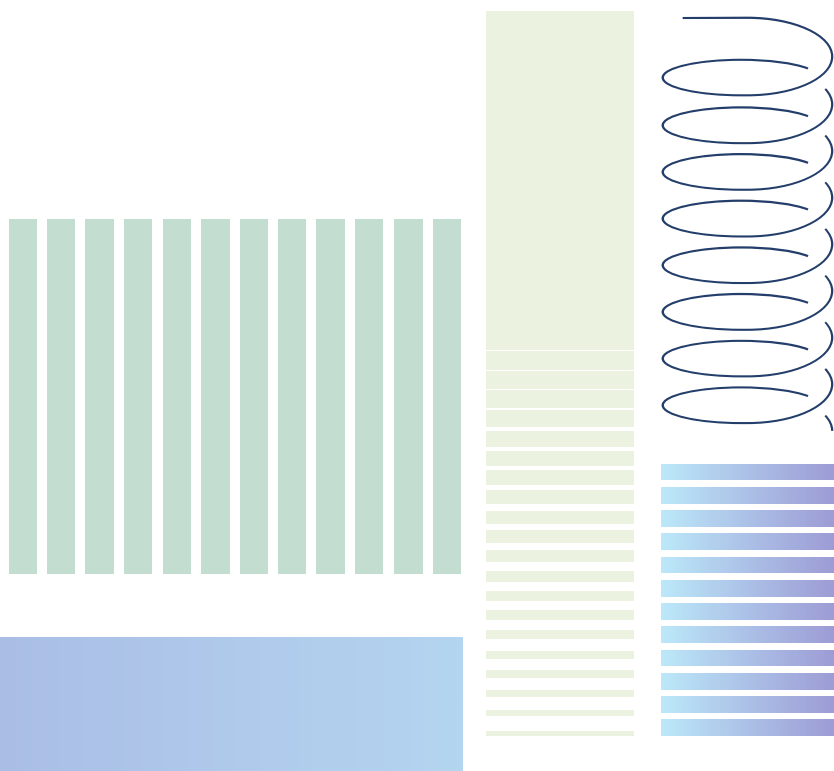


## D8.9. Guidelines about digital data curation strategies for small heritage institutions



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List of acronyms	
<b>AAT</b>	Art & Architecture Thesaurus
<b>CERES</b>	Colecciones en Red de Museos de España (Online Collections from Spanish Museums)
<b>CH</b>	Cultural Heritage
<b>CIETA</b>	Centre International d'Étude des Textiles Anciens
<b>GLAMs</b>	Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums
<b>ICOM</b>	International Council of Museums
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technologies

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This deliverable shows the results from involvement with museums housing textile collections, with the goal of helping them to improve their digital assets management. This document presents the outcome of three workshops and a Best Practices compendium, together with recommendations for future developments.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage organizations produce a vast quantity of heterogeneous datasets which are often held inside their walls and are not open to the public. Even when they are, sometimes they are not easily accessible, for technological and organizational reasons. This has led to the loss of information essential both for the general audience and researchers. The problem gets worse when dealing with textile collections that require a high specialization to document and conserve them.

On the other hand, heritage institutions (often alluded to as GLAMs – Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) are evolving towards digital supports, especially in well-funded, national museums that are being able to carry out large digitization projects successfully. Nevertheless, when it comes to small and medium size museums the results are seldom equally successful, due to lack of human resources, knowledge or funding.

SILKNOW aims to provide answers for some of these challenges, thanks to digital tools and approaches, combined with scholarly expertise (from silk specialists, art historians and historians, textile engineers...). One of its goals is to provide methods and best practices for heritage institutions that want to take their textile collections into the information and knowledge society. It pays particular attention to institutions that lack the technical resources and staff to venture into ICT and research.

This document is organized as follows: firstly, we describe the relationship with other deliverables of the project (Section 2). Afterwards, we give an overview of the state of the art regarding museums and open access (Section 3). Section 4 presents the methodology

followed to develop the best practices that are shown in Section 5. The last sections are the conclusions and references.

## **2. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER DELIVERABLES**

In SILKNOW's first policy brief (D1.3) [1], we already described how, within museums, most information lies in siloes, disconnected from similar objects held in other collections. Institutions preserving silk heritage have been producing large amounts of digital data, which in some cases are poorly tagged, variously formatted, in different languages, of random quality and usually inaccessible for the wider public. When some GLAMs have made the decision to publish that info, they have not reached the desired accuracy and quality due to lack of technical resources and ICT skills. New methods to extract automatically meaning from these huge and heterogeneous digital databases are already available. Adopting data standards and semantic web technologies can make data interoperability possible. To do so, we need GLAMS in general, and textile institutions in particular, to adopt best practices that can help them to improve their digital assets management.

On the other hand, Task 8.3 had one of the main project goals in mind, namely, to improve small heritage institutions management of their digital assets. D8.4, the Exploitation Plan established that SILKNOW will provide strategies and best practices for better curation of digital data in textile heritage institutions, taking into account the recent EU policies on digital cultural heritage and by providing them ground rules to standardize digital data curation [2]. A related Key Performance Indicator (KPI25) indicates that the project will reach at least "25 EU textile heritage institutions interested in enhancing access to their digital contents".

The Data Management Plan (D8.6) deals with data gathered by the project. It summarizes how SILKNOW makes this data interoperable, findable and accessible [3]. Finally, in the same work package, Deliverable 8.10 will show the main requirements and advantages for cultural heritage institutions in collaborating with Europeana. This deliverable is very much related to D8.9 as it is also based on the results of the workshops held to prepare it.

### 3. STATE OF THE ART

Museums, traditionally charged with the task of preserving the memory of the past, are facing a digital transformation by making information accessible and understandable for current citizens. The practical implementations of the digital transformation vary greatly from one context to another, of course. Many issues are at stake, in these processes: ownership and funding models of those collections, intellectual property rights involved, information resources (be they catalogs, inventories, mere accession lists, or any kind of intermediate models), and their availability in digital formats, etc.

Since cultural heritage institutions are likely to hold and generate a true wealth of information, one of the many aspects in this discussion within GLAMs, or cultural heritage (CH) institutions, has been the adoption of open access to data (or lack thereof). Definition of “open” in open access is a contested topic in itself and a source of frequent confusion, but by now we can simply take it to refer “a policy or practice that allows reuse and redistribution of materials for any purpose, including commercial” [4].

As a growing number of cases and literature shows, small and medium institutions have also adopted (sometimes ambitious) schemes of digitization, open access and interoperability for the information about their holdings [5-8]. The GLAM community is paying more and more attention to these issues, as shown by the excellent work carried out by OPENGLam, an international network of heritage professionals. With support from Creative Commons, during 2020-2021 they are working to prepare a Declaration on Open Access to Cultural Heritage. This effort was preceded by a survey that illustrated, among other things, perceptions about the main benefits and challenges of “going open” for CH institutions.

On the other hand, once information is digitized (not just the images, but also the catalog records) and incorporated into a structured data repository, sharing it across institutions is really at hand, in most cases. Instead of only expecting users to find museums’ websites out on the web, an additional way to proceed is to aggregate these data into larger repositories. These shared repositories ensure the practice of better cataloguing and information management strategies, since some degree of data planning and standardization is required to guarantee the successful integration into an interoperable repository. They also increase

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visibility for small and medium-size institutions (that usually do not have such a big public profile among the general audience), guaranteeing a permanent exercise of our rights of access to culture, in spite of failing institutional abilities during any given crisis. Another side-effect of large repositories is an increased sustainability of digital resources, against data obsolescence and in order to ensure appropriate usage of the required investment. Searching in a repository that contains dozens of millions of records seems daunting, but it is no worse than any ordinary internet search. Nevertheless, standardization is a prerequisite to produce homogeneous queries and obtain meaningful results from them.

A shared challenge in this process, as in any other interoperability effort, is the extreme heterogeneity of cataloging practices. Standards are available for textile objects, but they are seldom applied in digital catalogues because of their complexity and specialization. In the opposite situation, records structured according to general data standards are too unspecific to suit the needs of textile items. This means, for instance, that substantial parts of the most meaningful information (weaving techniques, decorative patterns, styles) are stored within general description fields, often as plain text. That makes finding similarities or matches between objects much more difficult. In this regard, to the best of our knowledge, there does not exist any silk specialized thesaurus. There is already a number of vocabularies and thesauri used for cataloging textiles, such as the Getty AAT [9] (non-specialized, but excellent as an open structure), the CIETA vocabularies [10] (specialized in historical and multilingual textiles), or the Europeana Fashion thesaurus [11] (multilingual but dedicated mainly to fashion). The result is a multitude of vocabularies, in different languages, that are difficult to standardize. The need for a multilingual thesaurus about has already been noted by the specialized literature, within museum studies [16].

Therefore, the trend towards open access and the integration of information in inter-institutional repositories makes cataloguing standards and interoperability necessary. Sadly, the vast majority of small and medium size museums lack the expertise to achieve these goals. SILKNOW provides the recommendations in this document as a useful foundation for such efforts, within textile museums and collections.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

In order to develop a document of best practices on documentation and digital assets management for textile collections, SILKNOW organized three workshops during March and April 2021. They addressed cultural institutions specialized in textile collections but also to museums that possess textiles among many other artistic or artisanal holdings. To facilitate discussion, each workshop was set up to take place in one language: Spanish, Italian, and English.

The first contact with potential workshop participants was an online survey, disseminated among 73 institutions that had textile holdings in their collections. Expressions of interest and answers arrived from 9 Italian museums, 11 Spanish ones, and 20 professionals interested in the workshop in English, including participants from Mexico, the United States, Portugal, Switzerland and Georgia, among others. The survey was based on a Google Forms questionnaire, made up of two main blocks. On the one hand, questions associated with the documentation and cataloguing of collections; on the other, questions focused on open access and digital data management. The answers received do not amount to a statistically representative sampling of the entire museum sector in Europe. The survey was not intended to provide that, in any case. It simply aimed at providing the organisers with a basis of empirical information, in order to group common concerns and prepare the workshop discussion.

Results showed that most of the information held in museums is digitized or going digital. The majority of collections count on both inventories and catalogues. Nevertheless, the exact ratio varies greatly from country to country; e.g. in Spain a 70% of the respondents had their collections only in inventories. Regarding cataloguing standards, the surveys clearly showed a scarce adoption thereof. While some museums reported that they follow standards like SPECTRUM [12] or CERES [13], the majority creates specific (and even idiosyncratic) catalogue records that fit the features of their collections, and the needs or resources of the staff in charge of them. When it comes to controlled vocabularies, the majority of the respondents use one or another, but they are not textile specific. A small minority report to use the CIETA and ICOM Costume vocabularies [14]. In fact, when asked about the specific challenges of inventorying / cataloguing textile collections, terminology was one of the main



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issues raised. Finally, regarding who performs or oversees these tasks, answers mostly identified curators and documentalists as the staff members in charge.

The second part of the survey was about challenges and opportunities for open access. One first issue is the intellectual property of the museum objects or their associated digital information. A full range of situations was reported, from museums that are provide full open access to their entire collection, to others that employ various kinds of licences following their own, national standards, while others retain full copyrights on their collections. When asked if open access is a priority for them, most of the respondents answered affirmatively, but some of them were not sure how to proceed about it. The majority did not know details regarding the possibility to export the data in their database, beyond simple operations like exporting them in general formats such as Excel or .csv files. On a more conceptual level, we asked them how they deal with dubious or unspecific information within their records. This is a common source of trouble for repositories that host information coming from different institutions, since each one deals with uncertainty in different ways. Most said that they try to be as accurate as possible, and when that is not possible to an acceptable extent, they add comments in a general description field within the catalogue record.

With these results, the SILKNOW team prepared a structure for discussion that would be replicated in each workshop. Workshops were divided in the same two blocks, one focused on documentation and the other on digital access. In these workshops, the idea was to act as facilitators for discussion between museums<sup>1</sup>, helping them to share their experiences in order to reach common ground.

The first workshop was held on 15th February 2021. It was attended by 13 professionals specialized in textile collections, some of them coming from 8 Spanish museums, such as:

- Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid
- Museu de la Seda de Moncada
- Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, Valencia
- Museu del Disseny, Barcelona
- Centro de Documentación y Museo Textil, Terrassa

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<sup>1</sup> We would like to express our gratitude to all participants, both independent scholars and museum professionals.

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- L'Etno, Valencia
- Patrimonio Nacional
- Conselleria d'Educació, Cultura i Esport (regional government, Valencia)

The main findings from this first workshop were the following:

- Regarding cataloguing and the use of controlled vocabularies, they want to be as exhaustive and accurate as possible, but they have to find a balance between targeting the specialists or the general public.
- Cataloguing is not approached in a systematic way, especially in museums that are not specialized only in textiles. Catalogers often change, or they might not be really specialized in textile heritage. Specific projects or exhibitions, plus any other changing circumstances, end up being the reasons to catalog one set of pieces or another, and to do so in one way or another.
- In this regard, it is important to understand each museum's own circumstances: its museology and the history of its collections. These elements greatly impact the information about its holdings.
- When it comes to online access to their collections, all museums identified it as a priority. Most of them said that they would prefer to focus on quantity (that is, having more digital information accessible online) than quality (ensuring high consistency and depth in their data), currently. The aim is to facilitate a widespread accessibility, and then gradually add more detailed information.
- There is a shared fear of making their catalogues accessible to other repositories, if that means losing visibility for the owning institution, or not sharing in any revenues that this might generate. It would make the information to seem as more important than the institutions and professionals that generate it.

The second workshop was held on 25th February and was carried out in Italian. It gathered representatives from 9 small museums, all of them belonging to Catholic dioceses:

- Museo Diocesano di Caltanissetta
- Museo Diocesano di Cuneo
- Museo Diocesano di Monreale
- Museo Arcidiocesano "G. Boccanera" di Camerino

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- Museo Diocesano di Genova
- Museo Basilica San Sebastiano
- Museo Diocesano di Massa Carrara - Pontremoli
- Museo Diocesano di Padova
- Museo Diocesano di Reggio Calabria

The main findings were:

- Cataloguing is an essential tool for safeguarding artefacts and especially a valuable aid after a catastrophic event (such as an earthquake).
- Catalog records should be updated constantly.
- It is important to share local experiences and seek common guidelines, using tools such as a shared thesaurus.
- In this regard, they agreed on the need for a new inventory to complement the CEI catalogue (carried out under the auspices of Italy's national department for ecclesiastical cultural heritage and historical buildings), with cataloguing by personnel with specific skills in textiles.
- There is a common need to train cataloguers, conservators and documentalists constantly, but also to train parish staff, who are custodians of most church textiles.
- Sharing information is important, as in this workshop, where scientific dissemination within the reach of all users was emphasised.
- It is also necessary to share information among users, in order to rediscover the close link between the textile artefact and its local surroundings, reinforcing their mutual connections.
- Tools like the ones provided by SILKNOW can create a meeting point between the museum and its users.

The third workshop was held on the 6th April, and gathered participants from Europe, America and Asia. The 15 attendees included representatives from 9 museums and one EU-funded research project, plus 2 independent scholars, including:

- Museo Textil de Oaxaca, Mexico
- Philadelphia Museum of Art, United States

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- Haus der Seidenkultur, Germany
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art, United States
- Klosterkammer Hannover, Germany
- Olympic Foundation for Culture and Heritage, Switzerland
- Fachhochschule Potsdam, Institute for Urban Futures, Germany
- State Silk Museum, Georgia
- Centre for Textile Research, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- Mingei research project
- Museu Nacional do Traje, Portugal

This workshop was the most eclectic one as we had not only a variety of museum professionals (documentalists, registrars, taxonomists, conservators and curators) but also museums of different typologies and from Europe, Asia, Latin America and the United States.

The main focal points were:

- Cataloguing is always a work in progress.
- Using controlled vocabularies helps to minimize differences between data sources.
- Thesauri should reflect language evolution and diversity.
- Sharing information through layered approaches allows to cater differently to the needs and rights of different users.
- Plagiarism was identified as a serious concern, be it from researchers that fail to acknowledge the authors or sources of their information, or from fashion designers that appropriate historical or indigenous designs without giving credit to them. Economical compensation could be requested, in some cases, but proper attribution and recognition should never be omitted.

The discussions that took place within these three workshops led to the document presented in the next section.

## 5. RESULTS

The guidelines for the documentation and digital data curation for textile collections can be found in the Annex.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Access to cultural heritage is recognised as a basic human right. Its enjoyment and recognition by the community makes them become its custodians, valuing it as worthy of protection. Despite textiles -and especially silk- play a key role within the history and current life of so many European communities, it is insufficiently recognised as an important kind of cultural heritage, of both tangible and intangible nature. Moreover, its conservation is a very complicated task, given its own physical fragility, and its dispersion in many small institutions.

On the other hand, the digital challenges faced by museums vary greatly, depending on their size, financial and human resources, etc. Small and medium size museums have little access to digital tools and repositories that can allow them to share their data beyond their own walls and websites.

Digital open access and data management is therefore one of the major challenges facing museums. Indeed, a large number of culturally significant historical artefacts have been digitized and made available online. This means that experts in cultural heritage, and often the general public, now have the ability to search for and access information about artifacts instantaneously, even when these are stored in distant parts of the world. However, each institution has its own cataloguing practices, that sometimes change, even within the very same museum. The resulting information can therefore vary greatly. The inherent heterogeneity of these data results in the creation of silos, incompatible with each other, and therefore mutually incomprehensible [15]. Data heterogeneity is further increased by the multiplicity of languages used. This makes the discovery of these data even more difficult, as it requires users to master various languages and very different information management systems, as well as explicit or implicit data models. To begin to overcome these issues, museums need to talk to each other, as they are the first to suffer these problems. SILKNOW provided three workshops as a forum to share, debate and propose best practices that should help many museums that share the same situations.

The resulting guidelines are quite broad, since the extreme heterogeneity of collections, institutions and contexts makes it very difficult to provide more specific advice. However, we are sure that this first step is already a valuable contribution for a number of goals, such as

the consolidation of museums in the digital arena, through a widespread adoption of digital open-access policies; the support and training to museum professionals tasked with its cataloguing and dissemination; the recognition of textile heritage, its value and complexities; and the need for its increased protection. National plans or international charters should play an instrumental role in this regard.

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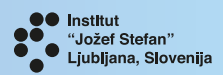
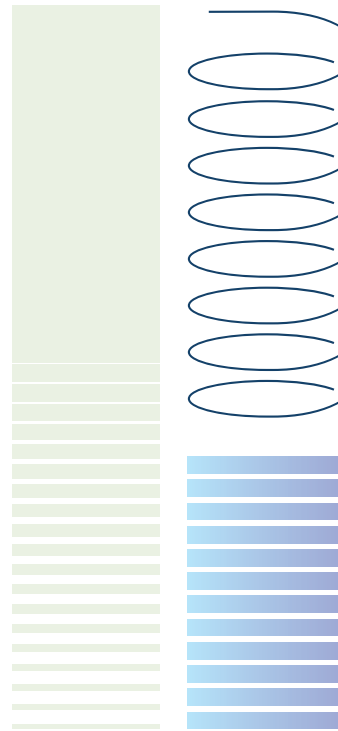
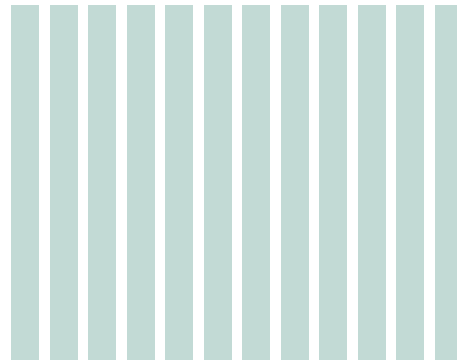
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## **Best Practices for the Documentation & Digital Data Curation for Textile Collections**

The following guidelines have been prepared, first and foremost, with small and medium size museums in mind. Of course, large national museums may also benefit from them, although their needs and resources tend to be quite different.

# Prioritize access over quality

## Should my database be perfect? Should it? Should I?

This sounds scary for most of us working in the humanities. We love details and feel insecure about providing information that is not in accordance with high academic standards. As explained below, in the current situation, this is more a hindrance than a danger, and we suggest beginning -or continuing- to publish your data as much and as openly as you can.

- If you think your database is a mess, you are not alone. Just having your data on an Excel file is much better than the average situation. Things happen along the way, sometimes for good, sometimes not. However, it is better to begin with something imperfect than to wait for the ultimate online catalogue.

*"We are looking forward to reviewing our catalogue"*

- Don't wait until all your information looks perfect.
  - Welcome to the boat. This is the permanent situation. **Cataloguing is always a work in progress.**
  - If this is what you have, prioritise making images and a bit of textual information available, even if they are far from perfect.
  - If you can have professionally made photographs, that's great. If you only have old or uneven quality ones, go ahead and publish them, that's better than nothing.
- Establish and follow some workflow priorities, for your online catalogue publishing. For instance, publish first what is on show (permanently or in temporary exhibitions); second, loans and new accessions; and last, all the rest... Trying to do all at once will not work.
  - Another common approach is to bear in mind three possible kinds of pieces in your collection: **top-notch**, **second-tier**, and (a huge amount of) **minor pieces**. It makes sense to treat their information in different ways within your database: for instance, providing much more information about the former than the latter. At least, publish all that you exhibit; it will be good enough, usually.
- Don't blame yourself about publishing information that you feel insecure about. Since your cataloguing is not perfect, let the users know about it. For instance, with a general disclaimer in the search interface, or with reminders for specific parts of your data. Accept imperfection and ask for understanding. It's better than hiding the collections, nobody knows for how long.
  - Be open to feedback and disagreement from the users. They may provide useful corrections that. Researchers will contact you, asking for help or giving advice. Academia will knock at your door, and that should be fine. Non-experts may want to reach the museum, too, and they have a right to do so; quite often, that heritage belongs to them, as well. Provide simple, specific ways to interact with information on the catalogue. Most times, an email address for comments will be good enough.

# Prioritize access over quality

## Should my database be perfect? Should it? Should I?

*"Lists of terms and thesauri are available, and they are regularly updated. It is essential to work with such tools in order to retrieve information conveniently afterwards and to share it with other institutions or researchers"*

- Using **accurate language** is necessary, but not everyone is an expert in textiles.
  - Lots of people love textiles and fashion but completely ignore its specialized terminology, since it is a very technical field. For non-specialized audiences, provide information that is not just accurate, but conceptually accessible, too. For instance, with illustrations that exemplify a technical term, or with alternative, simpler terms. Be reminded, too, that language and people evolve over time.
  - **Terminology standardization** is key, so please try to follow it as much as you can. On the other hand, these resources should reflect the huge diversity of textiles, and their terminology. Be open to synonyms, including local and popular usage.
- **Standards** and cataloguing rules exist and are sometimes officially adopted, but then, cataloguers don't always follow them properly! Train your staff and support them, ensuring a proper use. Otherwise, there is no point in adopting any standard.
- On the other hand, always bear in mind that all cultural heritage is, by definition, fuzzy and complex. When dealing with information about your objects, embrace ambiguity: polysemic terms, uncertain dates or labels, changing attributions, evolving standards... (This can be hard to accept for ICT collaborators, but there's no way around it.) Cataloguing rules and standards allow to handle this uncertainty, to a small degree. Nevertheless, when exporting and sharing that information, many of those details get lost or become less clearly retrievable.

*"During the 2016 earthquake when transferring cultural assets, it was very useful to have proper digitized data. Unfortunately, we had very little."*

- Information is worth its weight in gold. Documenting all the pieces in a collection may not be the most exciting aspect of our work, but it is a core part of it, as well as a legal obligation in many cases. It also opens new possibilities for sharing that information across institutions.
  - Cataloguing your collection might be a life saver (and a heritage saver), specially in case of natural or human disasters. This task is important enough to have **dedicated staff**. You don't need to have a full-time specialist for your inventory or catalogue, but the responsibility should be clearly incorporated within the museum structure.
  - Don't throw away old information. Don't forget that today's cataloguing will also become obsolete. The museum memory is part of its mission. For instance, treasure your paper-based records. Digitize your archival information, too, and make it accessible.
  - Not all information is equally useful, so feel free to select what seems more worthy of attention. Describing what anyone can see by themselves does not add much value.

# Manage your data, and everything around them

## Ok, I want to share, but what and how?

- Try to keep everything in the **same database** and show the information to different kinds of users in different ways, according to their profiles. It will make much simpler and safer the management of that data.
  - Of course, there is no need to open up all your information. Administrative details are nobody's business, outside the museum.
  
- Remember that **some exceptions to open access** should be kept in mind. Not just copyright-protected materials, but also objects from traditional cultures.
  - There is a wide range of intellectual property licences available. It's not just either public domain or "all rights reserved". **Creative Commons** licences provide many layered, nuanced variants, fit for most cultural institutions.
  - Some copyright holders may not necessarily require economic compensation but at least **recognition** and respect to their cultural identity should be secured and made public.
  
- Understand the way your collection / institution was built. On this issue, museums specialized in textiles and those with broader, more diverse collections, are quite different. The same applies to size: small museums may learn from the biggest players, but you don't need to imitate a different kind of museum. Textile collections are also very diverse, in themselves: some may be focused just on fabrics, others on fashion, others are old factories with historical looms and tools... Catalogue records should respect and record that **diversity**.
  
- Understand that not everyone cares equally about standardization. It makes sense, since many times textile experts are exactly that, specialists. They care about the specific. However, in a **digital world**, each institution should not be a silo. Some degree of information standardization is necessary: terminology, information standards, platforms, mapping between data models... Be ready to advocate for it. Mindset changes take time.

*"Our main curator is a perfectionist, sadly."*

# Manage your data, and everything around them

## Ok, I want to share, but what and how?

*"It is a priority, a dynamic process and a current practice. Nowadays it is more and more important to open the museum and promote its collections outside its walls to whomever wishes to visit us, physical or virtually."*

- In many cases, **authorship of records** or metadata is not properly recorded. It's a matter of practice, not of standards, since most of them indicate ways to record that information. We recommend the general publication of this information, which can be done with a layered approach, depending on the provided depth of details.
- In our current environment (pandemic, online transition...), the **quantity** is more important than the **quality** of the information. Scaling up, offering more resources, seems to us more of a priority, for the time being. In the future, however, it will be necessary to focus on quality, as a necessary correction.
- **Income** from reproduction fees is rarely worth its own costs, in many institutions; let alone a profitable source of funding. Big players among museums are leading a path towards making collections fully open-access, by providing high quality information, free of charge. This will increasingly become the standard for most institutions, be it de facto or by legal requirement. It's better to keep that as a horizon and work towards that framework.
- Institutional guardianship, recognition of authorship or any other moral rights, however, must always be respected. Any **rights** associated with the object or its derivative data must be recognized and made visible to users. Again, there are many options available in open-access licenses that should be enough to accommodate the needs of most heritage institutions, including the smaller ones.
- For the most part of our historical collections, that predate the 20th century, copyright is not an issue. In a great majority of cases, there is no legal reason to keep the information of our collections hidden.
- Peers and colleagues will particularly appreciate it if you **share data** about your holdings. It will also allow you to receive comments, help and proposals from them, in most cases. It's a win-win!

# Open access repositories for cultural heritage data

## WIKIWhat?

- Sharing digital information with external repositories should not mean extra work for the museum staff. The implementation should be facilitated by the external repository. Other frameworks are unsustainable.
- Visibility of the owning institution must always be provided by the repository. If technically possible, a **permanent link** to the same object in the museum online catalogue, should always be available, thus giving users the possibility to see the original record and to contact the institution responsible for its conservation and dissemination.
- Be smart with **external collaborations**. Negotiate your conditions. For instance, you can treat profit-making partners differently from non-profits or public authorities. Demand recognition and, where appropriate, financial returns for your work. Returns need not be only monetary: sponsorship, collaborations, technological partnerships, capacity-building, networking, reputation... can also be valuable sources of support for cultural institutions.
- Small and medium size museums or collections can benefit greatly from **alliances** with local authorities, universities, and companies, in applying for external funds for their cataloguing, digital data management, implementing open-access repositories and platforms, etc. The EU and other funding bodies are very interested in projects that bridge digital technologies and cultural heritage, and they expect those projects to be multi-actor and interdisciplinary.
- Talk to your supervisors and ask them to decide **who** is in charge of the management of digital information within the institution. (It might be a shared assignment.) Again, it is an essential task for any heritage collection, and responsibility over it should be clearly established and supported by decision makers - and budget planners.

# Open access repositories for cultural heritage data

WIKIWhat?

- As far as possible, adopt a **structured format** (data model) for your information. Take also into account that the fields in your records will also have to be mapped to those in the destination database.
- Use whatever software / platform / repository / collections management system you like or can afford, but please make sure that it can **export** your data to other formats. (A good old .csv file is a suitable starter for most needs.)
- Don't panic. There's a growing community supporting open access efforts within the cultural heritage sector.

- **OpenGLAM** is an excellent starting point, and a great source of information.

<https://openglam.org/>

- If you are interested in contributing data to **Wikimedia Commons** (the repository that feeds many open-access resources, Wikipedia among them), check the GLAMWiki:

<https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/GLAM/en>

- **Europeana** is the largest open-access repository for European cultural heritage of all kinds. It does not work directly with data providers (i.e., cultural institutions willing to contribute with their data like, for instance, your museum). Instead, they gather data through national or thematic aggregators. They are the ones you should reach. For more information, check:

<https://pro.europeana.eu/page/aggregators>

<https://www.europeana.eu/>

- Specifically for fashion, **EFHA** – the European Fashion Heritage Association is a terrific resource.

<https://fashionheritage.eu/>

- For historical textiles, mostly those made of silk, but not only, **SILKNOW** is the people to go to (ok, full disclosure, that's us, but you get it).

<http://silknow.eu>

"I would love to share my data, but I don't know how!"

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