

The Virtual Centre Pompidou, a new strategy to acquire and publish digital content thanks to a strong sponsorship

Descrizione

The Centre Pompidou has rethought its digital strategy and developed a new platform to broadcast cultural contents in digital format on the Internet through a pilot project: the Virtual Centre Pompidou(1). However the Virtual Centre Pompidou is much more than a simple web site. This innovative project aims at reviving the strategy of the online presence using a content-oriented approach. This great achievement had been done thanks to a strong sponsorship with the private sector such as with the Pernod Ricard Group, OVH.com firm and CGI France. In which way this collaboration has been fulfilled? What is the role played by these partners and to what extent they made the project effective and workable?

The core principle lying behind the project of the Virtual Centre Pompidou is to be faithful to the Centre Pompidou and its values(2). In this perspective, the Virtual Centre Pompidou's first priority is to highlight digital resources, which refer to the heritage of the Centre Pompidou(3). Also, the Virtual Centre Pompidou targets all visitors, occasional or regular. Besides, the Virtual Centre Pompidou offers a multidisciplinary approach to the arts and it takes definitely a lead on new developments in web technology(4). In this respect, the Virtual Centre Pompidou provides a navigation system entirely based on semantic architecture(5).

As a result, the Virtual Centre Pompidou is clearly anticipating the semantic web, and is then achieving a conceptual and technological breakthrough. This breakthrough is also achieved through the content-oriented approach(6) used for the project. Indeed, the Virtual Centre Pompidou gives priority to the content in order to reach a much wider public than that of potential visitors to the Centre. Faithful to the interdisciplinary core feature of the Centre Pompidou, the intuitive and user-friendly interface of the Virtual Centre Pompidou adopts a truly multimedia architecture which can handle text, sound, fixed or moving images(7).

The digital production process is totally renewed with the Virtual Centre Pompidou because dealing now with digitising for publication. And this new element implies that each element of content is identified, indexed, translated into at least two languages, given rights clearance.

The Virtual Centre Pompidou from its depiction appears to be a really innovative tool but it can also be seen as a cutting-edge cultural project through its innovative economic model. Indeed, the vocation of the Virtual Centre Pompidou is to remain free for its users(8). But the significant costs implied by the digitisation, the building and exploitation of this new platform requires to implement a new economic model(9) based on the development of a new generation of mobile phone applications, a new digital editorial offer(10) and finally an e-shop(11).

This new economic model convinced the General Investment Office to give funding to the project. This exceptional financing amounts to 12 million euros over 4 years(12). In addition, the Virtual Centre Pompidou received crucial sponsorship emphasizing that the collaboration between the private and public sector is still useful and efficient. Indeed, Pernod Ricard Group has directly financed the digitisation of the Centre Pompidou's entire art collection, archives and documentation. Then, Logica firm which became CGI(13) participated in the project with a skill-based sponsorship. Finally, OVH.com(14) acted as a sponsor of the Virtual Centre Pompidou through its entity Global Solutions thinking the hosting project(15) of the Virtual Centre Pompidou's platform. The three strong sponsors have long-commitment of sponsorship in the Arts but they clearly value the innovative impact of the Virtual Centre Pompidou.

As a conclusion, the Virtual Centre Pompidou can be seen as an innovative project thanks to its technological and creative improvement involving reorganisation of all the processes of production, organisation and publication of digital contents and the resort to semantic web, its new strategic economic model and its efficient cooperation with private sponsors.

Endnotes

- (1) This new web site was launched on the 4th of October 2012 in place of the previous institutional web site.
- (2) That is to say: the continuous transformations and to remain open to all the publics and all forms of creativity.
- (3) Namely the collection and the building but also to its programming (notably lectures) and its output (in particular editorial and multimedia).
- (4) Particularly the semantic web or web 3.0
- (5) The resources indexed are organised in open clusters (clouds) rather than in a rigid hierarchical arborescence, allowing the user to navigate by meaning. Each page is thus linked to a set of connected resources, allowing the user to create his own tour. A collaborative module using wiki type technologies was also developed.
- (6) This new approach provides a market contrast compared to the majority of major cultural institutions whose Internet presence strategy remains primarily institutional targeting potential visitors.
- (7) It includes the digitised collection of the National Museum of Modern Art, the Centre Pompidou events database, the digitised exhibition catalogues, video resources (recordings of lectures, artists' interviews, and specific contents for the young.
- (8) According to the public service's vocation of the institution.
- (9) The revenues obtained thanks to these new products will help to maintain the free access to the resources on line.
- (10) Consisting in e-books enriched with multimedia content available for Smartphone and tablets.
- (11) Proposing editorial products of the Centre Pompidou, printing of cards and posters on demand.
- (12) This financing includes 3 sections:
 - i. An endowment of 4 million euros for the strengthening of the platform
 - ii. A loan of 4 million euros attributed to the Centre Pompidou in order to finance the digitisation plan
 - iii. A further financing in sponsorship, level at 4 million euros either to increase the capacity of the digitising plan or to reinforce the functioning the web site.
- (13) The role of CGI was to accompany the Centre Pompidou in its digital transformation providing a dozen of colleagues working on the realisation of the project.
- (14) Firm created in 1999 specialised in Internet hosting.
- (15) Because of the scope (several thousands images and video in high definition) and

the predictable notoriety of the project, it required huge human and technical means (A team composed of architects and system administrators were dedicated to work in 4 “datacentres”).

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