

Kim H. Veltman

Europe's Cultural Heritage in the Digital Age

In 1995, over 90% of the Internet was in English. In 2003, English represents 35% of the Internet. Europe, which today has at least 50 million more persons using computers than the United States, is destined to play a significant role in future.¹

The American vision of the Internet is focused largely on uni-lingual e-commerce.² The European vision, through its links with tourism, which now represents over 12% of the world economy,³ also has financial concerns. At the same time, Europe is developing a multi-lingual approach to its cultural heritage that includes historical and cultural dimensions.

The lecture surveys some trends of the past decade: that digital cultural heritage in Europe now extends far beyond traditional memory institutions to include archaeological sites, historical cities, cultural landscapes and cultural routes (e.g. Silk Roads); that these interests are leading to new links between local, regional and national culture; that these approaches are transforming scholarship; that there is a need for a Distributed European Electronic Resource (DEER). It also outlines challenges for the future: Can Europe define its own approach to intellectual property, which leads to more creativity than the Hollywood method? Europe has traditionally been the only continent interested in developing a global view of culture and civilization. Can Europe, which now represents just over 5% of the world population, redefine its role such that it gives due recognition to cultural diversity and the contributions of other nations and peoples?

Kim H. Veltman was trained as an historian of Renaissance science and art as a specialist in the history of perspective and Leonardo da Vinci. Following a doctorate with Sir Ernst Gombrich at the Warburg Institute, he spent fifteen years of post-doctoral research with some teaching at the universities of Göttingen, Toronto, Carleton, Siena, Rome I (La Sapienza) and Rome II. He has been writing on potentials and implications of new media since 1981. Since 1998, he has been Scientific Director of the Maastricht McLuhan Institute. He is the founder and Co-Ordinator of E-Culture Net.

¹ <http://www.gltreach.com/globstats/>

² <http://gltreach.com/eng/ed/art/2004.ecommerce.php3>

³ <http://www.tours.com/travelstats.php>