

Kultur Project Steering Group Meeting
University of Southampton, 7th March 2008

Present:

Stephen Partridge

Arts researcher based at the University of Dundee, involved in REWIND, an AHRC project on the first 20 years of UK video art

Douglas Dodds

From the V & A, involved in an AHRC project researching the history of computer generated art

Stephen Bury

Involved in the British Library Domain UK project investigating website preservation; part of the UK Web Archiving Consortium; also supervising PhDs in fine art

Mike Pringle

Director of Swindon Cultural partnership and former director of VADS

Andy McGregor

Programme manager of JISC's Repositories and Preservation Programme, which includes the Repositories Support Project and Repositories Start-up and Enhancement projects.

Seymour Roworth-Stokes

UCCA Pro Rector Research and Development. Chair of AHRC knowledge transfer panel

Alice Williams

Winchester School of Art Students Union President

Representing the project partners:

Mark Brown

Wendy White

Victoria Sheppard

Clare Hemmings

Rosemary Lynch

Dominic Persad

Jess Crilly

Andrew Gray

1. Usability

A run-through of the project's demonstrator repository generated debate about a number of usability issues. These were considered from the perspective of end users searching for information, as well as from the perspective of artists self-archiving their work.

1.1 Metadata

Many of the records will have multiple files/images attached to them (e.g. images of a work and of the processes of making the work). It was agreed that in such cases there needs to be more information available to the viewer about each of these individual

images. There should be **collection level and item level metadata**, with a link retained between the two.

However, this would require a lot of input from the artist in terms of **filling out metadata fields**. The group suggested that artists would be led by example here – those who go to the effort of completing all of the fields will benefit from having a more usable object in the repository and will therefore get better usage. Seeing the benefits will encourage other depositors to be more conscientious about metadata completion.

Google image ranking is another incentive for depositors to complete metadata fields – the project needs to look into how Google images searches image repositories. There is a need to retain the context when an image is retrieved from Google, and to consider how the viewer is then drawn back into related works. Will it be possible for the artist to prioritise images in a series so as to control a viewer's way into them?

1.2 Versions

Because the objects in a creative arts repository could be used in a number of different ways, it may mean that different views/presentation levels are required for different audiences – eg. one type of record for research evaluation purposes, one for audiences wanting to find out about the processes of making a work.

1.3 Interface: end-users

With existing repositories of text-based outputs, the majority of users access records and outputs via Google. But it was suggested that for multimedia repositories, **browsing** may play a more significant role. Visitor retention: users need to be able to go on and navigate a site once they have accessed an image/record.

The presentation of **video files** in the demo would be more effective if thumbnails of the video were visible before opening the file (as in YouTube). Because of the visual nature of the material in this kind of repository, users are likely to make more comparisons with the interfaces of services such **Flickr** and **YouTube**. The project needs to take into account that users' expectations of how to navigate and browse the repository will be influenced by such services. Also possible links with **Facebook** and **Amazon** – for example, incorporating something like Amazon's suggestions engine as a browse interface?

Usability studies were strongly recommended by the group, in order to assist in developing the interface.

1.4 Interface: depositing process

It was suggested that the deposit process could be split up into stages, rather than the current single form structure, which may be off-putting. It was also thought that the depositing process should be more **visual** and more **interactive**. Users should upload the item first, and then be able to see an image of it straightaway on the screen, to prompt metadata entry.

Ideally, depositing an item should be a gradual, iterative process that feels more like commentary than completing metadata fields. This is not so much about changing the information collected, but asking the questions in a different way.

The **language** and terminology also needs consideration in order to reflect the user community. Currently the terms for the label fields relate more closely to text-based research - “abstract” is a prime example. It was also pointed out that “artefact” is a term used more in the context of research evaluation rather than by artists describing their own work.

The discussion of the depositing process, then, foregrounded three main issues for further investigation:

- The need to have the image on the screen as metadata fields are filled in
- Flexibility in the way in which data is collected – particularly with respect to language and interface
- Engagement with how information is organised – tension between a traditional institutional record and social networking folksonomy model, where users have more control. How will the repository mediate between these models?

2. IPR

The group stressed a pragmatic approach to IPR. A **risk-management** strategy will be essential in dealing with potential copyright infringements in the production of work. This should include some or all of the following:

- A deposit agreement with the depositor so that they take responsibility for what is uploaded (having to click to agree to terms)
- A take down policy
- Fair use disclaimer

There was strong steer that a **streaming** service should be available for time-based media as reassurance to artists concerned about their work being downloaded

It would be valuable to work through individual case studies in more detail in order to identify what kind of copyright problems may arise. The archetypes drawn from the user profiles, and the usability tests would be a useful preliminary to this.

3. Uses and re-uses of a creative arts Institutional Repository

3.1 For the artist

Even in cases where the artist already has their work available on a personal website, the repository offers an additional, institutional context, which could potentially act as an indicator of critical esteem. It is also beneficial from the artist’s perspective to increase the number of ways in which audiences are able to access their work.

There may be **knowledge transfer** links to be made, with opportunities for practitioners to sell their work. One way of doing this would be to link to other databases that are already serving this purpose

3.2 For the institution

A repository will provide a means of demonstrating an institution's support for collaborative research, and of encouraging interdisciplinary activity.

A repository could also provide a solution to research evaluation demands for evidence of a work's reception by the research community. Institutions are currently concerned about how to track ongoing evidence of esteem for evaluation, and a repository could respond to this by capturing critical responses to individual works.

3.3 Teaching and learning

There was a strong sense that material within the repository could exist within both a research context and a teaching and learning context. The student representative felt that the service would provide a useful information source for incoming students wanting to find out about the work of teaching staff, a process which, it was felt, is currently quite difficult.

Multiple access – links from the repository through to staff profile webpages and to course pages within Virtual Learning Environment would be an initial way of establishing links with teaching and learning.

3.4 Project scope

In order to engage with these different audiences, and to make further, cross-sectoral links, it was suggested that the repository could have different interfaces for different audiences– for example, one for galleries, another for students.

However, it was agreed that such options would be down to the individual institutions to consider as something to develop beyond the life of the project. It is important to be aware of what the project will not be able to achieve within its finite time scale. In line with this, it was thought that drawing up '**visionary scenarios**' would be beneficial, to explore where the repository could be taken in the future, particularly with respect to links between business and practitioners.

4) Dissemination of final project outcomes

In order to engage different groups effectively, it was advised that the project should plan separate events. An event targeted at practitioners may be pitched as an opportunity to find out more about the research of their peers. This should be distinct from promotional events aimed at research administrators and those involved in repository management.

It was advised that the project will need to avoid presenting the final outcome as another system that researchers have to learn to use, and that the key will be in making the repository processes look seamless.

As well as setting up events, it will also be important to attend existing events involving the different target audiences and use these as an opportunity for promoting the repository.

Conclusion: follow up points

Taking on board the advice of the Kultur Steering Group, the project will integrate the following activities into its existing work plan

Metadata development

- With EPrints team – assess options for incorporating different levels of metadata to describe individual images within a single record/presentation
- Assess the language used in the demo to obtain metadata from depositors. This will be an ongoing process, which will be affected by the results of the Image Application Profile – end Mar 08. Will also use practitioner feedback as part of interviews (April) to consider changes to the terminology used
- Analysis of Google image ranking

Interface development

- Paper exercise: project team to devise potential workflows for the depositing process based on today's discussions. EPrints to then advise how much of this is realistically achievable within the duration of the project. Alterations to be worked into demo before usability studies (see below).

Usability studies

- Define archetypes and identify people (April), devise approach and questions (July/August) and perform study in September, using enhanced demo. This leaves October/November 08 to implement any usability changes before the demo is split into separate institutional repositories (December 08)

Create visionary case studies

- To cover areas for development beyond the life of the project (may include any spin-off options, multiple interfaces, links with business), as part of the final phase of the project (December 08 – March 09)

An update on progress on these points (and with the project progress more broadly) will be reported to the Steering Group members by the end of August 08.

The next and final group meeting will be held at the end of the project in March 09.