

Digital archives

Digital archives are systematically organized collections of data, documents, photos, audio, video, or other digital content, accessible through computer systems.

Main purposes:

- Long-term preservation
- Organization of information
- Easy access to materials that might otherwise be lost due to decay or limited accessibility

Challenges:

- Technical issues: data corruption, outdated formats
- Continuous maintenance for security and updates
- Copyright and privacy considerations

Digital archiving is not a one-time task but an ongoing process requiring adaptation to technological developments.

Benefits of digital storage

- **Protection against loss:** If a physical object is damaged or destroyed, the digital record remains
- **Easier accessibility:** Communities and the public can access heritage online
- **Education and promotion:** Digital collections form the basis for exhibitions, workshops, and online presentations
- **Networking:** Digital records allow sharing with other communities and integration of different resources into comprehensive knowledge bases in the international archives



Basics of digitalizing textile heritage

Photography

- Most accessible method
- Guidelines: natural light, simple background, multiple angles, capture details (e.g. stitches or patterns)
- Use smartphones or cameras

Scanning

- Suitable for documents, drawings, or paper-based samples
- 2D scanners capture fine details accurately

3D scanning and photogrammetry

- Useful for complex objects and tools (e.g. looms, spinning tools)
- Photogrammetry: creating 3D models from a series of photographs (can be done with a smartphone and apps)



Step-by-step: creating digital collections

1. Preparation

- Select an object, skill, or process for digitalization
- Define the purpose (archiving, promotion, education)

2. Capture

- Photograph or record the object/skill
- Ensure good audio quality for interviews

3. Description (Metadata)

- Add key information: object name, date, location, material, technique, associated persons, story
- Naming standards: clear filenames (e.g. woolen_scarf_Tolmin_2023.jpg), avoid generic names like IMG_1234.jpg

4. Organization

- Create folders by category (e.g. Objects, Tools, Techniques, Interviews)
- Use standardized forms for descriptions (documentation sheet + digital version)

5. Storage and security

- Always make at least two copies: one local (computer, disk) and one in the cloud (Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive)
- Regularly check file integrity



Practical tools and platforms

Photography and scanning:

- Smartphone with a good camera
- Free apps: Google PhotoScan, OpenCamera
- Scanners

3D documentation:

- Qlone (mobile app), Meshroom (free software), Autodesk ReCap (professional tool)

Digital collections:

- Omeka (open-source platform for communities)
- Europeana (European cultural heritage collection)

Organization and sharing:

- Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive (easy for teamwork)
- Trello or Notion (project and documentation organization)



GOOD PRACTICES

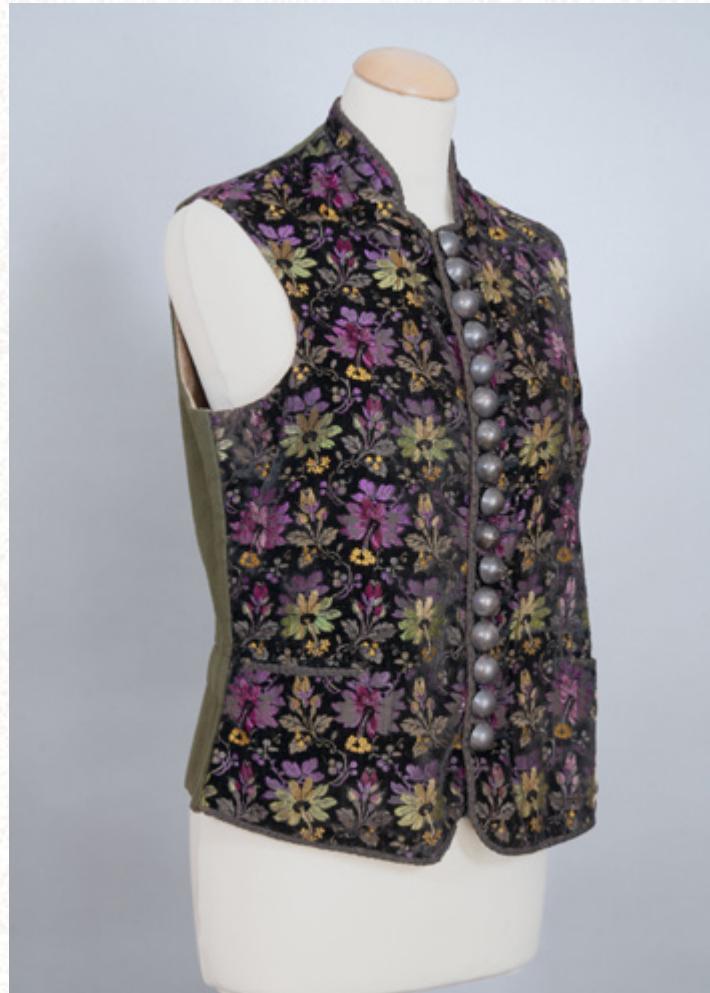
AlpTextyles Digital Archive—Europeana

Europeana is a European digital platform combining collections and archives from art, literature, film, music, and other sources from thousands of museums, libraries, and archives across Europe. It provides access to rich cultural heritage while clearly labeling copyrights and licenses.

In the AlpTextyles project partners digitized key collections representing Alpine textile heritage and created a digital archive on Europeana:

- Collaboration with the Montafon Museum: traditional clothing and garment components from the 18th to 20th centuries, sample books, and archival materials illustrating textile traditions. [Link](#)
- Collaboration with Musei Valposchiavo: materials showing the connection between textile practices, sustainability, and local stories, including Casa Tomé (1350) and the “Coperta Poschiavina.” [Link](#)
- ZRC SAZU contributed over 100 unique traditional garments from 19th to early 20th century Upper Carniola, including items from local museums, photographed specifically for the project. [Link](#)

These collections provide wider access to valuable cultural heritage in a European digital space.



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Task:

Create a digital folder with a description and photograph of a chosen object.

Steps:

1. Select an object
2. Photograph it from multiple angles
3. Name the file according to the standard (type_object_place_year.jpg)
4. Create a folder on a computer or cloud storage
5. Add a short description (name, material, place of origin, related story)
6. If possible, include an audio recording or short video with the knowledge bearer/owner telling the story

Outcome:

Participants gain hands-on experience in creating a digital heritage collection that can be expanded and shared.



4. Safeguarding Textile Heritage

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Learn methods for safeguarding tangible heritage (textiles, tools, spaces).
- Understand the basics of preventive conservation and storage.
- Understand how to document and transmit intangible heritage.

Heritage care is both a responsibility to the past and an investment in the future. Objects, knowledge, stories, and customs that we preserve and pass on form the foundation of community identity and inspire creativity. Safeguarding them for future generations requires careful handling—both to protect material objects and to sustain living knowledge and traditions. Different principles apply when dealing with tangible and intangible heritage.

Safeguarding tangible heritage

Textile items and tools used in production are valuable carriers of history but are highly sensitive to time, moisture, light, mechanical damage, and improper handling. Although often used in everyday life, their long-term preservation requires special care and attention. Before any intervention, consulting experts is recommended, as unskilled cleaning or repairs can cause irreparable damage.

Basic textile care and restoration

Basic care involves preventive measures to avoid deterioration and careful handling to maintain objects in the best condition possible.

- **Cleaning:** Usually dry cleaning using a soft, clean cloth or a very gentle vacuum with an appropriate attachment. Wet cleaning should be done only in exceptional cases, as it can damage dyes and fabric structure. If cleaning is necessary, it should be done by trained specialists, especially for older textiles.
- **Minor repairs:** Small repairs like patching holes or reinforcing seams should be done by a textile conservator or skilled tailor/seamstress. Improper interventions can shorten an object's lifespan.



Preventive measures and storage

Proper storage conditions are critical for textile preservation:

- Keep away from direct sunlight, as UV rays cause fading and fiber deterioration.
- Ideal microclimate: 18–22 °C and 45–55 % relative humidity, with stability being crucial.
- Store textiles flat rather than hanging to avoid stretching.
- Use acid-free boxes and paper for wrapping and separating layers.
- If flat storage isn't possible, large garments can be kept in breathable cotton protective bags.
- Avoid metal hangers; use wide, padded, neutral-material hangers to support shoulders evenly.
- Protect against moths and other insects: keep textiles clean of sweat, food, and organic residues. Natural repellents like lavender, cedar, or bay leaves can help.
- Tools also require care: protect wood from pests and moisture, metals from rust.
- Storage spaces should be dry, regularly ventilated, and dedicated to heritage materials if possible.
- Regular inspections and airing (e.g. twice a year) help detect early signs of damage.



Safeguarding intangible heritage

Intangible heritage—knowledge, skills, customs, stories, and rituals—is often even more vulnerable than physical objects, as it exists only while it is actively practiced and transmitted. When knowledge holders are gone, their knowledge disappears unless it is properly passed on.

How to document and transmit knowledge

Documentation is fundamental: recording videos, taking photographs, and carefully noting procedures help ensure that knowledge is preserved for future generations.

However, recording alone is not enough. Effective transmission requires hands-on learning opportunities—workshops where masters directly teach younger people are among the most effective methods. In addition to technical procedures, it is important to document stories, proverbs, songs, and customs that provide cultural context and meaning.

Community events such as fairs, festivals, and open days offer opportunities to present traditions to a wider public, raising awareness and appreciation of their value.

Engaging masters and knowledge holders

Knowledge bearers are true ambassadors of heritage. Actively involving them in community life is essential. Transmission can take place through schools, intergenerational projects, local exhibitions, and public presentations. This approach preserves techniques while fostering respect for those who keep heritage alive. Public recognition of their role strengthens community identity and raises awareness of the importance of heritage.



GOOD PRACTICES

- **Transumanza Culturale** has been conceived as a grassroots event involving all the stakeholders that contribute to the sustainability of the wool supply chain—from shepherds to local associations that have reactivated traditional artisanal skills and restored value to wool, innovating products and highlighting their sustainability and circularity to consumers: [Link to the video](#)
- **Arts & Crafts Centre Škofja Loka** (Sora Development Agency): Handicraft [manuals](#) and [videos](#) for knowledge transfer

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Task: Create a maintenance plan for an object or space.

Steps:

1. Select an object (e.g. woolen blanket, loom) or a space (e.g. textile storage).
2. Record:
 - Current condition (photo + description)
 - Potential risks (moisture, moths, misuse)
 - Necessary preventive measures (proper storage, regular cleaning, protection)
 - Maintenance frequency (e.g. annual inspection, monthly cleaning)
3. If dealing with intangible heritage (e.g. weaving knowledge), prepare a transmission plan:
 - Identify knowledge holder(s)
 - Define the method of transmission (workshop, video, mentoring)
 - Identify participants (youth, associations, visitors)

Outcome: Each community will create a concrete, actionable heritage care plan that can be applied in practice and updated over time.



5. Heritage Communication

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Understand how to present heritage in an engaging and inspiring way.
- Learn the basics of storytelling as a tool to promote heritage.
- Identify appropriate communication channels for different target audiences.

Communicating heritage

Heritage gains value only when people live it, understand it, and share it. Preserving objects and knowledge is essential, but if heritage remains locked in cupboards, archives, or museum collections without proper communication, its potential to connect and inspire is wasted. Communities must therefore develop ways to present their heritage—both to their members and to the wider public.

Why to communicate heritage within and outside the community

- **Within the community:** Communication strengthens understanding, belonging, and connection. Organizing community events (storytelling evenings, workshops, collaborative work such as production, processing, crafting, or object care) allows knowledge to be transmitted between generations and enables everyone to contribute to the shared story. Such activities encourage active participation and reinforce a sense of collective identity.

- **Outside the community:** Heritage becomes a bridge to other communities, tourists, researchers, designers, and the general public. It is crucial to craft stories that not only inform but also inspire. A story brings heritage to life, highlighting the human aspect and helping audiences relate to it.



Preparing presentations, exhibitions, and stories for the public

Heritage objects and knowledge often do not speak for themselves—they need context: the story should answer who, when, where, why, and how.

Example:

- Basic info: “19th-century woolen shawl”
- Extended context: “The shawl was woven from wool of local sheep and richly decorated, worn by women on holidays. A QR code could link to a recording of the songs women sang during celebrations.”

This storytelling approach creates an emotional connection that visitors carry with them long after the visit.

Stories can be shared through exhibitions, publications, websites, social media, podcasts, and short films. Choose the channel according to the audience: younger generations respond better to videos and interactive content, while older audiences may prefer personal stories or printed catalogs.

Engaging media and digital platforms

- Local media can partner in sharing stories.
- Tourist organizations can include heritage in promoting the region.
- Museums, libraries, and schools bridge to education and youth.
- In the digital age, online galleries and platforms like Europeana, YouTube, and Instagram expand reach to global audiences while inspiring the local community.



Connecting with other communities and cultural institutions

Heritage knows no borders. Joint exhibitions, festivals, and exchanges with other communities strengthen intercultural dialogue and allow heritage to thrive in a broader context. Digital tools, such as virtual exhibitions and online conferences, enable long-distance connections and story sharing beyond geographic limits.



GOOD PRACTICES

- **European Heritage Days Stories:** Each year, communities are invited to tell stories about their heritage. The best stories can receive funding to implement and expand activities. [Link to stories](#)
- **AlpTextiles Narrative labels:** While mandatory labels provide basic technical data, the narrative label offers a richer story: in the case of textile products, it gives insight into the producers, the fibers and techniques used, the local breeds and plant varieties they are made from, the landscapes involved, and the values that shape the process. [Link to the guidelines](#)
- **READ MORE: Diego Rinallo:** Heritage storytelling, community empowerment and sustainable development: [Link to the article](#)

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Task: Write a short story about an object for an exhibition or publication.

Steps:

1. Choose an object.
2. Answer the questions: who, when, where, why, what, how.
3. Write a story of no more than 150 words.
4. Include emotions or imagery that the reader can visualize.
5. Optionally, add a photograph or short video.

Outcome: Participants will create concrete communication material ready for exhibitions, online use, or publications.

More exercises on heritage storytelling available here: [Link](#)



6. Revitalization of Textile Heritage

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Recognize different ways to integrate heritage elements into contemporary life.
- Understand the importance of collaboration between communities, designers, and tourism organizations.
- Find inspiration in successful heritage revitalization practices.

Revitalizing heritage

Heritage is not merely a memory of the past—it is a living foundation for shaping the future. Revitalization means reintroducing traditional techniques, knowledge, and products into modern life—whether as part of everyday routines, tourism experiences, or as inspiration for new creative practices. This approach ensures that heritage does not remain locked behind museum glass but becomes a bridge between generations and a source of identity and innovation.



How to reintroduce traditional techniques and products

Traditional textile products can flourish again when traditional practices are combined with modern usability. Collaboration with designers and artists opens up opportunities to reinterpret traditional techniques in new ways—for example, through digital patterns, contemporary textile printing, or updated garment designs.

Revitalization can also serve as a foundation for cultural tourism: visitors can actively participate rather than merely observe—for instance, by weaving, dyeing wool, exploring thematic trails, or taking part in hands-on events.



Involving the community and youth

Revitalization can succeed only through active community involvement. Practical activities—such as demonstrations of traditional techniques, workshops for children and young people, and fairs or festivals—enable knowledge to be both transmitted and transformed.

Schools, youth centers, and associations can integrate heritage into informal education, combining learning with creativity. Intergenerational collaboration is essential: masters and knowledge holders act as mentors, while younger generations contribute new ideas and use digital tools to give heritage fresh forms and promote it through social media.



GOOD PRACTICES

- **Reviving linen production in Škofja Loka region:** Practical workshops, films, exhibitions, publications. [YouTube example](#)
- **Brächete event in Switzerland** [Link](#)
- **Development of natural dyes:** Collaboration with various individuals/communities for new products (Mediplant—Lili Panjtar—Landici)

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Task: Design a small event or activity to revitalize heritage.

Steps:

1. Choose an element of textile heritage you want to highlight (e.g. technique, object, story).
2. Decide on the form of the event (workshop, open day, market presentation).
3. Outline basic elements:
 - Who participates (master, community members, youth, guests)?
 - What will be demonstrated or produced?
 - Where and when will the event take place?
 - How will you promote it (posters, social media, partners)?
 - What will be the outcome (products, new knowledge, community connections)?

Outcome: Participants will create concrete communication material ready for exhibitions, online use, or publications.



7. Knowledge Sharing and Transmission

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Develop effective ways to share knowledge and skills within and beyond the community.
- Recognize and support knowledge holders as key actors in heritage preservation.
- Encourage sustainable forms of education and skills transfer.

The importance of sharing knowledge

Heritage knowledge only has meaning if it is shared and passed on. Alpine textile heritage is rich with specialized techniques, skills, and processes that cannot be found in textbooks—they exist only in the hands and minds of the people who practice them. Therefore, it is crucial for communities to develop ways to share this knowledge, skills, and processes internally and externally, ensuring their preservation.



Sharing skills within the community

One of the simplest and most effective ways to transfer heritage knowledge is through community gatherings. These can be small-scale events in local spaces such as cultural centers, museums, or community halls, where older members and knowledge holders meet with younger participants. Knowledge is shared through conversations, demonstrations of techniques, and collaborative creation.

Such gatherings not only transmit skills but also strengthen a sense of belonging, trust, and community cohesion.

Learning and education

Structured learning opportunities complement informal gatherings by providing systematic knowledge transfer:

- **Workshops and courses:** Practical learning of techniques like weaving, felting, natural dyeing, lace-making, or embroidery, organized by schools, museums, or associations.
- **Mentorships:** Experienced knowledge holders guide small groups of learners over extended periods, fostering deeper understanding and hands-on skill development.
- **Online courses and videos:** These expand access beyond the local community, enabling heritage to reach new generations of researchers, designers, and enthusiasts worldwide.



Empowering knowledge holders

Knowledge holders are the heart of heritage—without their willingness to share, knowledge can quickly disappear. Communities should:

- Recognize and publicly appreciate their role.
- Include them in projects and events.
- Provide fair compensation or support for their work.
- Offer platforms for their stories to be visible and accessible.

