

Recommendation for the future of Digital and Culture
Outcome of the first Global Summit: Digital meets Culture
In partnership with the Uffizi Galleries and Google Arts & Culture
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Introduction

The first Digital meets Culture Global Summit, a collaboration between the Uffizi Gallery and Google, brought together cultural and digital leaders from 23 countries. Heads of cultural institutions, academics, policymakers and public entities (including UNESCO, the European Commission, and national governments) gathered in the auspicious surroundings of the world-leading Uffizi Gallery in Florence. They shared their insights and expertise on the challenges, opportunities and best practices of harnessing digital technologies in the cultural sector in order to contribute to a recommendation for future action. The aim of the recommendation is to set the ground with a set of themes for further discussions among all stakeholders involved in the sector and to define the direction for the future.



Summary

The following Recommendation for the future of Digital and Culture focus on the importance of digital technologies in fostering accessibility and audience engagement, in preserving and promoting cultural diversity and in enhancing the digital footprint of cultural institutions through digital skills. Innovation and collaboration are identified as key elements for the development of the cultural ecosystem. Culture-related digital platforms also have a role to play in education as powerful tools to nurture mutual understanding and protect common values. The aim of the Recommendation is to encompass several topics for further discussion on best practices and harnessing the full potential of technology in the cultural sector.

Recommendation: key topics

Accessibility

Access to culture and information should be considered a fundamental human right. Accessibility to knowledge is one of the main objectives of digital preservation of cultural heritage. To ensure access for everyone and everywhere, development of networks and investment in infrastructure should be encouraged by governments and policy instruments. Net neutrality is another critical factor to ensure accessibility. To this end, Internet service providers and governments should ensure that no content, platform, user or application is discriminated against, while protecting at the same time different types of cultural works.

Engagement

Widening and improving audience outreach and engagement through digital tools is one of the main goals of the cultural ecosystem because of the potential of boosting social and economic impact. It can be achieved with several tools (including crowdsourcing or the use of cultural data in tourism) and innovation (including machine learning and virtual reality). The quality of content and the use of storytelling are key features that digital brings and creates meaningful and engaging online and offline experiences. Technology can and should therefore be embraced as an entry point - sparking interest in culture and moving the model of interaction between cultural institutions and users from standalone transactions to meaningful relationships.

Diversity

The scope and definition of culture covers the intangible environment going beyond arts and archives, and takes into consideration what is generated by local communities. By fostering community building and citizens participation (i.e. through user generated content), digital technologies are key to preserve and promote diversity (i.e. by giving place to dialogue and interaction between different social groups, ensuring freedom of expression and at the same time protecting minority groups). If accessibility and diversity are important for users and citizens, cultural organisations as content providers should have the same means to give an access point to their collections and hence to preserve diversity of content.

Digital skills

Digital skills are pivotal to ensuring that cultural institutions achieve successful, long-term and sustainable growth, improving their reach, engagement and impact with large audiences. Therefore, digital competences should be embedded firmly within the administration and management of cultural institutions, and digital experts empowered as leaders within the organisations. Technology companies could help bridge this gap by reducing IT costs and supporting institutions both access and develop the digital skills of their teams.

Education

Culture related content and digital platforms can be powerful tools for education: they foster connections and a sense of belonging, critical thinking and mutual understanding. Technology in education is therefore key to engage young people with culture and to help them in having an open approach toward others. For the above reasons it would be important that public policies support these tools in order to protect common values and promote tolerance.

Innovation and collaboration

Using a partnership model, museums, institutions, governments, technology companies and academics should come together to define best practices across disciplines. To support this vital development of the cultural sector, government funds should include culture and creativity within research and development programs. Public entities could also ensure removing legal barriers and burdensome frameworks that hinder the digital development of the cultural ecosystem and the full engagement of citizens in the cultural heritage.

“The value of this Summit was to gather different sectors together. We need an alliance between cultural institutions and digital leaders”

Martine Reicherts - Director General for Education and Culture, European Commission