Lorena Zevedei, Janneke Kamp

Background

Culture Vortex

This project has come to life through the cooperation between different organisations. To name them: Hogeschool van Amsterdam; Lectoraat Network Cultures and MediaLAB Amsterdam, The Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, Netherlands Media Art Institute, Virtual Platform, VPRO, Amsterdam City Archives, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, IDFA, Video Vortex Network and the Urban Screens Association.

Together as online collection holding institutes they have the same questions: How to deal with the collection and their users at the same time? What are interactive ways to deal with both and to make sure they interact?

Culture Vortex: Publiek 2.0 (NIMk)

Netherlands Media Art Institute(NIMk) works towards providing an optimal availability and accessibility to digital cultural heritage and media art while promoting media art and providing (digital) access to its various collections. The institution wants to become more transparent and an important centre for research and use of media in order to reach its cultural mission.

The main questions that are addressed in this research:
- How do users approach the collection at NIMk, what needs do they have?
- Is there a need for active user participation and how can this be realised in a meaningful way?
- What can be drawn and learned from other successful online initiatives and applications?
- How can NIMk generate income from the collection?

Project assignment:

- Research on usability and functionality of the online catalogue while approaching various target groups
- Bring up a list of services and features that could be most interesting for communicating the NIMk collection
- Find ways to improve the methods of storing, adding and editing metadata for the online catalogue (only Lorena)
- Develop a theoretical structured business model for online communication of the NIMk collection (Janneke, Bachelor thesis)

Products:

- Advice report for a renewed online catalogue and online strategy for making accessible and distributing its media art collection (Janneke and Lorena)
- A proposal for storing, adding and editing metadata for the online catalogue (Lorena)
- A structured business model for online communication of the NIMk collection (Janneke)

Project boundaries

At the end of the term of three months:
- We are going to provide an advice report for a renewed online catalogue and online strategy for making accessible and distributing NIMk's media/video art collection
- We are going to provide the theoretical elements to be included in the design of the new catalogue
- We are not going to provide the design model for the new catalogue nor the Content Management System (CMS)
- Lorena is going to write a proposal with new ideas for storing, adding and editing metadata for the online catalogue
- Lorena is not going to execute the proposed ideas related to the metadata

After the first term of three months:
- Janneke is going to write a structured business model for online communication of the NIMk collection (Bachelor thesis)
- Janneke is not going to implement the new business model

Target Groups

The main target groups for the research are:
- artists
- professionals
- non-professionals

Regarding these groups: each use the collection in a different manner, this is mainly why they are chosen. They are considered as three main groups although they each might be regrouped in different subcategories, as shown below.

Artists
The artists are both providers as users of the collection. This group is important because they can tell us what they miss in the current catalogue. Also what they need to make their work even more visible and accessible. As users we can learn from them what they would expect to find about other artists and as artists they can define the best questions and answers within their expertise.
This group will have a division between two subgroups:

- *Artists in the collection and distribution*
- *Artists not in the collection nor in distribution*

Professionals
This group is divided in three different categories. This is the group NIMk already works with a lot and they know them quite well. Even though it is best to approach them each in a different way and keep the gathered information mostly separated although there will be some overlap.

Curators mostly have two different roles that we can address to. They can act as information providers – they can be the link between the NIMk and their own institutions, and within their institutions the link with their users (general public, professors, students, even artists) – or they can search for information within their own profession. In both ways we can learn what the best ways to provide certain information is.

Lecturers will be chosen from three different levels. There will be a focus on high schools, higher education (HBO/Universities) and different academies.
Lecturers from various fields of higher education will be approached. The art professors should be able to provide interesting information about their usage of the collection within their classrooms. Lecturers from other fields than arts will be approached in order to get more ideas for the structure of the database. They might advise ways of better communication of the collection.

Students are becoming professionals, either artists themselves or art related professionals/ researchers. They can provide us with a critical view. Students are found on the internet a lot so they can recognise quickly what elements are useful or not.

Non-professionals
The last category is an important one in this research. They could be amateurs, people interested in art in general. NIMk is interested in approaching new audiences and their opinion is of great importance in the sense that it can give us ideas of better visibility and communication. NIMk wants to get to know this group better and this research gives a good opportunity.
A part of the non-professionals are also the *mediatheque users*. They are the best source to discover what other functions would be useful in the catalogue. Because they are used to the in-house catalogue and know its strengths and flaws.

Approach:

- Desk research, inventory of:
    - existing research in this area (focussed on public 2.0 in relation with cultural heritage/business models)
    - already completed research by NIMk in the context of GAMA
    - best practices and other projects - to use as examples

- expert-meeting with brainstorm with the consortium and other guests (afternoon workshop)

- Field research, public research/interviewing with various target groups:
    - Artists, professionals (email with options: interview or online form)
    - Non professionals (user-test, first contact with the website)
    - Non professionals, users of the mediatheque (written questionnaire handed at the mediatheque)

Other options to think of: online interview (skype), online conference (skype)

How to contact these target groups:
- mailing lists from NIMk (general and distribution) and Facebook friends
- curators (personal and through networks of NIMk)
- artists (personal and through networks of NIMk)
- professors (personal and through networks of NIMk)
- students (through professors and the network of the NIMk)
- users of the mediatheque (at NIMk)

Timeline:

- Project duration: 1 April – 30 June
- Team-meetings: every other week
- Desk research: April
- Field research: May
- Presentation inventory research: 27 April (overview questions on main topics)
- Expert meeting: 25 May (with the consortium members)
- Public research: 1 May – 15 June
- Final presentation: 17 June
- Weekly blog
- user-tests: Beginning of May (a few art academy students – to see reactions to the existing website and get more ideas)
- Analysing data and writing report with recommendations: 16 June – 30 June

Benefits:
- improved navigation functions within the catalogue
- a better interface and user friendly variables
- transparency and visibility of the collection and events/exhibitions
- bring more users to the institute, online and offline
- increasing income for artists and the institute
- expanding the recognition of the artists and their practice