

Democratising Digitisation

Empowering culture from the community up

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with:

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Abstract

Until comparatively recently to be 'cultured' was the mark of the elite, separating them from both peasant and nouveau riche. Even in current academic language and media 'culture' is often a term used *about* others "youth culture", "European culture"; indeed, this is almost by definition – according to the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy culture is often "too pervasive to be readily noticed from within". More progressive views upend these distinctions helping grassroots communities claim their own cultural heritage.

When it comes to the digitisation of cultural heritage there are still wide gaps. Crowdsourcing can harness community effort, but often sucking data into centralised repositories. Projects to create resources close to communities often fall into disuse once external funding ends or a local champion leaves. There are rich resources in treasury boxes, filing cabinets and community museums, but missing out from the benefits and exposure of being part of the rich growing digital network.

This presentation describes new work focused on local musical society archives in Yorkshire and Belfast and also the locally-based audience communities at University venues in York and Illinois. We plan to combine high-quality professional digitisation of some archive material with more basic digitisation using off-the-shelf hardware by members of the musical societies. We are seeking to both serve the direct communities involved, but also use this as a springboard to understand more general needs and challenges. What are the appropriate processes, tools and infrastructure that empower and engage communities but also create collections that can feed into scholarly study? Indeed, is it possible to marry local autonomy and expert authority?

We believe it is possible to bring these together and we look forward to this opportunity to discuss new modes of scholarship rooted in models of social capital and common ownership that enrich through active engagement.

Bio

Alan Dix is Director of the Computational Foundry, a £31M initiative by Swansea University, the Welsh Government and the European Union to nurture foundational digital research that makes a positive difference in the world. He is known for his text book on human-computer interaction (HCI) and numerous research publications in HCI and related areas. He founded Tiree Tech Wave a biannual maker/meeting event on a remote Scottish island drawing designers, technologists, artists and more from as far afield as Malaysia and Canada. It is now a peripatetic event including Techwave Cymru. Tiree Tech Wave has been the focus of a variety of community technology projects including Frasan, a Nesta funded project to bring the contents of An Iodhlann, the island archive, out to the windswept corners of the island. He also works with musicologists on the InConcert project and the new collaboration reported here. His interests are eclectic and recent work has included a textbook on statistics, a book on physicality in design and a video course on technical creativity. His methodologies are equally unconventional and in 2013 he walked a thousand miles around Wales as part personal journey and part research exploration of the nature of community technology at the margins.

Links

- InConcert: <https://inconcert.datatodata.com/>
- Tiree Tech Wave: <https://tireetechwave.org/>
- Frasan video at Creative Scotland:
<https://www.creativescotland.com/explore/watch/videos/digital/2014/the-frasan-app>
- Creativity: Methods to Design Better Products and Services:
<https://www.interaction-design.org/courses/creativity-methods-to-design-better-products-and-services>
- Alan Walks Wales: <https://alanwalks.wales/>

Position paper for:

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<https://culture-labs.eu/social-impact-online-symposium/>