



DOSSIER "ICT and Heritage"

Presentation

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"We are all very ignorant, but not all ignorant of the same things."

Albert Einstein

For some years now, information and communication technologies (ICT) have formed part of our lives, and, for this reason, the "new technologies" tag has fallen out of use to be replaced by ICT. These technologies have slowly been introduced, with greater or lesser success, into a range of professional fields and our lives in general. Thus, now that we have overcome the first stage of complete ignorance, we can see how these technologies allow us to improve the tasks being carried out, whilst also highlighting those tasks we would like them to do in the future.

These first steps for ICT have been seen in a range of professional fields, with greater or lesser levels of intensity, as well as in terms of culture and cultural institutions. Over the last decade a great number of technological applications have been applied and assessed by memory institutions (museums, libraries and archives), with, in some cases, spectacular results in terms of communicating with the public or managing content.

Evolution in Catalonia has been slower, and we are still at the stage where we are taking the first steps, where institution managers have yet to decide to use information and communication technologies actively. To gain an idea, currently only 40% of Catalan museums have a website and the majority of those existing have been born out of initiatives by the administrations or companies that own them, and not the museums themselves. There is a preliminary report entitled *Situació de les tecnologies de la informació a les institucions de la memòria a Catalunya* ['State of Affairs of Information Technologies in Memory Institutions in Catalonia']^[www1] produced by the Òliba group in December 2004, which shows the current situation here in terms of technological applications.

In order to overcome the possible lack of awareness of the subject, it was decided that the journal DIGITHUM focus on ICT and heritage. This issue includes work from **Kim H. Veltman**, scien-

[www1]: http://oliba.uoc.edu/oliba/reports/museus_tic_catalunya_2004.pdf



tific director of the McLuhan Institute at the University of Maastricht and one of Europe's leading figures in digital cultural heritage networks. The article highlights all that ICT currently contribute to cultural institutions, whilst also suggesting which lines should be prioritised in the future – which will, no doubt, require changes in the cultural models.

As ICT applications in the world of culture have been around for some time in neighbouring countries, it was felt that it would be interesting to investigate, thanks to the article by **Margarida Loran**, the experience of putting content online at the British

national museums. Thus, by comparing the cultural policies of other European countries, we can get a better idea of the potential offered by these information technologies.

Finally, the latest contribution from **Cèsar Carreras** looks to show, through two case studies, how small-sized institutions' cultural portals evolve, without the recognised brand of a national museum or any related virtual community. The aim is to see how the internet provides a showcase for cultural activities and content that could not be easily accessed through any other form of communication media.