Monday, 29th October
9:00am – 11:00am

Panel on Innovative Technology for the Documentation and Protection of Cultural Heritage

Chairlady:
Mrs. Eleanor E. Fink,
Senior Philanthropy Advisor
World Bank Group, USA

Abstract:

Prevalent among the many threats to our cultural heritage are looting, theft and destruction during times of armed conflict. It is shocking that illicit trafficking in art and antiquities is a multibillion dollar industry and the third largest criminal industry behind only drugs and arms. It is often connected to money laundering and terrorist activities! Despite international conventions, looting and theft remains a lucrative industry!

Key to the protection of our cultural property is documentation based upon internationally accepted standards and methods. International law enforcement agencies such as INTERPOL and EUROPOL and cultural heritage attorney's have pointed out that without proper documentation it is almost impossible to recover cultural objects that have been taken illegally. How can we be more efficient in documenting and reporting looted cultural property? Are there groundbreaking ideas and new global technologies that can dramatically impact how we document, track, and protect cultural heritage? Are digital libraries, like Europeana, the Memory of the World and Library of Congress, providing a solution? What are the current obstacles and challenges?

This panel comprised of innovative technology leaders will look to the future and present bold ideas and scenarios that could make a significant difference in documenting, protecting and preserving our cultural heritage. In addressing challenges, we will learn that technology is not an obstacle to the visions presented. What stands in our way is often lack of imagination, an unwillingness to use open systems, lack of agreements on international standards, absence of worldwide supporting policies, and innovative partnerships.

The Importance of Documentation in Recovering Looted or Stolen Cultural Property through Legal Proceedings

Keynote:
Mr. Thomas R. Kline,
Of Counsel
Andrews Kurth LLP
Washington, DC, USA
http://www.andrewskurth.com/people-ThomasRKline.html

Abstract:

Experience, it is said, is a cruel teacher, it gives you the examination first and then the lesson. Throughout history, we have learned the painful lesson that cultural property is difficult to protect from armed conflict, from natural disaster, from greed, from hatred. When objects fall victim to organized looting or simple theft, recovery is problematic and successful recoveries are rare. Without documentation, recovery is almost impossible, especially after an object leaves the local area where it had resided.

Hence, the search for justice in cases of looting or theft of art or cultural objects begins and ends with the quality of the documentation. Again, throughout history, the efforts to document objects before they disappear have been less energetic, less systematic and less thorough than the accomplishments of the looters and thieves. When documents and photographs of the objects are available, such as in the case of the famous mosaics from the church of the Panagia Kanakariá in Lithrangomi here in Cyprus, recovery becomes possible, although even with excellent documentation, a protracted judicial process may still be required.

Since 1989, I have been working on cases involving restitution of displaced art and cultural objects, representing the Autocephalous Greek-Orthodox Church of Cyprus, the Republic of Cyprus, other governments, churches, museums, families and estates. I plan to discuss a variety of these cases that I have handled as well as other disputes to dramatize the significance of documentation to the recovery of looted and stolen objects.

As a general rule, ***the better the quality of the documentation, the easier the recovery***. Although this principle would seem self-evident, it has several less obvious corollaries: the more vivid the proof of prior ownership or quiet possession – particularly clear and distinct images – the easier it will be to find an object, to convince the holder that the piece was illegally taken, to persuade authorities anywhere in the world to cooperate in the recovery of the object and, ultimately, to recover the object.

I applaud efforts that create digital libraries and ease open access to cultural heritage information, that preserve existing documentation on the basis of internationally recognized standards and that create images and data bases of missing cultural objects and of those that may be the subject of dislocation in the future. For this reason, I am very pleased and honored to participate in the 2012 EuroMed conference and to learn more about the developing technologies and capabilities for documenting art and cultural objects. Most important in this area, is the organization of worldwide efforts to ensure that these new innovative technologies are put to use and do not become yet another failed promise.

3D-Digitalization, Documentation, Presentation and Preservation of Cultural Heritage

Keynote:
Mr. Ben Kacyra, CEO CyArk
CyArk Founder
Oakland, CA, USA
www.cyark.org

Earthquakes, floods, acid rain, rising sea levels, acts of war, theft, vandalism, terrorism and mankind's unending appetite to build a new threaten the integrity and existence of heritage sites and structures. Physical conservation of all these treasures before they are destroyed permanently is unlikely; the resources required to save every site are too scarce.

Digital preservation of heritage sites and structures provides some relief to this dilemma. Using 3D imaging technologies including 3D laser scanning, photogrammetry and high dynamic range photography --many of these developed for industrial and military purposes, heritage sites and structures can be documented and preserved for posterity. The completeness, efficiency and high accuracy of digital preservation methods aids future conservation efforts and can inform analysis for remediation efforts.

However, with the growing use of 3D technologies within the heritage sector, new challenges are arise around the accessibility, curation and storage of this information. How do we ensure that new digital formats are presented to the public in an accessible way? How do we ensure these data sets remain accessible in the future, forever even? What steps can we take to properly curate digital data and how do we store these new types of deliverables? Can digital methods help to reduce theft and looting? Is it possible to develop a standard for digital data management?

Beyond applications for cultural heritage site documentation and conservation, digital measurement and visualization technologies are used more and more for education, interpretation and dissemination purposes. CyArk, a non-governmental, non-profit organization based in California has pioneered the use of 3D laser scanning, high resolution and high dynamic range photography and digital modeling for digital preservation purposes. To date CyArk has digitally preserved more than 70 cultural heritage sites. CyArk disseminates this information to the public freely with visually rich web and mobile application experiences. The use of these technologies has proven to be successful in aiding the heritage management sector as well as engaging the digital generation in history and culture, and engaging diverse groups in the heritage discussion.

This session will discuss the way in which CyArk is using available digital technologies for the capture and presentation of heritage sites, as well as discuss the ways in which this data is being preserved for the future. The presentation will include case studies from several of CyArk's global projects.

==========

Cultural Heritage Identification

Keynote:

Mr. John Greaves "Mr.RFID"
Senior Director, Orion System

The challenge so many of us face is how we can use rapidly developing technologies under a single umbrella to protect cultural property. Would the ability of monitoring artefacts and creating secure domains for storing such information make a difference? A number of important initiatives have been developed that go some way towards the identification, the location and the cataloguing of artefacts and properties, Europeana, ICOM and UNESCO' s use of Object ID, etc.

In the commercial world, and in government, threats similar to those that exist in our community have driven a rapid pace of innovation that has now enabled us to grasp the many developments in the use of advanced telemetry tools to set about reducing the incidence of cultural theft, spoilage and diversion across the World.

An approach has taken shape that is innovative in respect to methodology, technology, and partnerships. CHIP (Cultural Heritage Identification Partnership) based on advanced telemetry can monitor artefacts that are threatened and create secure domains for items large and small in any cultural scenario, building or in transit.