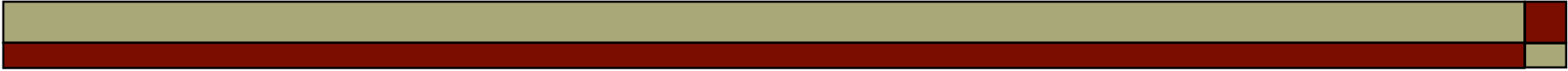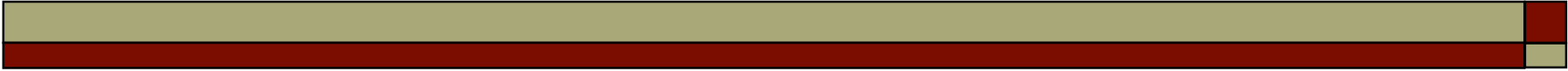# *From Cybercolonialism to Cyberglocalization: A Virtual Shifting of Cultural Identity on National Museum Websites*
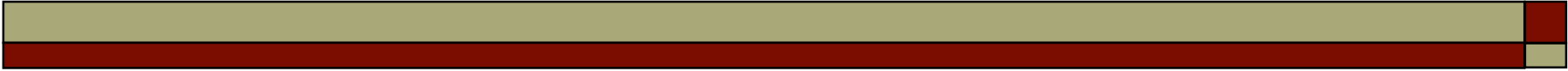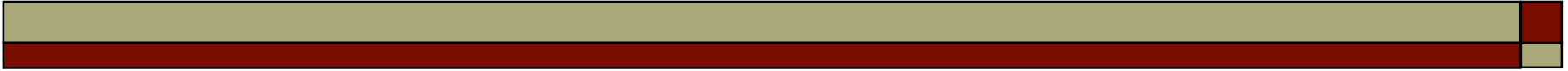
Mary Leigh Morbey

York University

Information and communications technology (ICT) holds the potential to change culture and subsequently how a museum represents itself. This is particularly so as national museum websites transform how we view and understand the cultural artifacts they house.
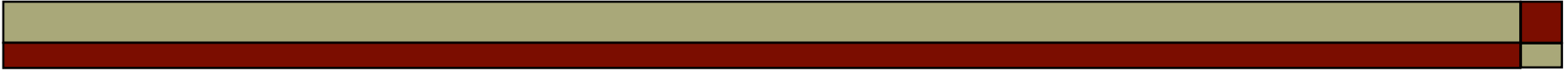
We are only beginning to discover the un-researched assumptions about ICT ideas, models, interaction, and appearance on museum websites and this is an important challenge before us.

To examine how information and communications technology changes the ways two national museums represent themselves online the paper asks: How are influences originating in computing and related ideologies giving shape to website developments of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia and of the Louvre Museum, Paris, France?

The museum studies are framed by the notions of cybercolonialism – a colonizing of cultures by an array of computing ideologies, and cyberglocalization – an adapting of global cyber processes to local circumstances.

The case studies of the two national museum websites demonstrate the premise that information and communications technology is a cultural construction, and it carries and generates cultural discourse related to its construction and place of application.

Multi-pronged methodological design

- Historical tracings
- Philosophical interpretation
- Ethnographic onsite field observation
- Qualitative pre-structured onsite field interview

The story of the State Hermitage Museum at http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/

➢ Interpreting museum website representation

➢ Problems within the IBM technological shell

➢ A question of reciprocity

IBM corporate links

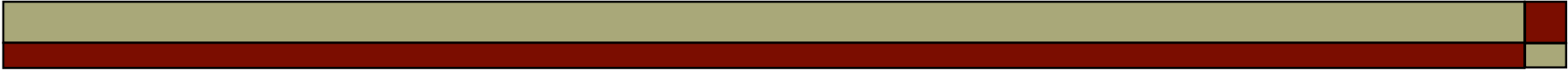- http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/html_En/00/hm0_8.html

- http://www-306.ibm.com/e-business/ondemand/us/index.html

- http://www.ibm.com/us/

The tale of the Louvre Museum at http://www.louvre.fr/llv/commun/home_flash.jsp?

➢ Collaborative conceptualization

➢ Differing curatorial and educational objectives

➢ A French cultural heritage scripted for global communication

Conclusions

➢ *Cybercolonizing influences of corporate IBM shape the IBM-Hermitage website; a financial and communication tool where much is about US corporate branding.*

➢ *A cyberglocal vision about openness and communication shapes the Louvre website; a cultural medium that engages interactively the French as well as visitors from around the globe.*

➢ *The case studies of the two national museum websites illustrate in tellingly different ways the premise that information and communications technology is a cultural construction, and it carries and generates cultural discourse related to its construction and place of application.*