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EFHA: Connecting Academia with Fashion Heritage

Introduction

It was Friday the 28th February 2020. In a few days, the Covid-19 virus outbreak would cause nation-wide quarantine in Italy. Meanwhile, Marco Rendina, managing director of the European Fashion Heritage Association (EFHA), sat in the airport in Athens awaiting to catch what would later appear to be one of the last planes from Greece to his home in Rome. He had just participated in a panel discussion on state-of-the-art technologies in the fashion industry at the *Circular Cultures: Design, Fashion, Crafts* conference. There, Marco discussed the future of the industry but his main concern, as a member of the EFHA, was how to ensure that the past and present of fashion would be safely stored and made accessible for everyone. The boarding gates would open in 15 minutes and Marco had a minute to check his emails. He found out that earlier that week he had been contacted by Carlijn, a Master student from Erasmus University in Rotterdam, who was taking a course on the economics of the fashion industry.

Carlijn had written a paper on the history of Dutch fashion brands and she had used the archive of the EFHA to find images and information about certain collections. She was excited about the project and in her email, Carlijn inquired how she, as a young researcher, could further engage with the association. Marco was intrigued by such a proposition. Just two weeks earlier, he presented the EFHA to a group of Master's students at the same university and this

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email reminded Marco of a few questions he had already been pondering in the past few months: How can the EFHA better engage scholars and students in its activities? What can the EFHA do to make their archive more accessible and useful to students and scholars? How can the EFHA make this engagement beneficial for both sides?

The EFHA: Background and Values

The European Fashion Heritage Association was established in 2014 as a part of Europeana, a non-profit organisation funded in part by the European Commission, which strived to empower the European cultural sector by 'develop[ing] expertise, tools and policies to embrace digital change and encourage partnerships that foster innovation'.[i] In 2018, the EFHA gained more independence but remained connected to Europeana as one of its strategic partners, contributing to its greater effort of archiving European cultural heritage digitally.[ii] According to the Impact Playbook of Europeana, this process allowed them to broaden and deepen public access to cultural artefacts, which was proven to benefit the society, especially the creative and cultural industries.[iii] The EFHA collected the archives of European fashion-related institutions and made them available online and free of charge. The association was the first to bring both public and private archives together into a cumulative database.[iv] Between 2014 and 2020, the association grew to include more than 40 entities across 14 countries, among which were galleries, libraries, archives, museums (GLAMs), as well as brands and academic institutions. The EFHA's resulting repository consisted of 'historical clothing and accessories, contemporary designs, catwalk photographs, drawings, sketches, magazines, catalogues, and videos.[v] The association strived to connect fashion institutions to a wider audience via their free and online digital repository. According to *Digital Meets Culture* magazine in 2018, which covered the organisation's new name, the EFHA's mission was to:

> "*Make it easier for fashion GLAMs and brands to get better value from their cultural heritage assets by opening them up and connecting to new audiences*".

In doing so, the core value proposition of the EFHA was made clearer by its name: the EFHA was a continent-wide **European** project, focusing on the cultural industry of **fashion** and the preservation of its **heritage** by uniting the resources of various institutions into one **association**. These categories also framed the challenges the EFHA faced in contextualising its work: what can be counted as European? What should be considered as fashion? How can the association define 'heritage'?

The EFHA provided GLAMs and brands with a shared narrative around being '**European**', putting them into a common cultural context and further working towards achieving the main vision of Europeana, which among others included "a Europe-powered by culture, giving it a [...] sense of European identity."[vi] Prior to 2018, the EFHA was called the Europeana Fashion

International Association. Apart from leaving the umbrella of Europeana, the new name was significant as the word 'International' was removed from the acronym further emphasizing the continental focus of the EFHA. One of the main tasks of the EFHA was to create an online archive of fashion-related materials from all over Europe. To do so the EFHA created a continental network of fashion GLAMs and brands, which strengthened cultural links among the members of the EU and promoted Europe-wide cooperation.

The association focused on **'fashion'** by archiving and showcasing the vast legacy of European fashion, the EFHA attempted to bring it to the forefront of European cultural discourse and strived for the widespread recognition of fashion as one of the key cultural assets of the continent. The EFHA helped fashion GLAMs and brands increase their cultural importance and relevance, The archive of the association was also one of the few efforts documenting fashion as a form of cultural legacy, paying special attention to European designer names and nationalities, production years, materials, techniques, and colours.

The cultural legacy or **'heritage'** that the association preserved digitally was used as a powerful tool for creating a common, historical narrative for strengthening European identity. The materials and artefacts collected by the EFHA could be freely accessed via the association's website and studied by anyone. The EFHA offered many GLAMs and brands a way to archive their content and have their resources seen by a wider audience, without investing in their own digital infrastructure.

One of the most important features of the EFHA was being an **'association'**. It acted as a platform connecting various European parties who were invested in studying, exploring, producing or displaying fashion. Assessing their impact, the EFHA highlighted the importance of their network by defining themselves as "a space where a thriving network of fashion heritage professionals, scholars and enthusiasts can meet, share experiences, [and] learn from each other…".[vii] As an association, the EFHA organised events such as conferences, workshops, etc. every year "with the aim of raising competencies and skills of its members on crucial topics like the use of new technologies for the exploitation of fashion heritage, digitisation and metadata standards, and copyright issues."[viii] Being a space funded by the European Commission where fashion GLAMs, brands and individuals interested in fashion could converge, the association also promoted public-private partnerships and collaborations.

Thanks to the network, the EFHA was a valuable resource for two different groups that converged via its digital repository. On one side there were content providers (GLAMs and brands) who were interested in extracting more value from their collections and reaching wider audiences. Through the association's network GLAMs and brands could also discover new opportunities and form new partnerships. Additionally, being a member of a European-wide organisation, could provide small fashion institutions with more credibility and prestige. On the other side there were users, such as fashion-lovers, students and others who could access the

content and make use of it. This led to the situation when the value of the EFHA grew for one side if the number of participants on the other side increased. More content providers meant more materials for users and more users meant more audience for content providers.

A feature, which could not be directly derived from the association's acronym but which was still a fundamental part of the EFHA was its **'digital repository'**. The version of the association's website available in 2020 was launched in July 2018 and as of 2020, it was "the largest and richest digital repository of fashion heritage online".[ix] The website became a showcase for GLAMs and brands, where they could display their vast collections digitally. A unique feature of the EFHA repository was that some of its materials were uploaded under the creative commons license. It meant that they could be freely used by scholars for educational purposes and by creators to generate more content and further promote European fashion heritage. For all kinds of users, such a repository provided access to a broad range of fashion objects in a convenient mobile form, which could be reached from anywhere in the world.

Figure 1 The EFHA Website. Source: https://fashionheritage.eu/
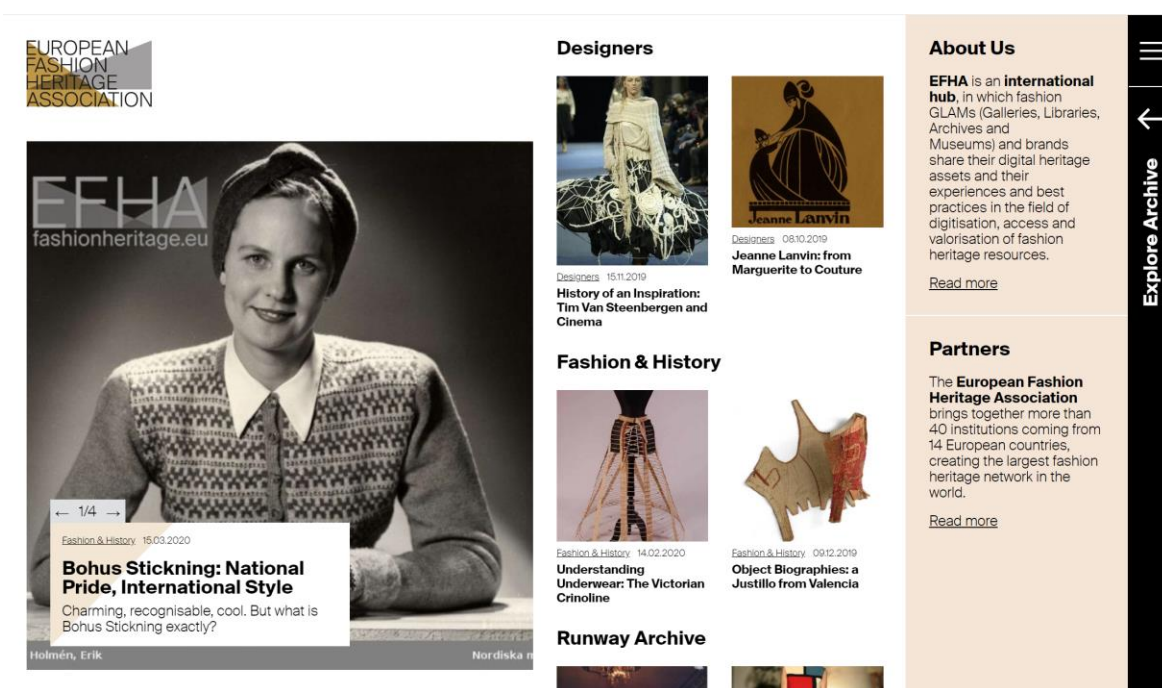
Decoding the acronym helped outline different aspects of work the association does and the value it brought to the fashion world. However, these 5 main features of the EFHA were tightly interconnected and the association's main asset lied in combining all of them.
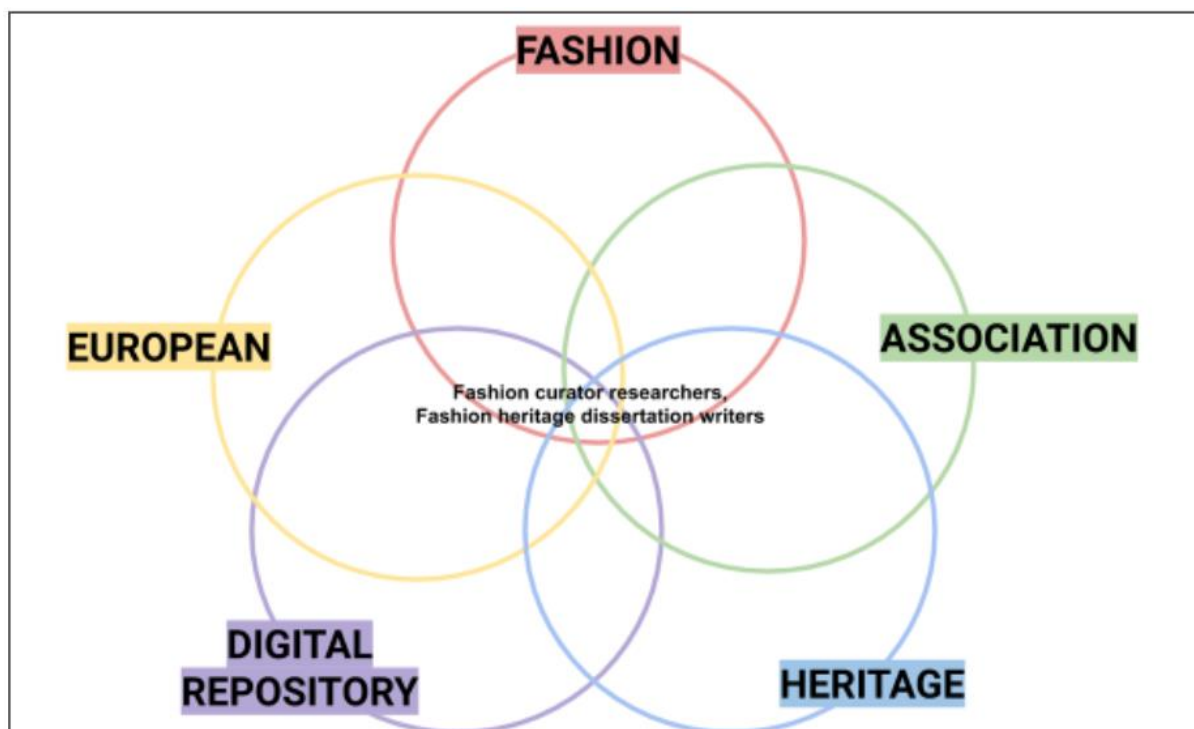
Figure 2 The EFHA Values Chart. Source: courtesy of the authors

<u>The 5 key values of the EFHA and their overlaps:</u> This diagram is one way to understand how the EFHA's values overlapped with one another. At the centre where all five values overlap is two examples of a specific type of student/scholar stakeholder, the fashion curator researcher and the fashion heritage dissertation writer. Both of these individuals find value as users with what the EFHA provides, from data to association.

The Landscape of European Heritage Associations

By 2020, the EFHA was among many non-governmental organizations, platforms, and associations funded by the European Commission in an effort to "shape Europe's digital future".[x] One of these endeavours was digitizing European cultural heritage, so the continent's rich cultural legacy could be accessed online by everyone for leisure or education.[xi] These platforms allowed participating institutions to reach broader audiences and promote greater collaboration amongst its members. Apart from the EFHA archiving fashion heritage, other organisations that existed within the EU-funded digital framework have preserved industrial heritage (ERIH), improved cooperation among museums (ICOM and NEMO), and archived cultural objects (Europeana), to name a few. These organisations contextualized the EFHA among different and similar association models, while sharing a common purpose in preserving European cultural heritage.

ERIH

One such organization was the European Route of Industrial Heritage, a tourism-related information network of industrial heritage sites in Europe. This association united more than 300 members across 26 countries who worked towards converting the continent's rich industrial heritage into a tourism brand.[xii] The main promotion platform of ERIH was also its website that was used to present the industrial heritage to the general public.

ICOM-Europe and NEMO

While ERIH used its website as its main promotion platform, some organizations took it one step further and improved cooperation among museums by meeting face-to-face. ICOM, or Regional Organization of the International Council of Museums, similarly to the EFHA, organized yearly forums for its members to exchange information and enhance cooperation among UNESCO National Committees across Europe.[xiii] NEMO, or The Network of European Museum Organisations, improved museum cooperation in their own way. Founded in 1992, NEMO was an independent network of national museum organizations representing the museum community of the member states of the Council of Europe that offered a platform for museums and museum organizations to develop shared projects across borders.[xiv]

Europeana

Lastly, Europeana was a digital archive of European cultural heritage, including books, music, works of art and numerous other categories of cultural objects. Through the Europeana platform, users could access over 58 million digitized items in many formats such as image, text, sound, and 3D material.[xv] Europeana was an umbrella organisation and the key strategic partner of the EFHA. They shared the archive, had the same goals of digitizing European heritage, and until July 2018, the EFHA had operated under the name of Europeana Fashion International Association.[xvi] Marco, apart from being the managing director of the EFHA, was also the Chair of the Europeana Aggregators Forum.

In 2017, the European Commission asked the public to evaluate the performance of Europeana. The result of this survey pointed out some issues, including the quality of the available material, lack of awareness about the platform, and limited functionality of the website.[xvii] However, it was unclear whether these issues caused problems to the position of the EFHA within the landscape of associations.

These associations served the purpose of preserving European cultural heritage. They are tasked with the responsibility of promoting continental collaboration and digitizing Europe's cultural heritage into accessible online archives or platforms. Moreover, these associations aim

to transform tangible cultural goods/objects into digital versions for broader accessibility. Finally, while these associations have different roles, they share the common goal of improving the process of sharing information about culture and cultural heritage.

The EFHA Stakeholders: Students and Scholars

On the plane to Rome, Marco thought about ways to engage more with students and scholars, a group that could range from a PhD researcher to a professional curator researching for a new exhibition topic. Students and scholars were one of the association's four main stakeholders (the others being GLAMs, brands, and archives), butthey felt the most left out. Since 2012, the EFHA has engaged with students and scholars on a general ad hoc basis, not necessarily differentiating, nor distinguishing between the two. Broadly speaking, the EFHA educated students about digital archiving and interacted with scholars through conferences. As the digital repository is the EFHA's core asset, students and scholars access it like a curated, digital 'library' for European fashion heritage. In addition to research, Marco recalled other previous experiences the EFHA had in engaging student and scholar stakeholders, such as Wikipedia Edit-a-thons and educational events. Marco also recalled several instances of unexplored opportunities, inspired from the creativity of students and scholars using contents from the archive.

Wikipedia Edit-athons and Crowdsourcing Metadata

As part of its efforts to bolster digital information about European fashion heritage, the EFHA was organising Wikipedia edit-a-thons, where students and scholars were one of the key stakeholders, invited to contribute and learn about digital archiving by doing. Participants utilised sources from the EFHA repository to update or add entries to fashion-related articles on Wikipedia. From 2014 to 2018, the EFHA organised 15 edit-a-thons in 12 different countries, and they published a handbook outlining how fashion GLAMs can organise similar events to increase the referencing of their original content in the world's most popular online encyclopaedia.[xviii] Much like the Transcribathon event Europeana did with Oxford University in 2011 to translate the recorded oral history of World War I survivors, the EFHA edit-a-thon format also adopted gamification ideas to make the process more fun, and engage teachers and students.[xix]

In addition to the Edit-a-thons, Marco partnered with CrowdHeritage on behalf of the EFHA, to host crowdsourcing campaigns to improve the metadata of fashion heritage content to be searchable online. Within 'Catwalk Colours', one of such campaigns, the participants were asked to verify and edit automatically extracted data on colours of the outfits of three iconic couture collections in the EFHA archive.[xx]
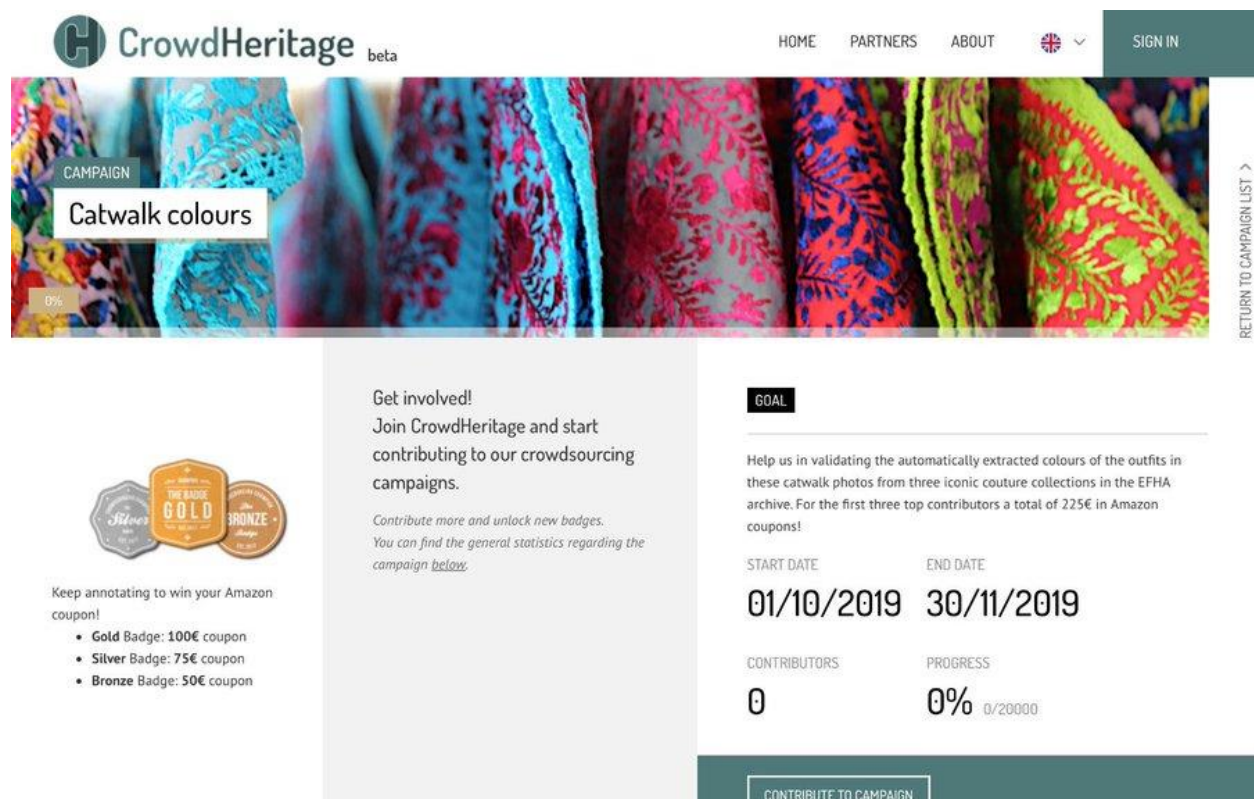
Figure 3 CrowdHeritage project. Source: https://twitter.com/EurFashion/status/1178913733491515397

Conferences and Educational Events

Marco thought about the added value the EFHA could offer scholars. Apart from the digital repository itself, the EFHA network was also valuable. Through its network, the association could connect scholars to their various partnering institutions, individual members, and other scholars, depending on their subject of interest. Participants could also access small-sized local institutions across Europe that would have otherwise been hard to get in touch with.

One of the key ways which the EFHA used to actively cultivate this network was hosting their annual international conference, bringing their community of professionals and researchers -- as well as guest speakers and non-members -- together to engage in various discussions about European fashion heritage, from archival best practices building to sharing updates. Through these conferences, the EFHA led in setting the thematic agenda on European fashion heritage, bringing together different stakeholders to engage with the latest academic research and fresh insights. At the 2019 international conference held at the London College of Fashion in November, the EFHA brought the network together to discuss the politics of heritage and present research, featuring speakers from different institutional, academic, and professional perspectives. According to a review written by an attendee and Master's student of the New

School, the 2019 conference discussions debated the meaning of fashion heritage and explored the ways GLAMs have tapped the economic resource of using heritage for fashion brand exhibitions.[xxi] A review of the speakers' biographies predominantly featured PhD-level scholars who often doubled as professors and curators.[xxii] This group of 'scholars' were not the same as the 'student' stakeholder that Carlijn was for Marco, but she reminded him of the various events the EFHA participated in, to educate students about the digitally archiving heritage. One of these included a presentation to 20 students at the Frankfurter Buchmesse in Germany for their annual THE ARTS+ festival, in collaboration with Europeana Labs and Platoniq in October 2016.[xxiii]

Figure 4 The ARTS+ Festival. Source: https://twitter.com/EurFashion/status/788681733034090496

Unexplored Opportunities

Reflecting on those previous projects, Marco realised the EFHA lacked a strategy to engage with students and scholar stakeholders. In the past, researchers have mostly used the EFHA materials on an ad hoc basis. Marco recalled that a researcher named Jennifer Daley from the Association of Dress Historians had referenced the EFHA as one of 116 online sources to research dress history because it had usable material in English.[xxiv] Aside from instances that he was aware of, Marco had no way of knowing how the EFHA may have benefited researchers or whether researchers used content from the EFHA in their work.

Moreover, the long-term impact of such ad hoc engagement had not been evaluated and it was still a question of how much further this collaboration could go. Marco was sure that the current state of student and scholar engagement was a fruitful but superficial exercise. To bring

the most value to the academic world and to reap the most benefits out of this world for the organisation itself, the EFHA had to create a clear vision on how to improve this cooperation.

Challenges

Unfortunately for Marco, the engagement of students and scholars with the EFHA was not the only problem that required strategic solutions. For example, the website was not designed in the friendliest way possible, which could potentially divert students like Carlijn from using it. Often vaguely defined relationships between the EFHA and its partners resulted in ambiguity of their cooperation. Additionally, private companies with big budgets and greater abilities than the EFHA, such as Google, were entering the field of heritage archives and posing as new competition.

User experience problems with fashionheritage.eu (see Appendix 1)

When Carlijn first searched for images and information on the history of Dutch fashion brands on the EFHA website, she immediately felt overwhelmed. She first roamed the homepage for a few minutes, scrolling through months of blog posts which she found out to be the EFHA's 'Journal'. Eventually, she found the archive on the right side of the page. After exploring the available filters such as 'object', 'provider', 'material', 'colour', 'creator' and 'date', Carlijn did not yet find the specific information she was looking for. She finally decided that the most efficient way to go about this research was to use the search bar. After trying multiple combinations of different keywords, Carlijn found many images, but none of them were specifically related to the history of Dutch fashion brands. All of a sudden, Carlijn noticed the filters and felt hopeful again. She opened up the list of creators and immediately found a list of hundreds of designers and brands in alphabetical order. Her knowledge of well-known fashion brands in the Netherlands helped her to pick the Dutch creators out of the list. Starting out with Dries van Noten, Carlijn was provided with over 3500 images of garments, shoes, and accessories. Along with the images she found information on the materials and techniques of the objects, but most importantly the object's content provider and the right statements. Carlijn noticed that most of the images of objects created by Dries van Noten were provided by MUDE (Museu do Design e da Moda) in Lisboa.

Although she had free access to this information, Carlijn could have also asked Marco to connect her with one of his partners at the MUDE for an interview. This way, Carlijn could have been able to gain more thorough information on the collections of Dries van Noten in the exhibitions of MUDE. Besides, Carlijn felt more secure receiving this information from the museum first-hand. As stated on the website of Europeana, they did not guarantee the accuracy of the information nor did they accept any responsibility or liability with regard to the information on the website.[xxv] Since the EFHA website was part of Europeana, Carlijn did not feel confident using the EFHA website as a reference for her research paper.

Ambiguous Partnerships

As an active and curious student, Carlijn regularly attended additional lectures about fashion. Two of her professors started a new course on 'Heritage and Fashion', and Carlijn sat in on a guest lecture featuring curators from the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) and the Centraal Museum in Utrecht. Both these institutions were one of the EFHA's 43 partners (see Appendix 2), and Carlijn was interested to learn how they participated in the EFHA network.

Ninke Bloemberg, the Curator of Fashion and Costumes at Centraal Museum, smiled as she spoke of how actively her institution worked with the EFHA as a supporting member. Last fall, she was one of five curators invited to speak from the museum perspective on working with heritage at the 2019 EFHA International Conference. In addition to paying an annual fee to support the EFHA, Centraal Museum was featured on the EFHA website among other supporting members, and Ninke and her colleagues had access to the EFHA network of fashion professionals, as well as events, like the annual conference. Ninke told Carlijn that she occasionally blogged for the EFHA, which sparked Carlijn's interest because there might be something interesting for her paper topic on Dutch fashion. Carlijn tried looking for it that very evening, but without a search option in the EFHA 'journal', she had no way of searching for Ninke's blogs on there. On the other hand, when Carlijn asked Sonnet Stanfill, a Senior Fashion curator for the V&A, about the EFHA, she received a completely different response. Stanfill was aware that the V&A was a content partner with the EFHA, but she herself was not aware of the details of the relationship.

The partnership structure of the EFHA was perplexing and intriguing to Carlijn. Before she wrote her paper on the history of Dutch fashion brands last year, she actually wanted to write about Belgian fashion heritage. When Carlijn found the EFHA's website for the first time, she was excited that one of their content partners was as prestigious as the Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België/The Royal Library of Belgium (KBR). Carlijn searched the EFHA's digital repository and found 3,794 products in the database when she searched 'Belgium'– 495 of which were from KBR. With so much to sift through, Carlijn decided to reach out to KBR to better understand how the materials were selected to be featured on the EFHA, but she was disappointed when one of the staff responded to her email that KBR had not been very active with the EFHA in recent years and that he did not have an answer for her. [xxvi]

Looking at the 'Partners' page on the EFHA website, it was hard for Carlijn to tell what differentiated a 'supporting member' from a 'content partner'. Europeana was the sole 'strategic partner'. At random, Carlijn clicked on the 'Missoni' logo and was directed to the company's website for shopping. She returned to the EFHA website, this time searching Missoni as a contributor within the digital archive and found more than 13,800 objects from the company. As a supporting member, Missoni benefited from using the EFHA's database infrastructure to share and store their archival material, Carlijn concluded.

Competition

When Carlijn told her classmates about the EFHA and their digital archives, several were interested in using it for their papers as well. They were not as patient as Carlijn however, and whether it was that they found the website too daunting to navigate, or that they could not find the information they were looking for, all of them turned to Google as their main search engine of preference. A few stumbled onto the Google Arts & Culture project, We Wear Culture, which they found to be not only useful for their paper assignments but engaging to look through.

The Google Arts & Culture project was founded in 2011 as part of a passion project by Google engineer, Amit Sood, to digitize the world's museum contents and make them available to online users as high-resolution images and videos. Since then, the project evolved into the Paris-based non-profit Google Cultural Institute, whereas of 2020 Sood was the director. This institute further cemented Google's ambition "to preserve and bring the world's art and culture online so it was accessible to anyone, anywhere", thereby echoing and challenging other museums and organisation's archives simultaneously.[xxvii] By 2017, Google launched We Wear Culture, the project "that brings you the stories behind the clothes you wear". Under this name, Google's fashion project aimed to add new value to fashion history and its artefacts, focusing on the cultural influences, people, and stories behind certain pieces.[xxviii] At its launch, We Wear Culture made more than 30,000 fashion items available, partly through its 180 partnerships with museums and organisations across 44 countries, and partly through Google's own documentation of pieces using its gigapixel cameras.

While We Wear Culture provided free exposure for its partnering institutions, it was designed with some student and scholar engagement in mind. "The target is not just fashion enthusiasts, but anyone who's culturally curious," said the project's program manager Kate Lauterbach in her 2017 interview with Business of Fashion. Some of the most 'culturally curious' were naturally students of fashion, and while Lauterbach referenced partnering with Central Saint Martins' fashion master's program of the University of Arts London to document their students' fashion shows from beginning to end, there was more potential to be explored, particularly to what Lauterbach referred to as 'teachable moments'. "We have Google Expeditions, which are basically teacher-led educational experiences. Students get [virtual reality] Google Cardboard viewers and get taken on a tour. I think this has incredible potential."[xxix]

The financial and technical capabilities of such a big technology corporation like Google far exceeded that of the EFHA. With its clout and technological expertise in both hardware (gigapixel cameras) and software (cloud computing), not to mention design and user experience of using search engines for information and engagement, Google was able to step into the digital archival world seamlessly. The Google Cultural Institute challenged other arts and culture digital archives in two keyways: the quality of their digitally documented content,

and its global reach to people around the world. We Wear Culture documented their objects in such granular detail, that it made the digital experience completely different from the physical museum experience. From anywhere that one had internet access, one could linger on an item by zooming into its details, reading through one of its 400 curated photo slideshows (called Online Exhibits), watch explainer YouTube videos about fashion trends, or view a virtual reality film (360 film) using Google cardboard on their smartphones.[xxx] Google, being a global household brand, also had the ability to reach an unprecedented number of people, who were used to navigating Google products and trusted its 'authority' for searched information online.[xxxi]

However, because We Wear Culture is driven by storytelling, its contents and categories were designed to appeal to the common user experience, with a heavy emphasis on famous figures, legendary designers, and globally recognized fabrics and traditional wear. The culture behind clothes, for example, was categorized by icons, movements, artistic influences, and craftsmanship. Each narrative about a subject, movement, material, or celebrity in one of these categories or featured topics like 'Sustainable Fashion Initiatives in India' gave users a shorthand, historical overview about the topic, with credits to the leading partnering institution and curator who helped put the online exhibit together. We Wear Culture established the creative direction, and their partners' collections and expertise met Google in the middle in content creation. Sonnet Stanfill, who had narrated the history of the corset for a Google 360 video, recalled that We Wear Culture had approached the V&A to contribute to their 'Surrealist Fashion' theme, but the offer was largely ignored because the V&A staff didn't have time for it. Unlike the EFHA, where partners could propose topics and ideas, Google's We Wear Culture gave their partners high-quality technological support in exchange for access to their museum items and the expertise of their curators for content creation.

After We Wear Culture was launched in 2017, the EFHA found itself in a David and Goliath situation. For the association, it was strategically vital to distinguish themselves from the Google Arts & Culture project and develop a unique value proposition in fashion heritage preservation. Despite sharing a similar value proposition with the EFHA and other independent fashion museums, Google's We Wear Culture was better positioned to guarantee value to its stakeholders, for their partnership and sharing of museum contents. The EFHA could not offer the same technological support and reach to its partners, but the association potentially had other angles of values to offer its stakeholders, including the frontier of student and scholar engagement.

Conclusion

Marco did not want to miss the chance to let Carlijn help with the project, as his plane descended into Rome. With competitors like Google having entered the field of fashion heritage archival, the EFHA was the David at risk of being eclipsed by a more technologically

advanced and globally recognized Goliath. Neither the EFHA nor Google's We Wear Culture have created a direct strategy for student and scholar engagement, and Marco saw this as an opportunity to distinguish the EFHA's value proposition and competitive difference as the leading archive of European fashion heritage. With many students and scholars using Google for academic and non-academic purposes, the need to clarify what role the EFHA played in connecting with these stakeholders was more important than ever. During the flight, Marco thought of many challenges the EFHA was facing at that time but questions regarding Carlijn's inquiry of how a student/scholar like her could better engage with the EFHA still needed to be answered. What was the profile of students and scholars that represented this group of stakeholders for the EFHA? What could the EFHA do to engage students and scholars? Why would this engagement benefit the EFHA and vice versa? What did scholars and educators of students, who were learning about European fashion heritage need from the EFHA and how could the EFHA improve their support for them?

Appendix 1

Focus-group study on the user experience of the EFHA website

In order to get a better understanding of Carlijn's point of view, a focus group was conducted for this case study. The focus group was conducted amongst three students who were either in their last year of their bachelor or in their master and took courses in fashion during their studies.

During the focus group, students were given an assignment and had to use the EFHA website in order to fulfil this task. Hypothetically, the students had to write a research paper on the heritage and craft of suitmaking, for which they wanted to use Anne-Marie Beretta as an example. They were then presented with the EFHA website, in order to gain as much information on the topic as possible. After they completed this task, they were asked to search for the same information on Google Arts and Culture. Finally, the students were asked a few questions about their experience with the EFHA, as well as Google Arts and Culture.

Most important takeaways from the focus group:
- None of the (fashion) students were familiar with either the EFHA or Europeana. Nor were they familiar with Google Arts and Culture.
- Students tended to immediately use the search bar in order to effectively and efficiently search for the right information. The EFHA website did not lend itself to this approach, whereas Google Arts and Culture immediately showed the desired results.
- When comparing the two platforms, students liked the EFHA because it showed more objects and thus, more variation. Google provided less objects, however, they did provide more in-depth information.
- Students did not perceive the EFHA as a reliable source, because of the unfamiliarity. They trusted Google more, because it was a more established 'brand name'.
- In general, students preferred Google Arts & Culture, because the website was more user friendly, provided more in depth-information and was considered to be more reliable.

Appendix 2

Comparison of the EFHA archive and Google Arts & Culture website
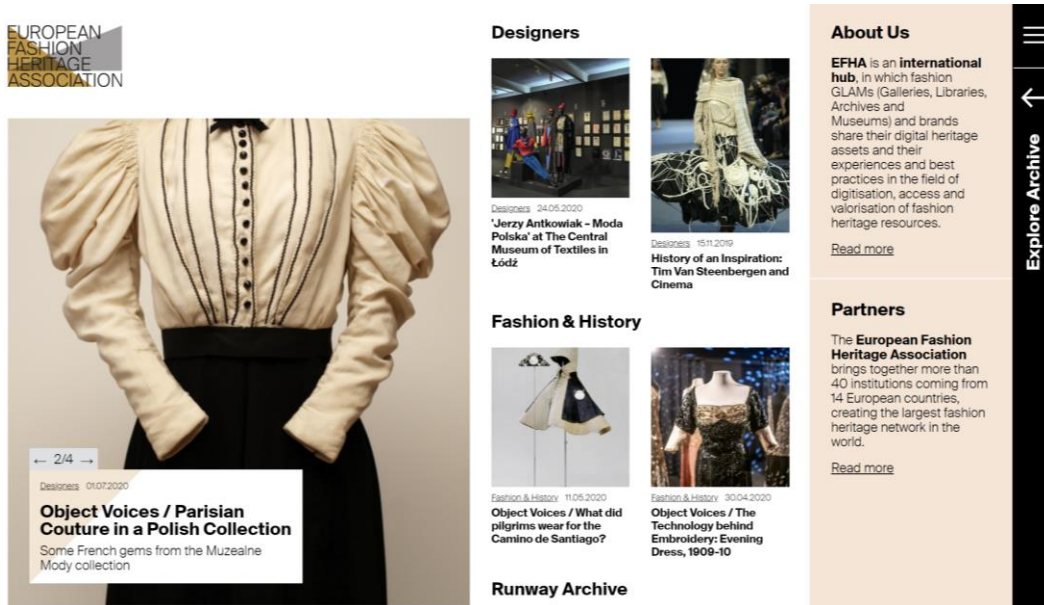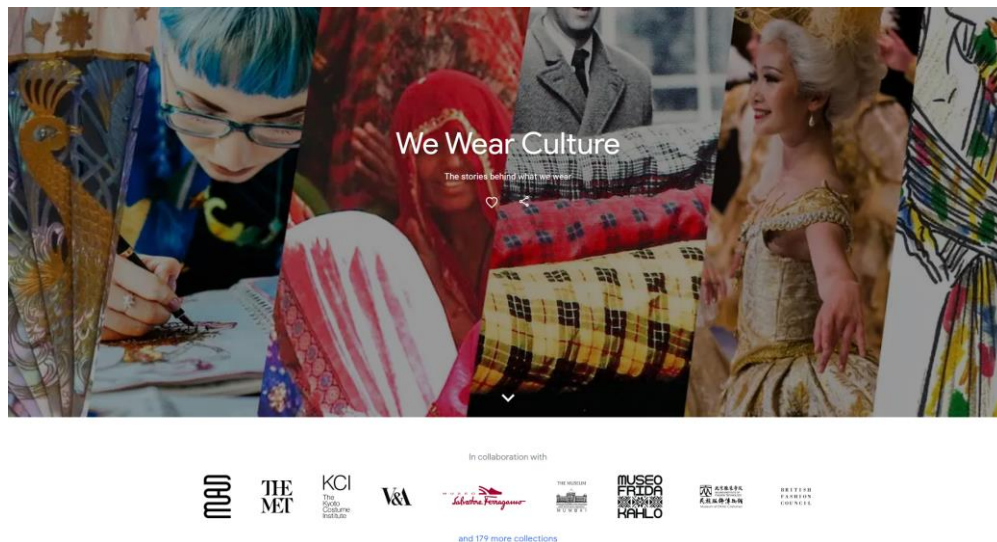
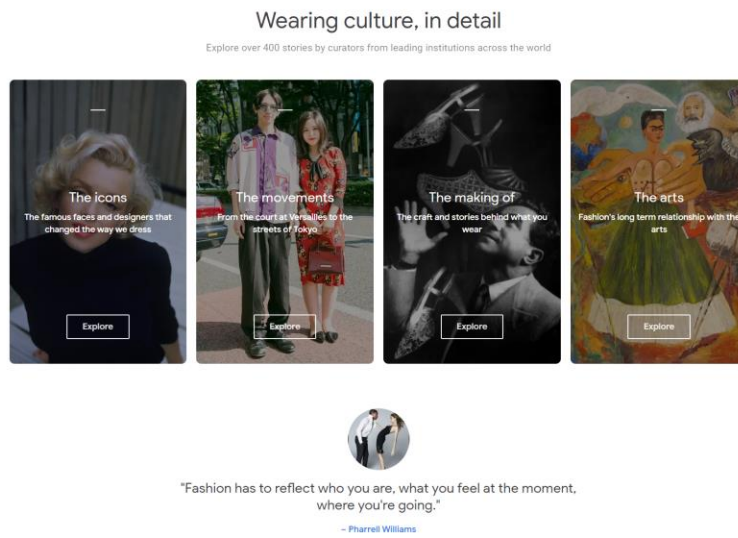Homepage

The EFHA

Figure 5 The EFHA Website. Source: https://fashionheritage.eu/

Google

Figure 6 Google We Wear Culture Homepage. Source:
https://artsandculture.google.com/project/fashion

Archives

The EFHA

Figure 7 The EFHA Archive, a dress by Cristobal Balenciaga, Paris, 1962. Source: https://fashionheritage.eu/browse/record/ed87f632ceb16cd7b36ddfbcdce44c81acaf49653de90547e 053611695516721/

Google

Balenciaga: Master Craftsman

Known as 'The Master' of haute couture, Cristóbal Balenciaga (1895–1972) was one of the most revered and influential fashion designers of the 20th century. His clothes were characterised by their sculptural quality, deft manipulation of textiles and dramatic use of colour and texture.
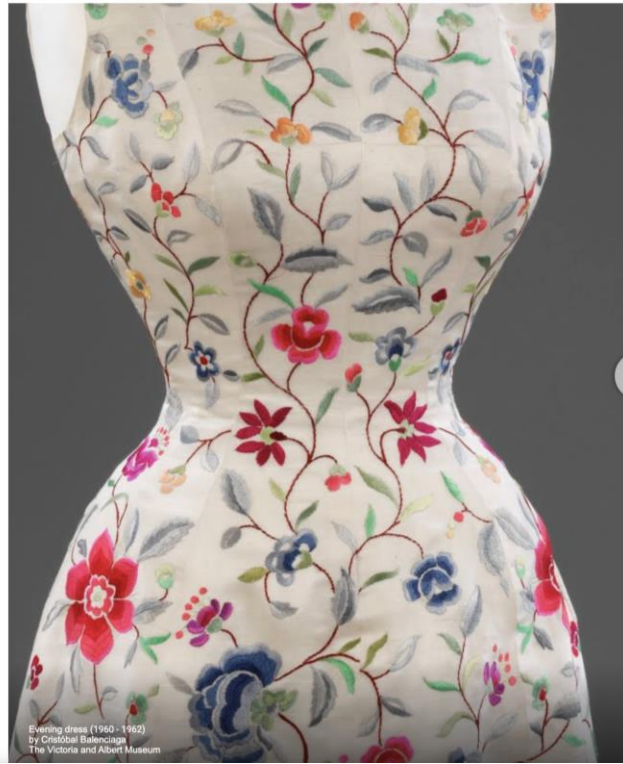
Evening dress (1960 - 1962)
by Cristóbal Balenciaga
The Victoria and Albert Museum

Figure 8 Google We Wear Culture Project, a dress by Cristobal Balenciaga, Paris, 1962. Source: https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/balenciaga-master-craftsman/-wIivb9hDv4rJQ

Appendix 3

The EFHA Partners

Supporting Members	- CATWALK archives - Modemuseum Hasselt - Museo della Calzatura di Villa Foscarini Rossi - Museu do Design e da Moda - Modemuseum Antwerpen - Pelopennesian Folklore Foundation - Missoni - Beeld en Geluid - Museo Salvatore Ferragamo - Germanisches National Museum - Bennetton Group - Museum Amsterdam - Musee des Arts Decoratifs - Fondazione Gianfranco Ferre - Stockholm University - Nordiskh Museet Stockholms - Pitti Immagine - Rijksmuseum - Staatliche Museen ze Berlin - Centraal Museum Utrecht - Emilio Pucci Fondazione
Content Partners	- Victoria & Albert Museum - Mode Muze - Paul van Riel - Wien Museum - Museum of Applied Art - Museo del Traje - International Talent Support - Armemuseum - The Israel Museum - Textiel Museum - Gemeente Museum Den Haag - Shoes or no shoes (SONS) - Friesmuseum - Polo Museale Firenze - Museum over mensen (Afrika Museum, Troopen Museum & Museum Volkenkunde) - Antwerp Cultural Heritage Sciences (ARCHES) - Bijzondere Collecties UvA - Musees royaux d'Art et d'Histoire Bruxelles

	● Fondazione Cerratelli ● Nederlands Openlucht Museum ● Koninklijke Bibliotheek van Belgie ● TRC Leiden
Strategic Partner	● Europeana

Endnotes

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Image (Cover): Trouser suit, patterned silk top and synthetic fibre trousers, Emilio Pucci, Italy, 1965 (Credits: Emilio Pucci, 1960/69; Providing institution: Victoria and Albert Museum; Provider: Europeana Fashion;Identifier:http://mint-projects.image.ntua.gr/europeana-fashion/http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O351201; T.585:1, 2-1995. The image has been cropped from the original).