

# Cultural informatics research and applications

## State of the art and open challenges

Following two successful events in May 2018 and November 2018, the Cultural Informatics workshop was held again in June 2019. Aiming at bringing together projects working on the field as well as researchers and research groups, the workshop provides an opportunity to discuss issues beyond a strict, academic fashion. There are numerous issues that affect all of us working in Cultural Informatics that often remain unsaid or discussed within a controlled environment of collaborators. However, silos need to brake since the field seems mature enough to proceed with admitting challenges, common problems and even failures. The academic opportunities we often have to come together and discuss, usually allow us to present our breakthroughs and our (significant) research results. However, we all know that our work is a lot more than that. What happens to our work after the end of projects? How do we deal with unwilling organizations and organizational resistance to change? How can we find participants for our necessary studies? How do we build new collaborations and involve a wider public? Issues like these are a big part of our work, nevertheless, are rarely discussed in the open. In addition, there is often a feeling that many of us work on very similar topics and we time and gain “re-invent the wheel”. Not only do we need to exchange know-how and tools to save us all effort, but we also need to evaluate and re-set the main goals of our domain. In this manner, we allow the field to evolve in an effective manner and we save valuable resources for meaningful research. This is the gap we wished to fill with the regular organization of Cultural Informatics workshops.

Ours is not the only effort in this direction. For example, the COST framework held the “COST Connect: Cultural Heritage in the Digital Era” in 2017 and this year the European Commission is organizing the “Fair of European Innovators in Cultural Heritage”, with both events aiming to facilitate the meeting and cooperation between researchers and practitioners. What is different in our effort is that, in addition to providing a medium for exchange, we also strive to achieve a more structured analysis of the opportunities available and challenges faced by most of those who are active in our domain, so that overarching solutions can be sought.

Based on the outcomes of the 2 previous workshops, and also having considered feedback from the European Commission, we met again this June aiming to further and deepen the discussion in four directions that have been identified as fundamental and critical, namely a) user experience evaluation, b) personalization, c) business plans and d) open challenges.

In particular, during the workshop discussions there were a number of recommendations that emerged and there are summarized here:

1. Important results achieved by research projects often fail to find their way to actual large-scale implementation after the end of the project, due to lack of awareness, scale, complexity and costs. It might be useful to have a new type of fairs, designed for small to medium stakeholders, showcasing practical, easily implementable and cost-efficient solutions that stem from EU research.

2. Although impact is now at the centre of proposal evaluation and project monitoring, the used KPIs do not necessarily reflect the actual impact on the society. New impact metrics, both qualitative and quantitative, are proposed and perhaps should be adopted in order to drive real impact.

3. Experience from the previous decades shows that digitizing without first considering the requirements of the intended application can lead to digital records that are unusable or have little practical value. Culture is mainly about the person's experience and the connections made between people and their past or amongst people. Therefore, funded research needs to focus more on user experience and let this drive the digitization efforts, not the other way around.

4. A true connection between humanities and the digital world can only be achieved through long term residencies (vocational placements) that allow not only the transfer of know-how but also the alignment of mentalities.

The present volume includes notes on lessons learnt, open challenges, and available tools and methodologies by some of the workshop participants. We should note, though, that this is by no means a full summary of the workshop proceedings. First of all, while an important number of projects and research groups are represented herein, a considerably larger number have joined the discussion in Cyprus. More importantly, this volume describes mainly what was known before the workshop. It is the actual exchanges and discussion that was held in Cyprus that formed the core product of the workshop; a product that we will make sure to share both with the European Commission and the broader community, hoping it will help pave the path forward.

We should clarify that our private effort does not aim to replace the role of the European Commission in outlining the strategies regarding the format and direction of European research in cultural informatics. Quite the opposite, our hope is to support the Commission, by gathering, analyzing and providing insight regarding the issues faced by researchers and practitioners and the interventions they believe could facilitate their work and augment its impact and longevity.

Closing, let us not forget to express our gratitude to everyone in the community for embracing and supporting our efforts. Special thanks are due to Mr. Giorgio Costantino, REA Project Officer, for providing insight and serving as a valuable link to the Commission, to the SMAP 2019 conference that kindly hosted our meeting, to the members of the program committee that provided their feedback towards the devel-

opment of this volume, and to Dr. Vassilis Pouloupoulos who assisted in turning our meeting notes into a published volume.

We hope you will enjoy reading this volume and more importantly we hope to see you in in our future meetings, so that we can together examine look for ways to further cultural informatics research and application in Europe.

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