Leveraging a €100 billion public investment in heritage digitisation for concrete results in research, education, and business.

- Building the first global network for collective knowledge
- Hard-wiring the modern world through open data
- Open access, integration and re-use of digitised heritage
- Application services for organisations and researchers
- Integrated social media for citizen science
- Tangible impact for citizens, education, media and marketing

Memlinq transforms the way knowledge is created, used, and shared. Leveraging the digitisation efforts in heritage, the online platform delivers productivity services for institutions, researchers, educators, business, and citizens. With tangible impact on how people experience and involve with brands, entertainment, art, sports, literature, fashion, tourism, history, film...

Everyone is part of the story. Everyone can own it.
How can you transform digitised heritage and history into tangible impact for citizens, society, and the economy?

**Accomplishments**

For years, organisations all over the world have been working on the digital transformation of cultural heritage. They focused on their immediate challenges, such as the mechanical process of digitisation, the online presentation of objects, and the metadata standards for making objects and information findable through online searches. In parallel, scientists in the digital humanities focus on applications that start to produce formidable results for researchers and scholars. In the private sector, an increasing number of start-ups are experimenting with highly creative commercial uses.

**Challenge: tangible impact**

Heritage institutions and policy-makers have reached a critical point. More money will be needed for digitisation, but it is ever more important to demonstrate the value of the investment in tangible ways. Digitisation does not replace the custodian role of institutions. Therefore, it needs to create new value for society, beyond the usual cultural arguments.

Digitisation must have impact for new audiences and be inclusive of society as a whole – beyond the traditional ‘consumers’ of culture.

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**Heritage digitisation is official policy in the European Union.**

*The digitisation of objects held by libraries, archives and museums not only preserves them for future generations. It also enables greater access for learning and research purposes. And, policy-makers encourage the re-use of heritage for the benefit of innovation and jobs in creative industries and business.*

Currently, about 20% of all heritage objects held by public institutions in Europe have been digitised. The investment in heritage digitisation will cost an estimated €100 billion, and it may take an average of 20 years to get the job done (depending on policies and budgets).

*In Europe, the Commission’s platform of choice for universal access to heritage is Europeana, where currently over 50 million objects can be accessed and re-used. In the US, similar initiatives already result in over 15 million objects through the Digital Public Library of America.*
It needs to demonstrate that it can be leveraged for advances in research, education and, indeed, for commercial purposes, too.

**The problem**

Many institutions are producing impressive online collections. However, there are no applications, yet, that transform these massive digital assets into tangible impact. Though many excellent initiatives exist, often in the private sector, their scope usually remains limited.

There are a number of obstacles, and it requires new and disruptive applications to overcome them.

→ **Heritage siloes.** Libraries, archives and museums focus on their own collections, not those of others – and rightly so. But, the true significance and value of heritage objects stem from the connection between them. To produce genuine impact, the data need to come together across collections, languages, and geographies.

→ **Data explosion.** Heritage objects often hold massive quantities of data. For instance, the digitisation of a newspaper also sets the stage for the extraction of data within. This produces ever more data that remains largely unstructured and unproductive. No single organisation has the manpower to deal with all that.

→ **Social media waste.** Online groups and pages are useful to connect institutions with their audiences. However, traditional social media don’t provide any tools to leverage the public’s enthusiasm beyond likes and shares. A tremendous resource for collaborative productivity remains largely untapped.

→ **Application shortage.** Heritage institutions present their digitised assets through creative story-telling and virtual exhibitions. However, they do not deliver the tools needed to re-use them for other high-impact purposes in education, research, or publishing.

Beyond heritage organisations, historical data are also kept by government, businesses, and research organisations at global, national and local levels. All this information needs to come together to produce genuine impact for society and business.

Public data and heritage resources need to be leveraged for actionable outcomes for society and business.
Connecting digital heritage data into knowledge, with integrated productivity apps, collaboration, and social media.

**What is Memlinq?**

The platform is best described as a “Collective Knowledge Network”. It is a network, as it will ultimately connect all the available data to each other. And, it is about collective knowledge, as open access to connected heritage data contributes to our common understanding of modern society.

Memlinq materialises through three major characteristics:

- **As the ultimate reference website.** Users can freely search original objects and data. This may sound like Wikipedia, except that it all starts with curated data from holding institutions and research. New knowledge emerges from the connections between data. Users add and connect profiles – for people, objects, places, organisations, events... - into a single knowledge network.

- **As a social platform for citizen science.** Users engage with information on Memlinq through social media style functionality, whereby people join, connect and share personal and professional interests. It may look like Facebook and LinkedIn, except that Memlinq enables genuine collaboration. Users will interact directly with original objects...

Memlinq is the first to address the challenges of digitised heritage in a comprehensive manner, by building the first Collective Knowledge Network.

Our platform transforms the way knowledge is created and shared. It delivers free access to all open data sources from libraries, archives, museums, research, government, industry... Users can connect, enrich and re-use trillions of data for purposes in research, education, learning, and business.

The full functionality of the platform will evolve over a two-year period. On the short-term, Memlinq focuses on delivering two major application services:

- Services for Heritage, which enable institutions to enrich their digital assets, attract new audiences, and interact meaningfully with the public;

- Services for Research, which enable scholars and educators to collaborate and leverage open data in research, presentations and publishing.
and data. Instead of simply liking and sharing, their social activity will actually contribute to collective knowledge.

- **As a purveyor of adaptive application services.** Users dispose of a range of services that adapt to their personal objectives. These services are permanently integrated and connected with all the original curated data. Users can research and embed data objects into informational articles. Professional users – such as researchers or educators – will use advanced technology to investigate and integrate the linked sources into presentations and publications. Any organisation – including heritage institutions themselves – can engage directly with their audiences about the data and objects they provide, and leverage this formidable social resource to enrich collections and build affinity with the public.

The combination of global access, social media collaboration, and productivity tools is unique.

**Key enablers**

Memlinq functions as a single platform, delivering integrated applications that adapt to different users and their different needs, around five common enablers...

- **ACCESS.** Free search and access to all digitised open data from authoritative, curated sources.
- **CONNECT.** Users connect data and objects around profiles based on causal relationships.
- **CO-CREATE.** Collaboration tools leverage open data about any topic or industry in the pursuit of common interests.
- **RE-USE.** Integration of open data into research, publishing, and presentations, permanently linked to the primary source.
- **SHARE.** Total user interaction with the primary object of their interests and passions.

For the first time, a platform will unleash all the potential of digitised heritage and let users collaborate freely and produce meaningful content for tangible uses and outcomes that impact society and the economy.
**Immediate outcomes**

Memlinq expects that its application services will have an immediate impact on how heritage institutions, researchers, and educators deal with digitised heritage resources.

For one, every provider of open datasets in heritage and digital humanities will have a *de facto* presence on Memlinq. They will redefine their approach to social media as they can envisage, for the first time, the genuine involvement and interaction with the public around their digital assets.

Researchers – which can be scholars, media or enthusiasts – will exploit Memlinq’s services to create personal work environments where they construct digital libraries of their own. Using advanced technology, they can automatically extract, annotate and reference data sources. They can join workshops with other people, anywhere, and leverage their collective efforts to explore vast quantities of data that they would not be able to handle on their own. Finally, they will also have the tools to publish their work, integrate it with the work of others, and share it with the world.

Memlinq also creates significant opportunities for students and educators. Learning becomes a participative process. Under the guidance of teachers, students become investigators and pull together objects and information around themes in geography, literature, art, history... Teachers themselves will benefit from directly accessing primary material and using presentation tools that deliver a greater educational experience in the class room.

**Longer term implications**

Memlinq expects to deliver a significant societal contribution by supporting collective knowledge. Through the ability to interconnect heritage objects and data, they no longer remain in splendid isolation, but re-integrate the bigger picture.

Every item held by heritage institutions becomes extremely relevant for society.

Whilst this is true for heritage, it also applies to any authoritative data source that relates to modern lifestyle and literature, art, sports, fashion, history, brands, film...

This will progressively implicate citizens in the use of open data for the benefit of society – and for themselves. They will discover their own connection paths – through trails in archival documents and records – with local history, events, social and business structures, and other people. What usually seems to be remote and of no concern, ultimately becomes totally relevant for them on a very personal level.

Any organisation, with either commercial or non-commercial purposes, will understand the great potential of building deeper connections with their audiences through close affinity.
Serving collective knowledge and individual productivity needs through a profitable, sustainable, and scalable business model.

*Business Model*

Memlinq is delivering free access, data use and applications for any internet user – in combination with subscription-based application services for organisations and professional users.

*Addressable market*

Memlinq estimates the global potential for its initial services at over £56 million per annum. This figure is based on the number of institutions to whom the re-use of digital assets is directly relevant. It assumes subscription rates that are less than 1% of the average annual investment in digitisation.

*Sustainability*

Memlinq seeks to service 5% of this addressable market within two years of operation. By doing so, it reaches its break-even point while continuing to enhance and deliver its original application services. Organic growth and profitability will then provide the means to invest in its long-term strategy.

*Marketing*

In the execution of its strategy, Memlinq cooperate closely with key stakeholders in the platform – including heritage institutions and...
research organisations. By connecting their digital assets and embedding social media into the basic functions of the platform, Memlinq expects an organic acceleration of its adoption by other stakeholders and their audiences.

**Pilot Projects**

Cooperation with content stakeholders will be driven by targeted initiatives, including pilot projects. Memlinq will initiate local, national and global pilots that illustrate the capabilities of the platform. They are multidisciplinary in nature, and designed to have high media impact. Pilots will continue to serve as benchmarks for identifying new functional and technical requirements.

**Technology**

The far-reaching concepts behind the platform enable a broad array of user scenarios. In order to meet future user needs, Memlinq integrates advanced technologies in areas such as Linked Open Data, artificial intelligence, and mobile. The platform will run on a uniquely scalable infrastructure that can flexibly deliver application services at a low operational cost. Whereas Memlinq is developing its own intellectual property, it also cooperates and integrates with technologies from third parties – in order to accelerate the deployment of application services to users.

**Are there any competitors?**

In fact, there aren’t. Heritage and organisations and technology companies have not focused on comprehensive solutions that serve multiple audiences from a single platform. Memlinq is uniquely disruptive as its concepts stem from concrete user experiences that reveal the need for a multidisciplinary approach. Instead, existing initiatives may match Memlinq’s vision, and it will seek integration if it contributes to a richer user experience.

**Organising for success**

Memlinq will operate a lean organisation with technologists and functional visionaries – each driven by a strong affinity with the potential of digitised heritage. While keeping core expertise in-house, Memlinq is developing a flexible, global network of specialists in heritage and technology, as well as project consultants for the implementation of pilot projects worldwide.

**Team & Locations**

Memlinq is the brainchild of George Homs and Richard Nicholson. Together, they combine decades of expertise in global business development and advanced technology with some of the largest organisations in the world as well as start-ups. The technology team is based at Memlinq’s London headquarters. Its business operations are run primarily from London (UK), Amsterdam (NL), and Cannes (F).
Investing in an innovative, independent organisation with a long-term purpose – and short-term deliverables.

Building Memlinq

Moving beyond its preparatory first phase, Memlinq has scheduled its future development around four cycles, spanning 2017-2019. The incorporation of Memlinq marks the start of the second phase in our project. During this period, it will produce early deliverables, including user access and base functionality. It will also formalise the first pilot projects and lay down a 3-year functional and technical blueprint.

Moving into the third phase, Memlinq will be open for user registration and deliver key functionality to subscribers of its application services. In the fourth phase, it will enhance its services to subscribers and move towards profitability. Finally, by 2019, the fifth phase will witness the deployment of Memlinq’s long-term strategy and the emergence of new revenue models.

Investment approach

Memlinq opts for a conservative approach to funding.

Over the full 2017-19 period, the total requirement will amount to £3.5 million. But, only £350,000 will be invested in the first year. Funding will be progressive and ramp up over multiple consecutive financing stages.
This approach allows for greater accountability towards investors. It allows them to continuously assess Memlinq’s progress and get insight into its long-term objectives.

Memlinq has a number of alternative business scenarios so that it can reset priorities and flexibly adapt to changing market and funding conditions.

**Type of investors**

Memlinq is open to all investment propositions. On the short-term, it expects to be particularly attractive to *seed investors* who can see the medium-to-long term potential. Memlinq also actively welcomes *crowdfunding* as it aligns closely with its philosophy that users should also own the platform.

**Return on investment**

There are no quick gains with a project of this nature. Whereas Memlinq plans to reach profitability by 2019, it expects that its shareholders will have a preference for re-investing profits into new developments and expanded business operations.

Also, Memlinq does not anticipate trade sale to a larger party as a likely exit scenario. Its objective is to operate as an organisation with a permanent and independent character, and it is confident that it can grow into a major player of its own.

Memlinq therefore expects that a public listing of shares will provide the most rewarding exit strategy for investors.

Whereas exit options are decided by future shareholders, these current assumptions may offer future investors a reasonable idea about the scope of Memlinq’s ambition.

**The longer term view**

While keeping a tight focus on the priorities set out in this document, Memlinq has a comprehensive vision on its future potential. It seeks to build a wide range of applications that leverage the exceptional capabilities of its platform to serve the needs of many different audiences. It also foresees alternative revenue models that will be implemented by 2019. Advertising isn’t one of them.

Investing in a start-up often amounts to a leap of faith. This applies to Memlinq as well. However, Memlinq does not start from scratch. It is leveraging the formidable and ongoing work of heritage organisations and research institutions worldwide.

The platform turns digitised heritage and open data into the vastest body of knowledge ever – about people and things from the past and the present. Memlinq is the first to do so, using disruptive concepts that will produce applications with genuine impact for citizens, society, and business.

Memlinq trusts its bright future. You’re welcome to join on this exciting common journey – as users and as stakeholders.

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Disclaimer: By outlining its objectives, Memlinq is making forward-looking assumptions about markets and technical capabilities. Whereas Memlinq does so with reasonable confidence, future stakeholders must be warned that any investment and participation in Memlinq may carry risks.