



# #1 Newsletter

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## WELCOME!



Dear Reader,

We are pleased to share the first issue of the Digital Heritage Lab Newsletter (DHRLab). Since the establishment of the DHRLab in 2013, we have introduced a series of communication tools with the recent addition of the newsletter.

This first issue focuses exclusively on the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, celebrated on the 11th of February, implemented by UNESCO and UN-Women, in collaboration with institutions and civil society partners that aim to promote women and girls in science. This Day is an opportunity to promote full and equal access and participation for women and girls in science. Gender equality is a global priority for UNESCO, and the support of young girls, their education and their full ability to make their ideas heard are levers for development and peace.

At the DHRLab currently 46% of the researchers are female. In the following pages the female scientists of the lab, will present their background, career path and share their experiences, with the aim to contribute in motivating other women and girls in science. Our target is to maintain equal representation in numbers and salary and also to inspire more women and girls to study and work in the field of Digital Cultural Heritage. The fifth Goal for Sustainable Development set by the United Nations is to achieve gen-

der equality and empower all women and girls. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

Since this is our first issue, let me introduce the Digital Heritage Research Lab, which was established in 2013 at the Department of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology of the Cyprus University of Technology. The lab is devoted to research in the area of digitisation, documentation, archiving, preservation, protection and promotion of cultural heritage, tangible and intangible remains of our past. The research scientists and doctoral students employed at the lab engage in collaborative research with national and international institutions to explore the latest technological advances in the field, their efficacy, and usefulness to bring cultural heritage information to end-users, and advance prospects for further development. At a European level, the lab collaborates with a network of over 150 key partners from the academic, research and industrial sectors working towards the development of new tools and applications.

DHRLab is hosting the unique UNESCO and European Research Area (ERA) Chairs on Digital Cultural Heritage. It has rapidly achieved a world-spectrum of collaborative research projects and has created a remarkable wide research network and an agenda with great potential for future activities (such as the H2020 ViMM Manifesto, Roadmap and Action Plan). A few of our latest achievements in the Lab are significant with unique international awards like the EU Best Innovation Award at the Fair of European Innovators in Cultural Heritage, European Commission Research Executive Agency REA: 10 years supporting excellence in science/REA's life-changing projects and Innovation Radar Capturing and Digitisation technologies in Cultural Heritage.

Therefore, I am confident that this newsletter will bring part of our work closer to you!

Dr. Marinos Ioannides  
Head of DHRLab





## The International Day of Women and Girls in Science

The 4<sup>th</sup> United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, held 21 years ago, represented a turning point in the recognition of women rights, given that the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, adopted unanimously by 189 countries, provides a well-established global policy framework<sup>1</sup>. Among others, it recognised Womens' rights as human rights and articulated concrete steps and measures in order to confront gender equality.

Despite the progress achieved so far, there are still many improvements needed, especially in terms of policies and social preconceptions; women still represent a minority in positions of political leadership, while they remain largely unprotected when it comes to violent behaviours in their family or work environments. The coronavirus outbreak brought new and unexpected challenges<sup>2</sup>.

Despite the vital role of women at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19, the pandemic impacted negatively women scientists, especially those at the beginning of their careers. More precisely, it has led to widening the already existing gender gap in science, making even more evident the extant gender disparities in the scientific system, which need to be addressed by new policies, initiatives and mechanisms to support women and girls in science<sup>3</sup>.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, the 6<sup>th</sup> International Day of Women and Girls in Science Assembly will take place with the aim to advance gender equality within science with a special focus on their role in science, technology, innovation and sustainability. As women in digital cultural heritage, we strive to represent women in science, advance gender equality and to embolden the voices of women.



<sup>1</sup>United Nations, Beijing declaration and platform for action, vol. 21, no. 4. 1995.

<sup>2</sup>United Nations, "Gender equality and women's empowerment – United Nations Sustainable Development," Online, 2020. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality>

<sup>3</sup>United Nations, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Women," 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad>





## Meet the team



### MARINA TOUMPOURI (CY)

Since June 2020 I have held the position of Senior Researcher at the H2020 EU ERA Chair "Mnemosyne" project. My work concentrates mainly on the fields of Data acquisition and Data processing. My research interests span across a variety of areas centring around issues related to tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage such as Byzantine and Crusader manuscript cultures and materiality, Medieval and Early Modern pictorial narratives, and the working methods of book craftsmen and painters in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Byzantine and Crusader periods. More recently, I have been exploring issues related to the production of knowledge about Cultural Heritage assets in the digital environments, the increasing diversity and multiplicity of links between art historical research, archaeological and curatorial practices.

During the last fifteen years I have been involved in various digitisation and research projects, which along with various European networking initiatives allowed me to realise the immense potential of the interdisciplinary collaborations for Cultural Heritage academics, stakeholders and specialists for advancing knowledge in the field.

Women have come a long way in enriching the multi-disciplinary field of Cultural Heritage, yet as in many

other research areas, significant gender disparities exist between men and women, something which I have also witnessed. The low representation or even the absence of women in higher paid positions, in leadership and in decision-making, a symptom of the general problem of unequal treatment where gender stereotypes remain dominant and impede the involvement of women, acknowledged also by the European Commission<sup>4</sup>, is an issue already raised in the case of Cyprus<sup>5</sup>.

As a female researcher I consider therefore that redressing inequalities between men and women in research and academia is a serious matter which needs to be addressed collectively, so I look forward to becoming a witness of tangible initiatives in this direction, for achieving more gender-equal research institutions, not only in Cyprus, but also at a Pan-European level.

### ELEANNA AVOURI (GR)

My background in science and research is in the area of archeological practice and theory, with a later specialisation in Cultural Heritage management. The driving motivation behind this choice was the conviction that scientific knowledge should always remain connected with society, and that raising awareness around Heritage value and preservation was equally important with excavation or laboratory analyses. Since June 2020, I have had the opportunity to further advance my research in this direction, when I started working as an Early-Stage Researcher and PhD fellow at the H2020 EU ERA





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Chair "Mnemosyne" project on Digital Cultural Heritage (DCH), at the DHR Lab at the Cyprus University of Technology.

My position within the project covers the field of DCH Use & Reuse and my research focuses on establishing a user centred approach, for the development of a holistic documentation lifecycle. Technology provides us with powerful and creative tools to digitally preserve, represent and narrate the stories of CH assets to the potential end users. The question that we pose here is, who are these people that we vaguely name as users and what do they really need in order to be able to fully access DCH?

As a female researcher I feel that I have a great responsibility in supporting and promoting women's participation in the scientific community but also in including gender issues within my research. Female voices and views are often excluded or misinterpreted in the production of scientific knowledge. The digital medium, however, offers valuable space to articulate multiple stories rather than a single, dominant history. Even though one would think that this is a given today, issues of limited research independency and freedom and underrepresentation of women in leading positions are still important regression factors that we need to overcome.

### HARRIET CLIFFEN (UK)

I have been working with the H2020 EU ERA Chair "Mnemosyne" Project on Digital Cultural Heritage, as an Early-Stage Researcher in Data Acquisition/Data Processing since April 2020. My work is predominantly focused on developing classifications for the structuring and enhancement of heritage knowledge. At the centre of my research, I am exploring different ways of extracting and documenting intangible heritage, through the use of different tools and methods.

My background is in archaeology and archaeological science, with my previous research focusing on analysing Bronze Age Cypriot ceramics through non-destructive techniques, to identify features of production, in order to understand production variations between sites. A driving force of this work was



to identify and apply non-destructive approaches for analysing and recording artefacts, preserving them for the future.

It is extremely important to me to represent women in science and in research, as whilst there is a move towards equality, it is still sadly lacking. I aim to contribute towards an equal representation and by being a voice to push forward and celebrate the views, knowledge and skills of women. We are currently in a pivotal period of change for the representation of women's views, particularly with the idea of her-story, which aims to present women's history and women in history that have been previously overlooked. There is hope for equality for women in research, but to allow that hope to come to fruition we need the issues and challenges, such as underrepresentation (in both research positions and in history) and pay gap to be overcome.

### GIULIA OSTI (IT)

I joined the EU H2020 ERA Chair "Mnemosyne" project in June 2020, together with my fellows Eleanna and Marina. I have previously approached this research from different fields and perspectives, my current work as an Early-Stage Researcher is centred on semantic data modelling or recreating the relation between data and their "values" in a digital environment, which will al-





low the conversion of what we know about a specific topic or object to a machine-readable way.

My research background is mostly concerned with digital and community archaeology, and I also have experience in the field of plant evolutionary biology – as well as in data visualisation. The possibility to transfer and translate something so precious and complex as the knowledge of the past into a digital form is what fascinates me most.

Modelling and working with artificial languages to disclose through the web whatever we can understand about the traces left from our ancestors is what I want to master – and what gets me out of bed every day. Being a woman and, most of all, an Italian woman in science is something I am often thinking about, given that my country of origin ranks 14<sup>th</sup> in the EU according to the Gender Equality Index for 2020<sup>6</sup>.

Moreover, dealing with ICT increases awareness about women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), but they are still a minority. It is up to us to improve this situation and, sure thing, I will do my part.

<sup>4</sup>European Commission, "COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025." p. 20, 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1263>

<sup>5</sup>United Nations, "Gender equality and women's empowerment – United Nations Sustainable Development," Online, 2020. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality>

<sup>6</sup>"Gender Equality Index 2020: Italy | European Institute for Gender Equality." <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2020-italy>





United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair on  
Digital Cultural Heritage at  
the Cyprus University of  
Technology



STUDY ON QUALITY IN 3D  
DIGITISATION OF TANGIBLE  
CULTURAL HERITAGE



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