

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MULTIMEDIA FOR HUMANITIES

October 5 - 8, 1998

ABSTRACTS - DIGITAL MUSEUM

Towards a Digital Museum - Experiments at National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan

Multimedia technology opens up the possibility to recreate partially the virtual museum in the cyberspace. Generally, a library museum, art museum, aquarium, botanical garden or zoo are classified based on the objects which they handle. This classification will possibly disappear if objects are digitised.

Towards a Digital Museum - Experiments at National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan by Shigeharu Sugita

Generally speaking, libraries, historical museums, art museums, aquaria, botanical gardens and zoos are classified according to the materials that they handle. In these places, materials are classified and arranged in physical space according to period, area, or other category. Museum activities are restricted because of space limitations. However, if we construct a multi-media computer data-base with digitized images, viewer access is released from the limitation of classification and space. Of course guided access is still possible with the computer system. Material exhibition is important. Computer information system is very useful to understand the background of exhibited materials. I will show various concepts for a Digital Museum or Virtual Museum composed of a computer system handling text, pictures, digitized images of artefacts, sounds and so on. A Digital Museum will offer visitors information interactively, on demand.

In order to realize a Digital Museum, we have to establish data-bases first. As an example, I will show the multi-media data-base system so far developed at the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan. This data-base integrates several systems that are connected by LAN: a text data-base, a photograph and slide-image data-base and image data-base for artefacts, audio data-base, and others. We have developed a Multi-media Information Retrieval System (MMIR) to provide high-speed searching for several files at the same time.

We are also working towards creation of a Global Digital Museum which made by connecting digital museum over the world. We currently have an experimental system for connecting the British Museum and our museum with co-operation of Japan IBM and Cornell University, U.S.A.