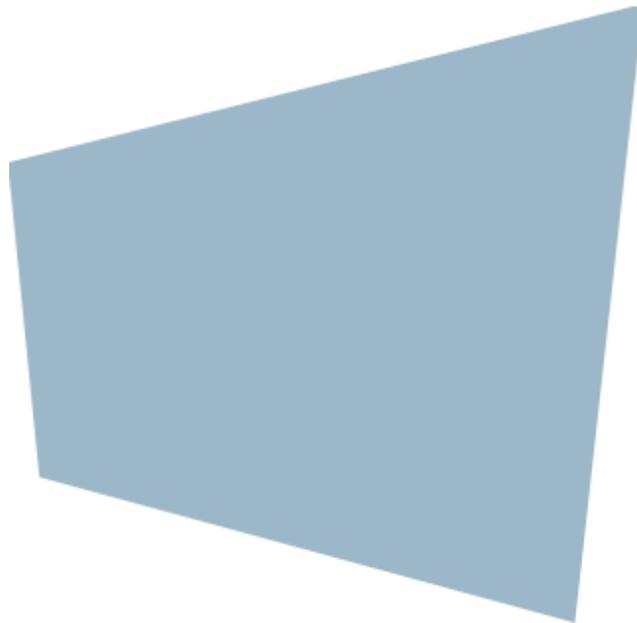




## DigitalExhibition Training

# Deliverable D5.2 Evaluation Report



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Starting in November 1<sup>st</sup> 2008, Digital Extra ([www.digital-extra.eu](http://www.digital-extra.eu)) is a 24 month Life Long Learning project funded by the European Commission Life Long Learning Programme [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc82\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc82_en.htm)

Digital Extra is a Transfer of Innovation project within Leonardo da Vinci programme transferring experiences from the ECMADE ([www.ecmade.net](http://www.ecmade.net)) an eTEN project (2003-2004) to new users. Digital Extra is the final test report.

Digital Extra aimed at developing two on-line training courses on how to create exhibitions on-line. The outcome of the project is a basic course for the ALM (Archives, Libraries and Museums) and VET (Vocational, Educational and Training institutions) sectors as well as for tourist agencies specialised in cultural heritage. The second course is an advanced course, which is intended for experts in cultural institutions and the ICT/media sector.

This document, the deliverable D5.2 Evaluation Report, is a summary of evaluation work that Digital Extra has been carrying out on-going throughout the project. Evaluation work has been divided into

- Process evaluation of the partners work
- Pedagogical evaluation of the outcome of Digital Extra (Camtasia and CMS)

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## A. ONGOING PROCESS EVALUATION

### 1. Summary of the ongoing evaluation of Digital Extra.

At the beginning of the project it was decided that a multi-voiced democratic evaluation was most appropriate for analysing and feeding back on the work of the Digital Extra project as it developed. This was to consist of a number of sources of information including semi-structured interviews, meeting records etc.

As the project developed it was decided that the most efficient way of recording work undertaken and the positive and negative issues that arose from this was through a e-mail sent before each project meeting with questions to partners.

The main benefit of this was that it was relatively quick to complete but enabled participants to focus on their contributions and evaluate their own progress. It also meant that more time was available for the development of the technical exhibition tool, the content and the supporting course modules. The regularity of the e-mail questions and discussion also helped maintain the momentum of the project.

The presentation of an interim evaluation report at each meeting (see attached Power-points) enabled partners to recognise the contributions of each other and appreciate the pressures that they were working under. This was particularly important as a wide range of institutions were involved including universities, museums and archives, designers and administrators, all working in different cultures and environments. It appears from responses that this appreciation led to a growing collegiality. The evaluation carried out prior to the Madrid meeting encapsulates this. In response to the question 'What helped you deal with these issues?' (in relation to the organisation of work), respondents noted

- Colleague support
- Collaborating and communicating with partners
  - Feedback and support when developing modules and writing interim report
- Good project co-ordination
- Working with people who know what they are doing
- Organisation of work with time schedules and deadlines
- Sensitivity to exacting workloads.

As will be seen below such sentiments were commonly expressed within this project. Evaluations show an appreciation of the impact that a missed deadline or slow response to an urgent email request could have. There is no evidence, however, that these problems disappeared entirely.

The evaluation also had a pedagogic intention in that it enabled partners to reflect on the ways in which they were working together and develop strategies for maximising their efficacy. For instance it is clear that those colleagues who could meet and work together between project meetings were able to develop approaches to producing materials that were based on consensus rather than compromise. 'They all agreed that their work so far had been a process of thinking together rather than one of compromise to come to a common solution' (interview KWP 10<sup>th</sup> March 2009).

The value of face to face meetings to enable the organisation of testing sessions, meetings and the final conference becomes apparent when this was disrupted by the ash cloud that made attendance at the Madrid meeting impossible for all but three partners. The subsequent responses to the final questionnaire reflect this.

- Lack of face to face discussion
  - made organisation of Brussels meeting difficult- more reliant on emails and Skype
  - Effected planning for the 'afterlife' of the product
  - Denied us of the opportunity to concentrate on project business easier- away from distractions of everyday work

The Madrid evaluation reveals a long list of specific tasks that needed to be dealt with in that meeting which were subsequently discussed through Skype and email.

As for the value of this evaluation process as a whole two participants stated 'I might not have pulled myself together to think about and write about this otherwise' and recognised that the process provided 'a realistic picture of what we have done, haven't done and could have done instead' (responses to email questions prior to London).

## 2. Common themes that arose

In the first evaluation the following challenges were noted.

- Managing all our different expectations (practical and cultural)
- Challenge to museums of working with new media
- Working with new partners
- Suitable ICT concepts for presentation of range of different objects
- Write in ways that will fit together
- Guard against technology having too much influence over content-needs and ideas of museums must come first
- Admin, accounts, receipts etc
- Practical problems of arranging meetings and workshops including managing different cultural expectations
  - Where to accommodate
  - Who to invite - broad audience for such a specific topic
- Working at a distance (Montserrat particularly).

Broadly speaking four areas emerge here that run through the whole project.

- 1.) The need to manage expectations and develop a common purpose with a shared view of the final product - this was largely facilitated by effective and at times frank communication and discussion
- 2.) Communication and deadlines
- 3.) The need to balance technical and design ambitions with the need to communicate 'museum' curatorial content effectively
- 4.) The need to manage the practical and financial arrangements fairly and openly and organise meetings to maximise their effectiveness

## 3. Management of expectations and developing a common purpose with a shared view

A good example of clarifying expectations and developing a common view arose early in the project. Prior to the meeting in Pammukule some partners had a discussion about the purpose of the testing questionnaires and the type of information that they would reveal in order to help product development. The issue of objectivity was discussed. The importance of developing collaborative models of working and the importance of trust and respecting partners' expertise was also recognised.

By London there is strong evidence of a developing culture of collaborative group work with a common goal and clearly identified roles. In answer to the question 'What has helped you in your work?' the following was reported.

- Strong evidence of group work and discussion focusing around Dornbirn; Encatc and PLAB; PLAB and Jamtli
- Positive appreciation of work by other project members, strong management and collaboration
- Positive Feedback from previous meetings and presentations in Pammukkele
- Prompt answers to queries
- Experience of observing 'It created a focus on what all our work means in action, face to face, with the target group. Planning, discussion and other background work is one thing, face to face outcome is another.'
- Clear divisions of labour.
- Clear 'to do' list

The development of a common view and purpose can also be seen in the targets that partners identify for themselves. These become much more specific after Pammukkele and London with a clear focus on module development. The need to have 'completed ground work so that details can be concentrated on' with swift and clear communication was emphasised in London.

It was also clear by the London meeting that targets to be reached by the end of the project needed to be considered in order to focus partners on medium and long term goals. The responses to this also indicate a shared view and approach which emphasises quality, usability, and reflexivity

- Good quality modules well marketed
- High quality exhibitions useful in daily work
- Develop useful courses for internet-exhibitions with contributors
- To make a useful product for many people
- Keeping to agreed targets - work in on time etc including model exhibitions
- Frequently reflecting on why we do this and for whom
- Good Test reports of use to us and others

By Madrid partners were clear and focused about what was necessary to achieve the final outcomes of the project.

- Partners need to be clear of contributions
- Final report demands high level of communication to be effective
- Keep up positive feeling that what we are producing is good and useful
- Keep evaluative comments in proportion but don't ignore expert advice
- Clear and sound definition of advanced course and how cope with technological change. So don't rely on specific software
  - Process more important than specific technical outcomes
- Work seriously on CMS
- More wiki-less email
- Explore advantages of Digital Exhibitions over static especially in template 4
- Need an imaginative model of exhibition- provocative images and voice and text

#### **4. Communication, time and deadlines**

From the start the need for effective communication was recognised to ease the flow of information and increase clarity. One of the major factors supporting work at this stage was

contact with colleagues, email and input from partners. This is a common feature of all evaluations.

Managing time and the competing priorities of work is also recognised as a major issue and so the need to be realistic, plan and expect delays was recognised early on. The solution proposed was to keep communicating. In London problems of insufficient discussion about the 3<sup>rd</sup> template, the failure to receive material on time and not being able to work face to face were recognised as problems in making progress.

As targets become more specific and the production of materials more detailed the evaluation showed growing pressures of time. This was particularly obvious in the evaluation before Madrid. In response to the question 'What issues arose for you in relation to the content of the work?' partners noted

- Time schedule
  - Modules late
- TIME-
  - more time for editing and refinement
  - To discuss what a digital museum might be, the working practices of different ALMs
  - To do the work properly (modern times!)

Team work has already been discussed in terms of creating a shared vision but it also requires time. The need to have more time to understand the work and personal backgrounds of partners, to improve discussions, improve communication - to know when, how and who will do what were identified as group targets in London. This was summarised as 'Keep up team work'

The other negative factors that hindered the progress of the project related largely to factors effecting partners personally (illness, parenting etc) or pressures in their institutions.

## **5. Balancing technical and design ambitions with 'museum' content**

Technical problems, their identification and solution have been a major theme throughout the project. In fact once the potential of the templates and CMS were recognised and the first exhibitions and modules developed concerns about the balance of ambitions fell away and focus turned on the problem of making the CMS, templates and modules work effectively.

The evaluation before Madrid illustrates this well. In response to the question 'What issues arose for you in relation to the content of the work?' partners noted

- Technical problems with modules and templates
- Technical problems with powerpoint in Camtasia for graphical displays and films
- Text and content of screen casts needed careful editing to maintain high quality
  - Correct terms, words definitions etc

By Brussels the issues had become even more specific

- Problems explaining needs for each session in Brussels as new staff involved- Lack of contribution to this from partners
- Technical problems with social networking tools- solved through research
- Cutting down contributions to speed-geeking session

- Making the potential of DE visible- required the use of different stories
- To secure future user very specific information needed about the location of the server and how long it would be active
- Technical problems delayed completion of exhibitions- solved but took extra time
- Management problems about payment of key-note speaker and lack of response in discussing agenda and advanced session. Solved once contributions were made. National Agency helpful

It was a dominant feature of this project that problems, once identified were overcome as the quality of the conference and finished products testifies.

## **6. Practical and financial arrangements**

In the first meeting the need to adequately fund partners was recognised and clarification given regarding interim payments. Individual partners negotiated with the co-ordinators about specific details of payment and contracts. Particular problems were the calculation of salary costs and getting accurate information from employers.

Problems in reporting costs and providing receipts occurred again in the London meeting. Some concern was also expressed about the work packages and the amount of time left to complete them.

As the project developed it became apparent that some partners were running out of time. The amount of time needed to arrange a meeting seriously ate into the time for development and evaluation of partners from London and Madrid. The production of the course modules on Camtasia and the production of the final filmed record of the project shot in Brussels took the time spent by colleagues from Tinta way beyond their allocation.

## **7. Conclusion**

The ongoing evaluation shows that the success of the Digital Extra project was largely down to a developing sense of collegiality and team work typified by a willingness to share expertise, ideas, content, technical expertise and time to the realisation of a common product that was valued by all partners.

The organisation and management of the project by the co-ordinating institution and the meeting organisers facilitated an open dialogue in which differences of opinion were aired and consensus reached. The ongoing evaluation contributed to this process. The disruption of the ash cloud clearly effected the ease with which the project was completed because it denied most partners the face to face discussion that was valued so highly and the experience of another test session. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that this had a negative impact on the final outcomes of the project.

Predictable problems over time, deadlines and pressures from work outside the project were largely overcome but there has been an investment of time from some partners above and beyond their contractual obligations.

## **B. Educational Evaluation: What have we learned about Digital Extra?**

### **Diversity, Variety and Complexity**

#### **1. The qualitative evaluation**

This evaluation was presented at the final conference for Digital Extra in Brussels. It consists of an overview of discussions, surveys, meeting notes and test sessions. It summarises the main lessons learned through these consultations that influenced the development of Digital Extra conceptually and practically. In particular it tentatively indicates an appropriate pedagogy for digital extra that should be adopted in future training programmes. The main lessons learned here have been incorporated into the production of the teachers' notes.

In summary Digital Extra attracts diverse audience. This diversity is related to the varying needs, skills levels and experiences of the individuals and institutions interested in using the digital extra tool. It was decided, therefore, that a flexible approach had to be taken to the preparation of training materials that would have to be used in bespoke training courses to meet such diversity of background and need. A collection of short modules was therefore developed, tested and modified and teachers' notes provided so that in future such courses could be run effectively and efficiently.

#### **2. What types of Museums, Libraries and Archives wanted to be involved?**

From the very start it was obvious that digital Extra would not be able to address the needs of a homogenous group. The museums and archives invited to the Dornbirn seminar included The National Archives of the Principality of Liechtenstein, the City Archives of Feldkirche and Dornbirn, The Library and Museum of Reuthe, a textile museum, a press museum and the Jewish museum of Hohenems amongst others. In London participants ranged for small local independent museums with very little funding (Barnet) through Middlesex University Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture (MoDA) to a museum of national standing (Geoffrey Museum). This range of interests could be soon in Pammukele, Madrid and Brussels also. Whilst all these organisations emphasised the need for practical training before they could use digital extra each institution presented a different profile that would have to be met if training were to be effective.

The diversity of this range of expertise and need can be typified as follows

- Small independent museums with volunteer staff, little money and great enthusiasm
- Medium sized museums with their own web presence but needing digital exhibition technology
- Libraries and archives with varying degrees of experience and expertise but needing to rise their profile with in their communities

### 3. What were the initial issues for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Sector?

Following the Dornbirn seminar a questionnaire was sent to participants. They were asked what would encourage them and deter them from using digital extra. The main issues raised were expense and time but they would be encouraged by cross- regional projects, collaborating with colleagues on practical work and receiving greater visibility and more hits on their websites.

In London colleagues discussed the diversity of ALM personnel who would be trained in Digital Extra. This ranged from trained, experienced ALM workers with a level of museum expertise and ICT capability who may only want or need digital exhibition template training at one end of a continuum to volunteers with little formal training but whose skills and enthusiasm ALMs wanted to tap - not to mention to access their 'free' labour at the other. These volunteers were identified as a previously unrecognised group for training in Digital Extra.

The need to consider the age profile of trainees also became apparent through these discussions particularly when considering volunteers though no assumptions can be made about the appropriate experience and expertise that they could bring.

### 4. What type of modules and what content would be appropriate for different levels of expertise?

Feedback from experienced museum workers at the London meeting indicated that short, well focused modules were needed so that individuals could select what they wanted or needed from a menu. The level of content in modules would need to be graduated carefully as basic introductions to the work of museums and archives and digital archiving were of little use to them but crucial for some volunteers and untrained staff.

Feedback from all participants, regardless of their levels of expertise stressed the need to maximise involvement in modules by including more activities and questions.

The consequences of this for **module** design were to reduce the length of modules from 30 minutes to a maximum of 10, include more examples of websites that could be explored with good quality digital exhibitions, include more activity both within the modules and as an introduction and follow up, and include carefully placed questions to stimulate thinking and debate.

Clearly the problem then faced was how to determine basic and advanced **course** levels and how to audit skills and experience so that the effectiveness of tailor-made training could be insured. Flexibility became key to course development with a collection of modules that could be combined in different ways and interacted with at different levels by different groups of people or individuals. It also became clear that face-to face training with a pedagogy that maximised interaction would be most effective. The modules could then act as support materials, information sources, examples and stimuli for debate.

Teachers guidance notes that would suggest introductory and follow-up activity to cater for this diverse clientele became essential.

## 5. Developing the modules: What did the experts have to say?

In order to develop a flexible and effective approach to future training courses two pedagogical experts were asked to review the modules that had been produced on Camtasia as a result of the discussions reported above. There were two problems with this test. Firstly because of pressure of time both colleagues had to review the modules together in one 3 hour session which did not replicate the way in which the modules would be delivered in a training situation. Secondly they only reviewed the training modules and did not have the opportunity to make a digital exhibition and so experience the goal at which the modules were aimed. Both of these problems were eradicated when testing a selection of modules and the exhibition tool in Madrid.

Nevertheless the pedagogical experts were able to offer valuable advice. Both colleagues had considerable experience of highly developed interactive on-line learning tools and so indicated areas where user expectations about module design and interactivity might be misleading and lead to disappointment (linking buttons etc).

Concerns were raised over

- the monotony of the presentation of materials as they were all presented by the same person in the same Camtasia style. In future training courses the modules would need to be used in relation to more varied, interactive learning approaches and fewer viewed at one time!
- Some of the diagrams, pictures and explanations were not clear
- Care must be taken in selecting modules for a training programme to ensure cohesiveness and consistency in training and to avoid repetition of material and ideas. Progression in learning must also be carefully designed
- Questions need to be raised at various appropriate places during the modules and not left until the end
- Consideration must be given to cultural sensitivity. In one module material was used to demonstrate the importance of context to reading people or objects that showed a woman in a way that some might deem offensive.

When tested in a more realistic training setting in Madrid participants found modules appropriate and engaging and suitable for their needs. In Brussels an interactive storyboarding activity was undertaken prior to the production of an online exhibition which clearly engaged participants both in handling images of historic material critically and in considering issues raised in the planning process for a digital exhibition. This modelled the way in which such activity might be undertaken in a taught course.

## 6. Testing the Exhibition Materials: How can different levels of expertise be met?

The exhibition templates were tested in Pammukele, London, Madrid and Brussels (see testing reports). The tests assisted in debugging and developing a user friendly interface.

Pedagogically different strategies needed to be developed to meet different levels of expertise. It was always difficult for one instructor to provide training for a mixed group of participants even with the support of other team members.

Those participants with a high level of IT skill and experience found the templates easy to use and intuitive. When problems arose they were able to overcome these themselves. They liked the choice of templates and the possibilities that they offered and recognised their potential for exhibition design.

Those with less expertise needed careful guidance stage by stage. They showed great satisfaction at success but were frustrated when problems occurred with the materials. In Madrid this was a particular problem because the testing had to be carried out by project members who had not been directly involved with the technical development of the templates and so they were not familiar with strategies for correcting problems.

The consequences of this for course design are that participants need to be given adequate time to play with the materials in constructing their exhibitions so that they can explore design possibilities fully and have individual support as necessary. Instructors must know the software intimately so that they can help overcome the problems as they occur.

### **7. What model emerges as appropriate for an advanced course?**

In order to provide maximum flexibility and interaction the model adopted for the advanced course was that of 'speedgeeking'. Here a number of experts present latest developments in ICT, Web 2 and museology to participants with an established level of experience and skill. Participants rotate in small groups to a number of presentations by experts. They are given about 10 minutes to listen in a concentrated way and 5 minutes to ask questions. They then move on.

Pedagogically this increases participation as participants are in small groups; it facilitates focused small group discussion through pressure of time and enables a range of content to be shared.

The method was tested in Brussels. It was found that careful logistical organisation and tight timing were necessary and that presenters had to be very focused on the essential points that they needed to get across. Participants reported a high level of concentration and satisfaction with the range of material even if the pressure of time left some issues under explored.

The fact that no modules are produced necessitates constant up-dating of the approach and allows, therefore, maximum flexibility in meeting participants needs. It does, however, require that these needs are carefully audited.

### **8. What lessons have been learned overall about Digital Extra?**

In summary we have learned that people approach Digital Extra with a whole range of expectations often related to their needs. It is important to explore these expectations and meet them honestly. Digital Extra is a flexible, straightforward tool for creating digital exhibitions but it obviously has limitations. The templates have been designed to allow for a variety of styles of exhibition but individuals and institutions will have to conceive of their exhibitions in the ways facilitated by these templates. Training is therefore advisable to maximise the potential that digital extra provides.

Any training delivered must provide maximum flexibility in relation to students' levels and their institution's needs. Careful negotiation and needs assessment is advisable before a course is run to ensure participants receive maximum benefit from their training.

Modules must be used carefully. If used as part of a course they provide useful background and support materials but they do not replace interactive teaching and interpersonal learning themselves. If consulted at a distance they need careful written introduction and a limited number should be viewed at one time.

All Digital Extra materials must be fully contextualised so that their purpose and potential are fully understood and their relationship to each other appreciated. This is particularly important when considering the links between the modules and the exhibition materials

All trainers must themselves be trained in the principals of Digital Extra, the selection and use of the modules, interactive discussion based pedagogy that fully appreciates and utilises the skills and experiences of the participants, and be able to quickly unravel technical problems encountered when making online exhibitions using the templates.

## **9. What pedagogical approaches best suit Digital Extra?**

From the preceding evaluative discussion certain pedagogical principles emerge that have been used in writing the teacher's notes and serve to summarise the pedagogical evaluation of this project.

- Pedagogical approaches must be alert and responsive to the diversity of students' needs and fully engage learners through exploiting their own experiences.
- Modules must be used to develop, fascinate, challenge and extend understanding of museums and the rich potential for Digital Extra exhibitions.
- The pace of training must be adjusted to support and challenge through the careful choice of materials and engagement with the exhibition templates.
- Learners should be given some freedom to chose materials and experiences appropriate to their level and needs
- Learners' success should be facilitated in designing digital exhibitions through careful instruction with plenty of time to play, experiment and explore with one-to-one support on hand.