

FUTURE EVA CONFERENCES & THE EVA NETWORKING PROJECT, EVAN

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1 INTRODUCTION

From their origin in 1990 at Imperial College, London as part of the EC supported VASARI project, the EVA (now standing for 'Electronic Imaging, The Visual Arts & Beyond') Conferences have developed substantially corresponding to the growth of the 'Culture x Technology' field across Europe and internationally. Altogether nearly 50 EVA Conferences have been held around the world (the and currently some 6-8 events are held across Europe and internationally each year) with a total annual participation of some 2,000 specialists, managers and government staff-the largest such set of events in the field in the world. Above all they try to act as a linked set interdisciplinary meeting-places for networking between activists in 'Culture x Technology' from different sectors - especially between the cultural and scientific and engineering ones - to exchange experiences, plans and dreams and thus also help to reinforce existing relationships and create new ones at local, national, European (encouraging and promoting such projects) and international levels. In particular we aimed from the start at trying to bring together diverse types of cultural heritage institutions such as museums, archives and libraries as well as academia, industry and government.

Why is there a series of EVAs and not just one large event each year in one fixed location e.g. Florence? The answer lies at the beginning in the diversity of Europe and the view in the early days of EVA that only by doing so could there be good participation by 'locals' (i.e. under 2 hours travel time) including interested small and medium-sized institutions and organisations as well as by those with funds and time to travel longer distances (generally large in size). Language of course also is a key factor The 'travelling event' solution was viewed on similar grounds to be not an ideal one - however, this may be a way for some EVA events in the future as discussed below for the case of 'Atlantic Europe' because of its special characteristics. Currently technology-based approaches for events substitution are naturally the focus of attention following the tragedy of September 11 in New York and Washington. However, the view put forward in this paper is, as before, that face-to face contact is a vital ingredient of most successful relationships plus of course the use of internet, phone and web as well as on occasion even 'snail-mail'. We therefore still see the series of local/regional linked EVAs each year as a reasonable way in the future.

This paper discusses the plans for future EVAs, especially for 2002, with attention being given to the underlying aims and extensions thanks to the EC-supported EVA Networking - EVAN - project. It is divided into the following major sections:

- The four main annual EVA Conferences in Europe : Berlin, Florence, London and Moscow
- Asian EVA Conferences in 2002
- Other EVA Conferences and events
- The European Commission's EVAN project

The paper includes observations on possible future developments in international scientific conferences in general and on the EVA Conferences in particular due to the terrible September 11 attacks and their aftermath. The opportunities for 'virtual conferences' and similar remote participation approaches are discussed. Further information on each EVA Conference may be obtained via www.vasari.co.uk, which provides a gateway to the individual conference web-pages or directly to them e.g. www.gfai.de/pinboard/eva for EVA Berlin.

2 THE FOUR MAIN ANNUAL EUROPEAN EVA CONFERENCES IN 2002

With encouragement and support from the European Commission there will be once again be the four principal annual EVA Conferences in Europe which have established themselves as a combination of European regional/international events:

- EVA Florence in late March for Southern Europe
- EVA London in late July for Atlantic Europe (following the last three years in Scotland and one in Cambridge after 1990 to 1997 in London)
- EVA Berlin in mid-November for Central Europe
- EVA Moscow for Russia and neighbouring countries

It should be emphasised that although the majority of participants at each come from the corresponding regions the speakers are from all round Europe and the world and increasingly there are special topics at each which attract people from across Europe and internationally as discussed below. A description of the origins and early history of the EVAs is provided by Duncan & Hemsley (1998).

EVA 2002 FLORENCE begins the annual EVA cycle in the fine Italian spring; as the birthplace of the Renaissance (Rinascimento) and now since it is, in the author's opinion, the leading centre of the new 'Digital Renaissance' this is particularly appropriate. In 2001 over 400 participants attended EVA Florence, the largest EU EVA, and a similar number are expected in 2002 especially from Southern Europe, but also many from around the world because of the special 'pull' of Florence. In past years there has been especially strong attendance from California and Japan. In addition to the usual range of main EVA types of sessions (i.e. Strategies/Surveys, Case Studies, Innovative Pilot Applications and new Research and Advanced Technology Developments) EVA Florence typically has strong focus on digital restoration and related issues, as well as the two day conference (All in English) there will again be a range of Workshops and Tutorials (some in Italian, some in English) on selected issues. Although supported by many local institutions and government, special credit must be given to the University of Florence for its remarkably active support and involvement, especially that of Professor Vito Cappellini and his colleagues and students,-present and past.

EVA 2002 LONDON at the end of July will be the occasion of the 50th EVA Anniversary Celebration since its beginning in 1990. We therefore hope that this will be a particularly memorable Conference and set of related events. Planning began at the beginning of this year. Special topics include:

- The Performing Arts & New Technologies, following three years at EVA Scotland during which this topic was successfully introduced. (NB Edinburgh is the home of the world's largest Arts Festival each August which provided the inspiration)
- Contemporary Arts Documentation, building on a successful Workshop given at both EVA in Florence and London this year led by Dr Harald Kraemer of the University of Cologne.
- Cooperation across the Atlantic-both North and South - for which we hope to have significant participation from Latin America as well as the usual strong North American contingent.

EVA 2002 BERLIN, planned for the middle of November as usual, is currently expected to consist of educational seminars/workshops (in German) and the main Conference day (with a strong Exhibition) in German followed by an International Cooperation day (mainly) in English if the usual structure of EVA Berlin over its 8 year history is maintained. Similarly the main Conference is likely to be strongly technical, with particular emphasis on 3D applications and developments as has been a consistent feature of EVA Berlin. The area of 3D appears now to be a rapidly maturing R&D topic, which is beginning to enter mainstream cultural system applications after many pioneering efforts in the 1990s by the Japanese and North Americans as well as by Europeans. The role of Professor Stanke and his GFal colleagues, the SMPK thanks to Dr Bienert and the efforts of other supporters has been vital. The views of participants at EVA 2001 Berlin are very welcome in planning EVA 2002 Berlin.

EVA MOSCOW, being held at the beginning of December this year and probably at the same time in 2002, is expected once more to be the largest EVA event in Europe with over 100 papers and 600 participants again. Organised by Centre PIC of the Ministry of Culture, thanks to Nadia Brakker and Leonid Kubyshev and their colleagues this is the most broad-ranging EVA Conference with particular attention being given to Artists, Archives, Monuments and Libraries as well as Museum and other cultural sector applications. New technology developments typically include strong technology transfer from major Russian Research Institutes and even from Aerospace and Defence R&D. EVA Moscow, like EVA Berlin, also includes a significant Exhibition with over 30 stands indicating the strength of the Russian Cultural Technology industry. Almost the whole Conference is given in both Russian and English with simultaneous translation. One hoped - for characteristic of EVA 2002 Moscow and already initiated in preliminary form in 2000 and 2001 is remote Conference attendance by the Web.

3 ASIAN EVA CONFERENCES IN 2002

Two major EVA Conferences are planned for 2002:

- (a) **EVA 2002 BEIJING** on April 12-14 at Tsinghua University ('China's MIT') will be a pre-event to the EURO-CHINA Cooperation Forum on the Information Society sponsored by the European Commission and the Chinese Government. Following a relationship initiated at EVA 2000 Gifu in Japan and strengthened at EVA 2001 Florence and by a visit by Claude Poliart of the EC to Beijing in May, this will be the first EVA in China and it is hoped to make a significant contribution to promoting 'Culture x Technology' in China and to building corresponding project relationships with Europe and also attention to similar objectives regarding China and Japan. Topics include Landscape Art, which was the subject of an influential and charming paper by Ling Chen of Tsinghua University at EVA 2000 Gifu. It is hoped that there will be at least 400 participants and the European Commission is giving priority to this initiative through the EVAN project (see below). It is still possible to join the European delegation to EVA Beijing and EURO-CHINA (see www.vasari.co.uk for further information).
- (b) **EVA 2002 GIFU**, the third EVA in Japan, held every two years since 1998 has established itself as the major 'Culture x Technology' Conference in Japan (1000 people attended the first EVA Gifu) thanks to very strong support and involvement from the Gifu Prefectural Government. Theme and programme planning is at an early stage so that no specific topics can be mentioned at this stage. However, we hope that as before there will be strong involvement by the major Japanese electronics companies and that for example 3G mobiles will be shown with Cultural Tourism applications. Information on EVA Gifu should be available via the VASARI web-site in early 2002.

In 2002 there will thus be an EVA focus on Far East Asia. Hopefully one day we shall see EVA in other parts of Asia - for example in India.

4 OTHER EVA EVENTS IN 2002

The main other EVA event in 2002 will be **EVA Kiev** in May. This aims at improving relationships with the Ukraine in the field of 'Culture x technology' and encouraging local efforts. This is being led by GFal from Berlin in cooperation with a local Ukrainian institution (International Research and Training Centre of Information, Technologies and Systems of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) and we hope that our partners in Moscow (Centre PIC of the Ministry of Culture) will also play a very active role. The precise form of this event is still in planning, but information should be available during the EVA 2001 Berlin Conference.

Depending upon the lessons of the first '**add-on**' event to one of the major EVA Conferences., EVA Warsaw following EVA 2001 Berlin, we hope that we shall organise others. For example, we

are already planning Workshops on Strategic Issues (with the EC) in Pistoia, Tuscany on March 30 & 31 and on Copyright Management and Cultural Systems Standards in Rome on April 2 following EVA2002 Florence. Similar initiatives are being considered following EVA 2002 London and we hope that after EVA 2002 Berlin there will be another 'add-on' event in another of the new 'Associated States' soon to join the EU e.g. the Czech Republic.

In addition, we have just been invited to hold '**EVA Harvard**' on October 2-3, following the view of a Harvard speaker at EVA 2001 Glasgow, Scotland that it was 'the best Conference I have ever attended'. This will be the fifth EVA in North America following California, New York, Texas and, most recently, in Montreal. This is an example of a 'travelling Conference' which, at least until now appears the most appropriate approach for EVA in North America.

These events will typically be smaller ones with less than 100 participants, but the 'networking quality' should be high as, for example, was recently the case of EVA 2001 Montreal held as a part of MIM (Marche International du Multimedia) despite the post September 11 difficulties.

5 THE EVA NETWORKING - EVAN - PROJECT

The European Commission is supporting the EVA Conferences in 2001 and 2002 through the EVA Networking (EVAN) project. The basic thrust of this project is to 'use, strengthen and extend' the EVA Conferences 'with particular aims including the promotion of EC projects in the field of Culture x Technology' (nearly 50 projects used EVA 2001 Florence to make presentations) and stimulation of international cooperation in the field, especially with China, Israel, Japan, North America and Russia. Subsequently, we hope to reach out to Australia/New Zealand, Latin America, India, the Middle East and other regions.

The EVAN project is not just about holding conventional conferences. As well as the clear networking and partnership building aims it also includes specific innovative technology-based features, for example:

- Special Workshops on cutting edge technologies relevant to the Cultural Sector such as 3D. Other possible topics include Language Technologies.
- Application of advanced technologies to the EVA Conferences themselves as a test-bed for their use in the general field of Event Management. Digital 3D videoing of EVA Berlin is a first experiment.

Both of these initiatives are being led by GFal, with the support of the other two main EVAN project partners: the National Museums of Scotland and the University of Florence (with VASARI in the UK and Italy providing sub-contract support).

A particularly important issue for EVAN following the terrible September 11 attacks is that of remote conference participation or 'virtual conferences'. Already at EVA Moscow web-casting has been used on an initial basis and this is being further explored at this year's EVA Moscow. Video-conferencing has already been used for remote Canadian participation at EVA Florence. The concept of 'virtual conferences' has been proposed by Dr Clarke of the National Museums of Scotland as well as also Professor Cappellini of the University of Florence, who has also suggested 'virtual seminars' and we received an offer at EVA 2001 Montreal to digitally narrowcast EVAs across North America. Moreover the EVAN project plan includes a 'virtual exhibition' for trialling in 2002 and a number of 'virtual working groups' on selected topics have been initiated at EVA 2001 Florence and Scotland as suggested by Vito Cappellini. This general issue thus looks appropriate for further attention. However, we nonetheless think that the physical face-to-face element will still remain a vital one for much of the EVAN project's work and also for future EVAs.

For further information on the EVAN project, EVA Berlin participants may contact Professor Stanke or Frau Geissler at GFal.

6 CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

International cooperation in 'Culture x Technology' is we believe vital for the Information Society. In the increasingly wired 'global village' this will be characterised primarily by electronic communications, but real physical communication will, we believe, continue to play a vital role and that therefore 'real' EVA and other Conferences and meetings as well as 'virtual' ones will continue to be useful-even despite the threats of terrorism. In this view of the future the contribution of EVA Berlin at the centre of the expanded European Union, and indeed the whole of Europe, is positioned to play a key role.

REFERENCES

Duncan,VP and Hemsley,JR EVA Conferences-Past, Present and Future. Prepared for EVA 1998 Moscow and available on www.vasari.co.uk