructure. At the time, only 39 % of about 2,8 million cultural historical artifacts on hold at Norwegian museums had been digitally registered, and of these, only 15 % were registered with a photograph (St.meld. 49 (2008–2009), 107–108). Another issue was that those collections involving audiovisual materials were often in a state of disorder, not registered, and not digitised, or not following international standards for electronic registration (other types of collections suffered from similar issues, though not as badly as audiovisual material). This all meant that there was not enough capacity to add the knowledge embedded in collections to the public digital knowledge commons. One reason for this was that the job of digital registration had so far consisted of transforming catalog and accession forms to digital format. This was partly to make work easier for museums, and partly because the electronic material was mainly intended for internal curators working in the given organization. The problem, however, was that the transformation into a database for public access was being hindered precisely by this very specialized type of registration.

The then authority for libraries, museums, and archives, *ABM-utvikling*, was given then the task to try to organize the effort of all these institutions, to harmonize digital collection management. They would be assisted by KulturIT, an organization created by the Norwegian Folk Museum. Amongst the main challenges identified as affecting the digitisation work and needing more attention are understanding how to exploit the potential of new technologies for systematic management and dissemination of information, managing long-term storage of digital information, cross-sector collaboration, finding coherent approaches at local, regional and national level, improving the ability to document fast changes in society, and finding ways to communicate history in a pedagogical way to as many as possible.

About five years later, in the report entitled *Digital infrastructure for museums* (GLEINSVIK/WEDDE/NAGELL 2015), an evaluation was made of the results from the work of the Arts Council, which manages an important number of the Department's Museum programs and investments, in creating appropriate infrastructure for the

digitisation of collections. The conclusion was that the Arts Council had made appropriate investments in infrastructure, creating the resource *DigitalMuseum.no* – Norway’s national equivalent to Europeana. However, and as in previous reports and whitepapers, the question of why digitise was only briefly dealt with, naming amongst other things that the various investments in infrastructure should help support the new digital sharing culture, and provide more public access to the country’s knowledge commons. Additionally, it was mentioned how this should also contribute to the broader European commons, since services such as *DigitalMuseum.no* would feed directly into Europeana.

Digital Significance as Common Standpoint, Analytical Framework, and Decision-Making Principle

The presentation in the previous sections of the way in which European policy has tackled digitisation in heritage organizations shows that there is still a lack of a cohesive principle to coordinate the various infrastructure and general policy activities. It shows that the focus has been predominantly on infrastructure, at the expense of dealing with the social aspects of digital collections. I argue that digital significance could be the common standpoint, analytical framework, and decision-making principle to address this gap. I would like to end this chapter by outlining some key points for future discussion in this regard.

First, digital significance would mean considering how the qualities for which a digital material has become a focus of spiritual, political, national, or other cultural sentiment to a majority or minority group. Yet defining groups (majority/minority) in such a disruptive context as the internet is not a trivial matter. Let us imagine for a moment the composition of a board dealing with a digital significance assessment online: who should be the interested parties? Facebook, Twitter, Google, along with the individuals and communities that used their platforms to create the digital heritage item? These questions show the issues that may arise in the digital domain that cannot be so easily tackled when directly transferring practices of significance assessment from the built environment or material collections to ‘born-digital’ items.

Second, digital significance should be an opportunity to reflect upon both the ‘why’ and the ‘who’ in digitisation very carefully, without taking for granted that social inclusion is an implicit attribute of digital media. It is my hope that in coming years, the very important discussions about ‘how’ that have so far dominated policy will finally start giving way to the more pressing issues surrounding the ‘why’, that is, the governance and social goals of our digital collection commons.

Third, digital significance could bring to the fore the problem of ownership of digital materials. The idea of significance implies someone who is taking responsibility for assigning value, and who will be willing to function as caretaker of the

heritage item. In this regard, the differential power technology companies (service providers, software producers, code developers) have over the future of born-digital items must be re-examined.

I leave the reader with these three points as prompts for a new conversation, which I hope we may continue asynchronously in a new branch of the digital domain to which this volume extends.

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Abstracts

PAUL ARTHUR & ISABEL SMITH

Digital Representations of Slavery in Australia

Navigating Heritage, Identity and Power

Abstract The digitisation of exhibitions and collections has dramatically expanded access to and forms of cultural heritage, while also raising many questions around the power relations that underlie the production of this heritage. Whose heritage is being digitised, by whom, and for whom is it being recorded and represented? Such questions are especially pronounced in digital museum spaces facing issues of race and empire. Exhibitions on slavery in particular, which have proliferated across the globe since a ‘slavery memory’ boom in the late twentieth century and intersected with the digitisation of museums, underscore the tensions between contemporary politics, new forms of cultural heritage-making, and the colonial origins and frameworks of museums. This paper reflects upon the development and early conceptual phases of an online exhibition exploring legacies of slavery in Australia. Looking at the complex relationships and responsibilities between individuals, communities and institutions, this paper also explores evolving approaches to community engagement, audience contributions, and the question of the democratisation of content through digital and online storytelling. It considers the ways that selections in voice, medium, space and audience interact with ongoing and complex connections with British culture and heritage, to produce specific representations of slavery and forms of heritage in Australia. These differing forms intersect with and hold significant implications for Australian identities, contemporary politics, and lived realities.

ROMANY REAGAN

Unlocking Heritage Stories

How the use of audio walks as creative public engagement expands access to site-based heritage to a diverse and globalised audience

Abstract For my practice-based PhD project *Abney Rambles*, I created four audio walks through Abney Park cemetery, which is located in the north London community of Stoke Newington in the United Kingdom. Each audio walk is positioned as an exploration of one layer of heritage within the cemetery. Since completing my PhD, I have expanded my research scope beyond the cemetery to encompass legends and lore from the British Isles, with several London-based research projects resulting in site-based audio walks and museum experiences. As of writing, there are 28 audio experiences in total available to be taken through various sites in London. The

Abney Rambles series of audio walks were crafted to be experienced in situ; however, one unexpected result of hosting this ongoing project through an online media platform is that people have been enjoying these audio walks as simply audio experiences – from anywhere in the world. This expanded the visitor reach of these public engagement initiatives beyond what could normally be hoped for in physical visitor footfall. The heritage stories of my sites of research became accessible to a globalised audience in the form of ‘digital visitors’ – and the implications for this also expand to those potential visitors who have not engaged with the space previously due to sight or mobility impairment. The aim of this chapter is to present an analysis of both the process and the outputs of crafting digital moments of interaction as part of a public engagement plan within heritage sites, hopefully offering a helpful resource for practitioners wishing to engage in digital heritage interactions.

PAUL TURNBULL

Restoring Dignity

The Ethical and Technical Challenges of Creating Digital Resources for the Repatriation of Indigenous Australian Ancestral Remains

Abstract Securing the repatriation from Western scientific collections of the bodily remains of their ancestors is of vital importance to Australian First Nations and many other indigenous peoples worldwide. An extraordinary achievement by indigenous peoples, repatriation has been the single most important agent of change in their relationships with museums, universities, and other scientific institutions over the past 40 years. Since 2016, the Research, Reconcile, Renew Network (RRR) has been engaged in creating a digital resource assisting indigenous repatriations efforts with funding from the Australian Research Council and partnering universities. Besides assisting repatriation by providing access to a wealth of historical sources and the findings of research by RRR members, this digital resource is also designed to support research and scholarship exploring the history of scientific collecting and uses of the bodily remains of the ancestors of indigenous peoples. This essay focuses on RRR’s efforts to date to develop solutions to the ethical and technical challenges of creating this resource.

VICTORIA HERCHE

Mediating Traumatic Memory

The Potential of Interactive Digital Migrant Fictions

Abstract Mediated representations and news coverage of boat migration play a vital role in constructing discourses of the situation of refugees and asylum seekers at large, often in generalizing ways. Whether as an image of potential danger and

hostile threat or as the image of vulnerability, danger, and crisis, the iconic refugee boat evokes ambivalent and emotionally charged associations with notions of transoceanic migration. This chapter discusses the potential in the recontextualization of individual migrant memories – by processes of fictionalization and digitization – to provide a transcultural perspective on memory and to contribute to the construction of collective memory and public awareness. By referring to two interactive web-based graphic stories, adaptations of Khaled Hosseini’s *Sea Prayer* (2018) and Nam Le’s *The Boat* (2009), this chapter discusses the choice of authors and media artists to accompany or adapt fictional migrant stories into interactive and intermedial forms. Hereby I argue that the interactive digital format provides particularly productive ways to represent the absences and gaps inherent to traumatic migrant memories and allows readers/viewers to be active participants in the re-conceptualization of the representation of boat migration in public discourse and narrative.

JANA KECK

How Meaningful are Digital Humanities Projects When it Comes to Training Early-Career Scholars in Digital Literacy?

Abstract In recent years, there has been a growing trend towards international collaborations in Digital Humanities projects, exemplified by initiatives like “Oceanic Exchanges: Tracing Global Information Networks in Historical Newspaper Repositories, 1840–1914” (OcEx). This project united scholars in computational periodicals research from various countries, including the US, Mexico, Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, and the UK, with the aim of examining patterns of information dissemination across national and linguistic boundaries. This article raises a crucial question: how beneficial are these collaborative efforts for equipping early-career scholars with essential digital literacy skills? Within this context, the article emphasizes the significance of digital literacy in the realm of historical research and underscores the pivotal role played by “Oceanic Exchanges” in offering international and interdisciplinary training opportunities. Jana Keck shares her own experiences and concrete project outcomes, placing particular emphasis on the acquisition of digital literacy competencies, a deep understanding of digitization ethics, and the invaluable connections formed through interdisciplinary networking. Furthermore, the article advocates for a reevaluation of existing evaluation systems, pushing for the recognition of diverse publication formats and the promotion of interdisciplinary scholarship. These changes are seen as essential to adequately prepare scholars for the multifaceted career paths that await them in the digital age.

ANA SANCHEZ LAWS
Digital Significance

Abstract Digitisation policies set the frameworks for the work that museums are able to conduct in the field. A comparative analysis of digitisation policy whitepapers from a selection of European countries as well as Australia can help shed light on digitisation areas that are well covered versus those that require more attention. One hypothesis that can explain any imbalances found may be that these imbalances stem from needing to meet prioritisation targets made in other government policies pertaining digitisation policy more broadly. A second hypothesis is that practical matters related to the physical process of digitisation itself may play a large role in hindering progress in some areas while easing it in others, despite the ambitions of policymakers. Sanchez Laws argues in this contribution that before assuming that an imbalance of available digital material in a given area is directly connected to lack of attention to certain groups or topics, it is important to understand the governmental conditions that underpin digitisation.

POLLY LOHMANN

Digitising from Scratch

An Example from the Practise of a University Collection

Abstract University collections face different challenges than public museums: established as “study collections”, they combine academic teaching, research and public outreach. In all these matters, they are provided with often very poor, or none, financial and human resources. Given these constraints, digitising such collections represents an enormous effort for individual responsables. This essay pictures the current situation in the Heidelberg collection of Classical antiquities and plastercasts as an example from the practise. It aims at problematising and questioning what “digitising” may mean and at showing the issues implicated with regard to specific kinds of objects and to selection and access of information.

AARON PATTEE

**Graph Databases for the Organisation and Analysis
of Digital Heritage**

Abstract This paper presents an application of a graph database management system in order to model and analyse the political and economic network of two ministerialis families of the German Palatinate from the late 12th century until the mid-14th century. The Neo4j-based graph database provides an excellent platform for adding in information extracted from over 500 hundred charters, and dozens of

historical texts, allowing one to assign unique properties to the different entities, and explore the interconnectivity between the family and their peers. This is made possible due to the graph database's emphasis upon modelling relationships and their properties. The opportunity to visualise real interactions between individuals and proceedings, as an interactive network with descriptive properties ascribed to each entity and relationship, brings transparency to the multitude of factors impacting particular historical events. In this capacity, graph databases prove themselves invaluable as explorative, learning, and analysis tools for understanding the complexities of medieval society. Furthermore, such a database can be applied to other disciplines or case studies, for which this paper can provide a procedure for developing other projects.

MARIJKE VON FAASENS & RIK HOEKSTRA
Storytelling, Identity, and Digitising Heritage

Abstract Heritage is recollections, and recollections are the building blocks for storytelling. A story is told from the perspective of a person, a group of persons or of governments. But all collections, both private and public, have been created through processes of selection, conscious or unconscious, that are often hidden. Even if we connect all available heritage materials, they contain blind spots, and some perspectives will be over-exposed while other remain under-represented. We explore the pitfalls of large-scale digitisation, the perspectives of the institutional and the individual, of governments and marginalized groups.

FRIEDERIKE SCHMIDT
Retracing the Mobile Object
Digitising Biographies of Aboriginal Material Culture

Abstract The essay gives an overview about the benefits of applying a mixed method design in order to examine the appropriation practices of Aboriginal objects in Australia during the 19th and 20th century, with an emphasis on the mobility of the collected objects. The methodological combination of a quantitative data collection and a qualitative comparative perspective on the acquiring process and mobility of the objects offers a unique view on the entanglements of local cultural material and global collector networks. The examination of written sources such as letters, diaries, official government reports, exhibition catalogues, contemporary publications and the objects themselves can be supplemented with statistical analysis of an online collected dataset in order to inform each other to the extent that the analytic outcome is greater than the sum of the parts. Most notably, the quantitative approach allows insights about competing explanations and helps to reason case

selection strategies for the qualitative perspective, whereas these case studies help to advance the quality of measurement procedures and model specifications used within the statistical analysis. The essay addresses questions such as the identification of quantitative patterns within the history of appropriating aboriginal material as well as individual circumstances which caused the mobility of an object. Moreover, the essay advocates for the importance of publishing replication files in order to lead to more transparency of the intersections of particular sensitive historical events and their (re-)analysis.

KIMBERLY COULTER

Mediating Ecologies

Cultivating Diplomacy, Destabilizing Paradigms

Abstract Ecology, Bruno Latour writes, is a “new way to handle all the objects of human and non-human collective life.. Nature is here considered as what assembles all entities into one whole.” Media ecologies, it follows, may illuminate not only such relationships, but also the mediated nature of connections, representations, and engagement opportunities. The 2016 exhibition “Reset Modernity!” at the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, which Latour co-curated with Martin Guinard-Terrin, Donato Ricci, and Christophe Leclercq, offered one such opportunity for participants of the Heidelberg “Media Ecologies” workshop. Arguing that environmental destruction is often fueled by tenets of “progress,” growth, and the nature/society dichotomy, the exhibition aims to disorient and gently “reset” visitors’ paradigms of (ecological) observation and representation. In this essay, I recount the hope expressed by workshop participants that that digital and environmental humanities can destabilize paradigms, allay fears, cultivate diplomacy, and amplify serendipity. I reflect on this in light of our visit to the 2016 exhibition “Reset Modernity!”.

Notes on Contributors

STEFANIE AFFELDT studied Social Economics at the University of Hamburg, received a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the Macquarie University and a Master of Arts in Cultural and Social History from the University of Essex. She obtained her doctorate with a historico-sociological survey from the University of Hamburg: *Consuming Whiteness. Australian Racism and the ‘White Sugar’ Campaign* (Lit 2014) examines the entanglement of the political history of Australian nation building with economic, cultural, and social processes and investigates the mechanism of inclusion/exclusion and questions of socio-political organisation in the settler society, with a particular interest in the role of mass media and popular culture in the everyday (re)production of ideology.

PAUL ARTHUR is Vice-Chancellor’s Professorial Research Fellow and Chair in Digital Humanities and Social Sciences, at Edith Cowan University, Australia. He speaks and publishes on major challenges and changes facing 21st-century society, from the global impacts of technology on communication, culture and identity to migration and human rights. A Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, he has held visiting positions in Europe, Asia-Pacific and North America. His latest book is *Open Scholarship in the Humanities* (with Lydia Hearn, Bloomsbury 2024).

KIMBERLY COULTER coordinates the research focus “Visual Regional Geographies” at the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (IfL) in Leipzig. Previously, she led a digital mediation project for Munich’s Alte Pinakothek and directed the Environment & Society Portal at the Rachel Carson Center (LMU Munich/Deutsches Museum). She holds a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

MARIJKE VAN FAASSEN (Huygens Institute, KNAW Amsterdam) is a historian and a senior researcher. Her research focuses on political and institutional history, international relations and migration history. She coordinates the project *Migrant, Mobilities and Connection*, a collaboration between Dutch and Australian historians and literary scholars of Huygens, Edith Cowan University and HOME-centre Perth. She is partner in the Dutch-Australian Shared Cultural Heritage Project since 2018, together with the National Archives The Hague and the National Archives Australia. Previously she has been editor in chief of various analogue and digital source publications. In 2014 she was awarded her PhD on the Dutch emigration governance system *Polder en Emigratie* and the online research guide *Emigration 1945–1967* (resources.huygens.knaw.nl/emigratie). In 2016 she received a NIAS-Lorentz grant to organize a 5-day international workshop on *Migrant (R)e-collections* with data scientist, digital humanities experts and cultural heritage institutions, together with Rik Hoekstra.

VICTORIA HERCHE is a post-doctoral researcher and lecturer in the English Department at the University of Cologne, Germany. She is the Public Relations Coordinator at the Centre for Australian Studies (CAS) in Cologne and assistant editor of *Anglistik: International Journal of English Studies*. Her first monograph is titled *The Adolescent Nation: Re-Imagining Youth and Coming of Age in Contemporary Australian Film* (2021). Her research interests include Migration and Refugee Studies, Australian Literature and Film, Indigenous Studies, Post-Colonial Theory, Ecocriticism and Energy Humanities.

RIK HOEKSTRA (senior researcher at DHLab/Huygens, KNAW Humanities Cluster) is a digital historian. He has a historical background in the colonial history of Mexico and has been focusing on the publication of historical information on the internet since the 1990s. He contributed to and devised and supervised numerous digital publications, including the correspondence of William of Orange, the Dutch Biographical Portal and the Dutch Charter Portal. With a combined scholarly and technical background, he bridges research, data, and development; his research interests are primarily in the combination of established and innovative, digital methods. With Marijke van Faassen, he has been involved in the Migrant Mobilities and Connection Project from the beginning, devising methodology to connect worldwide distributed cultural heritage collections and concentrating on digital collection evaluation and accessibility. In addition, he is involved in the REPUBLIC project. It uses cutting edge digital methods to provide digital accessibility for all estimated one million decisions of the Dutch Republic States General decisions from the time it existed (1576–1796).

JANA KECK is research fellow in Digital History at the German Historical Institute (GHI) in Washington, DC. Before joining the GHI in 2020, she was working at the University of Stuttgart, Department of American Literature and Culture, in “Oceanic Exchanges: Tracing Global Information Networks in Historical Newspaper Repositories, 1840–1914” (DFG). The DH-project boasted a team of scholars from seven countries in Europe and the Americas to study transnational news circulation in nineteenth-century newspapers. Her PhD project “The German-American Press Network and Gender: A Scalable Reading of Transtextuality in Digitized Newspapers, 1830–1914” uses digitized newspapers and computational methods to examine reprinting practices and genre conventions in German-American newspapers. In 2021, the project received the first Peter Haber Prize for Digital History at the “53. Deutscher Historikertag” (German Historians Conference).

POLLY LOHMANN is a Classical Archaeologist at Heidelberg University. She holds an MA in Classics from the University of Heidelberg, and received her PhD in Classical Archaeology at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich in 2016 as a fellow of the Munich Graduate School for Ancient Studies. For her doctoral thesis on

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AARON PATTEE is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for European Art History and the Interdisciplinary Center for Scientific Computing at Heidelberg University. He is writing his dissertation on the topic of 12th/13th century ministerialis castles in the German Palatinate with the application of 3D photogrammetric and laserscan models, GIS (Geographical Information Systems) based spatial analyses, and a graph-database of over 700 medieval charters. Prior to pursuing his PhD in Heidelberg, he received his Master of Arts in Anthropology with a focus in Historical Archaeology and a certificate in Digital Humanities from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2016.

ANA LUISA SÁNCHEZ LAWS is Professor of Interdisciplinary Methodologies and Methods at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. Her research covers topics within digital cultural heritage, immersive journalism, and peace and conflict transformation. Her books include *Panamanian Museums, History, Context and Contemporary Debates* (Berghahn Books), *Museum Websites and Social Media* (Berghahn Books), *Conceptualizing Immersive Journalism* (Routledge) and *Insights on Immersive Journalism* (Routledge).

ROMANY REAGAN is an Arts Council England funded audio artist and research fellow, creating works with a focus on dark heritage, feminist history, layers of memory in place, and folklore. She has crafted pieces of creative public engagement at various local and national-level museums and heritage sites in London, UK. Romany received her doctorate from Royal Holloway, University of London in Performing Heritage in 2018. Her practice-based thesis explored the layers of heritage within Abney Park cemetery, which led to a study of the occult literary heritage of Stoke Newington, ‘earth mystery’ psychogeography, and folklore. Since completion of her PhD, Romany has documented her ongoing research into lost histories and place-based folklore and legends on her blog Blackthorn & Stone. Her most recent work ‘Women’s Weeds: The hidden history of women in medicine’, an audio installation running July – September 2023 at the Museum of the Home in London (funded by Arts Council National Lottery Project Grant) is now part of the permanent interpretation in the Museum of the Home ‘Gardens Through Time’.

This project is accessible through the Women's Weeds tab on Blackthorn & Stone; Bloomberg Connects museums app under the Museum of the Home page; and also alongside other audio experiences and walks through various sites in London, which are available for free on SoundCloud.

Instagram / TikTok: @msromany

<https://blackthornandstone.com/>

<https://soundcloud.com/romany-reagan>

<https://www.youtube.com/@blackthornandstone>

FRIEDERIKE SCHMIDT is a doctoral candidate in art history at the University of Greifswald. In her dissertation, she investigates the appropriation practices of so-called collectors and British officials in Australia in the 19th and 20th centuries using a mixed-methods design. Therefore, she combines quantitative data analysis with qualitative individual case studies, thus contributing to the research fields of Digital Humanities and Post Colonial Studies. She is a member of the Critical Heritage Studies Network at the University of Stockholm and creator of the European Museum Collections of Aboriginal Material (EMCAM) dataset. At the German Association of Australian Studies she co-edits the newsletter and is responsible for creating graphs and maps. Her previous positions include curatorial assistance at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, associate membership of the research group "The Transcultural Heritage of Northwest Australia" at the University of Heidelberg as well as the presidency of the management team of the Stockholm Dual Career Network.

ISABEL SMITH is a Research Associate in the School of Arts and Humanities at Edith Cowan University, Western Australia, with particular interests in digital storytelling and the relationships between memory, narrative and identity. Previously a History Curator at major state museums in Australia and a social researcher in the UK, she is currently working on an online exhibition exploring legacies of slavery in Australia as part of the Australian Research Council grant *Western Australian Legacies of British Slavery*.

PAUL TURNBULL is Professor Emeritus in History and Digital Humanities at the University of Tasmania. He also holds honorary research professorships at the Australian National University and the University of Queensland. He is the pre-eminent historian of the scientific theft and uses of the bodily remains of Australian First Nations peoples, and the history of comparative human anatomy and anthropology in Oceania from the Enlightenment to the early twentieth century. His publications are deeply grounded in archive-based historical research and analysis, informed by concepts in the historiography of science and colonialism. Paul's innovative scholarship has been accompanied by applied archival research in the service of reconciliation. For near thirty years now, he has assisted First Nations, state and

national museums in Australia and overseas, and Australia's federal government, to locate, identify and repatriate First Nations Ancestors from overseas scientific institutions to their communities of origin for reburial. He is also internationally recognised as a pioneer in creating research-based digital resources for Pacific and Australian history, and has been instrumental in the creation of the Research, Reconcile, Renew Archive, an innovative, indispensable online knowledge base for assisting Australian and other First Nations communities in locating and repatriating their Ancestors. His publications include, *Science, Museums and the Collecting of Indigenous Human Remains in Colonial Australia* (Palgrave 2018).

CARSTEN WERGIN is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Ruprecht-Karls-University Heidelberg. He is chairperson of the German Association for Australian Studies (GASt) and member of the executive committee of the Association for Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS). His work is located at the intersections of heritage, culture, and ecology, with regional foci in Australia, Europe, and the wider Indian Ocean World. Carsten Wergin is the author of *Tourism, Indigeneity, and the Importance of Place: Fighting for Heritage at Australia's Last Frontier* (Lexington, 2023). His articles have appeared in journals such as the *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*; *Ethnos*; *Journal of Cultural Economy*, or *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*.



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