OpenGLAM Working Group

Swiss GLAMhack Awards 2018
Zurich, 28 October 2018

News from the Open Cultural Data Community

What happens when heritage institutions such as museums, libraries and archives come together with software developers, researchers, Wikipedians and designers to investigate the potential of digital cultural heritage and more specifically of open cultural data? Some answers to this question have emerged during the yearly Swiss Open Cultural Data Hackathon, which took place at the Swiss National Museum from 26 to 28 October.

For the first time, the Swiss Open Cultural Data Hackathon was accompanied by a public event during which the projects were presented to an audience and subsequently evaluated. The visitors could try out what the teams had put together during the weekend and vote for their favourite project. A jury of six professionals working in heritage institutions or in the field of open data and computer science selected the best projects in three categories focusing on the greatest gain of knowledge provided, on the best approach used to highlight a dataset and on innovation. In total, twelve projects were presented during the awards. They are presently at the mockup or prototype stage and will hopefully be further pursued over the coming months.

"Perfectly made" and "Biggest round of applause"
The project enabling the greatest gain of knowledge is a mobile application conceived for art museums. "Ask the Artist" functions with voice assistance and gives visitors the opportunity to have a conversation with an artist. When standing in front of a painting for example, the visitor can ask the author questions such as "What is the subject of your painting?", "When did you start painting?" or "Who taught you painting?". The answers are drawn from the museum's database – or in this specific case from the SIKART online Lexicon on Swiss art – and read out loud by the mobile phone. Contrarily to voice assistance devices which draw information from the internet, the data provided by "Ask the Artist" comes from secure sources and guarantees reliable information. The jury particularly appreciated this application because it enables the audience to gain information in a very natural and intuitive way. The project was also chosen by the audience as the "biggest round of applause".

"Stunningly beautiful"

"Zurich Historical Photo Tours" is the project that best highlights open cultural datasets. This mobile application takes the visitor on a journey through Zurich's history by proposing themed tours based on historical photographs from the collections of the Zentralbibliothek Zurich and the Swiss National Museum. After choosing a theme, the users are shown where to go on their mobile map. Once they reach the given perimeter, a historical photograph of the place appears on their phone. The users can take their own picture of the location and layer the old and new photos to compare them. They can get further information about the location by sending their photo using the application. "Zurich Historical Photo Tours" puts historical photographs back into their geographical context and creates a dialogue with the present. It permits the audience an interactive outdoor experience. The project group imagined a further function for the application, allowing the users to identify old photographs which have not yet been localised with geo data.

"Brand new"

The most innovative and independent project is "Walking Around the Globe – a VR Picture Expedition". The team created a virtual exhibition space which could be visited with Virtual Reality glasses. One of the two exhibition rooms is themed around a globe from the Sternwarte collection of the ETH Zurich. Thanks to 360° photographs of the object, a 3D model could be visualised in the centre of the room. On the walls the visitor can look at works from the Graphische Sammlung of the ETH, all having a thematic link to the globe. An audio-guide integrated in the glasses provides information on the works. The ideas behind "Walking Around the Globe" are diverse. For museum professionals, it provides a tool to visualise spaces during the preparation of an exhibition. Virtual exhibitions also permit to show works which cannot usually be presented because of conservation issues or simply a lack of space in the museums. For the audience, this project gives the opportunity to step in the mind of a curator and put together one's own exhibition.

List of all the projects:
- Art on Paper Gallery
- Artify
- Ask the Artist Dog Name Creativity Survey of New York City
- Find Me an Exhibit
- Letterjongg (Adaptation of the Mahjong Game)
- New Frontiers in Graph Queries
- Sex, Crime & Pub Brawls in Early Modern Zurich
- Swiss Art Stories on Twitter
- View Find (Library Catalog Search)
- VR Visits Zurich
- Walking Around the Globe – 3D Picture Exhibition We-Art-o-nauts: How to Provide a Better Art Experience
- Wikidata-driven Multilingual Search in the Library Catalogue
- Zurich Historical Photo Tours (formerly: Historical Tours based on Geo-data)