

**STSM - “Data management at a commercial environment: conducting a mini data audit on the data produced by the Times of Malta” - report by Elli Papadopoulou and Sotirios Sismanis**



Host: Professor Milena Dobрева, University of Malta

Duration: 04 - 11, July 2016

First and foremost, we would like to express our gratitude to Dr. Andrea Scharnhorst, Dr. Panayiota Polydoratou, Prof. Milena Dobрева for their trust and support by giving us this opportunity to enrich our knowledge. Furthermore, we would like to thank Mr. Donald Tabone, CTO of the Times of Malta, and all the staff members of the Organisation for the excellent cooperation we had throughout this mini study. Special thanks to Dr. Marc Koscieljew, Head of the Department of Library Information and Archive Sciences, University of Malta, for encouraging our academic endeavour and for all the advise he kindly offered to us.

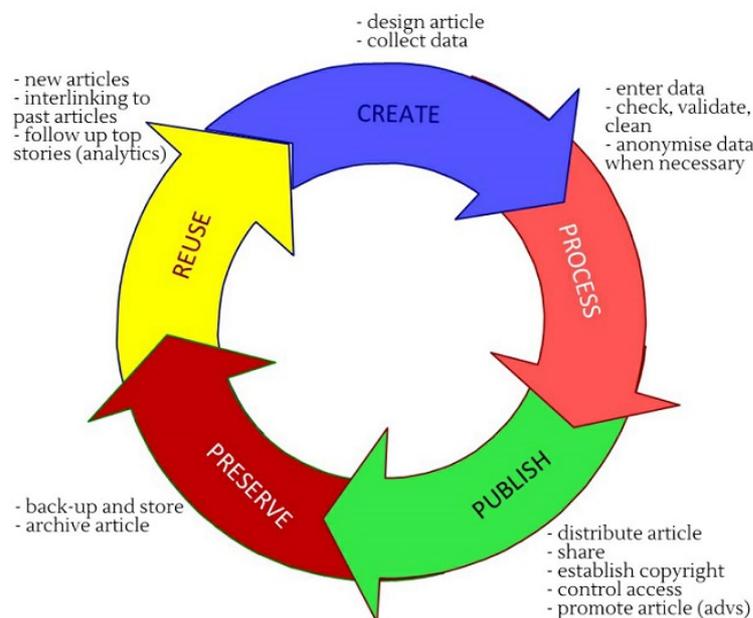
Funded by the COST Action TD-1210 KNOWeSCAPE, our short term mission to Malta aimed to explore the data management practises that the Times of Malta, part of the Allied Newspapers follows, and to suggest recommendations for potential improvements. The main objectives of this study were two-fold, first, to understand the overall workflow related to digital content creation, use, and management within the organisation, and second, to synthesize the lifecycle of digital objects within the Times of Malta environment.

The methodology of our study combined interviews, desk research, and on-site observations. We interviewed 11 representatives of the some 170-strong work force following a protocol which was developed after initial consultations with CTO Mr Donald Tabone in the first day of our visit and adapted the Data Audit Framework (DAF) to the particular needs of a newspaper environment. The interviews that were conducted provided us with the required information in order to understand how the organisation functions and how the employees perform and behave on a daily basis.

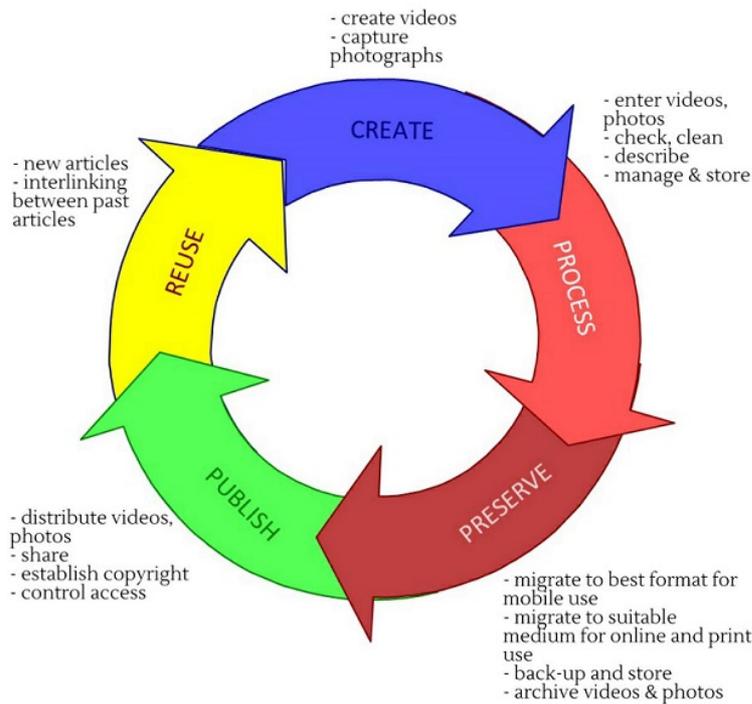
Our observations concern three major domains with their respective findings to be as follows:

- The overall place of the digital object workflows within the organisational culture: The Times of Malta uses an in-house built CMS based on a cloud server, combined with a suite of other online and customised tools. There is an overall good knowledge of the capabilities of the system among staff members. However, from librarianship's point of view, we had to express our concerns regarding the security of the data produced and held on cloud systems rather than dedicated ones.
- The digital objects' lifecycle: we identified that there are two different expressions related to the digital objects lifecycle. Diagrams were created to illustrate these two paths:

a) the online/digital texts lifecycle



## b) the images and videos lifecycle



Additionally, areas that could benefit from potential improvements are: Creation and versioning of the articles; Persistent identifiers; Rights management and referencing in the online environment; Preservation of digital objects; Readers' comments and social media policies.

- The use of analytics: Analytics have entered the staff's daily routine but their use is still not captured in a commonly-understood and implemented workflow. A Google analytics report is being distributed every morning via email. Further analytics data are obtained from Socionomix, DISQUS, Mandrill/MailChimp, Minely, and Alexa, but their data are mostly used by the management. What we identified is that there is a mixture of feelings on whether these metrics are of use for their daily duties or not and that there is no extensive analysis done on aspects that led the users to read these particular top stories.

In conclusion, our STSM in Malta was a remarkable experience and we hope that our report will inspire others to think out of the box and seek for RDM practices in various environments rather than the traditional ones.

Sincerely,

Elli Papadopoulou & Sotirios Sismanis