# Reimagining Europe's cultural heritage

C oventry University is leading a three year, £3.25m project, working with 28 other partners from 13 European countries. *Europeana Space* is a Best Practice Network funded by the European Union's Competitiveness and Innovation Programme. It will bring together cultural organisations including universities, research organisations, small-to-medium-size-enterprises, galleries, museums, technology providers and broadcasters.
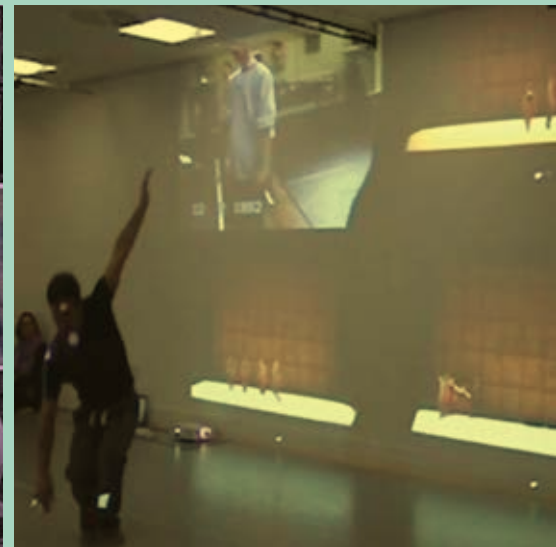
THE DIGITAL ECONOMY IS GROWING AT SEVEN TIMES THE RATE OF THE REST OF THE ECONOMY; THIS, LINKED TO THE RAPID PACE AT WHICH THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES ARE GROWING, MAKES THE DIGITISATION OF ARTS AND CULTURE FOR PRESERVATION AND REANIMATION A MAJOR FOCUS FOR RESEARCH.

The purpose of the project is to contribute to Europe's cultural economy – to generate jobs and growth by supporting the creative use and re-use of our digital cultural heritage – material held in rich archives, collections and accessible via portals such as Europeana – www.europeana.eu. It will build on existing European research and development know-how in ICT, collections management, IP law, games design, photography, publishing, broadcast and dance.

The Europeana portal offers access to a vast amount of Europe's cultural heritage. Millions of paintings, moving images, museum objects and other cultural treasures in 29 European languages may be reached and enjoyed via the portal, including books and manuscripts, photos and paintings, television and film, sculpture and crafts,

diaries and maps, sheet music and recordings. Some items and topics are world famous, such as Isaac Newton's work on the laws of motion in *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica;* the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci; Johannes Vermeer's painting of the Girl With A Pearl Earring; or objects about the Berlin Wall. Collections held by major bodies such as the British Library in London, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Louvre in Paris are featured in Europeana, alongside those of smaller organisations.

Coventry University's project team is headed by Professor in Dance, Sarah Whatley and draws on the expertise of a range of academic and professional services staff including Professor Gary Hall, an international expert in Open

Publishing; Jonathan Shaw, a distinguished photographer, Jacqueline Cawston and Alex Woolner, experts in serious games, Tim Hammerton as Project Manager and a Senior Research Assistant.

The team at Coventry University leads the project and is also involved in several key pilots which will test a range of tools to help people to use and work with this fascinating content. Professor Sarah Whatley says: 'Our work in the project is to develop more ways to explore and enhance users' engagement with the rich range of cultural content, and in particular intangible cultural heritage, available in Europeana and other European online collections. We have some exciting technologies to play with and the aim is to find ways to apply these technologies in

new ways to increase employment, expand economic growth and enable those working within the creative industries across Europe to find more ways to exploit cultural content for the benefit of everyone.'

The ultimate aim of Europeana Space is to stimulate jobs and growth in and across the creative industries. Partners will explore how digitised material from cultural institutions can be adapted and used in a variety of contexts, including the education sector, tourism, museums and galleries and interactive broadcast TV.

Sarah continues: 'Through a series of workshops and demonstrations the project will support prototype development, with the aims of taking ideas to market. We'll also use a series of 'hackathons' as a way of testing tools and services developed through the project.

The partners include Universities in the UK (Exeter and Goldsmiths), Belgium (Leuven), Italy (Ca Foscari), Cyprus (University of Technology) and Portugal (New University of Lisbon). We are also proud to work with some major international bodies such as SPK, as the Berlin research organisation representing all the major Prussian museums, the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision which holds all of this country's broadcast audio-visual material. We work alongside smaller cutting-edge arts companies such as CIANT in the Czech Republic, CultureLabel in the UK, the Onassis (Ariona) Foundation in Greece - and our key collaborator, PROMOTER srl of Italy. We will be presenting our findings at three major conferences in Venice, Brussels and Berlin.'

One of the biggest issues a project like this has to deal with is intellectual property relating to cultural heritage. Sarah Whatley and her team at Coventry University will be working closely with Charlotte Waelde, Professor of Intellectual Property Law at Exeter

Law School. Sarah explains: 'There are huge challenges around the use and re-use of material that require careful consideration of intellectual property law. There are various formats, technical platforms and application interfaces that we need to be aware of. We'll be working with Charlotte, an expert in the field, to try to find solutions.'

Europeana Space will move Sarah Whatley's work into a new sphere.

'THIS IS A HUGELY CHALLENGING BUT ABSOLUTELY FASCINATING PROJECT. EUROPEANA IS SO VAST AND BRINGS TOGETHER SO MANY DIFFERENT ELEMENTS.

We're working with partners from across Europe so we're dealing with cultural and geographical differences too.

It's so interesting to be able to focus our attention on art practices that are marginalised and so exciting to develop new contacts in the cultural industries along the way.

I'm thrilled to be part of a project that is promoting the creative industries in new ways and involving more people in cultural heritage. I'm also privileged to be able to help make these collections more vibrant and relevant for today.'

Marion Doyen, Business Development Manager, adds: 'Our work on high profile European and international projects has given Coventry University a valuable status as a trusted partner. We've built relationships with organisations across Europe which are already leading to exciting further work. In the past three years Sarah and her colleagues from the University's Centre for Dance Research (C-DaRE) have made of C-DaRE one of the most respected centres of dance research in the UK, with a rapidly growing international profile. Sarah's research has attracted significant Research Council and EU funding for the University; and under her leadership C-DaRE continues to provide a strong platform for high-profile multi-disciplinary research that makes a real impact in today's
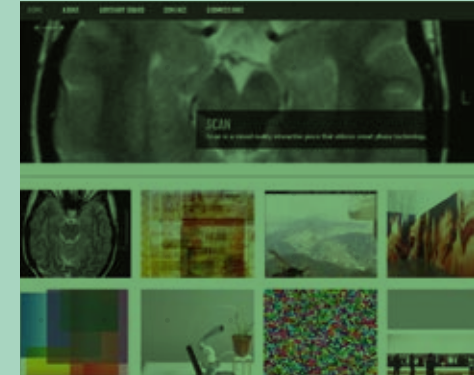
society. Sarah's and our Coventry colleagues' work on the Europeana Space project has yet further reinforced Coventry's profile and reputation.'