

The stories behind the masks



Image courtesy Dr. Faridah Mohd Noor.

The most viewed [GridCast](#) video at the recent [EGI Community Forum 2013](#) (Manchester, 8-12 April 2013) was a story-telling cultural preservation project.

Dr. Faridah Mohd Noor from [University of Malaya](#) spoke about **Mah Meri* Masks Project**, an example of Virtual Storytelling and Digital Archiving in the Cloud (download the interesting presentation in [PDF](#)).

Faridah explained about how the [University of Malaya](#), Malaysia, is assembling an archive of 2D and 3D images of 111 wooden masks carved by the indigenous in Carey Island, Malaysia.

Each decorative mask also has its own story associated with it relating to its origin or 'moyang' resembling an animal, humans and spirit. They also have their own special use in traditional healing (sakat buang) and ceremonial dances (Joh and Tengking).

Sadly, many of the senior mask carvers have passed away and their stories have vanished with them. The project plans to create a portal of both images and audio recordings from elder Mah Meris in three languages (Mah Meri, Malay and English) and is looking for sponsors for hosting the portal (a current modest 500GB storage). Several sites including the MYREN (Malaysian Research and Education Network) cloud are already involved and future collaborations include the university in Chennai.

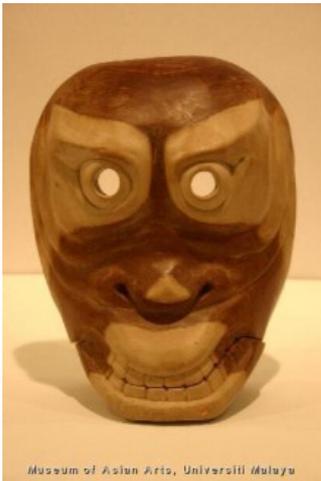
[VIDEO:] Stefan Janusz from e-Science Talk talks to Dr. Faridah Mohd Noor about digital preservation of masks and oral histories in Malaysia (courtesy of [e-Science talk](#)).

Dr. Noor, who also chairs the [eCulture workshop of the APAN \(the Asia Pacific Advanced Network\)](#), will launch an immersive and

interactive showcase of 24 masks in November at the University of Malaya Gallery's Museum of Asian Art.

?Eventually what we are hoping to build is a Global Story Telling e-Community, gathering members who voluntarily contribute 'stories' of their own. Keeping the stories all these years proves the value of these stories. Passing on this oral tradition to the next generation of their community is crucial to keep the tradition of storytelling alive for sharing and exchanging such beautiful stories across the globe to bridge the cultural gap,? says Noor.

The talk was part of the DCH-RP workshop, on the "**Digital Cultural Heritage: state of the art and future developments?**". The workshop brought together projects and initiatives working world-wide in the domain of the digital cultural heritage, digital arts, digital performances and digital humanities in order to find synergies and to discuss opportunities for cooperation, in particular around the theme of the use of the e-infrastructures for DCH, thus avoiding to duplicate efforts to reach the same goals. DCH-RP (acronym of [Digital Culture Heritage Roadmap for Preservation](#)) is a EU project that is piloting an '[e-Culture Science Gateway](#)' at various culture institutes across Europe.



Nyirih-Batu mask (courtesy of Dr. Faridah Mohd Noor)

Source: <http://www.isgtw.org/visualization/stories-behind-masks>

*The Mah Meri People:

? Belong to Senoi Branch living in the coastal areas of the Selangor state in Malaysia;

? Two communities, in Sepang and Carey Island;

? Carving of masks still strives in Carey Island only 7/10 carvers still active, 3rd generation of carvers.