

Review

1. Scientific / scholarly success of the project

Contribution and importance of the work to the further development of the discipline, any importance for related disciplines (transdisciplinary questions and methods), quality of the dissemination of the results (publications, activities at conferences and so on)

Comments

This is an important project with a number of interesting interlocking components. These include the explorARTorium for the presentation of artworks in context, ThIATRO, an online serious heritage game, ARTournament, a casual mobile game, and an analysis of art history as a networked structure.

explorARTorium is a really interesting application. I have tried it out. The idea of image based browsing with a strong focus on image and less on accompanying textual information and interpretation is very thought-provoking. It builds on tagging ideas explored in other projects such as STEVE – but this seems to me to have a much better interface. The report notes that “about 98,000 tags were collected from about 188 users.” That seems an extraordinary claim. An average of 521 tags per user does not seem very likely. Is there an error here?

ThIATRO, the online serious heritage game is a nice contribution to the area of the use of games in cultural heritage. The results are encouraging. Children learned as much as in traditional settings. But they seem to enjoy it better, and say they might play the game at home. Good game design is a complex iterative process. In particular, poor quality educational games have rather poisoned some learners' perspectives so that they may expect educational games to be rather dull. This project has directly addressed this challenge. With ongoing incremental testing and redesign, I am sure that the learning outcomes will continue to improve.

The analysis of art history as a networked structure is very interesting, and a useful contribution to the growing interest in digital humanities doing large scale analysis and visualization over substantial datasets. The reported finding is thought-provoking but perhaps not that surprising – German Wikipedia has more information about German artists, French Wikipedia has more information about French artists, etc. Indeed the production of more culturally relevant information is often noted as an additional advantage of the various language Wikipedias as well as access to information in one's mother tongue. However this is early pioneering work and we can expect more surprising results to emerge as the research area progresses.

2. Development of human resources in the course of the project

Improvement of the project leader's standing in the relevant scientific community; involvement of young researchers in the project work; development of international contacts

Comments

There does seem to have been significant involvement of young researchers. The publication pattern or work derived from the project shows a substantial emphasis on linking the work and the findings into wider activities across Europe and internationally.

3. Effects of the project beyond the research field

(in the sense of applications in or impacts on social, cultural, ecological, medical, economic and / or technological areas)

Comments

The topic itself clearly has important cultural implications. Additionally, bringing well designed and appropriate technologies into the art world can help some visitors become more comfortable with these technologies, experimenting with them in a non-stressful setting. The „culture industries“ are increasingly being recognized as an important component of a creative knowledge economy.

4. Applied aspects

How innovative is the potential of the expected application? How high is the potential (probability) of a successful application in the future?

Comments

Building on my comments in 1, all the applications have very great potential. All can be improved by ongoing analysis and redesign. That is because they tap such important parts of the design space that of course that space can not be completely explored in the first round of funding. Equally importantly, the applications can serve as inspiration to other researchers and developers to join in in exploring these design spaces.

5. Project performance (in the sense of efficient use of available resources)

Were the goals achieved? Were the changes to the original plan sensible? What is the relation between the results obtained, the duration of the project and the resources available?

Comments

It seems to me that the project performance was impressive. Much was achieved. The work done is useful in inspiring further work that can build on this.

6. Future perspectives of the research work

Should the topic be pursued or should the researchers involved be advised to switch their attention to a different area? What goals does the referee feel should be set for future work?

Comments

Definitely I would suggest that the researchers should continue their work.

Some suggestions:

Further and more detailed trials and analysis of the applications in the wild – say in various museum settings with discretionary use. See the extent to which people freely choose to use the tools, and if so for how long. What causes them to stop or give up? What might be redesigned to increase the probability of people choosing to have a go? Or to increase the time they spend interacting? Are there low cost low effort low intrusive ways of determining what they learned or got out of the experience?

Perhaps a new project modifying and adapting ThiATRO with more direct participatory design with art teachers to see if the game can be even more effective in helping conceptualizations – while still being an engaging activity.

The analysis of art history as a networked structure should also be continued. Perhaps using and comparing different datasets and comparing the findings with those of other researchers.

The work has been published in appropriate European conferences, and also at two international conferences: ICALT and WebSci.

However as funding permits, I would suggest that the researchers consider other international conferences.

For example Museums and the Web is an international conference with a good reputation in cultural heritage informatics that has expanded well beyond just looking at web-based interaction. For aspects of innovative interface design, CHI would be appropriate.