The Object of Memory Institutions in a Digital World

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Object

• Purpose
• Thing
Memory Institutions

- Archives
- Libraries
- Documentation Centres
- Museums
- The Internet (?)

What is a document?

- Briët's Antilope
- From analog to digital
- From document to information object
Convergence

• Google: webpages, books, images, video's, blogs, patents, news ...

Convergence

• Institutions:
  - convergence of functions
  - common development path
  - common object type: the digital object
  - converging user experience on the Internet

• The World Wide Web: 
  virtual archive/library/museum/documentation centre
Digitization: a common development path

• Internal digitization
  – the silent revolution

• External (on the WWW)
  – network presence of archives, libraries, museums, etc.

Memory Institutions on the Web

• Web-presence of memory institutions
  
  Rijksmuseum
  National Archives of Norway

• Virtual archives, libraries, museums, etc.
  Virtual Vietnam Archive
  Education Virtual Library
  Web Gallery of Art

• The Internet: Click here!
The New Web

- **Web2.0: the social internet**
  - An architecture of participation and democracy that encourages users to add value to the application as they use it. This stands in sharp contrast to hierarchical access control in applications, in which systems categorize users into roles with varying levels of functionality.
  - The key is: *user participation*.

- **The Amazon Model**
  - The key is: *richer metadata + user participation*
The Abundancy of Information

• 29.7 billion pages on the World Wide Web as of February 2007.

The Role of Memory Institutions

• What should memory institutions do in a world of abundant information?
  
  - Select on the basis of quality.
  - Preserve and protect valuable resources that have no economic significance and/or that otherwise would disappear.
  - Enhance the visibility (i.e. findability) of neglected resources.
  - Provide indexing based on meaning rather than on aboutness.
  - Base selection and preservation policies on information use rather than on information production.
Information and Culture

• Information is no longer merely a representation of culture
• In a digital world, information is also a component of culture itself
• The challenge for memory institutions is to preserve the information fabric of society

Preserving Digital Culture

• In a global, networked world, information is a global commodity. A focus on 'national' information makes little sense.
• Contemporary culture is not defined by information produced, but by information consumed.
• Preserving the information fabric of society requires capturing information use.
• This requires a major transformation of our memory institutions.
Conclusions

• The object (= thing) of memory institutions is increasingly the digital object.

• The object (= purpose) of memory institutions is not just to preserve access to digital 'things', but to preserve them in context as the 'information fabric of society'.