

Generative Traditions

LIVING HERITAGE
AND ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE

New Horizons -
Exploring Cultural
Possibilities



11 September 2026
Athens, Greece

National Gallery
Alexandros Soutsos Museum
"Onassis Foundation" Auditorium

Livestream on YouTube:
▶ <https://www.youtube.com/live/9KA2q6E9YI4>

Scientific Committee

Stavroula Fotopoulou, Director of Modern Cultural Heritage,
Hellenic Ministry of Culture

Konstantina Benissi, Head of the Department for the Supervision of Greek and
Foreign Scientific Institutions, Directorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities,
Hellenic Ministry of Culture

Alexandra Bounia, Professor, University of Aegean

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Ioulia Pentazou, Associate Professor, University of Thessaly

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Organising Committee

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Maria Sereti, Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage,
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Hellenic Ministry of Culture

Sofia Spyropoulou, Directorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities,
Hellenic Ministry of Culture

**Dr Lina
Mendon**

Minister of Culture
Hellenic Republic

The rapid development of Artificial Intelligence is already transforming the ways in which we document, study, interpret and transmit cultural heritage, while creating new opportunities for access, education and creative expression. In the case of living heritage, however, technological innovation encounters knowledge, skills and practices that are shaped, constantly recreated and transmitted by the communities themselves. While Artificial Intelligence relies on data processing and the automated generation of content, intangible cultural heritage is kept alive through practice, participation, collective memory and transmission from one generation to the next. The encounter between these different ways of creating and transmitting knowledge opens up significant prospects, while at the same time raising complex ethical, legal and social issues.

The conference “Generative Traditions: Living Heritage and Artificial Intelligence. New Horizons – Exploring Cultural Possibilities”, organised by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, through the Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage, in cooperation with UNESCO, aspires to provide a forum for meaningful international and interdisciplinary dialogue. Communities, scholars, cultural professionals, research institutions and policymakers are invited to bring together principles, experience and applied research, highlighting both the opportunities and the challenges presented by this new technology.

Critical questions lie at the heart of the discussion: Who decides which cultural materials are transformed into data and for what purposes they are used? How can consent, proper attribution, control over data and the equitable sharing of benefits be ensured? How can authenticity, cultural meaning and embodied knowledge be safeguarded when AI systems generate new cultural representations? A fundamental premise is that technological capability cannot be the sole criterion for adoption. Innovation must remain human-centred and community-centred, strengthening the capacity of communities to determine what is safeguarded, what is shared, what is transformed, and under what conditions.

This initiative forms part of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture’s broader policy for the responsible and culturally sensitive integration of Artificial Intelligence into the cultural sector. With people and the communities that bring our cultural heritage to life and foster contemporary creative expression and artistic production as our constant point of reference, we seek to ensure that technology serves knowledge, safeguarding, access and creation, while reinforcing the public character of culture, synergies in research and education, and Greece’s position in the international dialogue.

Fumiko Ohinata

Secretary of the 2003
Convention for the
Safeguarding of the
Intangible Cultural
Heritage
UNESCO

Artificial intelligence is poised to become a dominant force in our lives; already, it is spoken of as the next ‘industrial revolution’, a quantum leap in the way we live and work on par with the advent of the Internet. However, with such profound and transformative change must also come a moment for guidance and reflection. This is especially so in the realm of living heritage, whose very essence lies in the hands of communities, groups, and individuals. Even as we embrace the new possibilities of this technology, it is important to keep our focus on the bearers of living heritage, and it is why we are meeting in Greece.

Since ratifying the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage almost two decades ago, Greece has been an active member of our ‘living heritage family’, making significant contributions to the safeguarding of living heritage both at home and abroad. Its hosting of this conference on living heritage and artificial intelligence is timely – coming at precisely the moment when AI has just begun to enter the lives of bearers and communities, and just before it becomes a new normal.

This conference also marks another step forward for UNESCO and the 2003 Convention’s exploration of this topic. At the twentieth session of our Intergovernmental Committee last December, the Committee encouraged the Secretariat to explore the implications of digital technologies on living heritage, and to develop guidance on how to ‘effectively harness digital tools for safeguarding purposes while addressing potential risks for communities’. This is why the Intergovernmental Committee of the 2003 Convention has launched a new thematic initiative on artificial intelligence and living heritage, in line with our previous initiatives on economic dimensions, climate change, and urban contexts. Over the course of 2027, we will hold expert meetings and consultations leading to the development of a Guidance Note on the subject, which will give communities and other stakeholders a framework to safely engage with AI in safeguarding their living heritage.

As we embark on this work, I hope that this meeting will provide a foundation for the consultations to follow, and an opportunity for leading researchers in Greece and beyond to share their knowledge and expertise with the wider community. I am confident that your discussions will deepen our understanding of this new phenomenon in our lives, and aid bearers and communities in their longstanding mission to safeguard intangible cultural heritage in a changing world.

I congratulate the national authorities of Greece on this ambitious and timely initiative, and wish its organizers and participants every success and meaningful discussions ahead.

Stavroula-Villy Fotopoulou

Director of Modern
Cultural Heritage
Hellenic Ministry
of Culture

This conference, that we have the honour of organising in partnership with the Secretariat of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003), and with the support of the Permanent Delegation of the Hellenic Republic to UNESCO, does not aspire to provide ready answers to the overarching challenge posed by Artificial Intelligence to cultural heritage as a whole, both tangible and intangible. Our goal is to delve into the essential questions raised by the bearers of intangible heritage themselves, as well as the professionals and researchers in this field.

To this end, we have structured today's programme around five key thematic axes:

- **Documentation and Safeguarding:** We examine how Large Language Models (LLMs), Machine Learning, and technologies such as Computer Vision or Motion Capture can assist in recording oral traditions, performing arts, and craftsmanship, while also enhancing public accessibility.
- **Living Heritage, Experience, Transmission, and Sustainability:** We explore whether Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI) acts as an enhancing factor for younger generations or if it threatens to “freeze” the organic evolution of living heritage.
- **Communities, Participation, and Appropriation:** We focus on the control of cultural knowledge, seeking ways to protect against algorithmic bias and its consequences -namely, the appropriation and misrepresentation of cultural expressions- always guided by the meaningful participation of local communities.
- **Ethics and Intellectual Property Rights:** We discuss the complex legal landscape of intellectual property regarding works based on collective knowledge, as well as the need for the explicit and informed consent of communities when their heritage is utilized.
- **Management Policies and Sustainability:** We examine whether there is a need to update international frameworks governing cultural heritage, and discuss the challenges of the digital divide.

We look forward to the fruitful discussion that will follow, but we never forget our foundation, as it is reflected in the title of the Conference, *Generative Traditions*. It points to a particularly important dimension of the AI-ICH relationship. Living heritage is not simply something that communities inherit and pass on unaltered to the next generations: because it is sustained through human creativity and social interaction, it is itself inherently productive of new knowledge and new forms of practice. AI therefore enters an already generative process.

PROGRAMME

09:00–09:30

Registration

09:30–10:15

Opening Remarks

Dr Lina Mendoni, Minister of Culture, Hellenic Republic

H.E. Nayef Al – Fayez, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture

H.E. Peter K. Ngure, Permanent Delegate of Kenya to UNESCO

H.E. Georgios Koumoutsakos, Permanent Delegate of the Hellenic Republic to UNESCO

10:15–10:45

Keynote Speech

*Artificial Intelligence and Intangible Cultural Heritage.
Mapping terra (in)cognita*

Hanna Schreiber, PhD, Professor at the University of Warsaw, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair on Intangible Cultural Heritage in Public and Global Governance

10:45–11:15

Coffee break

11:15–12:30

SESSION 1

Rethinking intangible cultural heritage in the era of artificial intelligence

Coordination:

Elena Bazini, Deputy Head of the Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Intercultural Affairs, Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage, Hellenic Ministry of Culture

Nicholas Tan, Associate Programme Specialist, Living Heritage Entity, UNESCO

*From Traces to Data, from Query to Prompt:
Challenging Heritage in the 'Generative Condition'*

Ioulia Pentazou, Associate Professor of Humanities and Digital Media, Department of Culture, Creative Media and Industries, University of Thessaly

*Intangible Heritage meets AI: Reflections on early experiments
and generative futures*

Dr Marilena Alivizatou, Honorary Lecturer in Heritage and Museum Studies, University College London, Institute of Archaeology

*Response-able AI for intangible heritage practitioners:
how communities and heritage entrepreneurs can protect
their interests in digital environments*

Harriet Deacon, Lecturer in AI ethics, Centre of Excellence for Data Science, AI and Modelling, University of Hull, UK

Ground Truth Without a Ground: Artificial Intelligence, Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Postgraduate Education in Greece

Despina Catapoti, Associate Professor in Cultural Theory and Digital Culture, University of the Aegean, Department of Cultural Technology and Communication

Sabina Batlle Baró, Assistant Professor, Department of Library Science, Documentation and Audiovisual Communication, University of Barcelona

12:30–13:00

Coffee break

13:00–14:30

SESSION 2

Research Ecosystems for Intangible Cultural Heritage and Artificial Intelligence

Coordination:

Dr Olympia Peperaki, Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage, Hellenic Ministry of Culture

Maria Sereti, Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage, Hellenic Ministry of Culture

Beyond Movement Capture: Semantic and Physical AI Modelling for Craft Knowledge Safeguarding

Xenophon Zabulis, Research Director, Institute of Computer Science, Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas (FORTH)

Creating human-centric cultural experiences through technology: The AiTHERION example

Lida Arnellou, Research Scientist C, National Centre for Scientific Research Demokritos, Institute of Informatics and Telecommunications

withFlow: Capturing Intangible Cultural Heritage Through the Emotional Experience of Live Music

Spyros Kantarelis, **Vassilis Lyberatos**, Researchers at the Artificial Intelligence and Learning Systems Laboratory (AILS Lab), National Technical University of Athens

From Archive to Algorithm: AI and the Living Heritage of Music

Chris Sgouropoulos, **Theodoros Giannakopoulos**, Research Associates at the National Centre for Scientific Research Demokritos, Institute of Informatics and Telecommunications

AI and Robotics for the Digital Future of Textile Heritage: The TEXTaiLES example

George Alexis Ioannakis, Principal Researcher, Institute for Language and Speech Processing, Athena Research Center

14:30–15:30

Light Lunch

15:30–16:45

ROUND TABLE

Public Policies and Future Directions. Building a Research and Policy Agenda

Coordination:

Stavroula – Villy Fotopoulou, Director of Modern Cultural Heritage, Hellenic Ministry of Culture

Giovanni Scepi, Head of the Programme Management Unit, Living Heritage Entity, UNESCO

Maria-Daphne Papadopoulou, Dr, LL.M. mult, Acting Director, Hellenic Copyright Organization

Brigitte Vézina, Director of Policy and Open Culture, Creative Commons

Hanna Schreiber, PhD, Professor at the University of Warsaw, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair on Intangible Cultural Heritage in Public and Global Governance

Vangelis Karkaletsis, Dr, Director, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Centre for Scientific Research (NCSR) Demokritos

Xenophon Zabulis, Research Director, Institute of Computer Science, Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas (FORTH)

Despina Catapoti, Associate Professor in Cultural Theory and Digital Culture, University of the Aegean, Department of Cultural Technology and Communication (TBC)

16:45–17:00

Closing remarks

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