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Definition of a didactic model for digital media literacy by means of a community narrative of heritage reconstruction and interpretation

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Abstract

Using feedback between theory and practical experience in different informal and formal learning contexts, we've been refining the weak points of our proposal, arriving at the definition of the model we'd like to present at this conference. At the same time, we consider it important to present the process and evolution of the experiences and the transfers of meaning and collaboration that have occurred in the different contexts because it has resulted in the construction and strengthening of an autonomous learning community which transcends our actions as educators and brings together people of different ages, sexes, etc, around a common topic/thematic focus of interest

Keywords: Museum, community of practice; ICT, Social network;

1. Introduction

This project is based on proposals developed to permit collaboration and social participation in the construction of museums. Living Museums! is an open program based on the shared construction of knowledge, memories and meaning. On top of crossing disciplines, this project-based learning project has as its core objectives: digital literacy and public involvement.

Our objective was to combine new technology (specifically all technologies associated with the creation of social networks) with development of personal and shared creativity, involvement in networks and communities, avoiding hierarchies and the exclusion of those without access to or a culture of using these new technologies, all while promoting public involvement.

Living Museums' mission is to collect fragments of the past and present and digitalize them, preserving historical memory (spoken, written, photographic and cinematic) and to find the historical significance of the contributing

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communities. We are working to preserve completed history or the living present, written or otherwise—in fixed or moving images—snippets of the past or present that have meaning for community members.

Project development (www.museosvivos.es)—financed by the Comunidad de Trabajo de los Pirineos—includes participation from the University of the Basque Country (UPV), the Public University of Navarra (UPN), the University of Zaragoza, the Zarautz Museum of Art and History, the Aranzadi Scientific Society and the Planetarium of Pamplona.

More than just the creation of a Virtual Museum, Living Museums invites people to get involved. We live in a multifaceted society with complex modes self-identification where technology offers us the possibility to create new ways to participate.

The community and community members become the focal point that unifies and diversifies—through their multiple self-identifications—the objects to consider as having significance and therefore to share and digitalize them with new technologies.

The participants in the project have been offered:

- A technical architecture (Ning: http://museobiziak.ning.com; Elgg: http://pirinet.i2bask.es/; Drupal: http://nada.cps.unizar.es/museosvivos) that has let them build their own narratives through the development of ideas, saving of images and openly sharing their proposals.
- An introductory training program on the use and utilization of the technology allowing them to participate in the experience.
- Specialized assistance in implementing their ideas and energizing the creative process.

At its foundation, this project focuses on the reconstruction of collective memory using emerging technologies such as social networks that are being developed and used in other public settings.

2. Museums and technology

We have to consider three fundamental aspects with respect to the title of the project which refers to virtual museums, or more accurately to the relation and presence of digital technologies in museums and other heritage centers.

1/ More and more the presence and use of digital technologies in museums and other heritage centers is increasing with a triple function of communication, information and support for the teaching-learning process. The Hawkey review (2002) of the state of information and communication technologies in museums and other heritage centers emphasizes this point as does the work of other authors such as Falk, J. & Dierking (2000), Hooper-Green Hill (1999) or Hein (1998).

2/ What constitutes a museum space and the reconceptualization of the museum itself is a major focal point for this project.

3/ Social networks can achieve certain objectives in accordance with their function: "Communication (they help us determine common knowledge), Community (they help us find and integrate communities), and Cooperation (they help us do things together)."

As a base hypothesis we can consider the different contributing communities as a multifaceted reality made up of complex levels of self-identification. Social network technologies constitute a fundamental support in the construction of online contributing communities. This project has as its central theme (drawing together the members of the project) the Pyrenees and their communities which become the focal point that unifies and diversifies, through their multiple self-identifications, the objects to consider as having significance and therefore to share and digitalize them with new technologies (Correa and De Pablos, 2009).

3. Workshop organisation and participants

Different experiments with the Living Museums proposal have been organized. Some of these experiments come from a university environment (250 participants), specifically Master-level students on Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia campuses. Other experiments come from outside the university context, like the Workshop organized by the Zarautz Museum of Art and History called Zarautz in Memory, which included 14 local participants interested in preserving the history of the town; other experiments have been oriented to university students in a digital narratives workshop
organized within a course by the Aranzadi Science Society about the Civil War in the Basque Country (which included as a module of the course 10 postgraduate students). As well 20 high school students from the Colegio Compañía de María de Bergara participated in the project. Our project has not yet finished. In the summer of 2008 the Museum of Art and History of Zarautz will repeat the creative workshop Zarautz in Memory and the Aranzadi Science Society will organize two workshops called: Orbaizeta and Amailur.

And as we have already indicated, we will focus on the experience developed with students in the Teacher College of San Sebastian at the University of the Basque Country.

4. The technology architecture

Based on the exponential development of Web 2.0 applications, the first step was to establish a strong foundation for the project that would allow the creation of a social network and the selection of tools appropriate to the project objectives and to the construction of the digital narrative (Drupal, Elgg y Ning).

5. Tasks and activities

The task was to create a contribution—a video or digital entry that summed up our idea, that put a value on what we considered historically significant. First, participants were invited to think about the socio-cultural value of our surroundings and our history. As well we spoke about museums and how they and what they contain have evolved: from Napoleonic museums which displayed the great cultural treasures of the imperial conquerors to modern eco-museums maintained by communities, and digital museums. And we reflected on how certain technologies permit involvement and evolve the basic concept of what is a museum giving the citizen the ability to participate in the identification and meaning-creation of a communal cultural wealth.

As a result as set of entries was designed and developed and stored in the Biziak Museum platform (http://museobiziak.ning.com). The final task was the creation of a digital narrative—a video (of three to five minutes) in three of the four workshops—focused on a theme of communal interest. In the other group the end product was a video or other plastic object (two or three-dimensional: posters, t-shirts, installations, collages, or drawings) that were then digitalized.

The majority of the themes were historical in nature or related to environmental change. The participants worked with cameras, mobile phones, video cameras and with different video editing software such as Movie Maker, Photo Story or Kaltura. With ease, they filled up the forums, commented and personalized their webpages within the platform.

An Evaluation of our experience

Both in the past and in the present, the historical stage and the recent environmental stage where we find ourselves situated are based on a consensus of what is narrated (the object of our digital narrative). The narrated content in Living Museums transcends the subjective; Living Museums thrives off what is relevant for our communities, even through the narrator is the subject and is subjective. It's important to reflect on the community importance of what is narrated and for that reason along with the narrative video it is necessary to create a document, which summarizes the experience and the meaning of what has been digitally narrated.

The learning model derived from this experiment gives relevance to an informal learning environment. Social networks and the participation strategies used achieve a high level of interaction amongst participants. As well it's worth noting the motivation that is implied in the goal of communicating using new technologies and the intrinsic character of these technologies. Involvement in this type of experiments has been highly evaluated by the citizens who have taking part in the different workshops offered.

This experiment developed in the university context has been able to provoke real-life learning experiences that transcended the usual constricting curricular limits of our disciplines. It has helped us create a set of resources that
transcend discipline borders, reactivate student involvement, and break accepted molds which often are associated with neutral content, oriented to a mere professional tool for future teachings. For some of our Living Museums it has opened up the possibility of imagining the teacher as intellectual, engaged, and thinking critically, not only as a future professional that needs teaching and filling with core professional skills associated with creating a neutral and uncritical professional.

Social networks and the possibilities found in the Social Learning Environment have shown they can be integrated themselves into new ways of learning (See Martinez & Correa, 2009). We were surprised by the interaction in these more real or authentic tools (like Ning or Elgg) and not only the fictitious or excessively artificial environments of LMS (for example like Moodle which has reduced virtual contexts to situations exclusively curriculum-related).

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**References**


