

MaDiH: Mapping Digital Cultural Heritage in Jordan

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The MaDiH: Mapping Digital Cultural Heritage in Jordan project is dedicated to Dr. Andrea De Silva Zerbini (1984–2019), our inspiration and driving force.

The rich and diverse cultural heritage of Jordan has attracted the attention of the research community to explore, study, interpret, protect, and present this heritage to the world. Several international, regional, and local organizations or individuals have produced meta(data) as part of their study of Jordan's heritage, in various forms (Zerbini 2018). The MaDiH: Mapping Digital Cultural Heritage in Jordan project was established to map the extent and type of existing datasets on Jordanian cultural heritage, to investigate technological requirements, and to set up a prototype national heritage repository, essentially aiming to link technology and cultural heritage in Jordan (Smithies et al. 2021) (Fig. 1). It is a Jordanian-UK collaboration between King's Digital Lab (KDL) at King's College London, the Hashemite University, the Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL), the Department of Antiquities in Jordan (DoA), the Jordan Open Source Organisation (JOSA), and the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA) project.

The MaDiH project outputs were designed to be minimal so the focus could be placed on analysis and capability building. MaDiH launched an online catalog and prototype repository using the Comprehensive Knowledge Archive Network (CKAN) platform to present the collected data that were produced by the local and international research community on Jordan's cultural heritage. The MaDiH CKAN catalog quickly gained particular importance, filling an urgent need for a holistic view of cultural heritage datasets held across and outside Jordan. Three hundred twenty-five datasets were collected and entered into a CKAN repository, documenting tangible or intangible heritage ranging from solid institutional repositories to FileMaker databases and spreadsheets. It was initially installed at King's Digital Lab in London and intended as a short-term tool to facilitate data analysis, but it proved so valuable that it was migrated to Hashemite University for long-term maintenance and to support the project's data sovereignty goals.

Moreover, the team has produced a technical white paper that described the current state of Jordan's digital heritage infrastructure at both the micro (metadata/schema/ontology) and macro (repositories, network infrastructure) levels, complemented by a policy white paper that highlighted the alignment of the outcomes to national and international policies and standards and provided recommendations based on the analysis of the existing legal framework. Both papers were published in Arabic and





Fig. 1. A group photo of the MaDiH project team and partners in July 2021. (Photo courtesy of the MaDiH project.)

English to increase reach, in line with a broader commitment to support both languages as far as possible (including bilingual social media posts on Twitter and Facebook and bilingual blog posts on the project website). A series of public workshops with stakeholders from the cultural heritage field, including researchers, government officials, and IT developers was planned to collect data and ensure that the project fulfils the needs of the local community and is aligned to educational and commercial opportunities.

The first, “mapping” pilot phase of the project sought to map more than the technical terrain; it aimed to understand the current state, but also optimal next steps for the enhancement of Jordan’s digital cultural heritage infrastructure and associated stakeholders. It is one phase of a three-phase plan to map, build, and deliver digital cultural heritage (DCH) in Jordan. We hope to continue our project with future phases to improve and properly build a national repository for cultural heritage assets.

References

- Smithies, James, Fadi Bala’awi, Pascal Flohr, Shatha Mubaideen, Alessandra Esposito, Sahar Idwan, Carol Palmer, Issa Mahasneh, and Shaher Rababeh. 2021. “MaDiH: Mapping Digital Cultural Heritage in Jordan Policy White Paper (English Version) (1.0).” Zenodo. DOI: < doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4866975 >.
- Zerbini, Andrea. 2018. “Developing a Heritage Database for the Middle East and North Africa.” *Journal of Field Archaeology* 43, sup. no. 1: S9–S18. DOI: < doi.org/10.1080/00934690.2018.1514722 >

Project website: madih-jordan.org

MaDIH CKAN project database: madih.hu.edu.jo