Chapter 3
“Warp Drive, Mr. Sulu”: The New Relationship With Digital Heritage

ABSTRACT

The chapter focuses on the relationship between cultural heritage and digital heritage, and in particular on the peculiar characteristics of digital heritage derived from physical heritage. This kind of heritage poses technological and methodological knowledge and representation matters: It has own documental, historical, and aesthetic values, but it depends from tangible and intangible reality. Digital heritage cannot substitute physical heritage but keep and represent its values. Follows issues related to heritage digitalization, visualization, and transparency. In addition, the relationship with people has changed: They experience digital heritage with an aware cultural participation, and from the “marriage” between real heritage and its digital expression, new important potentialities rises.

INTRODUCTION

In 1999, in the UNESCO’s World Heritage Magazine, Stone described “Virtual Heritage” as “the utilization of technology for interpretation, conservation and preservation of Natural, Cultural and World Heritage” (Stone 1999). According to this definition, ‘virtual heritage’ is not in opposition to traditional one – it does not substitutes cultural heritage in a virtual dimension – but it is a tool for heritage interpretation, presentation and conservation. Virtual heritage and cultural heritage live together.
Afterwards, from the publication of the Charter on the Preservation of the Digital Heritage (UNESCO, 2003) many pages have been written on the concept of “Digital Heritage”. The Charter explains: “The digital heritage consists of unique resources of human knowledge and expression. It embraces cultural, educational, scientific and administrative resources, as well as technical, legal, medical and other kinds of information created digitally, or converted into digital form from existing analogue resources. Where resources are “born digital”, there is no other format but the digital object. Digital materials include texts, databases, still and moving images, audio, graphics, software and web pages, among a wide and growing range of formats” (Art.1).

The rise of Digital Heritage is favored by ICT growth, the decreasing cost and the ease of use of digital tools. They have made the most advanced technologies available to an increasingly wide number of users, thus favoring their practice and experimentation. Scholars are prepared to test and decline tools and applications; academics work with digital awareness and consciousness, according to a “meta-medium” logic – using the word coined by Manovich (2013).

This context favors a new relationship between cultural heritage and digital heritage. Digital heritage from built heritage maintains a conceptual relationship with the original physical datum, it does not substitute the reality but it helps its knowledge, understanding, communication, and management.

BACKGROUND: THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Communication, Technology, and Digital Culture for the Conservation and
Enhancement of the Architectural Heritage
Architectural Surveying, Modeling, and Representation* (pp. 446-475).
www.igi-global.com/chapter/communication-technology-and-digital-culture-
for-the-conservation-and-enhancement-of-the-architectural-
heritage/133424?camid=4v1a