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Athena Research Center

Research and Innovation Center in Information,
Communication and Knowledge Technologies

One object many stories: Introducing ICT in museums and collections through digital storytelling

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Why storytelling in Cultural Heritage?

education + enter**tainment**

+

interaction + creativity elements
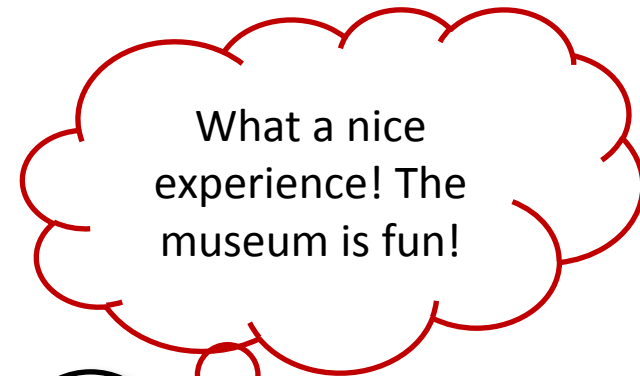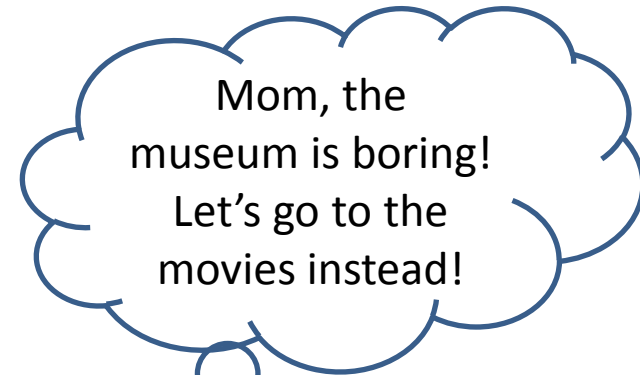
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technology tools and media
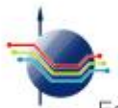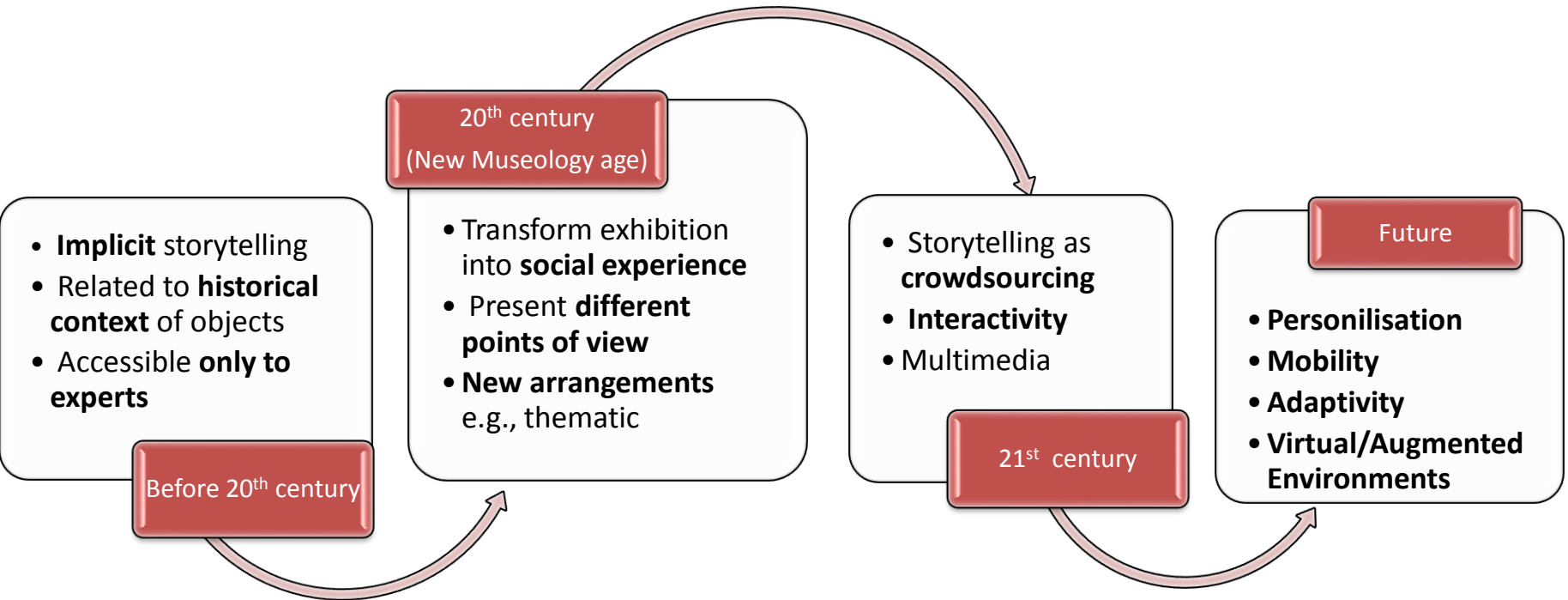
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powerful, old means of conveying messages

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storytelling for CH!

Mom, the museum is boring! Let's go to the movies instead!

What a nice experience! The museum is fun!

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Museums are in fact storytellers

Who tells the story? How? Who is the audience?

Before 20th century

- **Implicit** storytelling
- Related to **historical context** of objects
- Accessible **only to experts**

20th century (New Museology age)

- Transform exhibition into **social experience**
- Present **different points of view**
- **New arrangements** e.g., thematic

21st century

- Storytelling as **crowdsourcing**
- **Interactivity**
- Multimedia

Future

- **Personilisation**
- **Mobility**
- **Adaptivity**
- **Virtual/Augmented Environments**

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The battle of Thermopylae case:

- Virtual-reality environment
- high quality software & hardware
  - Place illusion effect
- interactive application
- built by technology-oriented CH institution for an innovative museum

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The battle of Thermopylae case:

- presentation of an historical event
- clear educative objectives
- exploiting gaming culture

- supported by human educator
- mainly addressed to children and teenagers
- storytelling as social experience

Examples of use: Acropolis Museum (I)

the CHESS project* case:

- augmented-reality environment
- mobility
- personalized storytelling
  - one object many interpretations
- interactive & adaptive application

Creative CHESS story authoring at the Acropolis Museum, 23.09.2013

- user-centered approach (cognitive, learning, museological)
- within an archaeological museum
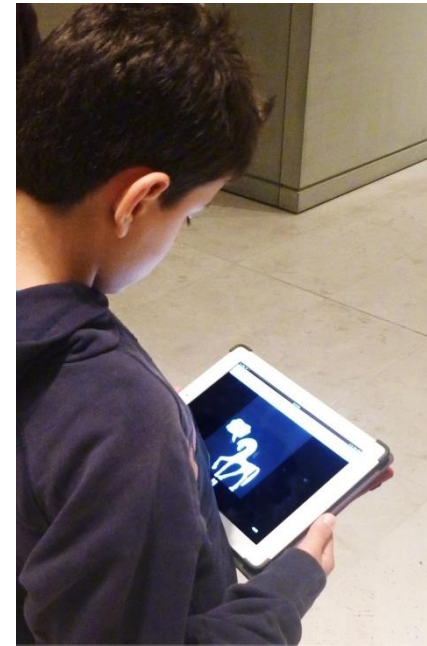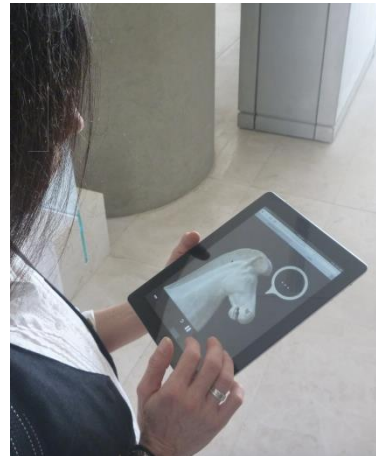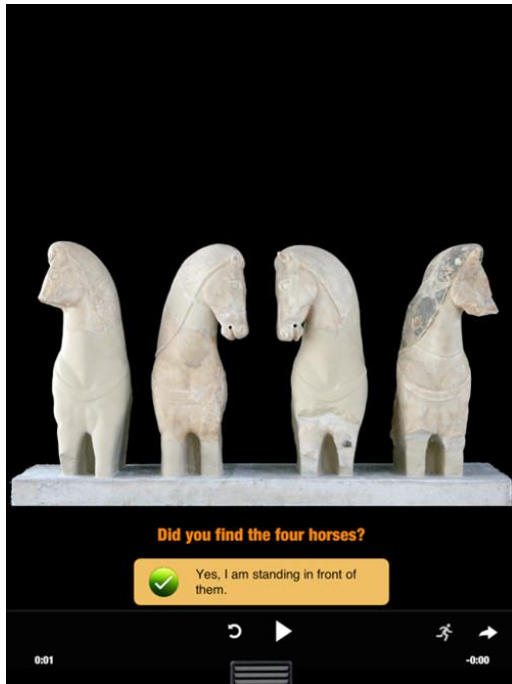 - about historically significant objects

* Cultural Heritage Experiences through Socio-personal interactions & storytelling

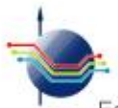Ερευνητικό Κέντρο Αθηνά
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Examples of use: Acropolis Museum (III)

- The objects are the main characters and tell their own story
  - a different story for each "persona"

Persona: detailed descriptions of imaginary people to create a set of representative profiles for users.

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Storytelling for CH: a bless or a mess?

- Money is always an issue!
  - Purchasing, implementing, maintaining → cost of resources
  - Technology not really an issue as it used to be in the 90's, can vary depending on the requirements
  - **Multidisciplinarity**: content, functionality and usability are not enough for enhancing user experience
    - A complex issue of balance!
    - Many objectives are sometimes contradictive.

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Storytelling in CH: searching for balance

- **Focus on exhibition vs. focus on the media**
  - how the story will highlight the exhibition without monopolizing attention on screen.
  - **Rich information space vs. "economy"**
    - Analysing the details is not necessarily an interesting story!
  - **Immersive plot vs. interactivity**
    - How not to interrupt the user when he is already deep in the plot.
  - **Fluency vs. mobility**
    - How the path of the story follows smoothly the path of the visitor
  - **Informative role vs. attractiveness**
    - Interest, believality and empathy are not always gained by extreme realism.
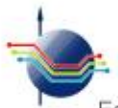
Conclusions : No one size to fit all solution!

- **Personalization**: respect / take into account the different profiles and preferences of users.

- **Adaptivity through non-linear approaches**: give to the visitor the choice of affecting the story, or skip some parts of it before losing his interest.

- **User centered-approaches**: know your visitors, their language, culture, background, age and needs. The more you know the more you can satisfy!

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