



## **EPOCH — AN EUROPEAN NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE IN OPEN CULTURAL HERITAGE**

S. HERMON

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EPOCH is a network of about a hundred European cultural institutions joining their efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of the use of Information and Communication Technology for Cultural Heritage. Participants include university departments, research centres, heritage institutions, such as museums or national heritage agencies, and commercial enterprises, together endeavouring to overcome the fragmentation of current research in this field.

The overall objective of the network is to provide a clear organisational and disciplinary framework for increasing the effectiveness of work at the interface between technology and the cultural heritage of human experience represented in monuments, sites and museums. This framework will encompass all the various work processes and flows of information from archaeological discovery to education and dissemination. It will allow identification of where the bottlenecks in the end-to-end process are currently located and this in turn will allow prioritisation of where the research priorities should lie.

A major strand in the development of the network has been to define a program of activities which will deliver an integrated infrastructure to support the production of applications to communicate aspects of cultural heritage to different end-user markets. This will bring together the localised results in individual cells of the matrix and harmonise those solutions across progressively wider groupings of cells. A clear thread through all activities in the network is the requirement to recognise different disciplinary perspectives and the value of cross-disciplinary fertilisation of ideas, skills and understanding. This is reflected in the network's membership, in the structure of its organisation and in the mechanisms for defining priorities within the Joint Program of Activities.

By bringing the disciplines and constituencies into a closer working relationship, the NoE will effect a fundamental, positive change in the state of the art. This will be accomplished through enhanced communication, thereby avoiding situations either in which technologists work on problems for the public cultural sphere that have little practical applicability - or in which cultural heritage specialists re-invent technologies that have been tried and tested elsewhere, and perhaps even found wanting. The network's primary goal will be to encourage all groups to work on problems which have potentially sustainable practical applications in achieving technical objectives, underpinning sustainable businesses and effectively communicating cultural heritage.

A major objective of the network is to continually re-emphasise the holistic, interdisciplinary view of the role of all disciplines contributing to a sustainable market sector to the benefit of the quality of life in Europe and of its citizens. The paper will summarize the project's activities and some of its outcomes, particularly pertinent to the archaeological research.



# Procedural Pompeii

