Digital Cultural Heritage

Chern Li Liew
Victoria University of Wellington
School of Information Management
Invited book chapter in:

**Business Planning for Digital Libraries**

Professor Mel Collier (Ed.)
Catholic University of Leuven
Belgium
(Leuven University Press, 2009?)
Overview

- Digitisation of Cultural Heritage Resources
- Some Issues/Concerns: A New Zealand Perspective
- Prospects?
Creating Digital CHR/Digital Memory

- Archives, Libraries, Historical societies, Museums
- Technologies VS.

Social and Political Factors
What are CHR?

- Tangible Artefacts
- Intangible Attributes
Issues/Concerns: NZ Perspectives

- Sporadic effort and lacking in coordination
- NZ Digital Content Strategy
  (www.digitalcontent.govt.nz)
  Foreshadowed in 2005; launched in 2007
Issues/Concerns: NZ Perspectives

- Māori cultural property and cultural preferences
- Concepts of authenticity and *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship)
- Electronic legal deposit
Key Issues/Concerns

Robert Sullivan (2002) proposed that

“A cornerstone of an Indigenous Digital Library is that the indigenous communities themselves control the rights management of their cultural intellectual property. Local cultural protocols need to be documented and followed prior to the creation of digital content, and communities must be consulted with regard to the digitisation of content already gathered by institutions of social memory.”

Hunter, Koopman and Sledge (2003) wrote,

“It is essential that traditional owners be able to define and control the rights and access to their resources, in order to uphold traditional laws; prevent the misuse of indigenous heritage in culturally inappropriate or insensitive ways; and receive proper compensation for their cultural and intellectual property. Finally, it is essential that indigenous communities be able to describe and contextualize their culturally and historically significant collections in their own words and from their own perspectives.”

Key Issues/Concerns

- Coordination of effort among cultural heritage institutions/the GLAM sector, governmental authorities, and other agencies
- Cultural intellectual property and rights management
- Consultation with the cultural heritage property owners and stakeholders
Coordination of Effort

- NZ Digital Content Strategy
  One of the key provisions is a programme aimed at achieving cross-sectoral collaboration

  Government agencies, cultural actors, legal bodies, education and research sector, commercial actors, various interest groups/stakeholders
Cultural Property/Rights Management

- Adaptation to digital context
- Right balance between rights protection and freedom of information
- Delicate issues concerning the ownership and custodial of traditional indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage

- In an earlier study of the needs of users with regard to digitised New Zealand CHR, the issue of cultural sensitivity emerged as one key concerns

Cultural Property/Rights Management

- Bicultural policies
- The Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous People (1993)

- Protection in the digital realm?
- Communal morality
- NZ Digital Content Strategy - Public awareness programme
Consultation

• In New Zealand, *iwi* (tribes) and *whanau* (families and extended families) are typically responsible for the preservation and protection of traditions and cultural *taonga* (treasures), with the concept of guardianship central to the issue of cultural and intellectual property.

• Potential clashes of interests concerning the use and guardianship of indigenous resources.

• Dorner, D, Liew, C.L and Yeo, Y.P (2007): Main concerns among historical researchers was that certain historical documents might be considered cultural *taonga* (treasures) which certain Māori groups strongly believed to be scared and should not be disseminated publicly — Importance of **Consensus Building**
Consultation

**Reciprocity** in collaborative collection building?

- Cedar Face and Hollen (2004): First Nations Collection project with the digital library team ‘giving back’ to the people by providing them with access to their CHR in the form of bound copies of documents
  

- Roy and Alonzo (2003): involving indigenous groups in the analysis and indexing of the items gifted to a digital library
  
Prospects

- Integration and sustainable structure

- Contextualisation of indigenous knowledge in its cultural and historical perspectives – ‘Textured Sculpture’

- Integrity and trustworthiness