SPARKLE
case

D⬜⬜RS Digital Incubator
for Museums

Who | Institutional Profile

Institution	Museo Civico Augusta Redorici Roffi
Location	Vignola, Italy
Short Description	It all began in the seventies, with a group of enthusiasts who, wandering along the banks of the Panaro river, found minerals and fossils that testified to an ancient past and decided to share experiences and materials with the other citizens of Vignola and neighbouring areas, above all school pupils. One such enthusiast was a primary school teacher, Augusta. A first temporary site for the museum was a classroom where a corner with fossils and minerals was set up. Gradually the objects found home in the rooms of the castle of Vignola and further in other makeshift places (such as rooms in the former high school provided by the Municipality), up to the current site that was inaugurated in 2010. In 2011 the museum announced its dedication to the teacher Augusta Redorici Roffi.
	Every year, the museum hosts dozens of guided tours for elementary and middle school classes and workshops for both children and adults. An important stage of these visits is the outcrop of the Panaro river, where the most precious fossils were found and where it is still possible to find little treasures of nature among the mud, fossil shells of various types and history.
	The main mission of the museum can be found in some sheets written by Augusta herself in graceful calligraphy. It can be summarized in the following statements: • sharing the knowledge (and passion) of enthusiasts; • conveying knowledge of the territory and respect towards it on the part of citizens through the fossils collection; • making the museum a learning tool and support for teachers to the benefit of pupils of all schools.
	These values are still cherished and inspire the volunteers who welcome visitors every year, and develop in-house games to get the kids curious and involved.
Ownership	The institution is publicly owned. Property: Comune di Vignola.
Size	4,000 visitors a year | 2 employees working part-time and 19 volunteers of Gruppo Vignolese Ricerche

Approach to Digital	*Input by Laura Corsini and Cristina Serafini*
	One of the museum's early endeavors connected to the digital realm was the development of computer games aimed at helping schoolchildren better learn and know the museum collections. These games, while well built at their time, are fading in light of the accelerated pace of both digital technologies and ludic design and can nowadays be considered a little outdated. Let's say it this way, digital technology used since 1990 to bring children closer to knowledge of the museum, has not been adapted to the latest technological developments. Many things are still done on paper; there are no computerised reservation systems or website, as it is currently under construction. Promotional flyers are created with the help of outdated tools, such as MsWord.

Since we started DOORS, we realised the need for a unique and contextually strong digital strategy. But it has not always been easy to involve everyone in these innovations. Communication across the institution has not been treated in a unified manner as there are oftentimes issues that proved to require more urgent attention (e.g., duplication of Facebook page, presence of different email addresses or uncoordinated information provided on different pages in the web).

In recent months we were able to experiment with various technologies together with our cohort of volunteers. The result is the DOORS WebApp. The work involved creating videos and selecting suitable texts to be made available online across selected platforms and resources. With determination and patience, we are learning how to use some simple programs and training the volunteers to acquire necessary skills. At the same time, things that require greater digital skills, such as social media management and website updating, will be carried out and supported by municipal employees.

The digitisation of the museum is a broad project that will be realized in the upcoming years. It will enable our small museum that lacks space and resources to gradually but gracefully enhance its offering to the public.

What | Case

Project Title	The Open Air Museum

Timeframe	2022-2023

Concept & Approach	Museo Civico Augusta Redorici Roffi is seen as an important point of reference for the city of Vignola. It actively engages with local schools, inviting schoolchildren to learn more about the museum and its collection. The classes are invited to:

- have a lesson/visit to the museum;
- take a guided tour of the paleontological site downstream of the Vignola bridge;
- participate in cleaning and classification of the fossils at school.

The museum also offers visits to individuals and groups upon reservation, hosts various initiatives such as theme nights, travel stories and book presentations.

In 2019, 40 classes visited the museum. However, we were also tracing the weakening of the link with the local population, the connection was fading. The reasons vary from a space itself (as not all the pieces can be exhibited) to the actual capacity for hosting the visits (available either by reservation only, or during the school year on Sunday mornings).

Solutions needed to be found to involve more people and find new enthusiasts to care for the museum. During lockdown we had the opportunity to view many virtual exhibitions organised by other museums in light of closures. We imagined such a tool for ourselves, too – a museum that is always open, continuously exhibiting the fossils that usually remain closed in drawers.

As we were participating in the DOORS´ Incubation programme Stage I, we also worked on making a list of the museum's primary needs: a website, effective and unified communication, a network with other neighbouring museums and at a regional level, identifying relevant digital booking system and unifying single point of access online to request information.

We worked together with some of the volunteers - Renato, Mariangela, Pia and Angela-, who helped us to reconstruct the museum's past, its history starting from the foundation and to imagine a digital museum that would boost and revitalise the physical one.

The news of having been selected for the second stage of the incubation filled us with joy and trepidation. We had made it into the next stage, but that is exactly where the hard work

began. It was not easy to consolidate volunteers, pupils, professionals and teachers to form the team, involve and keep them involved, i.e. active and enthusiastic. The theory learned in the workshops helped us to better understand the potential of our museum and its originality. We worked hard and passionately to create a digital tool that would be useful, sustainable and with characteristics discussed and agreed upon with the group. In the meantime, we were carrying out other projects related to digitisation and communication, constantly reflecting on how important our learning and implementation journey is for bringing the museum back to being loved and cared for as in Augusta's days. The journey is indeed long and demanding, perhaps it is an ever ongoing one, but definitely the one in which the old and the new must always coexist.

Augusta taught us to love our ancient history and to teach it with passion to the youngest. Many of her teaching methods are still valid and can acquire a digital shell to be carried further. How wonderful our fossils are!

Fossil collection, Museo Civico Augusta Redorici Roffi

Tools

To define the target audiences we used the user/buyer personas tabs.

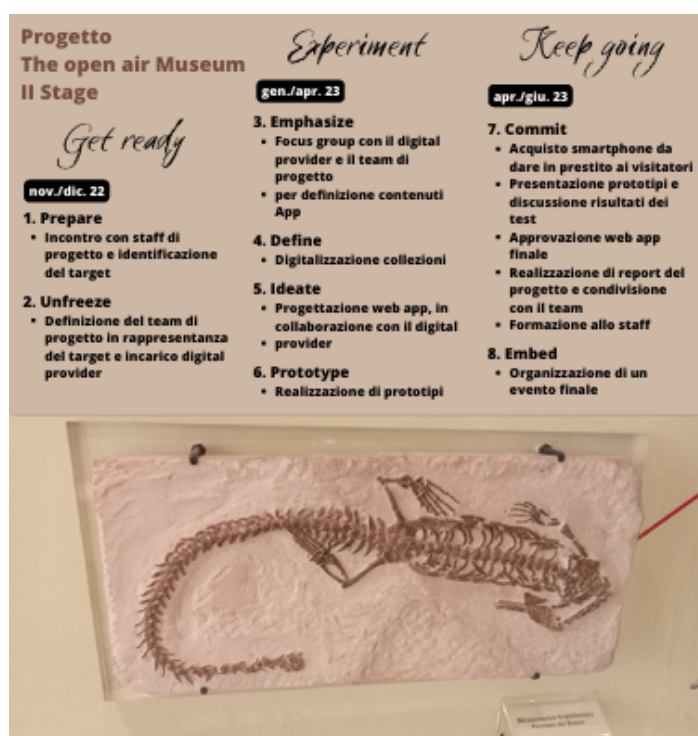
Example of buyer personas, Intesys

When it comes to measurement of digital maturity, Lauren Vargas came to our rescue with her CARE/ CALM Approach.
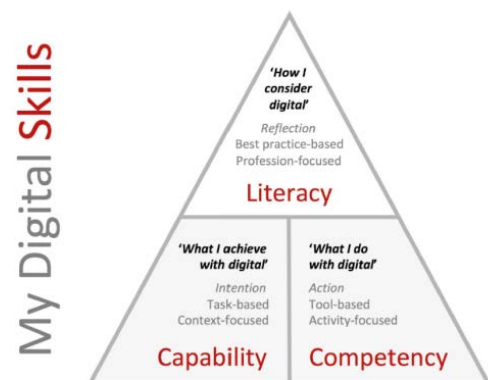
CARE/ CALM Approach, Lauren Vargas

It was very interesting and insightful to follow the experience of the [One by One project](#), particularly how to put citizens at the centre of museum operation and service design.

It has become an interesting challenge to define the design phases to be carried out with the newly assembled team. Not every phase was always respected in time and order; however, it was useful to have a track to follow in order not to lose our bearings.

Action plan as part of the DOORS project, Museo Civico Augusta Redorici Roffi

We can admit that we found [Europeana Impact Playbook](#) too difficult and complex for our very small set-up. Still we obtained core ideas on how to define the impact of our project, analyse the available resources, organise activities that can bring people to the museum and imagine the short and long-term outcomes.
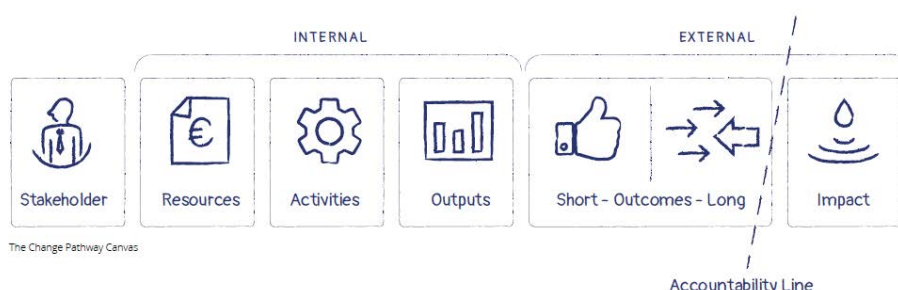
The Impact playbook, Europeana

Our USP: "Using digital, the project creates new ways to involve people and allow them to enjoy the exhibition rooms through a rich and attractive connection with open-air spaces where fossils can be found". This set our museum on a continuous search for connections between the present and the past, how the old didactic materials can be reworked towards a meaningful digital format.

The digitally enabledvisit will include, first and foremost the fossils and minerals that can be viewed in the showcases, but enhanced through didactic materials assembled through the years, revised with care and modernised suitably. When digital technology is applied carefully and meaningfully, it can increase visibility and disseminate the values of the museum, enable and support a better organisation, create passion and finetune emotional approaches. It will allow people who live far away to still get a glimpse of the museum (including the open-air section) if not visit.

The webapp

The webapp that we are realising in collaboration with our technological partner digital provider will be useful at various levels, and connected to the upcoming website. It includes a virtual tour of the rooms of the museum, with some points where, with a click, you can access educational videos and materials, updated news and curiosities.

Upon virtually leaving the museum and undertaking a short walk, indeed virtual too, through the ancient streets of the city, you can reach the river and therefore the outcrop where most of the fossils were found and some are yet longing to be discovered. Here, in the virtual world, we invite visitors to look for some hidden curiosities that, once found, will talk about themselves and will be further used in games and quizzes.

We have gathered a focus group that represents the potential users and visitors to the museum. These include young students from different classes, teachers, representatives of universities, associations and volunteers who have been taking care of the museum since 1978 and up till now. This approach was preferred after a study on user personas. The group has jointly created video materials, made a careful selection of the fossil and mineral finds to be 3D scanned and the mascot, and have been involved in the testing phase of the prototype for the WebApp.

We looked for a partner who was an expert in museums and we found TuoMuseo thanks to Fabio Viola. As a specialist in gamification, he was already known by us for his participation in conferences and seminars and as a book author.

To acquire the web domain hosting the WebApp we approached Aitec, a local company that is also working on the museum's website.

The core team, Cristina and Laura, had no significant previous experience in managing museums. Cristina is a cultural operator and Laura is a librarian. They had to study and work hard supporting the volunteers who had more experience with the museum collections of fossils and minerals, but not in managing digital projects. We had a shared aim and worked all together to strengthen the museum by digital means and pooled our skills and mutual support to allow everyone to grow.

Benefits & Impact	**Short term impact** Quantitative: • increase in number of visitors, part. schools visiting the museum • increase in number of interactions in Social Media. Qualitative: • Providing visitors with accurate and coordinated information on museum's accessibility. They can reach the outcrop and join the virtual visit, encountering our fossils and minerals and listening to their stories. Nowadays we have pointed the attention to the museum and we want to bring people in to organise events.

Event at the museum, Museo Civico Augusta Redorici Roffi

- Enhanced involvement of the community in the activities is a priority. This is possible provided there is strong and consistent communication. We post every step of the pilot on social media channels of the museum, so people can follow the growth of the project.

Social media post about a site inspection on February 17th, Museo Civico Augusta Redorici Roffi

With the aim to maintain community engagement:
- We have planned and prepaired the promotion of the WebApp, incl. special visits to schools, engaging teachers and students to try it.
- The WebApp will be shown and onboarding offered to all museum visitors by the respectively trained volunteers.
- A board with the picture of the mascot (tapir) and a QR code will be placed along the river, so that people going for a walk and curious to know about it will be enticed to try the virtual visit.
- The WebApp will be promoted on the new website of the museum.

A meeting with the DP in the museum,
Museo Civico Augusta Redorici Roffi

A meeting with DOORS' team,
Museo Civico Augusta Redorici Roffi

Long term impact

1. Dissemination
- talking about the pilot and making a report to other small museums and cultural institutions in our region, with the aim of sharing knowledge and expertise gained in the incubation programme;
- arranging meetings with the municipality officials to present and promote the pilot and inform them about the opportunities that digital offers and support it needs
- if needed, we can help other museums to realise their own WebApp, sharing with them all the DOORS processes and supporting them along the steps of their project.

In the coming years we expect to increase awareness of the Museum and of its role in the community of Vignola and to foster ever greater involvement. The aim is to recruit new volunteers as well, who will support openings and guided tours.

2. Share knowledge and skills
- In the recent past, new connections have been created between the volunteers (who have always managed the Museum and are its embodied memory, some of them since the very foundation in 1978) and the employees of the Municipality of Vignola, Cultural Services. These relationships will be maintained after the launch of the pilot and will ensure continued work together.
- The experience acquired during the DOORS sessions has established important skills that will be useful in and across our cultural institutions. We will use the approaches provided to us during the workshops and acquired digital literacy in our public library, eg. community involvement, internal buy-in enhancement, understanding of how to enhance engagement with collections and storytelling..
- These skills will be shared with other colleagues, interns and volunteers.

3. Valorisation of the museum

The pilot is included in a wider programme of valorization of the Museo Civico. While working on DOORS pilot we are realising the following
- museum's website being updated,
- museum's social media (Facebook and Instagram) being frequently updated;
- creation of informative signs and micro exposures along the Panaro river;
- accreditation to Google Arts and Culture or/ and to Wikimedia GLAM project;
- training of employees on the subject of digital museums.

The results of the DOORS pilot will be a strong motivation for the city administration to pay greater attention to that worthy museum and the role it has played and can play int he community.

Limits & Drawbacks	Limits we faced (and are still facing): • lack of dedicated staff members (museum is largely managed by volunteers, who are in great part elderly, and by two part-time employees); • lack of experience: neither volunteers nor employees are experts in museum management and are being trained only now; • difficulties in managing the pilot-dedicated team, that is composed of diverse people (children, grandparents, teachers, university students) and ensuring everyone's involvement during the meetings; • exposure to weather conditions (we had to postpone the 3D scans); • inability to predict how the technology will evolve and if our virtual visit will be appreciated by people tomorrow given the pace of digital evolution; • lack of time.
Future Prospects	With the launch of the DOORS´pilot we will continue working on creating a small museum network. We find the findings and outcomes of the project could be useful to many more similar small museums in our area (for example, a few kilometres away there is the "Elephant Museum" with the bones of a mammoth). Sharing the experience through meetings with the peers will allow us to create a network, promote and support each other, offer and expand thematic virtual visits bringing together digitised assets and stories of the various museums. We are currently training in the Wikimedia GLAM project to combine all the Wiki resources and share our digitalized items, to enable us to enter a wider digital community.
Key Take-Aways	Talking to people about the ancient past of the land makes them more aware and responsible towards it. People are curious to discover what they do not know and have not experienced, and with digital technology we can make them re-live exciting and unique moments such as the discovery of a fossil. We do not want to erase the past with digital technology, but we want to enhance it.
Involved Parties	• Associazione TuoMuseo • Aitec • Regione Emilia Romagna • Associazione Gruppo Vignolese Ricerche • Schools • University of Modena UNIMORE • Citizens

The museum´s team, Museo Civico Augusta Redorici Roffi

The museum´s team, Museo Civico Augusta Redorici Roffi

DOORS´team during a Focus Group in the library,
Museo Civico Augusta Redorici Roffi