EUHeritage

Skills for promotion,
valorisation, exploitation, mediation and
interpretation of European Cultural Heritage

Video
Transcript
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Melting
Pro

Module:	3. Digital strategies and tools for cultural heritage
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CHAPTER ONE: Storytelling for user experience in museums and cultural heritage sites

As we know storytelling is a powerful way to engage audiences, it's not only a buzzword. Scientific research has developed enormously in this field, although there might be some disputes, they all suggest that telling stories **is an inborn human instinct.**

As human beings we have always told stories to make sense of the world around us. **Stories engage us and make us more empathic,** so can be a force for transformation. But as always, the tool, storytelling, is not enough, if it's not supported by a different mindset, that places people, audiences, communities at the centre of our mission.

To make this change happen, we need a different kind of leadership, more inclusive, one which creates the space for conversations, the space where individuals, both the audience, the community, and the staff, are encouraged to create their own stories and connections with the museum itself and the history it represents.'[1]

The approach we use in Melting Pro is the Storycentre approach, of participatory storytelling, it's one of the methods, but we believe in this approach because it empowers people to tell their stories and it builds a sense of community of belonging inside the organisation and outside, where emotions are nourished and welcomed. A place of reflexive practice.

It's important to make the shift from seeing visitors as passive audiences, that have nothing to say, to more active communities who are welcomed to make a contribution. One of our roles, is to facilitate, to cure, as **curator** from Latin *cura* which one of the meanings is to "care, concern".

CHAPTER TWO: Features of a good, engaging story in the cultural field

I like to reference to Nina Simon [2] in her book Relevance she says "The stories that we should tell aren't just about someone making a link to an institution. They are about making connections that unlock meaning". They should also aim to trigger our curiosity and enable us to discover something unexpected about ourselves, often, museums are only seen as places of learning and they think that their role is to present factual data. As van Blerk, argues, the narrative surrounding heritage sites is often interpreted narrowly with a strong observance to scientific research structure, … but we are not all experts in the field.

We need the competences to design experiences that relate to different types of audiences, and storytelling can help us.

When a story is told well, we recognise it, and our minds synchronise with the characters in the story, regardless of the topic.

1   Domenica Sturabotti & Romina Surace, *Museum of the Future: Insights and reflections from 10 international museums*. Retrieved from http://www.project-musa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/MuSA-Museum-of-the-future.pdf
2 The Art of Relevance, Nina Simon, 2016

In our training we always say that it should be:
- Be authentic - told by the storyteller's point of view;
- Have a clear purpose – the reason why we are telling this story at that moment,
- Have a personal connection
- Have common reference points – the audience understands the context and situation of the story;
- Express conflict, vulnerability, or achievement we can relate to – the story shows understandable challenges and resolutions;
- Pacing – there's a clear beginning, ending, and development you and you bring them with you forever.

CHAPTER THREE: Specificities of storytelling in the digital sphere

The focus should be always in telling a good story. Digital technology is a means to reach out to different audiences and with the help of new technologies, we have more means at our disposal to tell stories.
And who is the audience of your story? It is necessary to understand the needs of audiences/visitors (user needs) and therefore to conduct audience research as the basis for implementing meaningful experiences.
Connected to that as mentioned we need the mindset, the competences, the right digital infrastructure, but foremost to be ready to listen, as Joe Lambert says "Listening is a core technology".
Digital technology is first and foremost an instrument of social participation, and with the right kind of leadership, it can support museums in offering cultural programmes that involve a greater degree of sharing and participation. Used in combination they can be a powerful tool and can bring institutions closer to the different communities that gravitate around them.

There are many study cases to share, but for my professional and personal research, I look for the ones that, in my opinion, are enabling that space of belonging, I was mentioning. Of course, there are different steps along the ladder of engagement, we can decide to move along that ladder one step at a time.

END OF SCRIPT

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