Presentation 4

Online Outreach Programs at the National Center for the Promotion of Cultural Properties

Ms. Kojima Yukiko

Head of Planning at the National Center for the Promotion of Cultural Properties/Researcher at the Curatorial Planning Division, Curatorial Planning Department, Tokyo National Museum, Japan

Profile

Kojima Yukiko graduated from Tamagawa University's College of Humanities. After working at McDonald's Company (Japan), Ltd. (now McDonald's Holdings Company (Japan), Ltd.), she obtained an MA in history at the Graduate School of Kokugakuin University and left the school after obtaining the required credits for the doctoral program. She began working at Tokyo National Museum in 2012 and she assumed her current position in July 2018.

Yukiko specializes in museum studies. At the National Center for the Promotion of Cultural Properties she is involved in the creation of high-definition reproductions and the planning of events to facilitate the enjoyment of cultural properties.

Presentation

Being 'online' involves connecting a device to a network or to another device via a communication line, for example. Museum online content can broadly be divided into two categories. The first involves 'stock data,' the term given to digital archives, websites, videos, or other forms of data with a long shelf life. The second involves 'flow data,' the term given to real-time information with a short shelf life. This data can be classified into 'real-time communication-type data' or 'appreciation-type data', for example. This presentation introduces cases whereby 'real-time communication-type data' was utilized to run online programs aimed at facilitating the appreciation of cultural properties.

The 'CPCP Outreach Program'

The 'CPCP Outreach Program' was developed by Tokyo National Museum's Education Programming Department and the National Center for the Promotion of Cultural Properties (CPCP). It is targeted at nationwide educational institutions (elementary, junior-high, and high schools, etc.), social educational institutions, youth education institutions, museums, and galleries. The program is free in principle, and it involves sending reproductions of cultural properties to applicant institutions. The program uses art appreciation to encourage people to think for themselves about the cultural

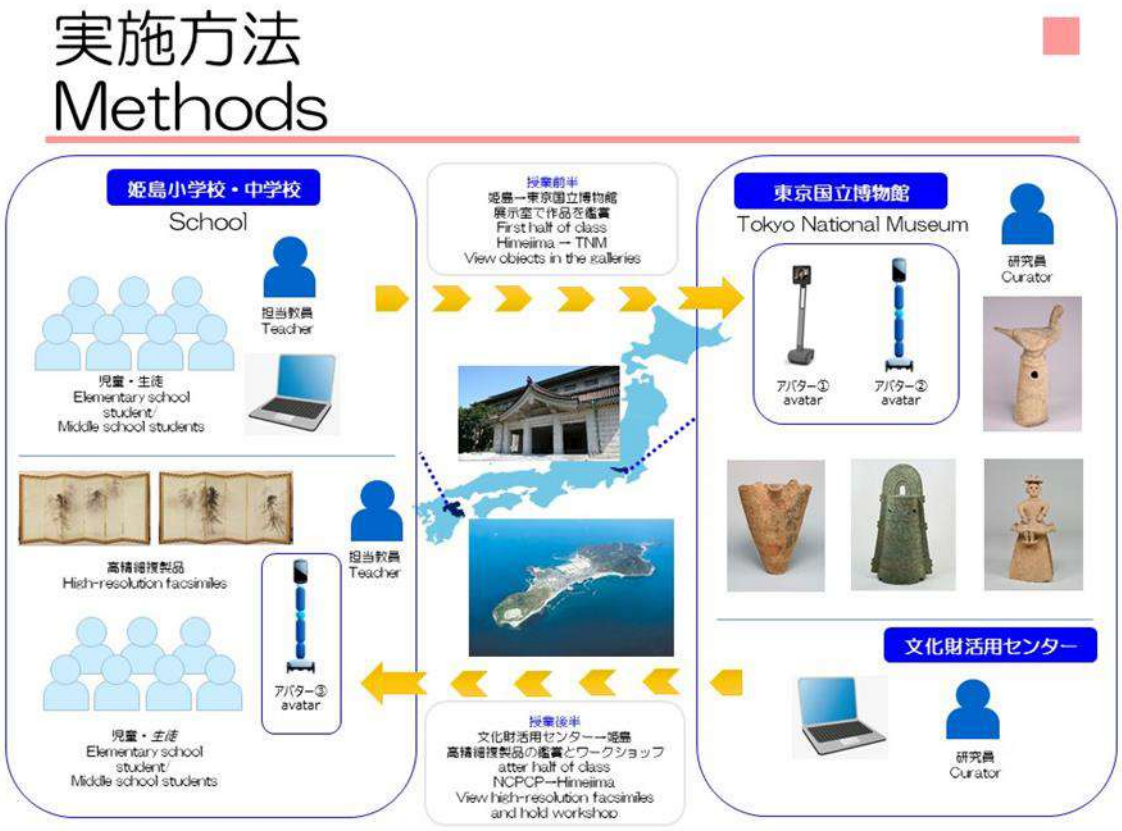
properties carefully passed down in their local areas. The aim is to nurture a desire to protect these artworks and pass them down to future generations.
(https://cpcp.nich.go.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=31)

Case (1): Elementary and junior high schools on the remote island of Himeshima in Oita prefecture

In the summer of 2019, we received a request to guide the children of a remote island in Oita prefecture through Tokyo National Museum (TNM) using robotic avatars set up by Avatarin (a company established by ANA Holdings) (https://about.avatarin.com). After considering the state of the equipment, we managed to implement a program four times in February 2020, once for junior-high students in year two and once apiece for elementary students in years one to three.

The program in progress (TNM side)

The equipment was not capable of providing a good view of the cultural properties within the exhibition rooms, so the program was split into two parts to ensure the quality of the viewing experience. The first part involved a virtual tour of TNM and the second part involved the appreciation of cultural properties. The first half of the program took elementary and junior high school students on the remote island of Himeshima in Oita prefecture on a tour of TNM's exhibition rooms by connecting school PCs to robotic avatars installed in the museum. The second half saw researchers conducting a shortened version of the CPCP Outreach Program. They did so using a PC at the CPCP to control a robotic avatar installed in the schools. It took one month to connect the equipment and run trials, with a further week required to create a program geared to the capabilities of the equipment. The process, from preparation (including meetings and adjustments) to actual implementation, took around three months, with over ten people involved in the implementation. When asked to compare the experience of viewing artworks online with the experience of viewing high-resolution reproductions, participants confirmed that the latter is a more effective way to appreciate cultural properties. There are limitations when it comes to appreciating cultural properties using equipment developed for one-to-one communication (or communication between small numbers of people), so we will need to wait for technological improvements in commercially available equipment before we can truly conduct art appreciation online.



Methods

Case (2): Mie Prefectural Yokkaichi High School

The program in progress (school side)

The second example involved an online version of the lecturer talk component of our basic program. At that time, Tokyo was under a state of emergency and Mie prefecture a semi-state of emergency. Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXI) (https://www.mext.go.jp/content/20210423-mxt_kouhou02-000004520_1.pdf) stated that gatherings of students and conversations between students should be avoided, so kit sharing was ruled out. The program used the Google Meet application to connect an iPad at the CPCP with PCs and monitors in the school's art room. The students could view the lecturer, but not all the students were displayed on the CPCP's iPad, so it was difficult to discern how the students were appreciating the folding-screen reproduction in the art room.

The appreciation component in the first half of the program was essentially left unchanged. However,

rather than speaking out, students were told to raise their hands to indicate whether they agreed with a statement. They were then asked to reflect quietly on why they thought that way. In the second half, students were given the choice of expressing their thoughts and feelings through (1) art or (2) words, with presentations taking place at the end. The only changes from the basic program were some alterations to the wording used to indicate movement.

A questionnaire completed by participants revealed that the online explanation were just as effective as face-to-face explanations. The program also roused a variety of thoughts and feelings in most of the students. As such, it surpassed our goal of 'providing opportunities to encounter cultural properties.' In fact, the program clearly demonstrated the essential role that art appreciation classes should play in school education.

Methods

Conclusion

Online real-time programs can be implemented if they involve a lecturer giving explanations, but there remain challenges when it comes to displaying and appreciating art through screens, with connection stability an issue too. I hope the private sector can develop equipment for this purpose. At the same time, I believe online programs can help to stimulate interest in museums and cultural properties. To achieve this, we need to consider (1) gathering the artwork data acquired during the shift online and utilizing it as 'stock data,' (2) methods and tools to best fit our targets and goals, (3) aligning the goals of museum online activities with user needs, and (4) the importance and role of communication.