

# Documentation to the Rescue:

## An Infographic About Documenting Your Immersive Work

Dear artist or maker of immersive media, are you working on making an immersive work or already made an immersive work? First of all, congratulations! On behalf of the enthusiasts of immersive media, we thank you for your contribution. However, before moving on to your next work, please take some time to document your work so we can make sure that we can still enjoy your work in the future. By reading this infographic you will learn what you need to know about documenting your work.

### Why is documenting your work important?

There is good news and bad news. To start with the bad news: preserving immersive media is very difficult. This means that the current version of your work has an expiration date and will change over time. In the worst-case scenario your work can become inaccessible and therefore 'disappear'. But do not worry too much, now it is time for the good news: documentation can help. To summarize: "It is inevitable that immersive media will become obsolete, which increases the importance of documentation as the final remaining trace of an artwork." (Lennaerts, 2022, p. 2).



### Why is preserving immersive media challenging?

Cultural heritage institutions are working on strategies to preserve immersive media. There are existing strategies that cultural heritage institutions apply to preserve immersive works. However, these strategies are quite complex. The technologies that are used to create immersive works are rapidly changing. Therefore, it is difficult to create best practices. Additionally, immersive media is a broad term that consists of multiple technologies that all require different preservation approaches. This means that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to preserve immersive works (Baetens, 2023, p. 28).



### What does documenting your work mean?

The term 'documentation' is defined by ICOM as "all paper and other physical records and electronic records of information relating to an object or collection; the term is also used for the process of creating records pertaining to each object in a collection" (Boylan, 2004, p. 207). For immersive media documentation means "the act of creating textual, visual, audial, spatial and time records of an artwork, in order to conserve, archive and re-install artworks" (Lennaerts, 2022, p. 6). Documentation is an important part of preserving immersive works.



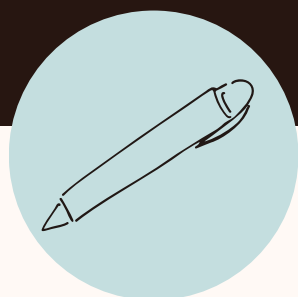
### How do cultural heritage institutions document immersive works?

The institution ZKM has created a helpful open-source workflow that explains the acquisition process for software-based artworks. There are three phases in this workflow, pre-acquisition, during acquisition and post-acquisition, in which institutions and artists or makers are in contact to exchange information needed to preserve the immersive work (ZKM Werke Wiki, 2023). The frequency of contact between the institution and artist or maker depends on the capacity of the institution. It is common for artists and makers to be asked to fill in a questionnaire and/or be interviewed by the conservator (Baetens, 2023, p. 18-19).



### Why should an artist or a maker document their work?

You might wonder: "Why is it my role to document my work if cultural heritage institutions are documenting immersive works as well?". Conservators and archivists are responsible for the preservation of works. However, when it comes to preserving immersive media there are special circumstances due to immersive works becoming rapidly obsolete. Artists and makers have a "pivotal role" in documenting their works and institutions "occupy an assisting role by managing the documentation process" once they acquire or present the work" (Lennaerts, 2022, p. 16). It is important to document a work before it becomes obsolete. To make sure the work is documented in time and in the way the artist or maker intended the work to be, it is important that the artist or maker documents the work and institutions preserve the documentation.



### How can you document your work?

Artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer has created guidelines for artists and makers to document and preserve their work that are highly recommended (Lozano-Hemmer, 2015). In addition to these guidelines, there are several open-source artist questionnaires that indicate what information is important to document, such as those found on the Preserving Immersive Media Knowledge Base (Rowe et al., z.d.). Documentation focusses on the one hand on the technical part of the work, such as what hardware and software is used for the work. On the other hand it focusses on the conceptual part of the work, such as how the work interacts with audience (Baetens, 2023, p. 18). If you have questions about documenting your work you can approach institutions, such as the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision or LIMA.

### Literature

Baetens, L. (2023). Collaboratively Moving Forward: Exploring Strategies for the Selection and Preservation of Immersive Media in Cultural Heritage Institutions. Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision. <https://publications.beeldengeluid.nl/pub/2179>

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Lennaerts, K. (2022). Anticipating Obsolescence. Documentation as a strategy to preserve immersive media. Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision. [https://publications.beeldengeluid.nl/pub/1938/Anticipating-Obsolescence\\_Klennaerts.pdf](https://publications.beeldengeluid.nl/pub/1938/Anticipating-Obsolescence_Klennaerts.pdf)

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Rowe, S., McConchie, J., Ensom, T., Campbell, S., & Hellar, M. (z.d.). Documentation. Preserving Immersive Media Knowledge Base. Accessed July 16, 2023, from <https://pimkb.gitbook.io/pimkb/acquisition-resources/documentation>

ZKM Werke Wiki. (2023). Acquisition workflow (Software-based artworks). Accessed July 16, 2023, from [https://werke.zkm.de/wiki/index.php/Acquisition\\_workflow\\_\(Software-based\\_artworks\)#Post-Acquisition\\_marathon\\_\(be\\_prepared\\_to\\_be\\_proactive\)](https://werke.zkm.de/wiki/index.php/Acquisition_workflow_(Software-based_artworks)#Post-Acquisition_marathon_(be_prepared_to_be_proactive))