

Chapter 2

The Intersection of Digital Humanities and Artistic Augmented/Virtual Reality Research in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

Immersive media such as augmented reality/virtual reality (AR/VR) environments are growing in popularity both globally and in Hong Kong. In the artistic research sector, these projects may or may not have systematic digital preservation, data curation, or other digital stewardship components built into the creative process. Although digital multimedia preservation has been a long-standing topic of discussion for archivists, the complexity of immersive media projects raises questions regarding best practices and ensuring future accessibility. The author proposes that artistic AR/VR research in Hong Kong could benefit from the application of digital humanities practices, whether it be for archival, research, or further artistic purposes. This chapter reviews case studies in Hong Kong academic institutions to identify existing needs and makes recommendations for incorporating digital humanities practices into the creative and project management processes.

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INTRODUCTION

Immersive media such as augmented/virtual reality (AR/VR) environments are growing in popularity globally, and Hong Kong (HK) is no exception. In the artistic research sector (i.e. research rooted in the arts and humanities), these projects may or may not have systematic digital preservation, data curation or other digital stewardship components built into the creative process. Although digital multimedia preservation has been a long-standing topic of discussion for archivists, the complexity of immersive media projects raises questions regarding best practices and ensuring future accessibility. Additionally, while the use of immersive media in digital cultural heritage projects has been growing in popularity, there still remains untapped potential for other types of artistic AR/VR works to be further disseminated and transformed through digital humanities (DH) strategies. A number of North American and European institutions have begun investigating these questions and publicizing their findings in earnest at international venues. Information on developments on HK, however, is not as prevalent.

The use of multimedia within DH projects is a common strategy and is often accompanied by some level of digital preservation and/or data curation. In some cases, a more curatorial or museum-oriented approach may be taken to produce an artistic multimedia DH project. What is not immediately apparent is how the output of academic researchers engaged in artistic immersive media projects are preserved and disseminated in accordance with standards followed by other academic disciplines. As a digital archivist/humanist and artist engaged in practice-based research currently embedded in Hong Kong, the author proposes that artistic AR/VR research in Hong Kong could benefit from the application of DH practices, whether it be for archival, research or further artistic purposes. This chapter reviews case studies in Hong Kong academic institutions to identify existing needs and makes recommendations for incorporating DH practices into the creative and project management processes.

BACKGROUND

The notion of digital environments that “immerse” a viewer has existed as a concept since before the advent of digital computing devices (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly, 2008). Of all the types of immersive media available at the time of writing, AR and VR environments are perhaps the most available to the general public as evidenced by the Oculus Rift, HTC Vive, Sony VR and apps for smartphones. The concept of virtual reality itself is not new, having started with the publication of

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