



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
FINLAND

Digital cultural heritage as a bridge between people

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Cultural heritage is a bridge

Cultural heritage is a bridge that connects:

- Time: past, present and future
- People and communities at any time to share experiences, knowledge, values and cultural practices with each other

As cultural heritage is a bridge, belittling, neglecting and destroying it are effective means of harming individuals, communities and states.



Local History Museum of
Kupiansk.
State Emergency Service of
Ukraine.

We need to take care of the bridge so that it carries us.

- The more we care about and look after cultural heritage the stronger we are when crises arise.
- The better we have maintained cultural heritage and related information in digital format, the easier it is for us to live through crises and to recover from them.



Särkänalmi bridge. Bonin, Volker von, photographer.
Finnish Heritage Agency

How is the bridge built?

- The most unique task of cultural heritage institutions among cultural organisations is to preserve cultural heritage for future generations. Bearing this responsibility in a society that is becoming more culturally diverse, and where awareness of cultural diversity is broader than before, is far from simple.
- In a pluralistic society, cultural heritage actors play a key role in identifying and recognising the cultural needs of individuals and groups with different backgrounds, in creating equal opportunities in relation to cultural heritage, and in strengthening the dialogue with different stakeholders and audiences.

This means that cultural heritage actors must

- genuinely strive for a continuous, goal-oriented dialogue with different communities
- document and record current phenomena through continuous observation
- be mindful of their own attitudes and commit to learning

Only this way will we have enough information on the cultural present in the future.



Teiskola bridge. Esko Sarasmo, photographer. Tampere Historical Museums

Who walks on the bridge and what do they carry over it?



Who walks on the bridge and what do they carry over it?

- Everyone is invited to go on the bridge, and everyone can decide what to carry over it.
- In February 2023, the Finnish Government adopted a resolution on the National Cultural Heritage Strategy 2023-2030.
- One of the main themes of the strategy is **people and communities' ownership, responsibility and opportunities for participation in cultural heritage.**
- The right to cultural heritage means opportunities to act for the benefit of one's own cultural heritage, while also respecting the cultural heritage of others. These rights belong to everyone.
- Everyone must have the opportunity to participate in defining cultural heritage, implement their cultural heritage and identify themselves from it. Individuals and communities have the opportunity to adopt and create cultural heritage, but also to place themselves outside it, or give it up.
- Cultural heritage actors have the opportunity to act as forums for societal, communal, and participatory debate that promotes sustainability. The cultural heritage sector and cultural heritage actors can be involved in strengthening democracy by inspiring a debate and providing space for negotiation from different perspectives.

Digital cultural heritage as a bridge

- Publishing content in digital environments alone is not enough; we must build infrastructures and services and provide the content to users in a way they find natural
- The Ministry of Culture and Education launched the National Digital Library project in 2008.
- The goal of the project was to ensure efficient and high-quality creation, management, distribution and preservation of the digital cultural heritage and library information resources.
- One of the main results of the project was the Finna. Europeana: a forerunner and a source for inspiration



Bascule Bridge.
Tampere Historical Museums



Kiettare bridge. Seppälä, Raimo,
photographer.
Satakunta Museum.

Bridge builders

I often find myself thinking

- Have cultural heritage actors focused too much on transferring their traditional practices to the digital environment?
- Do cultural heritage actors have enough willingness and ability to build value chains based on cultural heritage in cooperation with experts from other fields that result in products and services that genuinely interest users?
- Do we keep in mind the fact that if the communities, platforms and services based on reliable information and cultural content are not actively present in digital space it will be filled with something else.

Could we think that the purpose of cultural heritage actors is to provide a basis for a meaningful life for both present and future generations?

Thank you!



Hakaniemi Bridge.
Rista, Simo, photographer
Helsinki City Museum