

# BERLIN CHARTER

## ON CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN CULTURAL HERITAGE AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH IN THE DIGITAL AGE

At the International Conference on Digital Heritage and Innovation, Engagement and Identity  
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adopt the following principles

### **PREAMBLE**

These principles, first proposed by the CIVIC EPISTEMOLOGIES and RICHES projects, are open to all to endorse and all interested partners are encouraged to adopt the Declaration/Charter.

### **THE PRINCIPLES**

#### **1. To develop strategic dialogue and collaboration**

Engendering dialogue is essential in unlocking new opportunities of collaboration. The dialogue between research bodies, digital humanities, cultural heritage institutions, digital libraries, e-Infrastructure providers, citizens' associations, and the artistic and educational sectors is still relatively infrequent. They seldom share their specialist knowledge and data outside their immediate groupings, whether professional or interest-based.

Larger bodies in the cultural sector, including holders of business archives as well as national public heritage bodies, should be encouraged to open up their innovation potential through informal dialogue with interested volunteer users and experts.

Sharing a common terminology will help the dialogue.

## **2. To pursue openness as the means to increase broad participation**

The signatories share their commitment to the values of openness, collaboration and wide participation. The access to the knowledge and data of cultural heritage and humanities domains is of crucial importance. This should be realised through open practices and transparent procedures.

Open Access, Open Content, Open Data, Open Source and Open Standards are elements of a desired common reference framework that enables citizens and researchers to develop their insights together.

## **3. To acknowledge Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as enabler of creativity, co-creation and innovation**

New technologies are very powerful tools in the processes of creativity, co-creation and innovation and need to be promoted further in the cultural heritage and humanities sectors.

The signatories are committed to make their communities aware of both the opportunities and the ethical implications of new technologies.

This is particularly important because the creative and cultural sectors are often lacking in technical know-how and are mistrustful of new technologies, and these limits aggravate their difficulties in engaging with wider audiences.

## **4. To contribute to the establishment of a common policy framework for research infrastructures**

A common policy framework among the European providers of research infrastructures, including e-Infrastructures, is also necessary to progress in the domain of citizen science. It should address open access to the infrastructures and open participation in the development of enhanced services.

The access to research infrastructures and e-infrastructures is an important element for encouraging and facilitating the mediation process of citizen science. This is increasingly relevant for digital cultural heritage and humanities research.

There is also a socio-economic potential in engaging research infrastructures to work with civic society. Advanced services for the implementation of intellectual property rights frameworks is a priority.

## **5. To preserve traditional curation skills and to develop novel digital curation abilities**

New skills are required in our changing society particularly with regard to the phenomena of new, social media.

Underinvestment in skills development and the loss of traditional skills leads to the risk of an innovation deficit. Lack of diversity and choice across design, production and marketing, could result in missed employment and commercial opportunities. Creating the conditions for new civic and professional networks of understanding, and building capacities to grasp opportunities can lead to economic and social benefits.

## **6. To address the following and societal and ethical issues:**

- How can humanities research, in which the citizen is invited to play an active role, support re-conceptualization of CH?
- How can the participation of citizens in research influence the ways in which cultural heritage reflects, constructs and enriches individual and collective identities?
- In which ways can these increasingly fluid identities be represented more comprehensively, within a context of continuing social change?
- Who has rights on the results to decide on access to, use and re-use of such results?
- How should political-, social-, gender-, religious-, and cultural-related aspects be taken into account when launching a citizen science initiative?

- How can citizen contribution be attributed and acknowledged, while balancing privacy and security matters?

**7. To explore research and innovation perspectives and to make progress in the following directions:**

- a) Stakeholders from the cultural heritage, humanities, ICT and e-Infrastructures sectors will be involved in the identification of common priorities for shared R&D and validation initiatives that foresee the engagement of citizens. These priorities will inform joint action plans for research and validation, contributing to improve initial strategic research agendas developed in the two projects. Examples of focus points include digital preservation, geo-enabled services, end-user interaction, annotation and content creation, semantic enrichment, standards and mechanisms to ensure interoperability of digital cultural repositories.
- b) Establishing shared research agendas and action plans will help to avoid redundancy and maximise the efficient use of resources across the sectors, across national boundaries and across initiatives, while still respecting individual national contexts, in terms of legal, social, cultural and economic priorities and constraints, which may impact on collaborations.
- c) Shared validation activities, pilots and implementation initiatives will contribute to evolve from theory to practice, creating a sound basis for continuing investments from public and private sources.

### **MEASURING PROGRESS**

As best practice evolves and demonstration and validation are achieved through joint implementations and pilots, we need to measure progress in key areas against key indicators. The following indicators are considered important and relevant:

- i. the growth of citizen science initiatives in the cultural heritage and humanities domain,
- ii. the presence of multidisciplinary projects where social science and humanities is informing ICT development and vice-versa,
- iii. the dissemination of the use of e-Infrastructures by the cultural heritage community, humanities research and citizen organisations,
- iv. the participation of artistic and creative practices in ICT and humanities research as a “catalyst” for innovation and as a “driver of open and participatory processes”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/starts-ict-2015-when-arts-innovate-connect-and-transform](http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/starts-ict-2015-when-arts-innovate-connect-and-transform)