

Culturemondo Development Plan 2008/09



Who we are

Culturemondo is an open international network of people who manage, build or develop online cultural content, resources and services. We work through a community of practice to facilitate strategic and relevant knowledge exchange.

Our Vision:

To engage, empower and inform digital culture practitioners and specialists. To connect them internationally, no matter where they are from, in order to become better facilitators in their own neighbourhood.

Success will be

- Creation of a thriving network of active collaboration and exchange.
- The conversion of roundtable participants into active network members.

How we work

- Open, practical, solution focussed
- Mix of face to face and virtual
- Apply technologies to support networking activities
- Sustainable
- Not political
- Socially responsible
- Committed to use of open source software and relevant low cost solutions

Benefits of participation in network

- Access to like-minded practitioners and specialists internationally
- Insight into different good practices
- Access to information about trends and developments of Internet technologies
- Cross cultural exchange
- Opportunities to meet, work, learn, socialise and have fun

Background

The idea behind the Culturemondo network came from a meeting in June 2004 at the Minerva International Digitisation Conference, in Dublin, where a number of individuals from the first wave of cultural portals met for the first time.

As a group of people all involved in cultural portal development, we wanted to create a place where we could meet other like-minded people, share ideas and help each other. Despite the fact our websites ranged in size, scope, services and management structure, our on-line spaces all had one thing in common - the drive to engage and excite people with the richness and diversity of culture and the way that it shapes our lives.

The first Culturemondo meeting took place in Brighton, UK in December 2004 where an International Steering Committee was formed with representatives from Culture.ca (Canada), Kultur.nu (Sweden), Cultuurnet.be (Belgium), 24hourmuseum.org.uk (UK), Collectionsaustralia.net (Australia) and Culture.fr (France). Other members have since joined the committee from Taiwan, Croatia, Cuba, Mexico and The Netherlands.

Since 2004 we have held three international face-to-face meetings (roundtables in Japan, Croatia and Cuba) with participants from over 35 countries and 50 cultural portals. To inform the agenda of these meetings we have also carried out strategic research and surveys of the cultural portal sector, identifying and benchmarking over 200 cultural portal style websites globally via two surveys. The first of these resulted in the publication of a report in 2005 entitled 'Cultural Portals - Gateways to a Global Commons'. Our website www.culturemondo.org is where details of the all of these activities can be found and reports accessed.

After the last roundtable in Cuba in 2007 the website was rebuilt and a number of online communications and social networking tools were set up to try and nurture the community of people that have come together around the Culturemondo vision through either taking part in a survey or coming to one of the roundtables.

These tools include:

- CulturemondoNetwork Google Group for shared messaging and communication.
- The cataloguing of all cultural portal URL into a Delicious account (sites are tagged by country and by audience).
- Use of the LinkedIn network to share individual profiles of members.
- The creation of a Netvibes Universe to aggregate RSS feeds of relevant and related news, stories and blogs.

The network is led by an International Steering Committee of web portal experts and is currently chaired by the UK. The network is not formally constituted and the ISC members carry out much of the work on a voluntary basis. Financial support for roundtables has come from a mixture of network members and agencies. The secretariat for the network was intensively supported by Canadian Heritage for two years and passed from Canada to the UK in June 2007. It now sits with Culture24 in the UK.

The word 'Portal'

When the network first formed in 2004, the use of the word portal to describe the sort of websites that Culturemondo members were working on was commonplace. Since then the structure of the web and the opportunities for presenting and promoting digital cultural online have changed radically, in particular with the development of new web 2.0 applications and the personalised web. As a result, the term cultural portal is not felt to accurately reflect the range of work of the members, as much of this new work is 'between and outside' of specific portals.

However, for simplicity's sake in this document, the word portal is still used as a form of shorthand to describe the increasingly wide range of new publishing based services, content and resources that are being developed.

Structure

International Steering Committee (ISC) consists of 10 members as follows:

Jane Finnis (Chair)	Culture24 (United Kingdom)	joined 2004
Vladimir Skok	Canadian Heritage (Canada)	joined 2004
Ana Duran	Culturenet Sweden (Sweden)	joined 2004
Hans Nissens	Oxynade (Belgium)	joined 2004
Seb Chan	Collectionsaustralia.net	
	Powerhouse Museum (Australia)	joined 2005
Ilya Eric Lee	culture.tw (Taiwan)	joined 2005
Alfonso Castellanos	e-cultura (Mexico)	joined 2006
Aleksandra Uzelac	Culturelink (Croatia)	joined 2006
Rafael de la Osa Diaz	Cubarte (Cuba)	joined 2007
Katherine Watson	Lab for Culture (The Netherlands)	joined 2008

Summary of International Participation

	People	Portals	Countries
Japan Roundtable 2005	26	13	18
Croatia Roundtable 2006	52	40	16
Cuba Roundtable 2007	46	24	18

Google map showing location of all participants to all roundtables



Lessons from the last four years

The Bigger Picture

Since the first initial ISC planning meeting in Brighton in 2004 the online world has changed dramatically and continues to do so. The models of governance, mission and ambition of the first wave of cultural portals established has evolved with many of those first portals now offline or replaced with newer sites.

In fact, the personal experiences and career changes of the ISC members themselves is in many ways a microcosm of the wider political, financial and social changes in how online culture is being viewed strategically in different countries.

In the last two years we have seen the withdrawal of government funds from the Swedish portal and more recently the closure of the Canadian portal. Yet despite these changes, there are still a large number of active cultural portals, developing and evolving despite changes in strategy and approach from funders and governments. Within this changing landscape there is still clearly evident a need amongst professionals working in this area to share information, best practice and experience.

The web is a global phenomenon and Culturemondo offers those working regionally or nationally the chance to see their activities within that world stage, to learn from each other and ultimately to deliver better services to our audiences - something we all want.

Face-to-Face meetings

To date there have been three Culturemondo International roundtables:



- 2005 – Japan (hosted by Canada in their Pavilion at the World Expo, Aichi) *See left.*
- 2006 – Croatia (hosted by CultureLink in Dubrovnik)
- 2007 – Cuba (hosted by Cubarte at the 5th International Congress on Culture and Development in Havana)

These roundtables have been intense, inspirational and friendly events. In each case the agenda was designed to reflect the specific environment of the host organisation but also to reflect the changing nature of the web and user behaviour online.

For the ISC members, many of whom have attended all three roundtables, they have been highly evolutionary; each developing and expanding on the themes of the previous in useful ways. The net result has given these ISC members a unique perspective on the changing nature of online cultural publishing and funding internationally. It is vital that this experience and in-depth knowledge is not lost and that a way is found to track, document and share it to share with others.

For those who have only attended one meeting, the impact has been more localised. Using the umbrella of the Culturemondo international network, we were able to bring together and introduce (sometimes for the first time) people working on portals from neighbouring countries.



In Croatia, people were able to come together from different portals within Croatia and the supporting region. In Cuba, they can from across Latin America and the Caribbean. The results provided a platform to begin to explore collaboration and development with others who are often dealing with similar regional issues of language, politics or remit.

In many ways these face-to-face meetings are at the heart of Culturemondo's success and have provided those who have attended with the kind of peer exchange that is not available anywhere else.

It is also significant to note that the impact of networking is not always evident immediately. Often a face-to-face meeting can kick start something that then lives on, on its own. An example of this is the <http://inseecp.blogspot.com> which was brought together as a result of the Dubrovnik roundtable and have since gone on to form their own informal network dealing with specific issues to their locality.

One area of collaboration that has been very active is the Culturemondo Flickr group, where members have shared photographs from roundtable visits. <http://www.flickr.com/groups/culturemondo/pool/>

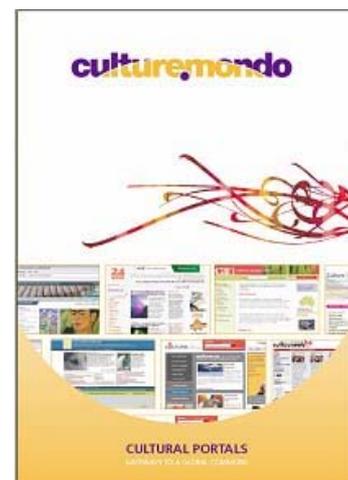
The challenge is to continue to set an agenda for future meetings that not only keeps pace with the wider industry and audiences, but which also captures the communications and learning that takes place. This then needs to be shared with a much wider constituency beyond those who are able to actually attend a meeting.

Benchmarking and surveying

There have been two online surveys completed, the first in 2005 and the second in 2006. Both were conducted by DECIMA research in Canada using a simple online questionnaire, the results of which were then analysed.

The results from the 2005 survey formed part of a larger piece of commissioned work, where Katherine Watson was contracted to write an analysis and report that encompassed not only the survey results but also the resulting discussion from the first roundtable where the results were presented. The end product was our first published report that does an excellent job of articulating the key issues facing the sector and benchmarking activity at that point in time.

The second survey was evaluated and discussed at the Dubrovnik roundtable but as yet, the results have not been incorporated into any further publications. Both surveys collected a mixture of general information about each portal; details of its funding, constitution and content, as well as some performance metrics and web statistics.



It is well understood that the collection and comparison of web statistics is fraught with problems. Different systems count different things in different ways, there is no agreement on

what duration constitutes a visit and some methodologies still count visits made by robots and automatic web crawlers.

At the roundtable in Croatia in 2006, there was a general agreement that all Culturemondo members would begin to use Google Analytics. This would be run if necessary alongside any other log interrogation software. We know that since then this idea has been taken up and Google Analytics is more widely used than in was in 2006.

Any future surveys should therefore be able to collect and compare web statistical information from one system. This would allow us for the first time to compare like-for-like portals and track audience behaviour. It could also act as a way to benchmark growth and provide an insight into penetration of population size in any particular country.

In addition to surveying web metrics, it would also be useful to do more work on other ways to demonstrate impact and measure success. These might be more traditional methods such as: the number of people who sign up for newsletters, number of downloads of resources, local IP addresses, search engine ranking etc. They could also include looking at how people are using digital content online in new ways and how these new ways can be tracked e.g. pick up in blogs, RSS feeds, social bookmarking, image hijacking etc.

The challenge here is to try to work out what these different measures mean, how they might influence our publication and marketing strategies and how they reflect changing user behaviours and learning patterns.

Communities don't build themselves

There were a number of online communications and social networking tools that were set up in July 2007 to try to nurture the Culturemondo community and to gather them around a Culturemondo vision. These included a Google Group, Delicious account, use of LinkedIn and a Netvibes Universe.

The take up of all of these has been slow and reflects an anticipated lull due to the ending of the high level of support from Canadian Heritage for the Secretariat and the handover to the UK.

The lack of activity is also a reflection of the nature of online communities and the fact that they do not entirely build themselves. Most communities come together around an agreed subject, passion or preoccupation. They usually have some members who are most active, post the most often and spend the most time on it. This is called the 90/10 rule where actually only 10 percent of community members participate actively. This means that when planning how we can leverage our social media to generate dialog, we need to plan to ensure our community is big enough to support only 10 percent participation.

Historically for Culturemondo, the higher level of activity has inevitably been between the ISC members, with peaks in other member activity around each of the roundtables. But there are over 100 people who have taken part in a roundtable and over 300 portals identified for surveying. This means that the potential size of a virtual cultural portal community is therefore at least 400 people.

The challenge now is to build our network through increased communication and sharing of best practices, which will take human resources – a person to act as the community manager.

We also need to make sure that the Culturemondo website can meet members needs for information and expertise. This again requires a regular programme of updating and more thorough documentation.

What we need now

1. Community managers

Two people have been appointed to act as the Culturemondo community managers. Ruth Harper at Culture24 in Brighton and Charles Chuang at TELDAP in Taiwan.

Their job is to manage and stimulate communications between Culturemondo members, encouraging them to share info into the new social network they are building in preparation for the roundtable and making sure the website is up to date. They will also be filters for keeping people up to date with work is going on in our sector around the world.

Charles is the contact for Asia and the Pacific and Ruth is the contact for Europe and the Americas. They will both work closely with Ilya and other TELDAP staff on the coordination and run up to the roundtable.

Ruth and Charles will also work to update the website. This work will focus on dissemination of information about the next survey and roundtable but also trying to make sure that past events are better evaluated.

The community managers will be in post until Summer 2009.

2. A new survey

A third **online survey** of cultural portals to benchmark the sector and evaluate impact (web 1 and 2 style). The survey will be conducted and evaluated by Culturelink in Croatia who have experience of this kind of work. The results will be used to inform the agenda of the next roundtable.

3. Sponsorship and support

Funding for a 4th roundtable and another survey has been secured from TELDAP in Taiwan, with additional support from Lab for Culture, Culturelink and Culture24.

A face-to-face ISC meeting was held at the Culture24 office in Brighton, UK in the first week of September to plan the next phase of activities in detail.

The proposed 2008 roundtable will be held in Taipei, Taiwan and an excellent location for the roundtable has been found in the city centre that is both large enough but still has an informal, creative edge. It is inside the Hua-shan Culture Park, which is owned and managed by the government but was originally built as a wine factory.

A site visit took place in March 2007 by images of the proposed venue can be found on Flickr <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ilyaericlee/sets/72157604403361777/>

The physical environment and location of the event are an important element in its success and the Hua-shan Culture Park is ideal for presentation style conferences or an actual large roundtable. There are additional smaller breakout rooms, space for catering and onsite refreshments and a lovely outside area to relax in.

4. Taipei 4th roundtable December 10th to 13th 2008

The focus of the roundtable is on a combination of what we are calling 'the basics' – stuff everyone needs to know, mixed up with some future ideas around mobile and 'inside out' collections. An important aspect of what we have planned is the local perspective from Asia/Pacific.

The title of the event will be:

New Thinking, New Models - digital culture and heritage roundtable.

The overall theme is 'How the old feeds the new' and is structured in order to maximise debate, networking and inspiration. Speakers include:

- **Geert Lovink**, founding director of the Institute of Network Cultures, is a Dutch-Australian media theorist and critic. He holds a PhD from the University of Melbourne and in 2003 was at the Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies, University of Queensland.
- **Gilberto Gil**, Brazilian singer, guitarist, and songwriter, known for both his musical innovation and his political commitment. Since 2003, he has been serving as his country's Minister of Culture in the administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.
- **Gino Yu**: Director of Digital Entertainment and Game Development at Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Along with the Community Managers Charles and Ruth, there would also be another consultant, Joy Tang, from onevillage Foundation who will be responsible for all the local arrangements.

5. Evaluation and reporting

Lab for Culture have agreed to sponsor the roundtable by offering to document and evaluate the proceedings. Katherine Watson will be the person who will lead on this and the results will be a joint Lab for Culture/Culturemodo publication (made available online for download).

Appendix: URL's of Steering Committee members

Jane Finnis (Chair)
Culture24 (United Kingdom)

www.24hourmuseum.org.uk
www.show.me.uk
www.icons.org.uk

Ana Duran
Culturenät Sweden (Sweden)

<http://www.kultur.nu/index.asp>

Hans Nissens
Oxynade (Belgium)

<http://www.oxynade.com/>

Seb Chan
Powerhouse Museum (Australia)

<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/>
<http://www.dhub.org/>
<http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/>

Ilya Eric Lee
culture.tw (Taiwan)

<http://www.culture.tw/>

Aleksandra Uzelac
Culturelink (Croatia)

<http://www.culturelink.org/>

Rafael
Cubarte (Cuba)

<http://www.cubarte.cult.cu/>

Katherine Watson
Lab for Culture (Netherlands)

<http://www.labforculture.org/>