

An Indian-Australian research partnership

**Project Title:**

**Digitalore: Sustainable preservation, transmission and transformation of intangible cultural heritage through digital storytelling**

**Project Number**

ID00690

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## Research Academy Themes:

**Highlight which of the Academy's Theme(s) this project will address?**

(Feel free to nominate more than one. For more information, see [www.iitbmonash.org](http://www.iitbmonash.org))

1. Advanced computational engineering, simulation and manufacture
2. Infrastructure Engineering
3. Clean Energy
4. Water
5. Nanotechnology
6. Biotechnology and Stem Cell Research
7. **Humanities and Social Sciences**

## The research problem

*Define the problem*

What possibilities do digital technologies offer for the sustainable transmission, preservation and transformation of intangible cultural heritage through digital storytelling? How can digital technologies promote the contribution intangible cultural heritage makes to sustainable development?

Cultural heritage and traditional craftsmanship contribute significantly to cultural and creative diversity and sustainable development. While there has been an interest in cultural heritage and traditional practices as a reaction to increased urbanisation and industrialisation, there is a range of issues challenging the survival

of these practices globally-- mass production of globalisation, the impact of environmental and climatic change on availability of resources or displacement and dispersal of communities, and other changing social conditions. The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted in 2003 by the General Conference of UNESCO identified a range of domains in which 'intangible cultural heritage' (UNESCO 2015) may be manifest ('oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practice about nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship'), and recognised the need for approaches to safeguard the knowledge and skills involved in these domains for transmission to future generations more than the preservation of craft objects (such as, 'tools; clothing and jewellery; costumes and props for festivals and performing arts; storage containers, objects used for storage, transport and shelter; decorative art and ritual objects; musical instruments and household utensils, and toys, both for amusement and education') (UNESCO 2009). Where the abandonment of the 'handmade' objects for digital gadgets may be perceived as one of the factors contributing to the decline of these traditional practices, the recognition of similarities between digital fabrication and craft practices with the notion of 'digital craft' has led to the development of new manufacturing methods and recognition of the value of skill or technique that is always involved in the production of objects (Oxman 2007). However, this project responds to the need to preserve and make tangible the most intangible aspect of intangible cultural heritage to look to digital technologies to understand what opportunities they might offer for new tools and approaches for preservation and transmission of the skills or techniques involved in the manifestations of cultural heritage.

#### Sources Cited

Digital Craft: Fabrication Based Design in the Age of Digital Production  
Oxman N., in Workshop Proceedings for Ubicomp 2007: International Conference on Ubiquitous Computing. September; Innsbruck, Austria, 534-538  
UNESCO (2009) 'Kit of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage' [Online] Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/kit>  
UNESCO (2015) 'Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development' [Online] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002434/243402e.pdf>

## Project aims

*Define the aims of the project*

1. To understand and assess the challenges of transmission and preservation of skills and knowledge of intangible cultural heritage and the contribution they makes to sustainable development;
2. To assess the role, value and range of opportunities that digital methods may have for the transmission and preservation of skills and knowledge of intangible cultural heritage and what implications this may have on sustainable development;
3. To understand how extant practices combining digital technologies and manifestations of intangible cultural heritage may be defining and contributing to the development of new approaches for their transmission, transformation and continuity for future generations;
4. To explore and develop new digital and visual ethnographic approaches to transmission and preservation of and public engagement with intangible cultural heritage through participatory research and co-design with traditional practitioners.

These aims will be realised through the following objectives:

1. Produce digital storytelling artefact that maps and presents the challenges of transmission and preservation gathered through interviews and workshops with traditional practitioners;
2. Develop an archive and exhibition of existing practices combining digital technologies and manifestations of intangible cultural heritage across a range of technologies and art forms;
3. Develop a digital storytelling artefact co-designed with a traditional arts practitioner (individual or community depending on context and form) that models an approach to digital transmission, preservation and ethnographic presentation of intangible cultural heritage.

## Expected outcomes

*Highlight the expected outcomes of the project*

A better and more nuanced understanding of the challenges for the transmission and preservation of the knowledge and skills of intangible cultural heritage, its significance to

sustainable development and the part that digital technologies can play in its transformation, transmission and preservation. The outcomes could be films, websites, installations, performances etc.

### **How will the project address the Goals of the above Themes?**

*Describe how the project will address the goals of one or more of the 6 Themes listed above.*

The project addresses the 7<sup>th</sup> theme that has been added – Humanities and Social Sciences. It not only aims to respond to issues of concern of the sustainability of cultural and creative diversity expressed through intangible cultural heritage that are of concern in contemporary India and more globally with the impacts of rapid urbanisation and globalisation, but also hopes to expand the understanding of the contribution that both the knowledge and skills involved in these practices and also digital technologies can make or are already making to sustainable development. In addition, it hopes to contribute new ethical and culturally sensitive ethnographic methods of representation, preservation and transmission through digital scholarship in humanities and social sciences.

### **Capabilities and Degrees Required**

*List the ideal set of capabilities that a student should have for this project. Feel free to be as specific or as general as you like. These capabilities will be input into the online application form and students who opt for this project will be required to show that they can demonstrate these capabilities.*

1. A Masters in any of the following disciplines: art and design, performing arts, technology, or anthropology. MPhil strongly preferred.
2. Some awareness and experience of working with digital technologies
3. Some awareness and experience of working with ethnographic research techniques
4. A proposal, no longer than 1000 words, with a specific topic and indicating research question, is to be submitted.

### **Potential Collaborators**

*Please visit the IITB website [www.iitb.ac.in](http://www.iitb.ac.in) OR Monash Website [www.monash.edu](http://www.monash.edu) to highlight some potential collaborators that would be best suited for the area of research you are intending to float.*

Dr. Tom Chandler: [tom.chandler@monash.edu](mailto:tom.chandler@monash.edu)  
Dr. Vince Dziekien: [vince.dziekien@monash.edu](mailto:vince.dziekien@monash.edu)  
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Please provide a few key words relating to this project to make it easier for the students to apply.

Folklore, traditional handicraft, digitization, digital storytelling, ethnography