

Uncovering the Community's History: an interactive and community- based crowd sourcing tool for heritage

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This crowd sourcing tool and a website is a joint effort from the St. Kitts Department of Culture and researchers, Habiba and Eloise Stancioff. The pilot version attempts to assimilate, promote, visualize, analyze information and unearth both intangible and tangible heritage from communities of St. Kitts. This crowd sourcing tool is a web based platform that provides users an interactive map interface to locate and learn about everything culturally interesting about St. Kitts. The crowd sourcing tool and subsequent website will be available for St. Kitts Department of Culture and National Trust. Through the crowd sourcing process, it collects geo-localized heritage sites of importance- including archaeological heritage, built heritage, intangible heritage linked to performing arts, culinary arts, visual arts and literary arts. The website and tool represent an interactive and innovative way to collect information related to the arts industry in St. Kitts as well as promote the diverse cultural heritage of the island. While the pilot study focuses on St. Kitts, the open source format of the platform allows for future renditions in other contexts and locations. We see this pilot study as one of hopefully many more digs into the crowd, the public and community's own heritage.

1 Crowd sourcing tool for heritage management

Crowd sourcing is the technique of obtaining information from a large and diverse group of people in a non-centralized distributed manner. Usually the crowd sourcing tools are web based which further facilitates the process of data collection. Crowd sourcing promotes the contribution of information from multiple groups of people without a centralized authority dictating the information gathering process. This is a powerful way of incorporating the plurality of thoughts and opinions about a given domain.

In this work we propose to build a crowd sourcing tool for collecting as well as disseminating information regarding the tangible and intangible culture and heritage of St. Kitts. Following are the two primary uses of such a tool.

Dissemination of cultural and heritage based information: This tool can be used by official organizations, such as, Ministry of Culture can use the crowd sourcing tool to spread the word out about the cultural events taking place in St. Kitts. This can very useful for tourists as well as the local population to be informed about the cultural events going on the Island.

Assimilation of information of cultural and heritage: On the other side of the spectrum, tourists and local users can use this tool to contribute to the knowledge about the heritage of St. Kitts. By using this tool a person visiting a certain heritage site or a music festival can submit their opinion about the place or event. This is useful for making the heritage dynamic and 24/7 living. Everyone

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can freely contribute to the knowledge about events and places as well as get instant information about what are the interesting places and events to visit in St. Kitts.

2 Technology and dependencies of the crowd sourcing tool

The tool we are proposing is web based, thus, ensuring the information is available to everyone anywhere.

2.1 Ushahidi platform

The crowd sourcing tool for St. Kitts is based on the Ushahidi platform (<http://ushahidi.com>). Ushahidi is a non-profit tech organization that specializes in developing free and open source softwares for information collection, visualization, and interactive mapping. Ushahidi has built various tools for democratizing information, increasing transparency and lowering the barriers for individuals to share their stories since 2008. The main aim of the tools developed by the Ushahidi organization is to channel information flow in non-traditional ways. It allows people to collect and share their own stories using various mediums such as SMS, Web Forms, Email or Twitter.

3. From the developers of the tool

The web platform and tool are only one part of the result. For a successful tool that is used and accessible, the creation is only the beginning. It is for these reasons that community partners are once again so inherent and important in research and outreach. The crowd sourcing tool can only be successful if individuals use it. For this to occur, there needs to be a relatively active crowd. Social media- via twitter, Facebook and other forms via radio, television can produce enough conversation that will fill the website with data.

4. Main contributors for implementing the crowd sourcing tool

Charlotte Eloise Stancioff is a PhD student in the Faculty of Archaeology at the Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands. She is part of the Heritage Management group within the NEXUS 1492 project. Her expertise is in Geoinformatics with previous research and projects focused on health, environment and societies interaction in place through time. With the crowd sourcing tool she aims to achieve a concrete example of participation in the naming and valuing heritage.

Habiba is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Computer and Information Sciences at the University of Konstanz. She is part of the Network Science group within the NEXUS 1492 project. She has been working on applications of social network analysis during her PhD. With this project she hopes to analyze the factors contributing to diffusion of information in a web based social setting.

Collaboration, ideas, advice, thoughts?

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us! We would love to hear your thoughts, critics or possible projects!

