

Virtual Storytelling and Digital Archiving in the Cloud: Mah Meri Oral Tradition

Wednesday, 10 April 2013 11:55 (10 minutes)

Summary

The presentation is about an on-going project on the oral tradition of the Mah Meri people in Carey Island of Malaysia. This project is focused on compiling the stories behind the wooden masks that belong to a collection at the Asian Art Museum located on the main campus of the University of Malaya. As the masks are a precious collection of the cultural heritage of this people, the stories about the spirit or moyang of each mask is just as valuable to their cultural heritage. Once compiled the project hopes to create a repository of the audio recordings of the oral tradition.

Impact

This presentation is about taking advantage of cloud computing to preserve the oral tradition of this community. A portal will be set up with digital audio recordings of the stories as a way to give them back to the community they belong to. Adults and young Mah Meri children can retrieve not only the stories but also listen to narrations by their older generation in their own language.

URL

www.um.edu.my

Description

The Asian Arts Museum, University of Malaya (UM), holds a collection of 111 wooden masks of the Mah Meri people who live on Carey Island in Peninsular Malaysia. These masks represent the artistic expression of the carvers of their animistic spirits or 'moyang'. An on-going project is to collect the oral tradition of these different masks as each mask represents a different 'moyang'. The project aims to have the future Mah Meri generation to have access to this compilation of the stories as they truly belong to their cultural heritage. Interviews with the village head and mask carvers have produced a collection of 50 mask stories and three folk tales. Sadly, however, many of the senior mask carvers have passed away and their stories have vanished with them. Therefore, it is timely that the stories be collected and a portal on storytelling be set up with digital audio recordings of these stories to be shared with the community and other communities in Malaysia, and possibly the rest of the world, in particular those with oral tradition.

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