



A Sustainable Cultural Heritage Management Plan for Museums

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General Cultural Heritage Management

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Cultural Heritage Management (CHM) is the main vehicle for helping museums to face challenges, secure sustainable competitiveness, be resilient to climate change, natural hazards and pandemic risks, and redefine themselves in a constantly changing world. This best practice contributes to the understanding of how to establish a state-of-the-art management plan for museums, which takes into account the latest developments in the field. It offers clear and concise information on the cultural heritage sector needs, challenges and opportunities, and bring forward the main issues and principles that need to be taken into account during the drafting procedure of a CHM plan.

Organisation in charge of best practice

University of Nicosia

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Nicosia, Cyprus

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Description

Introduction

Many museums and cultural heritage (CH) institutions, especially smaller ones, continue to suffer from inefficient management due to lack of funding and support, as well as the pressures of ongoing crises. In this respect, it is crucial for each them to create a realistic, detailed and sustainable Cultural Heritage Management plan (CHM plan) within the digital transformation and innovation context in order for them to be relevant to contemporary societies. In the context of the ReInHerit project, the University of Nicosia developed a model of how to establish a state-of-the-art CHM plan for museums and CH institutions, which takes into account the latest developments in the field. It brings forward the main





issues and principles that need to be taken into account during the drafting procedure of a CHM plan, explores current state-of-affairs of professional practice in the CH sector across Europe, offers clear and concise information on the CH sector needs, challenges and bottlenecks, and eventually, provides practical recommendations that need to be taken into account so as to support communication between CH professionals and their various audiences, with special focus on young people and local communities.

What is a CHM plan?

A CHM plan is a document that explains management issues, approaches and requirements relating to museums and sets a framework for decision making over a given period of time. It is a clear and coherent plan for action, a guide to the future. It identifies areas of strength to build on, weaknesses to be addressed and opportunities to be exploited. Overall, it is a management tool for museums to use in planning their future activities and operations.

What are the main objectives of a CHM plan?

The main objectives of a CHM plan are: to protect the values of CH for present and future generations, to promote effective sustainability practices, to improve museums' operation, and to help museums reposition themselves in an ever-changing world, in order to be more relevant and better serve society.

What is the first step in preparing a CHM plan?

In order to prepare a successful CHM plan it is important to look outside the organization and understand how the external environment is changing. In other words, the first crucial step is to understand the needs, challenges and opportunities of this era. An in-depth understanding of the current situation in the CH sector will facilitate CH professionals to develop a CHM plan that provides a vision, aims and actions designed to address these needs. The ReInHerit project mapped the current status quo of the CH sector in Europe in order to provide an overview of the current needs, challenges and opportunities. In a nutshell the following needs were identified:

- a) Need for interdisciplinary collaboration so as to avoid fragmentation;
- b) Need to redefine the management of collections based on evolving ethical standards and new trends;
- c) Need for sustainable business models resilient to changes and crises;
- d) Need for climate and energy responsible museums;
- e) Need to redefine the relationship between museums and their various audiences (relevance and inclusivity).

What are the major issues that almost every CHM plan should address?





Taking into account the needs and challenges of this era, as well as the potential opportunities, museums should proceed to the second step, which is to design a CHM plan. The design of a CHM plan should be based on:

- a) a people centered and environmentally friendly approach to CHM with an open minded, “out of the box” and holistic vision;
- b) a clear orientation towards the ideas of sustainability and resilience as a framework for the development of long-term strategic cultural policies and the rethinking of patterns of consumption and current practices, modes of operation and managerial organization;
- c) a commitment to the concepts of inclusivity, relevance, innovation, accessibility, democratisation, ethics, diversity, professionalism, cooperation, and community participation;
- d) a clear vision on the application of digital technologies, which are of relevance to the CH sector.

Key issues in the designing process of a CHM plan are:

- a) a thorough understanding of the character of the CH (tangible or intangible) to be managed;
- b) an excellent knowledge of the wide set of legal instruments (hard and soft law ones) for safeguarding CH;
- c) a knowledge of all resources, both human and financial;
- d) a knowledge of the relevant key stakeholders that are involved in the protection and development of CH.

However, taking into consideration the “big picture” (needs and challenges), an updated and modern CHM plan should include clear strategies for the following issues: Collections Management, Energy and environmental Management, Intellectual Property (IP) Management, New ‘Business’ Models and Financing, and Audience engagement.

What is the importance of a CHM plan?

A CHM plan has the potential to help museums to tackle a complex reality with multiple challenges and bottlenecks that create specific urgent needs. Museums that develop a CHM plan are better prepared for the present and the future and are more likely to engage more people with CH and provide them enjoyable and meaningful experience compared to museums, which continue to follow traditional operating methods that do not respond to the needs of the modern era.

Links

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aT8jx_-My2k&t=10s





Resources needed

In the drafting procedure of a Cultural Heritage Management plan Financial Resources, Physical Resources, Intellectual Resources, Human Resources, and Digital Resources are needed.

Challenges encountered

In an ever-changing world, where rapid transformations (economic, social, technological, environmental) are taking place, museums and cultural heritage institutions must be constantly vigilant in order to respond to new needs.

Evidence of success

This research provided a solid background for the successful implementation of the next phases of the ReInHerit project. More specifically, it has paved the way for the development, communication, dissemination and exploitation of the ReInHerit Toolkit in WP3, the Digital Hub in WP4, and the Travelling and Digital Exhibitions Pilot Phase in WP6.

Potential for transfer

The focus is on how this CHM plan has been communicated to professionals through publications, conferences, and the ReInHerit Project (e.g. factsheets on the platform, the actual Plan published, webinars).

Further Information

<https://reinherit-hub.eu/factsheets/>