

Democratising Digitisation: Tools to Support Small Community Archives

Invited Talk

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Abstract

Local communities across the world have documents, artefacts and crucially memories that are precious but precarious. Digital tools to help communities record, curate and present their own heritage are important both for the life and empowerment of each community, and also to add to a broader historical body of knowledge. When designing digital interventions, there is an apparent tension between co-creating tools and processes that are meaningful for a particular community and creating generic tools that can be reused at scale. Tools created as part of ongoing engagements with two very different communities has shown that this apparent tension may be an illusion. Indeed, tools created very specifically for the local circumstances of one are also well-suited to the other. This is promising and suggests that it is possible to create human and technical infrastructure to democratise digitisation for cultural heritage in the small that has broad impact

Bio

Alan Dix is Director of the Computational Foundry, a £31M initiative by Swansea University, the Welsh Government and the European Union to nurture foundational digital research that makes a positive difference in the world. He is known for his textbook on human-computer interaction (HCI) and numerous research publications in HCI and related areas. He lived for ten years on Tiree, a remote Scottish island. While there he ran Tiree Tech Wave a biannual maker/meeting event and worked on a variety of community technology projects including Frasan, a Nesta funded project to bring the contents of An Iodhlann, the island archive, out to the windswept corners of the island. His interests are eclectic and recent outputs have included a textbook on statistics, a book on physicality in design and a video course on technical creativity. His methodologies are equally unconventional and in 2013 he walked a thousand miles around Wales as part personal journey and part research exploration of the nature of community technology at the margins. Amongst other things, he is currently he is working

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with musicologists on local musical society archives and with the diaspora of the evacuated village of Troedriwfwch in the South Wales valleys.