Foreword

During the past three decades digital technology has slowly but steadily gained recognition from the cultural organizations and memory institutions of society. As a result of this increased engagement, there has been a shift in the role of heritage institutions from being repositories and keepers of heritage into that of active information and communication hubs. In the Information Society, communities are embracing cultural tourism as a potential generator of economic activity for the 21st century. It is expected that the combination of digital cultural heritage and e-tourism will work as potential catalyst and trigger of opportunities for economic revival. It is likely that these advancements will result from the materialization of new service-oriented heritage industries.

Digital cultural heritage is a term used to describe artifacts such as digital collections from museums, archives, libraries and other cultural institutions. The term is also indicative of activities involving the creation, preservation, and dissemination of heritage through education, entertainment, research and tourism-oriented digital applications.

Though closely related to artifacts, the heritage industries themselves are not totally object-oriented but rather emerge as part of the search for subjective and highly personal meaningful experiences usually associated to memories and nostalgia. Therefore, the discipline of digital cultural heritage cannot be treated as a simple entity but must be understood as a complex system where diverse knowledge communities converge to create multifaceted phenomena. The wide span of coverage requires careful inquiry in areas such as art history, design, business planning and marketing strategy. Additional areas that must be surveyed include the human sciences, particularly anthropology and psychology, and a diversity of theories and techniques employed in the communications fields that are constantly being developed and revised.

Written by respected professionals involved in the creation of this digital cultural heritage, this volume seeks to fill an urgent need for accurate and timely information about the latest developments in the field. Professional and managerial personnel involved in developing infrastructures and administrative policies, as well as those who work in the arts, humanities and sciences either as researchers or producers will find the book to be a resourceful compilation.

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