



# Call for proposals – Digital Cultural Heritage: Mobilities, Mutuality and Heritage Futures

UNA Europa PhD Workshop

Proposal Deadline: Monday 31 January 2022

Eligibility: Doctoral students in any year at one of the UNA Europa universities<sup>1</sup>

Event dates: 30 May - 1 June 2022

Location: Edinburgh, Scotland or Helsinki, Finland

**Digital Cultural Heritage: Mobilities, Mutuality and Heritage Futures** invites participants with a diverse range of expertise and interests, both topical and methodological, to consider how the digital (as broadly understood) intersects with, poses, and can potentially address some of the biggest challenges and ideas in cultural heritage today.

These major themes include

- The intersections between digital practices and the cultural heritages of increasingly mobile people and communities.
- Public engagement with digitised heritage; and how heritage organisations use the digital to engage with publics and communities.
- The digital preservation and (re)production of objects, sites, texts, practices, tangible and intangible heritages.
- The heritage of the digital and the mediated themselves; and the ways in which this heritage is preserved and produced, engages people, and becomes the heritage of a mobile, migrant world.
- Constructions of heritage in digital media genres - who debates, discusses and speaks for cultural heritage, and how?

By participating in this workshop, you will join a community of critical and ambitious thinkers engaging with the key questions that will shape (digital) heritage in the coming years and decades. In addition, you will have the opportunity to develop skills in and experiment with digital tools to engage, build and communicate with communities around your research topic or methodology.

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To which end, we seek proposals for problems: for attempts to set individual research projects within these broader concepts outlined above and below, and also to use these attempts to frame problems (opportunities, issues, or briefs) that, during the workshop, we will collectively use the lens of the digital to address. These problems might relate to any one of the issues above, or any combination of them.

One or more of the following questions might usefully inform your proposal for this workshop:

- What does digital cultural heritage mean in your research?
- What aspects of ‘the digital’ are you centring and how are you theorising them?
- What purposes do the digital ostensibly, and actually, serve in your research?
- How does the digital impact heritage practice in your area now and what impacts might it have in the future?

### Rationale:

The role of digital technologies in the **care, curation, preservation, sharing, and production of meanings** around cultural heritage objects, practices and collections is deep and enduring (Parry, 2010) and informs many aspects of the work of contemporary heritage organisations. Collections management databases and processes are at the heart of heritage information ecosystems, with digitisation of records, creation of digital scans and images of objects, and production of associated metadata seen as an urgent priority both in terms of knowledge production and sharing. Issues of **copyright and intellectual property** as digitisation unfolds produce ongoing, complex tensions (Crews, 2011; Dolen, 2013; Aufderheide, Milosevic and Bello, 2016). The potential uses of digital technologies for **engagement and learning** are also seen as central to heritage outreach and education strategies.

From a theoretical perspective, debates about **access to and representation of knowledge** have accompanied the evolution of digital cultural heritage practices (Geismar, 2018). Digital objects have been theorised as being more open than their material counterparts to being “reclaimed, re-contextualised and re-formed” (Bayne, Ross and Williamson, 2009, p. 110). This produces opportunities for participation and engagement, but also introduces tensions for cultural heritage organisations around issues of **interpretation and authenticity**. For instance: who has the right to produce, publish, share and interpret digital images of objects and artworks is a matter of considerable debate, and sometimes disagreement as different museum priorities (care, sharing, participation, expertise) come into conflict. In addition, there is still “a sense of disconnect between the individual agendas that outline dialogue, heritage and digital practices in a global context” (Galani, Markham and Mason, 2019, p. 11), including in European policy contexts. This is perhaps particularly true for the heritage of low-income or (historically) marginalized communities, for whom **access** to digitized objects and intangible heritage – like recordings of oral narratives and folklore, for example – can on the one hand facilitate interaction with heritagized objects and practices, and play an important role in practices of repatriation and community engagement (Arzyutov and Anderson, 2021), but on the other hand can stand in the way of material repatriation or counter calls for reparation.



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**Technologies** themselves play an important role in shaping heritage and heritage experiences (Galani and Kidd 2020, p.299). For example, mobile technologies such as smartphones have become increasingly accepted as part of the visitor experience in cultural institutions – including via the presence of digital devices which serve to ‘blur’ the concept of fixed space in favour of what De Souza E Silva (2006) calls ‘hybrid space’. Multiple mappings of place and meaning, including “social, emotional, psychological, and aesthetic” (Hjorth and Pink, 2014, p. 42), emerge from digital mobile practices and artefacts. Digital means of communication and representation also increasingly help to connect mobile citizens to heritages ‘back home’ and their new communities. The contributions of **digital and mobile processes** – for example, the algorithmic surfacing of particular resources as a visitor browses or searches a digital collection – are still underexplored factors in many kinds of heritage experiences and the meanings made of them.

The **politics and economics** of digital information flows, interactions and spaces are increasingly relevant in heritage contexts. The ascendency of digital platforms, and the plethora of places and ways that people are encountering cultural heritage objects and collections, create new and shifting meanings of heritage. This creates issues of **expertise and trust**, as new questions emerge around how knowledge and interpretation attaches to circulating digital culture; and how it might be used to communicate organisational values and points of view in a de-centralised digital cultural landscape. New forms of authority and trustworthiness are also emerging, and heritage organisations are examining the potential gains and losses involved in shifting organisational boundaries.

Digital public engagement with and debates around heritage (on various media platforms and in various digital media genres, including social media, video games etc.) by diverse and broad audiences constantly increases. This goes far beyond simple representations of heritage and heritage elements in media but refers to more complex construction processes seeking to **label or define** cultural heritage. Discussions on what may be counted as heritage or on who has the authority to speak for such issues is just one example of the current debates. For instance, “video games are already recognised as a component of the increasingly diverse ways in which we frame and consider the concept of “heritage”” (Zeiler and Thomas 2021, 256). At the same time, digital media genres such as video games are considered as a form of heritage in their own rights (Barwick, Dearnley and Muir 2011), a fact attested by collections and preservation efforts of an increasing number of museums.

As in recent decades the realm of the digital has expanded beyond the fixed physical domains of the computer and the physical network, new opportunities have arisen to re-produce **heritage environments and ecologies**. First, (apparently) ubiquitous access to data and signal, allied with geolocation, have enabled augmented realities to leap from the gaming world of Pokemon Go to heritage strategies for regions and places that would be untouchable or inaccessible under ‘euclidean’ regimes, enabling us to ‘read’ landscapes and environments in new ways. Second, and conversely, more and more of our heritage environments are entering virtual space as digital duplicates – witness the Roman city of Palmyra, whose (digitally scanned) triumphal arch was reproduced in Trafalgar Square, London, weeks after the original was destroyed by ISIS. Thirdly, digital platforms from AirBnB to Instagram or Skyscanner have transformed urban and rural heritage environments by mobilising the vast, and often unintended, consequences and resources of mass tourism and mobility on places



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unprepared for them How does the digital provoke re-reading of places-in-time – heritage cities, sites, and landscapes?

### **Professional development opportunities:**

In addition to being a vibrant hybrid space for sharing and developing your digital cultural heritage research, parts of the workshop will focus on digital methods for public engagement. By participating, you will develop and practice your public engagement skills, for example ‘do it yourself’ filmmaking. The event will culminate in a virtual public exhibition of materials created during the workshop.

### **Workshop details:**

The main language will be English.

Successful applicants for the workshop will be divided into two groups (where possible on the basis of their first choice), travelling to either Helsinki or Edinburgh for the workshop. The workshop will have an interactive format in order to facilitate communication and debates between PhD students in both locations.

In advance of the workshop, an online event will be hosted at which all participants will give a short ‘lightning’ or Pecha Kucha style talk about their contribution and the main problem they will be working on.

The duration of the workshop is 3 full days, with the programme consisting of participant presentations (framed around a key problem to be worked on), keynote lectures from invited speakers, skills development workshops and design activities, and a participant public engagement showcase on the final day. The day-by-day breakdown of the workshop will be available in April 2022.

The workshop organisers will be monitoring the COVID-19 situation. We will place the health and safety of workshop participants and organizers at the forefront of our decision making at all times. We will follow the advice of the World Health Organization and comply with all requirements of the UK and Finnish Governments. We may therefore issue revised information about the workshop when informing those who have been selected.

### **Funding:**

There will be up to 4 grants (approximately 700€ each) offered by each participating university to cover the costs of selected participants.

### **ECTS**

UNA Europa universities may award ECTS to workshop participants, according to the regulations of their doctoral schools.

### **How to apply**

**To apply for a place in the workshop, we ask for the following materials:**

1. Abstract of your doctoral thesis (max. 500 words)
2. Curriculum vitae (max. 2 pages)



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3. Letter of introduction from the thesis supervisor or other academic referee (max.300 words). This can be in the form of an email.
4. Essay (2000 words). Applicants should submit a short essay situating their own research in the context of digital cultural heritage. We expect academic and critical essays which also demonstrate your motivation to participate in the workshop.  
This essay will form the basis for your introductory symposium presentation, and it will also state a ‘problem’ or ‘opportunity’ that you would like to invite participants to engage with during the workshop, with a view to exhibiting at our concluding ‘virtual exhibition’.
5. (max 500 words) Proposal of a digital object or objects you intend to work with as part of the public engagement sessions during the workshops. This might be a series of posts on social media, a digital audio-visual document, a lidar scan, a digitised text or a fragment of code - something that engagement with which can enrich our understandings of both heritage, and the digital

### **Evaluation criteria**

The applications will be assessed by the Scientific Committee according to the following criteria:

1. Abstract of the doctoral thesis: not scored but evaluated as relevant/not relevant to the workshop theme.
2. Curriculum vitae: max. 10 points, focused on relevant experience and skills.
3. Letter of introduction: not scored, but checked to ensure the referee supports participation in the event.
4. Essay: max. 25 points, based on the originality of the argument, analytical approach, and references to academic literature on the topic, as well as its potential to generate productive discussion during the workshop.
5. Public engagement object: max 10 points.

The workshop organisers will communicate the Scientific Committee’s decision to each applicant.

### **Application:**

Applications should be submitted through the registration form:  
<https://elomake.helsinki.fi/lomakkeet/115229/lomakkeet.html>

### **Key dates:**

Deadline for applications: 31 January 2022  
 Notification of acceptance: 28 February 2022  
 Publication of final program: 11 April 2022  
 Online event for participants: To be confirmed  
 Workshop: 30 May – 1 Jun 2022

### **Workshop Organisers:**

Rick Bonnie, University of Helsinki  
 Jon Henderson, University of Edinburgh  
 Josephine Hoegaerts, University of Helsinki



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Ed Hollis, University of Edinburgh  
Jen Ross, University of Edinburgh  
Xenia Zeiler, University of Helsinki

**Scientific Committee:**

The workshop organisers, plus –  
Alain Duplouy (Paris 1)  
Margherita Fantoli (KULeuven)  
Maria Garcia Hernandez (UCM)  
Krzysztof Kowalski (Jagiellonian)  
Monika Trümper-Ritter (FU Berlin)  
Fred Truyen (KULeuven)

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