

# DigiCULT .Info

Issue 1 A Newsletter on Digital Culture

July 2002



## WELCOME TO THE NEWLY LAUNCHED DigiCULT.INFO NEWSLETTER

**D**igiCULT.Info, the newsletter of the DigiCULT Forum project, presents a mix of news items, announcements and articles that cover technologies development and culture. In this issue, you will find a summary of the first DigiCULT Forum, that took place in Barcelona on May 6th, dealing with the topic, "Integrity and Authenticity of Digital Objects". An interview with one of the Forum participants, Luciana Duranti, draws attention to the urgency in solving the problems related to this subject.

Note that the second Forum, on Digital Asset Management Systems (DAMS), will take place on September 3rd, in Essen, Germany, within the context of the AIIM Conference @ DMS EXPO Europe. Please see further for details.

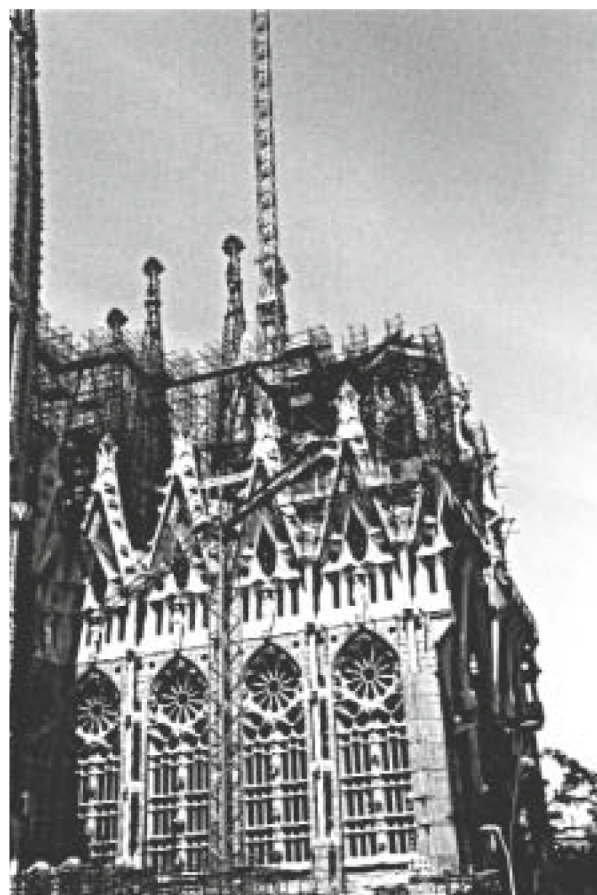
DigiCULT Forum has in place a Steering Committee to monitor and advise on the progress of the project. In this issue, Paolo Buonora, Italian State Archives, a member of this Steering Committee, will provide his thoughts on where the focus of the DigiCULT Forum should lie.

*On behalf of the DigiCULT-team,  
Guntram Geser, John Pereira, Friso Visser*

## DigiCULT TECHNOLOGY WATCH

**D**igiCULT Forum, launched in March of this year, as an IST Support Measure (IST-2001-34898), will establish a regular technology watch for the cultural and scientific heritage sector. Based on the results of the strategic study 'Technological Landscapes for Tomorrow's Cultural Economy' (named DigiCULT), and building on the knowledge and expertise of over 50 cultural heritage and technology experts, DigiCULT Forum will monitor the technological developments relevant to, and in the cultural and scientific heritage sector.

The DigiCULT Forum, will discuss and analyse current and future trends in several technology domains, that have or will have, an impact on digital culture. Along with monitoring technological developments, DigiCULT Forum will also broaden its scope to include, organisational and financial aspects, exploitation, as well as future trends in the area of new services and user demands, pertaining to the cultural domain.



*All photographs of Barcelona were taken by John Pereira,  
© Salzburg Research.*

## INTERVIEW

'The fast pace with which technology for creating and recording of information is developing, threatens the authenticity of records. Archivists, and governments, and other institutions, who rely on these records are losing control, I would not hesitate to call the situation disastrous', states **Luciana Duranti**.

*Find interview on page 3*

# HOW SERIOUS IS THE THREAT?

AN INTERVIEW WITH PROF. DR. LUCIANA DURANTI, PROJECT DIRECTOR INTERPARES,  
PREPARED BY JOOST VAN KASTEREN

‘The fast pace with which technology for creating and recording of information is developing, threatens the authenticity of records. Archivists, and governments, and other institutions, who rely on these records are losing control, I would not hesitate to call the situation disastrous, states Luciana Duranti, professor at the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver (Can.) and director of the International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems, InterPARES.

Duranti, states, ‘Records are generated by society and need to be preserved, sometimes permanently as instruments of accountability. They are a means of protecting the rights of individuals, companies and corporations, and serve as a source of information for historians. Hence, it is very important that their authenticity be guaranteed.’

Authenticity, has two components or aspects, one is the identity of the record, i.e. is it what it claims to be. Is that card in the Land Registry, indeed a record of your ownership of a piece of land. The second aspect is integrity; the completeness of the record. For instance, does it show that your neighbour has the right to cross your land to go to his barn. Records and the way they are kept – the archives – have to live up to a judicial ‘rigueur de control’, i.e. a judge must be able to establish their authenticity beyond any doubt. Duranti: ‘If you cannot prove the authenticity of a record in the Land



Luciana Duranti in Barcelona: ‘I would not hesitate to call the situation disastrous...’

Registry, that can have enormous financial consequences. You can say, that the authenticity of records, and the ability to prove it, are essential in the functioning of any society.’

The authenticity of records is threatened by the ease with which records can be changed, without leaving any trace. Duranti: ‘Everyone knows it is very easy to erase the wrinkles on a digital photograph. You can also delete whole chapters from a text without leaving any trace, or change the date on a document. There is also the growing need to make record creation as convenient as possible, for instance many local governments are introducing interactive record creation where a user can request and receive planning permission completely online. The planning permission may still be stored in paper form, but the whole creation process up to the issuing of the paper form may be

performed electronically.’

Duranti, makes the point that, ‘...these technologies are introduced in our offices without anyone so much as wondering about the possible consequences. No one is telling civil servants that they have to scrupulously register changes in documents and other records, and that these registrations should be audited. Nor is it, that they deliberately tamper with records – although that happens as well – but through their actions they jeopardize the authenticity of records.’

Such an example, was the Canadian Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia. In investigating the database which stored all the message traffic between headquarters and troops in the field, the commission discovered that some entries

*Continued next page*

## SOME WORDS FROM THE DigiCULT FORUM - STEERING COMMITTEE

‘For cultural heritage organisations collecting and storing is no longer sufficient. The changing dynamics in the demand for access, requires closer attention on the changing user needs. And not just the traditional users of creators, preservers and historical researchers, but also the undefined users of tomorrow, especially in the commercial context.

Cultural heritage organisations charged

with the preservation of our common history, must, along with the onus of ensuring the authenticity and integrity of their objects, also react to the challenge of making possible or at least leaving open, every potential future use of their objects.

As a member of the Steering Committee in the DigiCULT Forum project, I am honoured and pleased, to carry on from the remarkable work of the initial

DigiCULT work, embodied in the Final Report of 2001. I look forward to the contribution the DigiCULT Forum project will make through their ‘technology watch dog’ role, in assisting the cultural sector, in facing these technological challenges and opportunities.

*Paolo Buonora,  
Italian State Archives*

*Continued from page 3:*

### How Serious is the Threat?

contained no information, that serial numbers were missing or used twice for different messages, along with other anomalies. The result being, that the Commission could not prove nor disprove whether the data had been tampered with, leading to the dismissal of the database as a reliable source of record keeping.

‘In general it is very easy to tamper with electronic data’, states Duranti. ‘Even a 14 year old kid can get into a poorly secured system, which most systems are. And, they do it, because the development of ethics has not kept up to pace with the advances in technology, as the spread



of computer viruses around the world reflects. As a system manager, you can never be sure that records retrieved from the system are the same as the records that you stored. It is very difficult if not impossible to prove that the record had not been tampered with.’

Because, most governments and other institutions have no systems in place to guarantee the identity and integrity of records, Duranti, is against plans to destroy

paper records, once they have been migrated to electronic media. ‘Organisations –including governments– do so, to save storage space, but that is very short-sighted. If you keep the records on paper, you will still have something when your electronic records have become unreadable due to obsolescent technology

or the media used. If you do want to save space, migrate the documents to microfilm. It might be old-fashioned in the age of digitisation but in terms of authenticity it is a proven technology.’

Microfilm and paper will have to do until systems and protocols have been developed that can guarantee the authenticity of records, not just for the time being, but for the next 500 years or so. Duranti: ‘A lot of research as to be done to develop criteria and guidelines for authenticity, and specify them for different kinds of electronic records. InterPARES with its involvement of 25 governments can also play a role in implementing these specifications. We have to succeed. If not, chances are that societies may come to a grinding halt, because the authenticity of official records cannot be guaranteed anymore. That is how serious it is, at the moment.’

The first DigiCULT Forum was held in Barcelona on the day pre-ceding the **DLM-Forum**. A report on the DLM-Forum 2002 is available (for subscribers to their newsletter) through Project-Consult.

<http://www.project-consult.com>

**From the conclusions of the European DLM-Forum 2002 @ccess & Preservation of Electronic Information: best practices and solutions Barcelona, May, 6th-8th, 2002**

The successful DLM-Forum 2002 confirmed its role as the leading event for archivists, records and information managers of the European public sector. Since the mid 1990’s the DLM-Forum has evolved as a platform for multi-disciplinary cooperation between archivists, public administration, research and the ICT industry, with a view to identifying and promoting best practices and concrete solutions. This 3rd DLM-Forum extended the participating community and thereby enriched the exchange of information and expertise on electronic document and records management. This event brought a new quality of partnership, in particular with the ICT industry. The Forum also launched the European DLM network initiative. The acronym DLM was newly interpreted as ‘Document Lifecycle Management’ to reflect the broadened scope of this initiative.

<http://www.dlmforum2002.org>