

Digital Heritage as Collaborative Practice

Collaboration and partnerships are important for the long-term sustainability of digital heritage. The creation, dissemination, and management of digital heritage often require interdisciplinary, and cross-institutional teamwork, engaging both heritage and university partners. This theme addresses the advantages and challenges of such collaborative practices. In particular, we welcome presentations that examine cross-border collaborations and local, regional and European partnerships in ever-expanding digital infrastructures.

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Bio

The UCL Multimedia Anthropology Postgraduate Lab: Research and Reading Group (MAL) is a student-led research network aimed at developing innovative methods for anthropological practice. MAL experiments with mediums such as sound, film, VR/360 video, graphic novels, drawing, sculpture, and installations to explore alternative forms of anthropological thinking. We propose furthering the theoretical movements of Material Culture studies and the Ontological Turn through experimenting with a multimedia approach to anthropological research beyond text; to facilitate new methods of public engagement, encourage greater interdisciplinary dialogue, and to widen the scope of participation and the ideas that can be expressed.

Abstract

The Guarani and Kaiowá communities in Brazil have been facing ongoing violence that is threatening their certainty of leaving a strong heritage for future generations. They have subsequently sought to improve community access over the management of their cultural heritage.

To meet the community's needs, a collaborative project between the Kuñangue Aty Guasu, the Great Assembly of Guarani and Kaiowá women, and the Multimedia Anthropology Laboratory of University College London (MAL) has been undertaken to build a virtual-reality museum. The project aims to build this digital infrastructure so the community can preserve, curate, and display their own material and immaterial cultural heritage.

In order to achieve its collaborative goals MAL will support community-led initiatives to enable Guarani and Kaiowá women to gain increased access to digital tools, skill, and technology so they can build their own online digital identity. This dissemination of knowledge and resources will allow for long-term maintenance and development of these online and virtual spaces to by the community as they present their own heritage on their own terms.

Project members in MAL team have been sourced from a diverse range of disciplines to utilise the sophisticated digital technologies alongside critical ethnographic work. The documentation processes are using a range of digital media including technologies of sensory immersion such as VR/360 video and ambisonic sound to capture and preserve Guarani and Kaiowá material culture, material processes, and technical knowledge and to digitally upskill the community.

Alongside meeting the needs of the community, MAL hopes its collaboration with the Guarani and Kaiowá indigenous communities will contribute to discourses on the decolonization of knowledge. The project hopes to do so twofold; (1) by being led by the indigenous community in the construction of the VR museum so that it reflects their epistemologies and cosmologies. Therefore, challenging the imperial foundations of museums and the ways in which they document and categorize; (2) the use of digital mediums to demonstrate the epistemic value of deviating from the normative use of text in ethnographic documentation.

Through collaboration, this community-led project hopes to create a radical form of digital heritage infrastructure, managed by the Guarani and Kaiowá indigenous communities, that challenges conventional conceptions of heritage curation.