

Report from the third Culture24 Action Research Project

LET'S GET

REAL 3

Demolition on Camp Deleam II by DVDSHUB, CC-BY2.0 (changes made)



Is your content fit for purpose?

by: Sejul Malde and Jane Finnis

More than just a report



Let's Get Real is different. Its unique collaborative and experimental approaches challenge the way arts and heritage organisations think about their audiences, impact and digital capacity. This report is the summary of our shared learning from Phase 3 of the project but we hope it will be much more than that for you. We like to think of it more as a trigger for your own learning - one that is based on your individual actions, circumstances and experiments - but is guided by the insights of others. It contains everything you need to know to start your own journey.

Chapter 1 is a think piece that is a way into the key strategic questions. The framework in Chapter 2 will help you if you are looking for practical guidance. Chapter 3 gives you the whole story of Let's Get Real Phase 3 - the who, what and how of the project.

In chapters 4, 5 and 6 we unpack the results of our research and explore how individual research experiments shaped our thinking and overall conclusions. Finally Appendix 1 summarises the project participants' research experiment questions and why they chose them.

Wherever you choose to start reading, we hope you all arrive at the same place: inspired and informed to take action.



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1. Think piece: Is your content fit for purpose?



We live in a world that values culture and meaning in many forms and we know that people are looking for ways to explore the subjects and interests they have. They want to know, they want to play, to share and understand – sometimes deeply and sometimes just for a moment.

But are we as cultural organisations - museums, galleries, theatres, art centres and others - connecting people to what we have that they might want? We are certainly experts in our fields, with a wealth of assets, knowledge and expertise to offer society, both online and offline. Our cultural content - collections, performances, exhibitions and more, is perfectly placed to be the start of many conversations, to tell many different stories and to signpost people along their personal journeys. So why does it feel as if we still have so much to learn about making the most of this content when it comes to digital? How can we unlock the value of our cultural content online?

What's wrong?

How much longer until as organisations we stop thinking of 'digital' as something separate that needs its own department or strategy? No one under the age of 20 talks about digital anything; it is simply woven into the way they live. There is a generation that expects everything to be connected, open and, crucially, shareable and available for their own re-use. Underlining this, a survey of 10,000 online users by CIGI-Ipsos¹ stated that 83% believe that affordable access to the Internet should be a basic human right.

How much have the arts and heritage sectors in the UK truly embraced this shift in thinking?

In the 2014 Digital Culture survey,² 947 organisations responded, painting a picture of a sector beginning to consolidate its digital activities and enhance its impact. But looking at the

figures there is still some way to go with 45% of organisations yet to optimise for mobile and 51% not using data analysis to better understand their audiences. Yet despite this rather slow take-up of what might seem to be fundamental for any commercial business, there is still huge momentum and desire within cultural organisations to embrace digital activities. The same survey says that by the end of 2015 95% will be running their own branded website and 92% publishing content on platforms like YouTube and Facebook. But are arts and heritage organisations ready for this new activity? Have we evolved our practice? Do we understand what it takes to become an online publisher? Are we open to new kinds of participation and conversations that the social web is made of? How far are we shifting our organisational thinking and is it working?

In 2014 Culture24 used Hitwise³ to research the percentage of UK domestic traffic online to the websites of 744 publically funded cultural organisations (including all Arts Council National Portfolio organisations, all of the national museums, the National Trust, English Heritage and National Archives). The total was only 0.08% of the overall total online attention of UK domestic online traffic. This is just a tiny drop in a vast ocean of online attention share.

This lack of attention seems to be exclusive to the online world as attendance at arts and heritage venues has never been higher, with the most recent Taking Part survey⁴ showing that 77% of adults took part in an arts activity in the last year.

Another factor at play here is the harsh reality that the websites of many cultural organisations are a bit rubbish. They lack editorial voice, technical flexibility and good design. It is also important to note that audiences are not finding and consuming content on websites as much anymore, they are immersed in the social media ecosystem, discovering and using content in those channels, away from its source. Facebook alone has the same amount of monthly users as China (1.35 billion), with 1.1 billion people using it on a mobile device each month.⁵ That's one seventh of the people on planet Earth.

Our online behaviours have changed forever.



How can we unlock the value of our cultural content online?



1. www.cigionline.org/articles/internet-access-considered-human-right-multi-stakeholder-governance-of-online-world-favoure
2. www.artsdigitalmd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Digital-Culture-2014-Research-Report2.pdf
3. www.experian.co.uk/marketing-services/products/hitwise.html
4. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201415-quarter-2-statistical-release
5. www.cnn.com/id/101611586

As cultural organisations trying to engage people online, we need to understand these changing behaviours and look at the data around them. We need to use the data and insights about our online activities to inform our decision making. We need to interrogate how people interact with our content, and be clear about the purpose of our online publishing offer and how it links to our organisational mission. Without this clarity we are failing - failing to recognise the difference between which content is engaging audiences and which is not; failing to know how to improve what is not working well and invest for that improvement and failing to respond to our audiences' behaviours. More fundamentally, we probably don't understand exactly how we are failing, which is the biggest failure of all.

So, it is really important that we try to **understand our audiences, their needs** and all of the different touch points we might have with them, online and offline. Our ability to do this comes down to this key question – **is your content fit for purpose?**

To fully understand this question we need to think about the circle of demand and supply. The supply side is about the channels we use – social, retail etc - and the content we have - images, videos, text, facts, opinion and more. In a supply model we believe that we must be in every channel and that we must showcase and make available everything we have and that it must all be under our own brand. This model is classic push broadcasting. It is one way, authoritarian and often narrowly cast.

The demand side, by contrast, starts with the audience, their motivations and behaviours. In a demand model we respond to communities of interest in the places where they are and we curate and adjust our offer to suit them. It is about understanding how our core value and the proposition we offer to audiences might meet their needs.

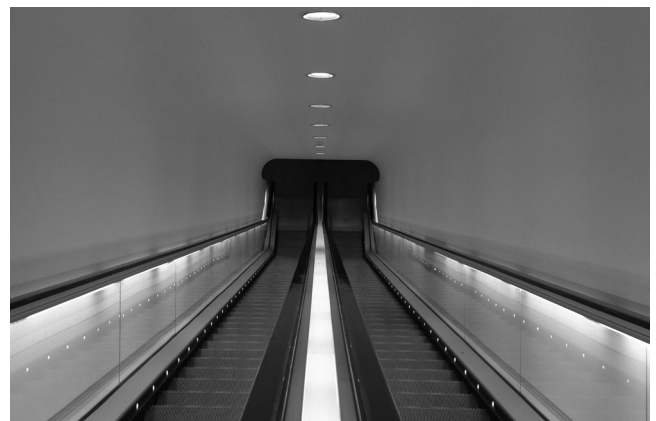
It is through this demand-led approach, understanding the relationships between our organisational mission and our audiences' needs that we can **make our content more fit for purpose.**

Responding to audiences requires us to hone and understand our purpose online more deeply. We need to understand exactly what kind of user behaviours we are trying to engender and to ensure our offer is targeted and specific editorially, technically and design-wise.

Without this clarity of purpose in our offering, our efforts are unmeasurable and it is almost impossible to know if we have succeeded or not.

In trying to understand the question **'is your content fit for purpose?'** it is helpful to look for examples where someone has found the right mix of message, medium, technology and intention. They know what they want to say and who they want to say it to. They know where on the web that audience is and how to reach them and they have chosen a channel and presentation layer that best serves their intentions and is optimised for their audience. YouTube superstar Charlie McDonnell is a good example of this. His YouTube channel [Charlieissocoollike](https://www.youtube.com/user/charlieissocoollike)⁶ knows its audience and has a consistency of voice in his vlogs. His series of FunScience posts are an antidote to anyone who thought science was boring at school. He understands that his target audience – teenagers - is already in YouTube so he's matched his message to the best medium. He has, over time, perfected a style and personality that is open, engaging and responsive and has gained him over two million subscribers.

As a sector, we have a lot to learn from people like Charlie and the compatibility of his content, with his ambition and his evolving personal story, but how?



It is through this demand-led approach, understanding the relationships between our organisational mission and our audiences' needs that we can make our content more fit for purpose.



6. www.youtube.com/user/charlieissocoollike



© Bruce Mau, The Incomplete Manifesto for Growth

Begin anywhere

Culture24 has been thinking about all of these questions for some time through our Let's Get Real project, which has, over the last four years, involved 70 organisations, three conferences and three published reports with over 18,000 downloads. The project takes participants on a journey to improve their organisation's impact online and asks challenging questions about success, failure, purpose, impact and internal change.

Let's Get Real is leading a quiet revolution in the working methods of the organisations that take part.

The experiments participants are supported to carry out during the research allow them to learn in the context of their everyday working practice. They can define their experiment in any way they choose based on the content they already have. They can begin anywhere, it doesn't matter where, they just need to start.

This is a different type of R&D. It is innovation up close and personal from inside an organisation, using what they already have and trying to make more of it. It isn't only organisations that struggle to adapt to digital change, it is the people in them too, which is why Culture24 believes that real innovation lies in changing people's work patterns and rhythms and breaking down boundaries in how they communicate.

Let's Get Real supports participants in following their hunches, helps them to look for inspiration, to understand and **tell their own stories**. Some might call this professional development, we call it shared learning.

Going forward, as arts and heritage organisations, we must develop empathy with our audiences online, gain our own insights into how to understand their needs and behaviours and then decide how best to communicate openly with them to share what we have. We need to be in the places where people are looking and be shareable, reusable, meaningful, useful, relevant, intelligent and loveable. This is the business of emotions. The more we can curate our content in human ways for real people – their needs, demands and dreams – the better.

Ensuring our content is fit for purpose is a journey that we are all on. It is both beyond digital and yet totally digital and it is where we all are going to have to go.



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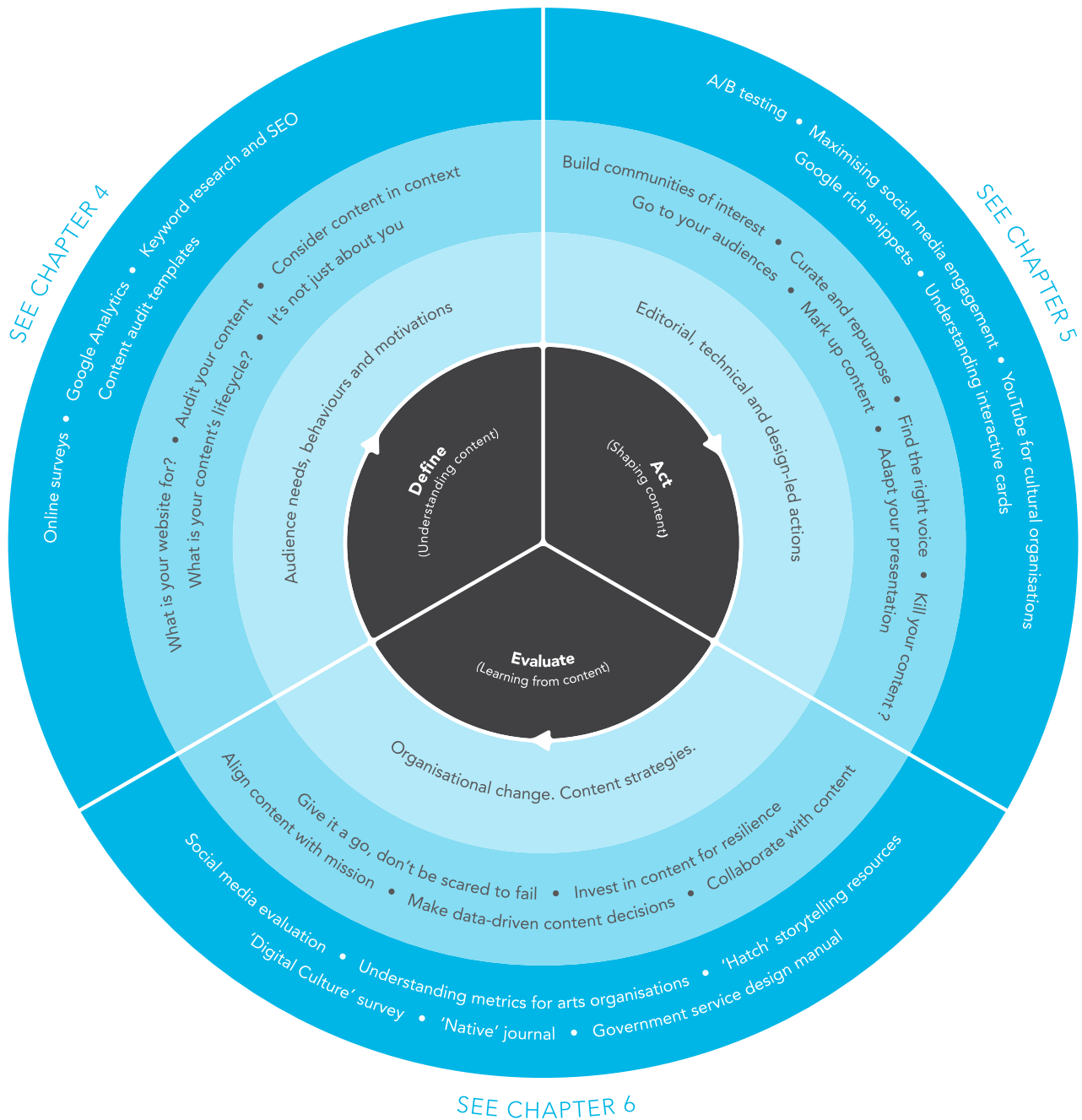


2. A practical framework: Is your content fit for purpose?

Let's Get Real is about learning through doing. During Phase 3 we encouraged all participating organisations to do this by running their own content experiments. The insights and learning from these were invaluable and are peppered throughout this report.

For a quick summary of all participants' content experiment ideas and why they chose them please see Appendix 1. We hope these will inspire you to run your own content experiments to develop your own insights. The framework below details the key elements involved in running your own experiments:

- **process** to shape your experiments
- **knowledge** to inform your experiments
- **tactics and triggers** to implement and run your experiments
- **tools and resources** to support your enquiries (see p.8-9)





Tools and resources

Many of the tools and resources detailed here were commissioned by Culture24, with the Audience Agency, and written by our collaborators. These are available on our website www.weareculture24.org.uk/digitalchange/. We have also highlighted useful tools and resources from elsewhere.

Tools to better understand audience needs

Google Analytics healthcheck by Mia Ridge

Following the steps in this healthcheck guide will help you get more accurate and useful analytics information by ensuring that Google Analytics is set up correctly and will give you a basic understanding of how Google Analytics works.

Google Analytics segments by Mia Ridge

Google Analytics segments are a powerful tool for looking at subsets of visitors within the wider analytics interface. Use them to view and compare different types of visits based on factors that are important to your organisation, such as their location, the sections of your site they've visited, referrals from a partner site or referrals from a marketing campaign. This guide will show you how.

Understanding mobile and tablet use for your website by Andrew Lewis, V&A

This guide details practical tips for finding out how visitors to your website are using mobile phones and tablets to access and use it. It will provide you with a better understanding of how to gather evidence about device-specific user behaviour on your website, when you need to do something about it and what you should be considering when planning your response to this audience behaviour.

SEO for content producers by Lana Gibson, GOV.UK

Free online search tools will help you create the content that people want, based on what they're searching for. Use this insight into your audience to design your content so that popular pages are easily findable in search.

Tracking your audience's online motivations by Sejul Malde, Culture24

Your website is a key online channel connecting you with your audiences, but how much do you know about them? In particular do you know why your audiences visit your website? If you think you know, are you sure that your assumptions are correct and is your website meeting these needs? By applying the thinking contained in this resource you can begin to answer these questions.

Understanding Facebook insights by Peter Pavement, Surface Impression

This guide takes you through each aspect of the Insights interface and explains what the graphs and tables mean and how they can be useful to you.

Google Analytics Academy

www.analyticsacademy.withgoogle.com/explorer

Free online courses from Google that will help you improve your analytics skills.

Undertaking content audits by John McCrory

www.johnmccrory.com/2011/10/the-handly-dandy-content-audit-template/

A useful template that can help you begin to plan an audit of your existing content.

Building broader arts audience data insight: Audience Finder

www.audiencefinder.org/

The website of Audience Finder, a national audience data and development programme, enabling cultural organisations to share, compare and apply insight. It is developed and managed by The Audience Agency for and with the cultural sector, and is funded by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. Audience Finder provides insights and practical advice to help cultural organisations develop their audience through collecting, understanding and using data.

Tools to better shape your content

A/B testing your website by Peter Pavement, Surface Impression

A/B testing helps you trial your ideas for website improvement using the behaviour of your own online audience to show the benefit (or otherwise) of those ideas. This guide explores the reasons to deploy A/B testing and gives you step-by-step instructions in how to set them up and analyse results using Google Analytics Experiments, a powerful A/B testing tool.

Maximising engagement on social networks by Abhay Adhikari, Digital Identities

This resource gives you practical tips to maximise audience engagement on social networks. You will learn how to build a narrative voice that can be used to promote events, themes and initiatives.



YouTube for cultural organisations by Chris Unitt of One Further

This guide is an introduction to online video strategy for cultural organisations, specifically in relation to YouTube. It covers using YouTube as a video hosting platform and as a means to build and engage audiences. As well as helping you to identify the strategy that is correct for your organisation, this resource provides tips for achieving the best possible results for your chosen approach and recommendations for evaluating your performance.

Google rich snippets and structured data

www.support.google.com/webmasters/answer/99170?hl=en

An overview of how to create rich snippets and structured data so that Google can better understand your content to present to audiences.

Understanding and using interactive 'cards'

www.blog.bufferapp.com/twitter-cards-guide

www.socialmediaexaminer.com/rich-pins-on-pinterest/

Cards are small interactive pieces of content that are built for the social ecosystem in that they can be shared over networks, are not static but rather designed to be rich and interactive. These websites will give you more information about using cards on Twitter and Pinterest.

Tools to better understand organisational change and develop content strategy

Social media evaluation by Elena Villaespesa and Culture24

This resource will help you consider and select which of the measures matter for your organisation and then identify the performance indicators and tools to collect and analyse. This resource also includes a series of practical examples that illustrate how to evaluate social media from different perspectives.

Native: the journal of the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts

www.artsdigitalrmd.org.uk/about/

Native is the magazine site from the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts in England. The website showcases the projects supported by the fund and shares their insights and research as well as lots of other stories of what works and what doesn't work when it comes to digital innovation in the arts and cultural sectors. The site also hosts information about projects funded through the Digital R&D Fund for Arts and Culture in Scotland and the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts in Wales.

Digital Culture Study

www.artsdigitalrmd.org.uk/features/digitalculture2014/

A 3-year study tracking how arts and cultural organisations in England use technology.

The Digital Engagement Framework

www.digitalengagementframework.com/

The Digital Engagement Framework helps you to identify the value creation opportunities of digital engagement for your organisation and develop the strategies, processes and technologies to structurally engage audiences. Created by Jasper Visser and Jim Richardson.

Government Service Design Manual

www.gov.uk/service-manual

A manual that details how the UK Government has been designing for digital transformation. This is packed full of useful guides and resources that you can consider and apply to your own organisational learning about digital change.

Understanding metrics for arts organisations

www.chrisunitt.co.uk/arts-analytics/

www.artsmetrics.com/en/home/

2 excellent blogs that focus on how arts organisations are thinking about their online activities through considering metrics. Written by Chris Unitt and Elena Villaespesa respectively.

Guardian Cultural Professionals Digital

www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/digital

Full of useful insights and experiences from arts and cultural organisations responding to digital change.

Hatch storytelling resources

www.hatchforgood.org

A suite of tools and insights to help you use storytelling as a strategy to increase your organisation's reach, resources and impact.

3. The project story

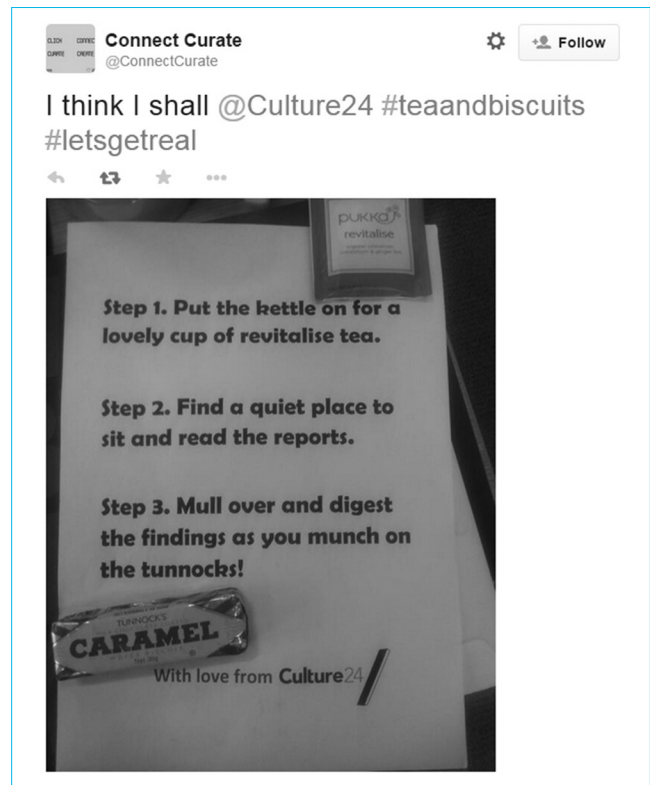
Every cultural organisation wants to harness digital tactics to make use of their most valuable asset: content. But this content’s real value is only realised when it can reach and meaningfully engage audiences both online and in physical spaces. Combined with the human resources of staff and volunteers, cultural content can be the start of conversations, tell many different stories or be a signpost on a personal journey.

Using digital channels can make this happen but only **if content is fit for purpose**. This means thinking of digital channels not as a range of generic publishing or marketing outlets, but as routes to a distributed network of communities with niche interests and needs. Our content and our data need to match the screen size, platform and interface – not just technically, but editorially.

As content creators we need to be ready to respond to different user behaviours and demands. We need to respond as much to demand as to our own ability to supply. This means thinking more deeply about the presentation of content: the words we use and our style, quality, rigour, authority, tone of voice, humour and humanity; about the scalability, interactivity and portability; about the metadata, formats and device optimisation. All of this and more needs to be considered to ensure our content is fit for purpose.

Phase 3 of Culture24’s Let’s Get Real action research project chose to focus on this key question – Is your content fit for purpose? We interrogated the question within a research framework that explored and measured ways that content can be presented online to meet the needs of audiences. This exploration was only partly about ‘digital’, in the sense of specific platforms or tools. Our central focus was connecting audiences to an organisation through its own stuff. It was absolutely **not** about investment in new content management systems, apps or shiny new design. It was not about innovation through the new. Instead we sought to consider deeper questions about the content an organisation already has and how best to deploy existing internal resources to curate, edit or repurpose that content to meet a more defined ambition for audience engagement and value.

This means recognising that audiences do not only need information about an organisation’s activity but seek **value** through their content. To unlock this value, organisations need to do more than just communicate via digital; they must have a strategy for their content.



Filling a gap

Let’s Get Real (LGR) is unique, not just in its open, collaborative nature, or because of its willingness to challenge the status quo or trust in a shared process of learning. It is unique in that it is the only project within the current arts and heritage policy environment that is focussing on developing effective content strategies.

Culture24 developed the LGR project to meet what feels like a significant gap in the current strategic support programmes that are focused on digital in the arts and heritage sector. Other programmes support other valuable areas of activity such as: The Space supporting artistic practice that takes place in the digital landscape; the new arts MCN (multi-channel-network) to aid the discovery of arts content online; the Digital R&D fund seeking to develop new business models and reach by supporting innovation and partnership; the Heritage + Culture Open Data Challenge to build new services using cultural data and the Digital Culture research, mapping how arts and heritage organisations use technology.

LGR operates in a gap in-between these other initiatives. It works on the premise that arts and heritage organisations already have a legacy of existing content that has value but is under-exploited. It starts from the perspective that organisations have lots of stuff already online that they don't know what to do with and that there are audiences who already have interests that this content may serve, but only if it were more fit for that purpose.

LGR is action research, done on the move, done live. It is actively seeking innovation inside an organisation, using what they already have and trying to make more of it. It looks for innovation inside the people who take part and the way they work, hoping to change their work rhythms and to break down boundaries in how they communicate with their colleagues. It sets out to support them in their hunches, helping them to look for inspiration, to understand their audiences better and to know how to tell their stories with more impact.

The story of Let's Get Real

The LGR story has led Culture24 and the various project participants on a journey of open, honest enquiry that has sought to shift the 'digital change' debate from evaluating metrics of success, to better understanding audiences, through to recognising the opportunities to create impact with content in an online world.

LGR1: How to evaluate success online?⁷

June 2010 to September 2011

The first phase of this project brought together 24 cultural organisations to collaboratively look at the state of the sector re metrics and measuring success.

LGR2: A journey towards understanding and measuring digital engagement⁸

July 2012 to June 2013

This second phase of action research involved 22 cultural organisations and explored what digital engagement could mean for each of them. We tried in particular to better understand audience online behaviours and motivations.

LGR3: Is your content fit for purpose?⁹

April 2014 to December 2014

This third phase, the subject of this report, involved 29 participating cultural organisations who addressed this question through individual content experiments.

LGR4: What's the story?¹⁰

April 2015 to December 2015

In the fourth phase, yet to happen at the time of writing, we will seek to look at content publishing more holistically by breaking down boundaries in the way we work and the way we make things for our audiences.

Connecting to Culture24's other programmes of work

Culture24 has also been asking and considering fit for purpose questions across other areas of our work. In particular, through our thought-leadership work leading projects such as Connecting Collections,¹¹ Europeana Awareness¹² and our partnerships with ACE and Google curating Digital Change events;¹³ our 12 years of online publishing via platforms such as www.culture24.org.uk, www.show.me.uk and www.vangoyourself.com and our deep understanding of content aggregation and sharing through our management of the most comprehensive, current and high quality database of information about UK arts and heritage venues.¹⁴

Our experience and expertise of fit for purpose issues, developed through this work, feeds back into the learning contained within Let's Get Real. Let's Get Real in turn helps to shape the evolution of this work.



7. www.weareculture24.org.uk/projects/action-research/how-to-evaluate-success-online/
 8. www.weareculture24.org.uk/projects/action-research/phase-2-digital-engagement/
 9. www.weareculture24.org.uk/projects/action-research/phase-3-fit-for-purpose/
 10. www.weareculture24.org.uk/projects/action-research/phase-4-whats-the-story/

11. www.weareculture24.org.uk/projects/connecting-collections/
 12. www.weareculture24.org.uk/projects/europeana-awareness/
 13. www.weareculture24.org.uk/google-arts-council-culture24-conference-newcastle/
 14. www.weareculture24.org.uk/services/data-sharing/

The shape of LGR3

Phase 3 brought together 29 partner cultural organisations who worked together over a period of ten months from April 2014 to November 2014. They met for four full day workshops, plus an additional day for the LGR conference in September 2014. Individual research experiments, homework and time for data analysis were carried out independently by each participant between the workshops, amounting to a further four to six days.

The project was a highly collaborative process of self-reflection and peer learning for everyone, supported by a range of external experts and the Culture24 team.

The project was made possible financially through a collaborative funding model with each participant contributing £2,800 to cover the project's management and delivery. Culture24's role was to lead and manage the project and bring in experts as necessary to support all stages of the process and shared learning.

The diagram below illustrates how the project was framed by the primary question, the methodology we used to unpack the question, the key insights that help arts, heritage and cultural organisations understand this question better for themselves and finally the intended outcome of responding more effectively to digital change.

THE QUESTION	IS YOUR CONTENT FIT FOR PURPOSE?		
HOW WE DID IT	External experts Individual experiments Collaborative shared learning		
THE INSIGHTS	Understanding audiences	Telling your story	Becoming a fitter organisation
THE OUTCOME	Responding to digital change		



Who took part?

Project participants were a mix of 29 museums, galleries, performing arts organisations / centres, multi arts centres, county councils and festival partners:



External experts

A talented group of cultural, commercial and government experts were brought in to inspire and support the project, advising on research investigations and data analysis:

- Matt Locke, Storythings
- Abhay Adhikari, Digital Identities
- Peter Pavement, Surface Impression
- Anra Kennedy, Culture24
- Jon Davie, Zone
- Joanna Prior, Penguin
- Padma Gillen and Lana Gibson, GOV.UK
- Max St John, Nixon McInnes
- Shelley Bernstein, Brooklyn Museum
- Michiel Van Iersel, Non-Fiction
- Tanya Cordrey, Guardian News and Media



Matt Locke

Individual experiments

Running individual content experiments provided the opportunity for organisations to apply and test out the learning they derived elsewhere within the project to their own circumstances. Culture24 supported participants to conceive, plan, track and analyse these experiments using agile-based methodologies to encourage clarity of objective, audience responsiveness, a willingness to create and iterate and a culture of learning from failures.



Introducing the research experiments to the LGR group

Shared collaborative learning

We undertook various strands of activity across the whole group as a basis for shared collaborative learning. These included undertaking Google Analytics healthchecks for all participants, exploring Hitwise and Google Analytics related data, capturing regular feedback via online surveys and facilitating structured and unstructured discussions across the group both at workshops and at the pub!



Post workshop ice skating

4 Understanding purpose, understanding audiences



4.1 The challenge

'I've been overwhelmed by the sheer amount of jabber in the world... a vast cloud of blah'
Charlie Brooker writing in The Guardian¹⁵

Competition for the attention of online audiences becomes more fierce by the day. At the exact time of writing there was estimated to be a total of 1,187,459,248 websites online, a total of 4.41 billion web pages, 92,000 articles posted to the web each day and an average of 6000 tweets per second.¹⁶ A huge amount of information is being created and published every second - all contributing to the bloated content bubble that surrounds us.

Adding to this challenge are the changing behaviours of users online. In the UK it is predicted that 80% of the population will own a smartphone by the end of January 2015. These users expect and want to perform a multitude of complex tasks while on the move: banking, shopping, gaming, reading, commenting, videoing, blogging and more, on a range of devices. As Tim Goodwin points out 'I listen to the radio on my phone, read the newspapers on a laptop, watch YouTube on my TV and read magazines on my iPad'.¹⁷ This means that the type of device a person uses is less important than what he or she is doing on that device, meaning it is essential to consider context of use when considering usefulness of content.

Recent research¹⁸ also tells us that users spend just 14% of their time when on a mobile browsing the web, compared with 86% on applications that relate to connecting with the broader social ecosystem through gaming, social media apps and social messaging. This places user engagement with online content within a broad social ecosystem that is no longer just focussed on websites, but instead gravitates around different communities, social media channels and networks. Audiences congregate around specific subject interests and groups, looking for content to connect with, share, reuse and discuss.

4.2 The state of play

If competition for attention is all about having a good story to tell and great content to tell it with, then arts and heritage organisations are in a very good position. Jon Davie, MD of digital agency Zone, when presenting as part of LGR3, identified the challenges that large corporate brands have in creating original content to build their brands. They often have to seek out increasingly creative ways, often in areas where they have varying levels of legitimacy, to convince consumers to buy their product. Arts and heritage organisations on the other hand have to work less hard to convince audiences of their offer, we hold genuine legitimacy across subject areas and don't need to create content to promote a product, but rather just curate content into a product.

Arts organisations also have advantages compared to other not-for-profit organisations when it comes to content assets. In a recent report,¹⁹ 49% of not-for-profit organisations (non-arts sector) had to outsource their content creation, whereas arts and heritage organisations have a wealth of content at their heart. *'Every exhibit, display, or show is a treasure trove of content that other non-profits would love to have.'*²⁰

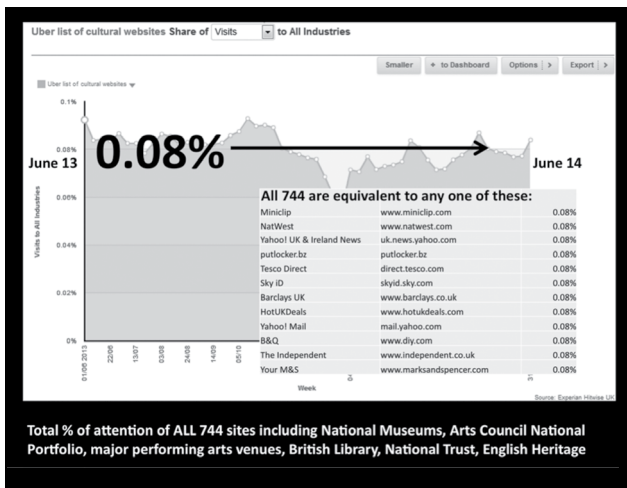


Audiences congregate around specific subject interests and groups, looking for content to connect with, share, reuse and discuss.



15. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jul/28/too-much-talk-charlie-brooker
16. www.worldwidewebsize.com/ | www.internetlivestats.com/ | www.slideshare.net/chartbeat/mockup-infographicv4-27900399
17. www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2014/dec/18/future-advertising-digital-media-technology
18. www.flurry.com/bid/109749/Apps-Solidify-Leadership-Six-Years-into-the-Mobile-Revolution#.VMZ2Uyc_5DE
19. www.npengage.com/nonprofit-fundraising/nonprofit-content-marketing-2014/
20. www.npengage.com/nonprofit-fundraising/5-steps-content-marketing-arts-and-cultural-nonprofits/

Making the most of these potential advantages is a challenge because of the fierce competition for attention online. This was brought home starkly by Culture24's Hitwise research²¹ as part of LGR1 that showed the percentage of UK domestic traffic to 40 of the top UK cultural attractions in May 2011 was only a tiny 0.04%. Culture24 then recently looked at the percentage of UK domestic traffic to 744 cultural organisations (including all of the Arts Council of England's National Portfolio organisations, all national museums, National Trust, English Heritage and National Archives) and the new total was only 0.08% of the overall UK domestic traffic.



Total % of attention of ALL 744 sites including National Museums, Arts Council National Portfolio, major performing arts venues, British Library, National Trust, English Heritage

*'Content management systems have transformed the way we manage the content of our websites, but they do bring with them some drawbacks. They allow large numbers of people to add content, and this creates challenges around keeping content up-to-date, on-message and relevant. Many organisations suffer from content bloat, where content is constantly added to their website and never removed'*²² - **Paul Boag**

Another challenge for arts organisations when developing content that adequately meets the needs of audiences is an over-reliance on narrow interpretations of who that audience might be. Audience segments and frameworks based on lifestyle and demographics are immensely useful when developing marketing plans but can feel inadequate when looking to respond to audience needs online, which can display multitudes of interests, motivations and behaviours that are hard to segment according to lifestyle or demographic type. A more wide-ranging approach to understanding audiences is needed.

*'On one hand we need a criteria: a framework from which to design experiences, shape communications and develop the brand. On the other hand, once we have a framework it somehow dehumanises audiences; it takes away their face and voice. Knowing your audiences isn't a one-stop shop. We know it should be an integrated and constant activity – an ongoing conversation – but it tends to fall off the list when we are thick in the activity of running an operation'*²³ - **James McQuaid**

This problem of attention share is juxtaposed with the bloated amount of content that arts organisations still produce and publish online. This 'content bloat' can be caused by many arts organisations using content management systems (CMS) to publish content. These facilitate quick and easy ways of publishing online content, yet without accompanying content policies determining publishing guidelines, these CMS systems can lead to heavy and confusing websites that might end up mirroring the structure of the organisation rather than the needs of the audience.



Audience segments and frameworks based on lifestyle and demographics are immensely useful when developing marketing plans but can feel inadequate when looking to respond to audience needs online.



21. www.weareculture24.org.uk/projects/action-research/how-to-evaluate-success-online/
 22. www.smashingmagazine.com/2012/11/16/structure-supports-digital-presence/
 23. www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2014/oct/06/audience-engagement-arts-heritage-traps

4.3 Moving forward

Insights from LGR3 have identified practical ways for arts and heritage organisations to navigate these challenges to better connect content with the needs of audiences.

'You have to think about what your audience wants and how they want it delivered, not what your organisation wants to tell or the latest technology you want to play with' - Hampshire's Big Theme 1914

Keep asking - what is our website for?

Given the challenges of competing for attention online, arts and heritage organisations need to think about depth of engagement, not just reach. Does your website adequately meet the needs of your audience? Are you clear what it is for and what purpose it is serving for your audience?

These questions reiterate much of the insight and work from LGR2 (Chapter 7 of the LRG2²⁴ report) where organisations ran single question online surveys, using a tool called Qualaroo,²⁵ asking their audiences to self-identify with certain motivations for visiting the websites.

A number of organisations within LGR3 were at various stages of redeveloping their own websites and were interested in better understanding the question of what their websites were for, to inform these redevelopments. These included **Yorkshire Sculpture Park**, **Tyne and Wear Archives & Museums** (in respect of the Laing Art Gallery), **People's History Museum** and the **Design Museum**. They used these questions as the basis for their individual experiments and set up online surveys using the Qualaroo tool to capture user motivations and then track the behaviour of the 'types' of motivation within their site. This way they could interrogate what people said they came to the site to do, against what they then actually did.

'As a consequence of our initial investigations we have already planned to revamp the website, use our audience and visitor data better, so that we can be more informed about our decisions and approaches.' – **People's History Museum**

'This research gives us a rationale for prioritising content on the new Laing Art Gallery site and a method for deciding what content should be present on our other venue sites.' - **Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums**

By running this experiment **Yorkshire Sculpture Park** was able to quickly identify the large proportion of their website audience that was looking to plan a visit to the Park. By performing some simple behaviour analysis within Google Analytics of these audiences, they could quickly identify the difficulty people were having in finding basic information to support their visit such as prices and parking. Ensuring this information is more prominently featured on the website in the future will make the Yorkshire Sculpture Park website more fit for purpose.



You have to think about what your audience wants and how they want it delivered, not what your organisation wants to tell or the latest technology you want to play with.



24. www.weareculture24.org.uk/projects/action-research/

25. www.qualaroo.com/



Yorkshire Sculpture Park Nina Rogers



Our research question

What is our website for? And how can it best serve different visitors?

Why this was important to our organisation

'Great art for everyone' has been YSP's goal since opening to the public in 1977, enabling access, understanding and enjoyment of art and landscape, whilst dismantling the barriers that often exist between the public and contemporary art. I want to make sure the website reflects this goal.

What we did to implement this

We carried out a Qualaroo motivation survey to find out more about what people visit our website for and we analysed Google Analytics data in detail, looking at user segments and behaviour flow.

What happened

It quickly became clear that the majority of users visit our website to plan a visit (66%).

What we learned

Some initial exploration of segments and behaviour flow in Google Analytics suggested that some users were spending too much time looking for basic information, e.g. to find out how much it costs to visit.

What the organisational challenges were

It was really easy to set the experiment up; fortunately our web developers were able to add the Qualaroo code quickly.

What the personal challenges were

It's hard to find time to dedicate to detailed analysis of Google Analytics and despite learning more about the platform, it is still often very confusing. The project support on GA was vital and I hope to seek more support in the future.

What next?

I still need to analyse each of the Qualaroo segments in detail. Once I have, I hope to use the results to inform a web design refresh in the next financial year. I'm interested in trying A/B testing and hope to do this if and when we refresh the design of the site.

Audit your content based on audience need

Understanding what your website is for is just the first step. You then need to undertake an honest evaluation of your existing content to assess whether it currently meets the needs of audiences. Whilst some of your existing content may reside in social media channels, blogs etc, it is likely that the largest amount of your existing content resides on your website. Auditing this content based on audience need will allow you to consider which bits of content are truly *needed*. For every piece of published content you should ask yourself – if no one is looking at it, why is it there?

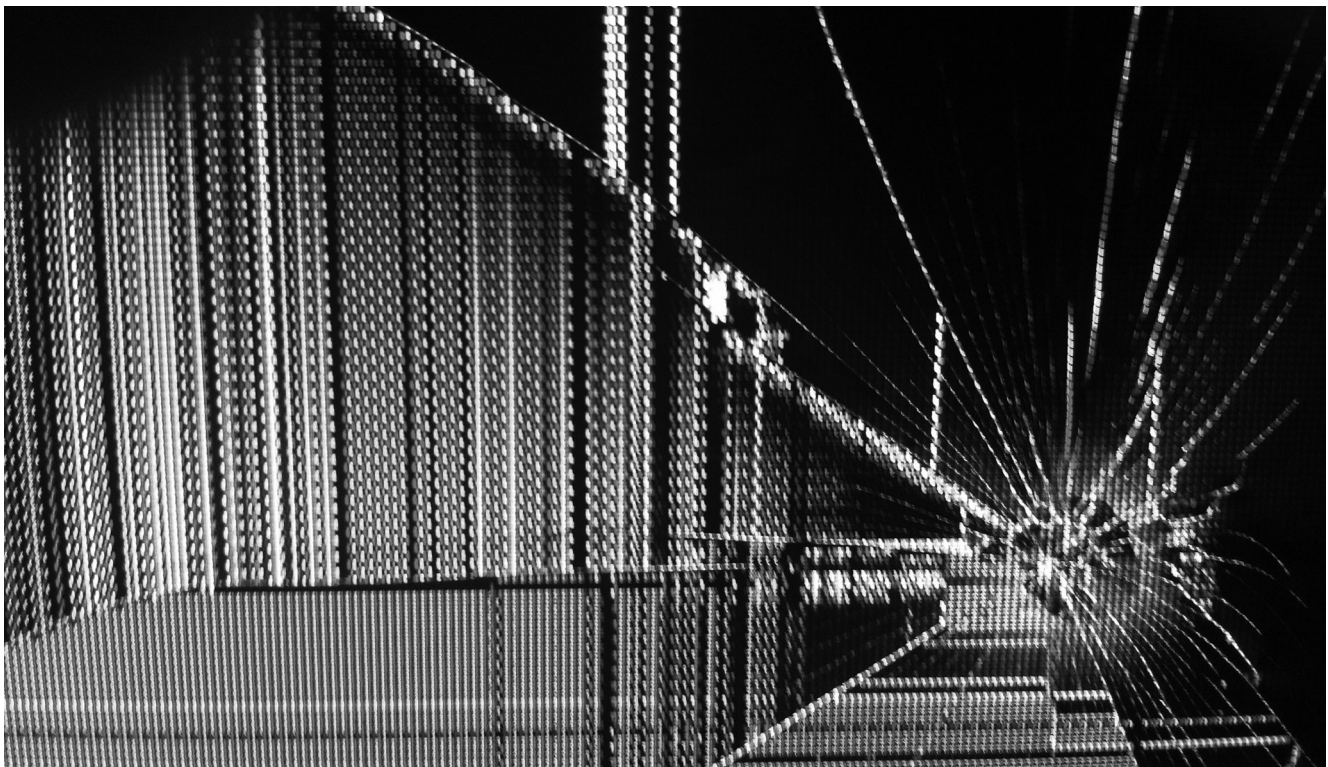
The project, and participants' experiments, took a number of approaches to explore how content should be evaluated based on audience need.

a) 'Top down' insight: web mapping

We set up a 'Content Grouping' function²⁶ in all participating organisations' Google Analytics accounts that allowed them to consider appropriate metrics to understand the performance of their website not as an amorphous entity, but as a map of groups of content. This allowed us to provide each organisation with a 'content map' of their websites split out in different areas such as: visit, about, events, collections, learning and others.

The content maps shown on the facing page illustrate a simple top-down view of audience usage of the respective websites based on % page visits. They only give a narrow view of audience need as they don't tell us anything about whether audiences found what they were looking for and whether their specific needs were met. But these maps can give you a cost-benefit insight allowing you to compare the top level of usage of your website content with your respective investment in each area of content.

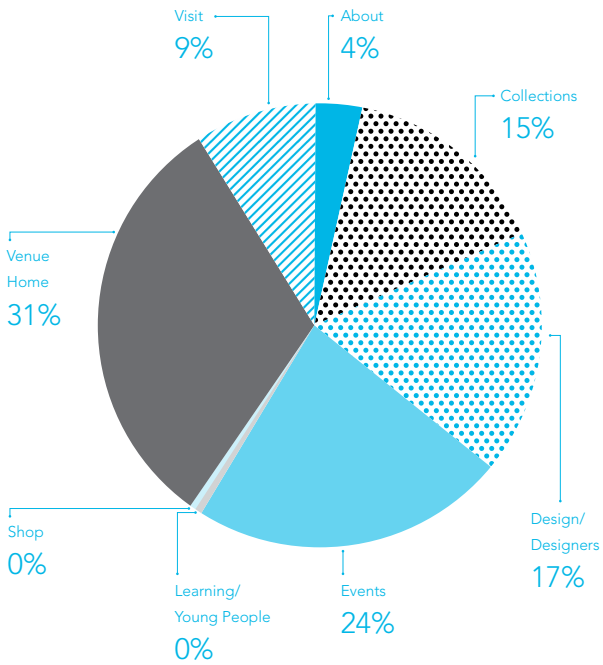
In that respect they can be useful as a management reporting/advocacy tool that challenges usefulness of metrics reporting for websites as a whole. As one project participant pointed out *"Our website is not one thing, but rather a series of functions and groups of content"*. Therefore the reporting of your content should not be based around a few top level website metrics, but rather broken down in this sort of way. Reviewing such maps regularly over time will allow you to assess potential changes in the usage of your website content. Other maps could also be produced that look at alternative metrics of usage – such as time on page and percentage of return visits.



26. For more information about the Content Grouping functionality in Google Analytics please see www.support.google.com/analytics/answer/4566727?hl=en

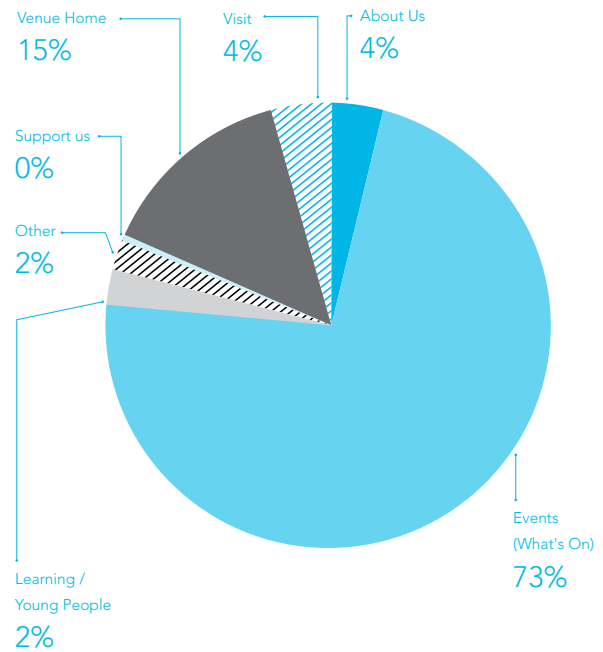
Design Museum website (www.designmuseum.org)

Content map: % page visits Sept to Nov 2014



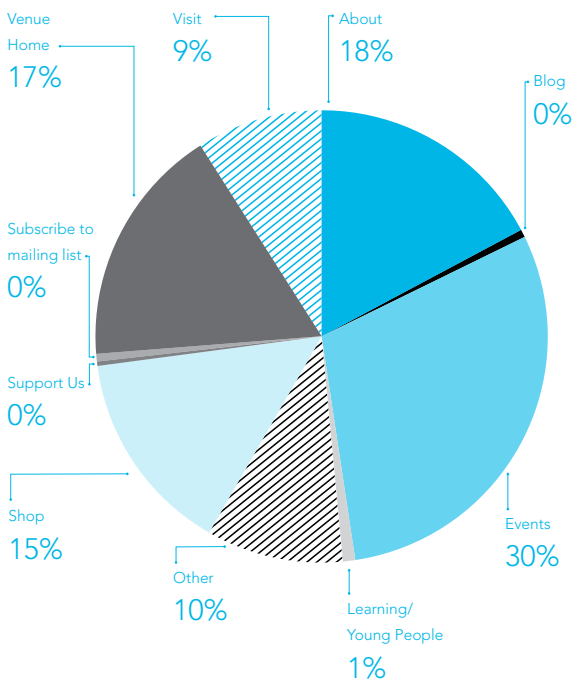
Gulbenkian website (www.thegulbenkian.co.uk)

Content map: % page visits Aug to Nov 2014



Yorkshire Sculpture Park website (www.yssp.co.uk)

Content map: % page visits Aug to Nov 2014



For every piece of published content you should ask yourself – if no one is looking at it, why is it there?

b) Broader insight: thematic audit

For their research experiment the **Victoria & Albert Museum** took a broader approach to content auditing. Focusing on the Japan section of their website, they adopted a range of user research approaches that not only looked at usage of the Japan-related content on the website, but also observed engagement with real objects through physical visits to the Japan galleries and investigation of engagement with other (non V&A) Japan-related themed content on social media channels.

'This project reminded us of the importance of getting out into the museum and watching what real (physical) visitors engage with, what they enjoy, what they like to photograph and draw' – **Victoria & Albert Museum**



Victoria & Albert Museum Joanna Jones



Our research question

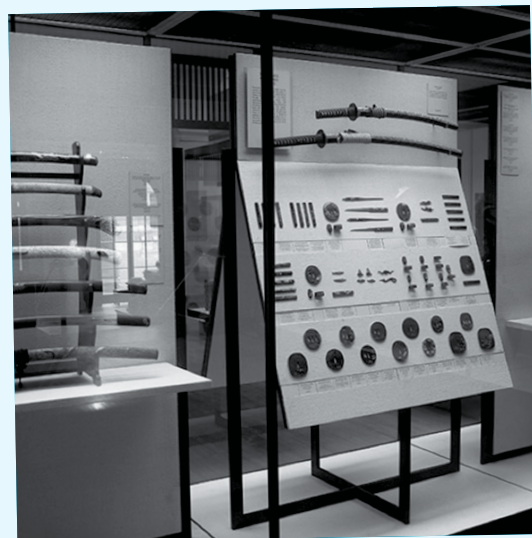
How to cull/shape/create content based on a workable content audit template.

Why this was important to our organisation

We want people to be able to easily access quality and relevant content about our collections, building and public programme in whichever format is most useful for them.

What we did to implement this

We did a thorough content audit of our site using statistical and keyword analysis, exploration of social media usage and mapping across our collections as well as Qualaroo motivation and exit surveys on the main V&A website.



Understanding content through physical visits to galleries

We also visited the galleries themselves to ascertain what objects were featured or prioritised, what objects and information visitors were focusing on and where there were gaps between the physical and digital offer. I based the audit on the content audit template on www.johnmccrory.com





What happened?

I focused on the Japan section of the website because it is a small and fairly contained section that could be researched thoroughly within the time frame of the project. My team and I gathered and collated the research findings from the physical visits, statistical analysis, Qualaroo analysis, keyword and trends analysis. This formed some really useful feedback and recommendations for the Japan curatorial team in order to make their content more relevant, findable, engaging and audience focused. We also identified key subject areas that were not represented on our site but that we hold significant collections of and that we knew had huge online audiences.



The V&A content audit process in action

What we learned

We learnt that our use of terminology was curatorially-driven and did not necessarily mesh with what people are searching for online. We discovered some subject areas that we should look at creating and commissioning new content around, to tap into huge audiences elsewhere. We learnt a lot more about the importance of placing content strategically on other platforms as some topics were huge on certain sites and less so on others. This project reminded us of the importance of getting out into the museum and watching what real (physical) visitors engage with, what they enjoy, what they like to photograph and draw. Looking at something as simple and easily accessible as predictive searches was invaluable and illuminating. Auditing a site containing over 100,000 assets is daunting, slow and massively time-consuming but very worthwhile.

What the organisational challenges were

A huge lack of resource both in terms of people and time was our biggest challenge. Because performing such a content audit is a complex and lengthy task with no immediate results, it was all too often side-lined so that more pressing jobs could be done. It can also be incredibly difficult to get stakeholders together to feed back any findings. Content 'ownership' combined with a certain level of digital ignorance can lead to unloved and stagnant content languishing for years.

What the personal challenges were

My challenge was finding the time and energy to focus on gathering and analysing all the data. Maintaining the momentum within the team over a few months during some frantically busy times was also difficult. I also faced the frustration of continual disruption to the team's weekly allotted audit block of time that I set up at the beginning of the research period.

What next?

I'll be feeding the results back to our Japan curators so that we can really improve and enhance the content we currently have and produce content that we know is needed. The work that we have done will inform the major site overhaul that we are about to embark on and it will continue to help audit the other assets that we have on the site.



c) Deeper insight: specific content usage

National Galleries of Scotland and **National Museums Scotland**

sought to delve deep into understanding whether specific pieces of their content responded to the needs of audiences. For their research experiments both set out to understand what their audiences wanted from this collections content. This was informed by previous research²⁷ Tate performed in respect of their collections content following their involvement in LGR2.

'Engaging with the public and sharing information about the collection both on site and online forms a notable section of our corporate plan so developing the online collection with a user focus serves this goal' – National Galleries of Scotland

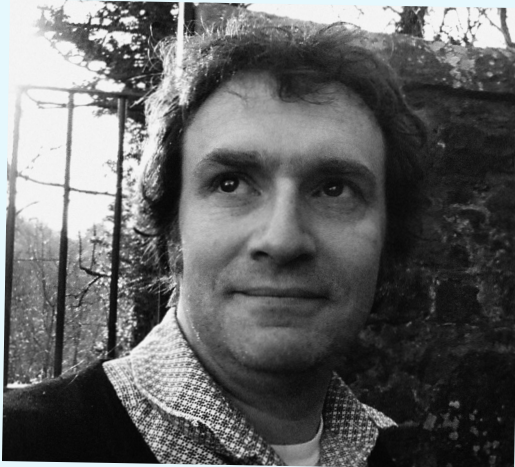
'Our website re-launched in August with a new hub for all collections content, Explore (previously, this had been scattered around the website). However, the section is very much a work in progress, and before investing in further development I wanted to get a better idea of who was using the information and why, and what they would like to see improve' – National Museums Scotland



27. www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/blogs/understanding-peoples-motivations-and-usage-online-collection



National Galleries of Scotland Phil Hunt



Our research question

How do we understand more about the users of our online collection and their needs and preferences with the view to re-developing this online collection?

Why this was important to our organisation

Online collection redevelopment is a major forthcoming project for us, as part of our wider digital engagement objectives. This also comes at a time when we are undergoing a major digitisation programme which will expand our online collection. Engaging with the public and sharing information about the collection both on site and online forms a notable section of our corporate plan so developing the online collection with a user focus serves this goal.

What we did to implement this

We ran a multi-question Qualaroo survey looking at user motivations. The survey involved asking visitors to the online collection why they came to the site and also what they planned to do once there.

What happened

The survey ran for almost a month and produced some interesting results. We experienced a very positive take up of the survey during this time.

What we learned

Visitors to the online collection are primarily motivated by research and are mostly interested in searching for a specific work or artist. The most popular motivating factor was student research followed by personal interest and professional research. Most of these users arrived at the site directly from an organic search and arrived at the specific work of art page. These visits were fairly brief involving an average of five page views.

What the organisational challenges were

The main challenge was resource: financial and staff. We had significant staff turnover in the year which meant 'additional' work was very hard to accommodate and financially we had to pay for the development required to add the Qualaroo code to the site as well as travel and accommodation costs.

What the personal challenges were

Lack of time was probably the greatest challenge. As our survey was not implemented until quite a way down the line this did not leave a great deal of time for analysis and reflection.

What next?

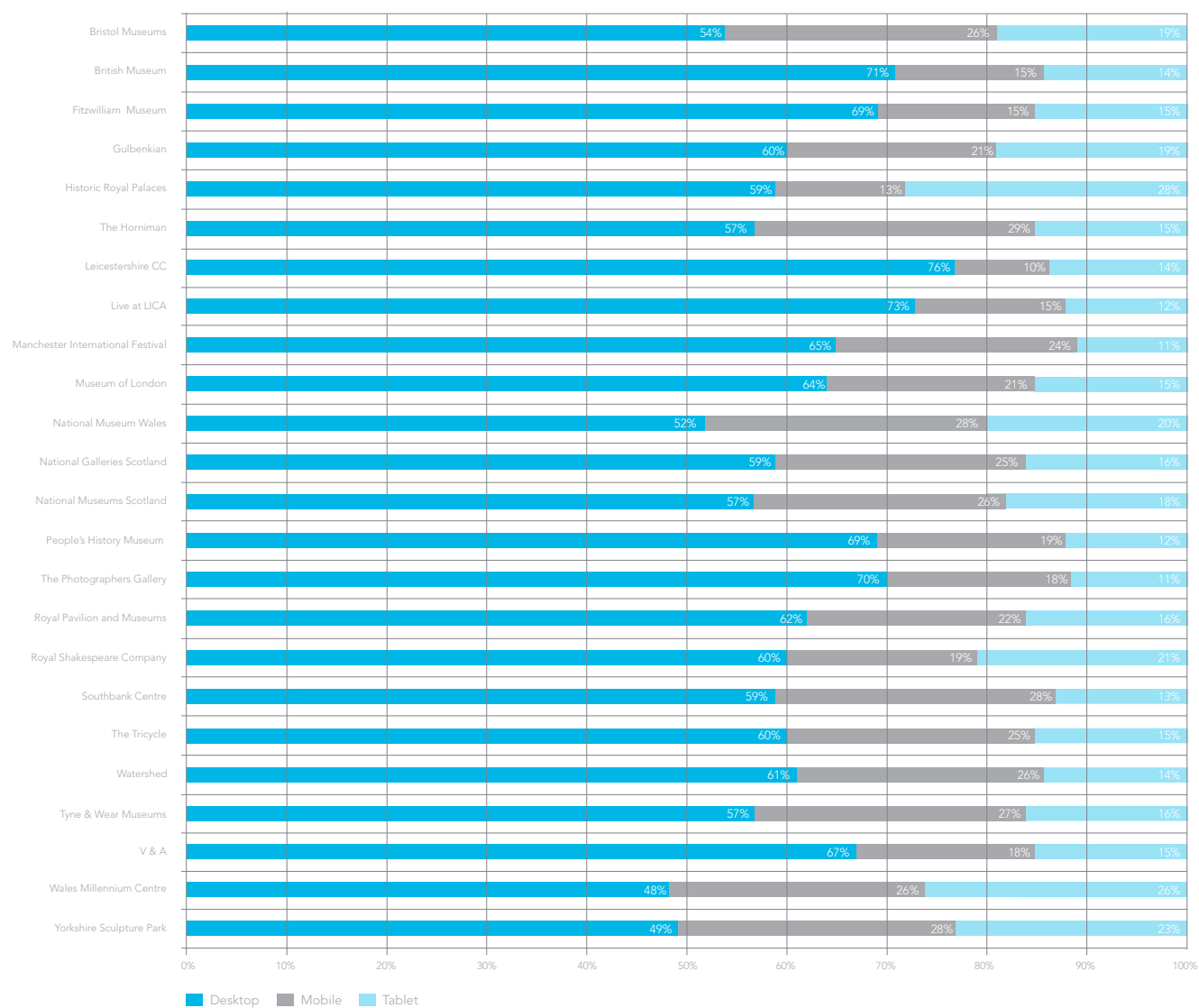
The results of this experiment will feed into subsequent research (including an additional Qualaroo survey looking in more detail at user motivation and expectations). We will then follow this up with some A/B testing to help establish what works best for users in terms of giving them what they would like to see.

Understand your content's context of use

An analysis of all participant organisations' device usage on their websites (from 1 Jun 2014 to 31 Aug 2014) demonstrated significant proportions of audiences utilising web content via tablet and mobile devices.

Across the organisations combined tablet and mobile usage made up an average of 40% of the total web visits with mobile at 23% and tablet at 17% and growing.

Percentage of web visits per device (1 June 2014 to 31 Aug 2014)



However, this doesn't tell us anything that most organisations didn't already know – that alternative device usage to browse websites is commonplace. It's more useful to consider device usage in terms of content. This gives an insight into content's context of use.

We were able to begin to explore this as part of the project by extending the content grouping functionality in Google Analytics, as used in the content map work on page 18. By applying Google Analytics segments relating to mobile, tablet and desktop traffic to these content groupings, participating organisations were able to explore the performance of groups of content on their websites based on each device.

The image below relates to a section of the relevant Google Analytics report for a participating organisation relating to page views of three areas of its website content, namely 'Shop', 'Collections' and 'Visit'.

LOR3 Content Grouping Test (Content Group)		Pageviews
Mobile Traffic		915,305 <small>% of Total: 14.52% (8,204,381)</small>
Tablet Traffic		1,002,077 <small>% of Total: 15.89% (8,204,381)</small>
Desktop		4,386,999 <small>% of Total: 69.59% (8,204,381)</small>
1. Shop		
Mobile Traffic	196,784 <small>(21.50%)</small>	
Tablet Traffic	320,566 <small>(31.59%)</small>	
Desktop	1,082,529 <small>(24.49%)</small>	
2. Collections		
Mobile Traffic	160,268 <small>(17.51%)</small>	
Tablet Traffic	199,625 <small>(19.82%)</small>	
Desktop	1,399,959 <small>(31.91%)</small>	
3. Visit		
Mobile Traffic	156,464 <small>(17.59%)</small>	
Tablet Traffic	86,601 <small>(9.64%)</small>	
Desktop	276,327 <small>(9.39%)</small>	

This shows that tablet usage of Shop and Collections is higher than mobile usage, which given the more browsing-related nature of Shop and Collections content, we would expect from tablet use perhaps done whilst relaxing at home.

This also shows the much larger mobile usage of the visit-related content which is not surprising given that this content would usually be engaged with whilst on the move. Other more engagement-related metrics such as time on page, or pages per visit could also be explored for these content types per device.

This form of analysis still only gives a certain top-down view allowing organisations to begin thinking about the context of how content is viewed on their websites. To understand this better you need to examine in more detail the exact content in each content grouping, exploring likely context for their use. This can be done within Google Analytics by following the user journeys through specific pages based on different devices. This helps in putting yourself into the mind-set of the user and allows you to examine the value of content on a device, within a context you might expect. A good place to start to wonder about the users' mind-sets would be to look specifically at Visit pages from mobile devices.

Understand your content's lifecycle

We have seen that to understand the extent to which content is fit for purpose, it needs to be viewed through a broad lens. The discussion regarding context explores the usage of content based on location and situation, yet another dimension that could be added is time. How does your content's usefulness to audiences change with time?

For their research experiment the **Royal Shakespeare Company** specifically looked at this question. They wanted to know if there was a life-cycle to online content that would allow them to maximise the impact of that content on audiences. Their investigations brought revealing insights to audience usage of production synopses. They identified that rather than audience use of these diminishing over time as they had previously believed, there was actually increased usage as production runs matured. This has dramatically changed their approach to producing content.

'We have usually produced content based on opportunity, without necessarily examining the likely effort required to create versus the impact it would have on the audience. We have now begun to incorporate regular feedback on page performance in to our regular content planning meeting and now make data-backed decisions on when to create and release content, when to review or delete, and even decide not to create proposed content.' – **Royal Shakespeare Company**

Considering usage of content over time in this way can help you better understand what content to publish when, as well as helping you make more informed decisions about when your content should be archived.





Royal Shakespeare Company John Benfield



Our research question

Is there a predictable life-cycle to online content that will allow us to maximise the impact of that content on audiences?

Why this was important to our organisation

For every RSC production we produce production hubs under which we create content from the moment the production is announced until it comes off stage. We produce considerable content per production, typically 15 or more pages, ranging from synopses and cast listings to interviews, features and infographics. In the past this has been done relatively opportunistically and we have only monitored content for effectiveness by looking at simple metrics totalled at the end of a production's run.

The first Let's Get Real workshop led me to suspect that our understanding of content was incomplete and what we really needed to do was to explore how specific content is used over time. Our productions' online presences have distinct phases - from launch, tickets going on sale, the performances, finally the production run ending. My question was: are there any equivalent patterns in how content is used over time, and if so, do these patterns vary by the type of audience? As all content takes effort and resource to produce, it is essential that we maximise the impact a particular piece of content has, as well as being able to more accurately assess the likely effectiveness of content at the strategy/planning stage.

What we did to implement this

I decided to analyse how our synopses pages were used over time. Synopses pages typically perform well in terms of page views, but we had previously explained this by assuming it was because it is usually one of the first items of content we create for a production and it is therefore viewed over long period of time, and that the use of the page diminished over time as new, more in-depth content was added. In Google Analytics I reviewed the performance of synopses pages for several different productions, including Shakespeare and non-Shakespeare plays. For each I used a relatively hidden view within Google Analytics where the performance of a page is presented over time as an animation.

What happened

This clearly showed that far from synopses pages becoming less important, they consistently increased in usage as production runs matured. Following this I tested the hypothesis that it was perhaps audiences less familiar with a play who made later use of synopses pages, once a play had been reviewed by the press and therefore had wider profile. By applying new vs returning audience segments to my data it again was clear that at approximately two thirds through a production's run new users began to dominate usage.



What we learned

We have already begun to re-look at how we present synopses. Previously these pages received little scrutiny once they had been published, but now we have begun to experiment with new formats that we might be able to use to target different audiences at the most opportune times. We are now reviewing the tone of voice of synopses to ensure they are written in a more accessible way. We have begun to add audio synopses re-purposed from audio material created for visually impaired audiences, and we are now commissioning short video synopses in which a creative (such as the Writer or Director) from the production tells the story to camera. Finally, we have renamed the pages to be more accessible to new audiences.



I have also applied the same approach to other types of content and we have now identified that there is a core group of pages which receive the bulk of page views and that have clear common patterns of usage. We are now beginning to use this data to inform strategic content planning, and a re-examination of how we deploy content creation resources.

As an example, we have just conducted a similar online experiment looking at how audiences respond to cast pages, which are particularly well-used by existing engaged audiences. We have trialled the inclusion of actor biographies on these pages, with initial results showing a dramatic increase in page views as a result.

What the organisational challenges were

The results have proved challenging because they have made us re-examine assumptions about the relationship of content and our audiences. I also think my experiment and the rest of the LGR project is more broadly illustrative of how as a sector we need to focus less on top-line numbers for reporting purposes, because taken out of context these really mean very little in terms of actual audience engagement.

What the personal challenges were

None really. Honestly.

What next?

We have usually produced content based on opportunity, without necessarily examining the likely effort required to create vs the impact it would have on the audience. We have now begun to incorporate regular feedback on page performance in to our regular content planning meeting and now make data-backed decisions on when to create and release content, when to review or delete, and even decide not to create proposed content.



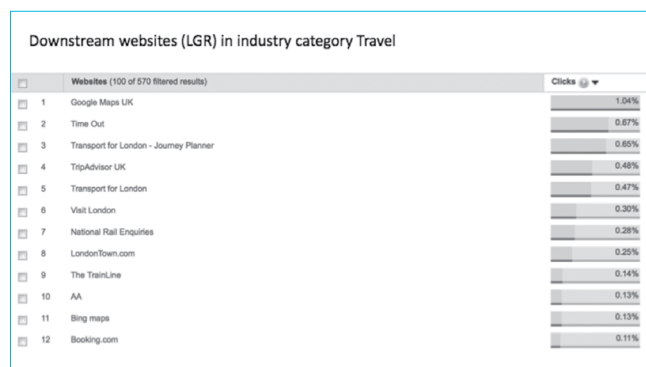
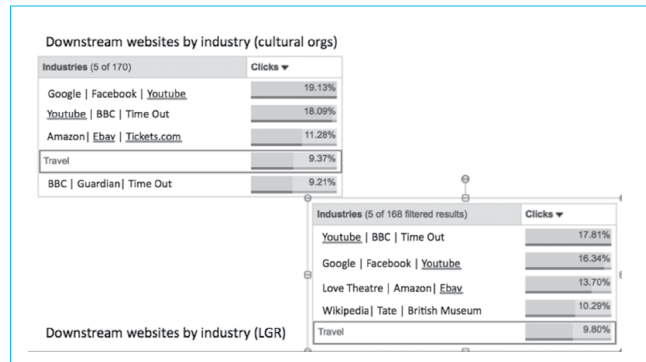
It's not just about you

We know from the discussion relating to attention share that audiences may engage with arts and heritage content as a small part of their overall online content engagement. If we think about our own web behaviours (as cultural consumers ourselves) we will rarely just focus on one piece of content or one website per session, we will usually surf a number of websites, interact with different types of content and likely engage with our broader social ecosystem. Therefore when seeking to understand audience content needs, it is important to cast the net more widely than just across your own organisational platforms and channels.

For example, what other websites might your audiences look at? Many organisations often look at the websites audiences are on before they visit the organisation's website – 'upstream visits' as part of the referral data within web analytic tools. Generally there is less interest in understanding where audiences go to afterwards – 'downstream visits' as there is less perceived impact of this data on the organisation's website. However, understanding downstream visits tells us a lot about our audiences' overall website behaviours and interests as part of a wider content journey.

We wanted to explore this further as part of the project, so through accessing data via Hitwise, we were able to explore the typical downstream visits across all Phase 3 participants as well as per the cultural sector more generally. Both showed a large percentage of 'travel' categorised websites appearing in the downstream of cultural organisations websites.

These 'travel' categorised websites included those related to transport, maps, tourism, hotel bookings and city 'what's on' magazines:



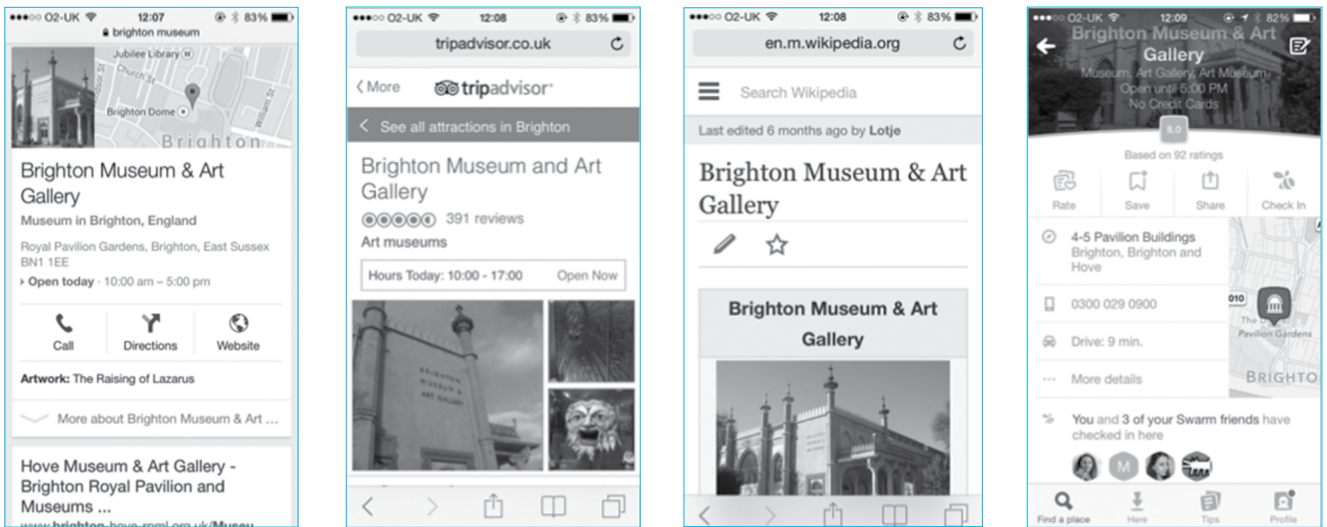
A summary from Hitwise showing downstream web traffic.

If we think about our own behaviour when we visit cultural websites, possibly being drawn to a particular performance or exhibition or venue and then wanting to understand more about locations, transport, other reviews etc, we can see how this makes sense. This opens up opportunities to explore content partnerships with these other organisations, perhaps exploring ways to surface your content with them or alternatively feature feeds of their content on your website. Understanding audience behaviour across their content journeys in this way not only allows you to understand their behaviour better but also allows you to identify opportunities to reach them.

Audiences may engage with your content and your organisation via channels that are out of your control. For example, your organisation may well have a TripAdvisor page, a Google Place page, a Foursquare entry or a Wikipedia page. Audiences may also be discussing you via their own social media streams. All of which could be happening without your involvement. For some of these channels there is nothing you can do beyond simply letting go. For some channels there are ways that you can more actively shape the presentation of related content. Owning your venue's TripAdvisor page²⁸ for instance will allow you to respond to feedback and post your own images.

When seeking to understand audience content needs, it is important to cast the net more widely than just across your own organisational platforms and channels.

28. www.tripadvisor.com/TripAdvisorInsights/n680/get-your-business-tripadvisor



The presence of Brighton Museum and Art Gallery on various channels.

Similarly there are ways that organisations can influence the way they appear on Google related pages. For their research experiments Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives and Manchester International Festival were interested in exploring this, using a structured data mark-up tool called Google rich snippets.

Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives had identified, following research conducted as part of LGR2 project, their main website home page on www.bristolmuseums.org.uk was increasingly redundant as a tool to refer audiences to their individual museum websites. Data showed many audiences were being referred to each specific museum’s home page directly from Google search. As such there was an acceptance that effectively Google search results were their main home page. Thus they were interested in how they could better influence the appearance of some related content on Google search results.

Manchester International Festival had very similar experiences to those of Bristol Museums and Galleries: *'We learned that trying to change your organisation’s appearance on Google is like turning a boat, it happens very slowly but does get there.'*

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Audiences may engage with your content and your organisation via channels that are out of your control.

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Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives Fay Curtis



Our research question

Can Google rich snippets help us to promote what's on content more effectively and help us to implement online ticketing?

Why this was important to our organisation

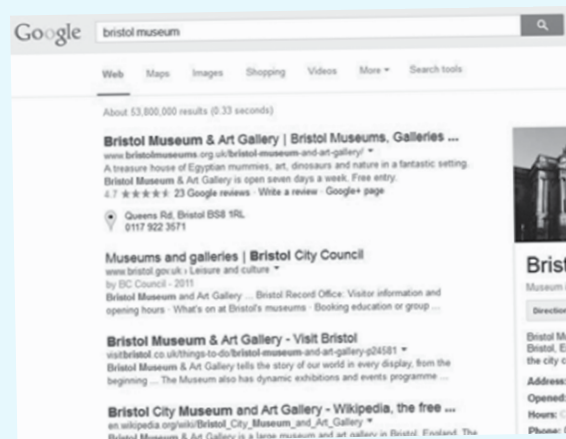
We found from taking part in Let's Get Real Phase 2 that 53% of visitors to our website want to plan a visit. We designed our website (launched in May 2014) around this, and since then have found that two thirds of traffic to bristolmuseums.org.uk comes from search and that people go straight to our individual museum home pages via search/referrals/direct/social. So we need to make sure the content that two thirds of people see before they even get to our website, e.g. on search results, was 'fit for purpose'. With a majority of visits to the 'what's on' and 'visiting' sections of the website I wanted to see if bringing our events straight onto our search results (i.e. through Google rich snippets) would result in an increase in visits to those pages and/or if it meant we could then sell more tickets this way, and to be able to benchmark against our KPIs: user satisfaction, cost per transaction, take-up and completion rate.

What we did to implement this

I used Google+ to update and clean up our search 'homepages' and Google Webmaster Tools to mark up our data, using the data highlighter to create 'Event' rich snippets. Doing this basically gives Google more information about how the content on your website is structured so that it can do more with it - though there are no guarantees that it will use it.

What happened

I had varying degrees of success. Just spending an hour updating our Google+ profiles and creating new profiles for the historic houses resulted in out-of-date information coming off search results and our website going higher in search results. We saw a jump in impressions straight away for search terms such as 'bristol museum' after doing this.



I didn't have so much luck with Events rich snippets. After highlighting our data for our events, I kept waiting and hoping for them to show up but alas they haven't yet. There are no guarantees that Google will use the marked-up data, and it should show up after a few days, however I tried a few things but no joy. I'm talking to someone at Google at the moment to see if they can help, and have made a few changes, so I'll keep an eye on it for the next few days. Fingers crossed...



What we learned

I learned that you don't have control over what Google uses, although seeing a jump in impressions from cleaning up our profiles on Google+ shows that it's worthwhile to really get a hold on making sure your content on Google is up to scratch, and to make SEO a priority. If your content isn't 'searchable', you won't be found and someone/somewhere else will pick up your traffic. Simple as! You have little control over what third parties such as Google do with your content. I also learnt a fair amount technically in terms of structured data on websites.

What the organisational challenges were

It's always an ongoing process for people to understand the benefits of doing this, and for them to understand our users and why we structure content the way we do. It's always seen as someone else's job!

What the personal challenges were

As ever, just trying to juggle 100 things and find time to prioritise this. However being involved in the project has made me reevaluate what we need to be doing with our content (mainly, distributing it more) so has helped with this.

What next?

We'll be working on a content strategy and the second phase of our website over the coming weeks which will be informed by the project. We're planning on having more focus on SEO, and developing content for non 'museum name' terms such as 'what's on bristol,' 'alfred the gorilla,' 'banksy.'



If your content isn't 'searchable', you won't be found and someone/somewhere else will pick up your traffic. Simple as!



5. Shaping your content and telling your story

5.1 The challenge

Understanding content in terms of audience need is a key first step. But how do you then respond to this need and what tactics can help shape your content to fit these needs?

The importance of shaping your content cannot be overstated. It is often not enough to present your content in its raw form without considering ways to help your audience make sense of it such as curation, descriptions, images and narratives. Stories need to be shaped to be **editorially** sharp, **technically** efficient and **design** sensitive.

Taking each of these in turn, remember:

- Editorial tactics are not just for book publishers, they are a common currency for most businesses today. The rise of content marketing in recent years, where 'companies seek to engage customers with informative or entertaining content they'll want to use or consume for its own sake, rather than pushing or interrupting them with direct sales or promotional messages'²⁹ has made editorial tactics a must for most brands and businesses such as Red Bull³⁰ and Asos.³¹
- Technically shaping your content correctly allows it to adequately inhabit the networked, information-saturated, multi-platform nature of the online world. Doing so gives it a life beyond your own channels, enabling it to become discoverable, portable, responsive and connectable. Technical tactics aiming to achieve this in recent years include responsive design, metadata standards,³² APIs,³³ COPE³⁴ (create once, publish everywhere) and linked open data.³⁵
- Design, page layout and information architecture all affect how effective content can be and how it is seen. The GOV.UK team has published excellent design principles³⁶ to guide you through the key issues.

5.2 The state of play

Arts and heritage organisations are content rich. The challenge is not to create significant amounts of new content, but rather make the most of what we have. But are we doing this? Is existing content being presented in the language of our audiences rather than retaining the vocabulary of the organisation? Are we still expecting our audiences to come to us to engage with our stuff rather than going out and finding them, on their channels, within their communities of interest?

A cursory review of many arts and heritage organisations websites, let alone their social media activity, tells us we should be doing much more. It reveals, on the one hand, a mass of cluttered and bloated content with confused pathways for audiences, whilst on the other hand lacklustre branded vehicles conveying marketing-led messaging only: *'a lot of websites seem to serve the purpose of being an online brochure. I'd argue that this does no one any favours, not only does it reduce the websites of arts organisation to the level of blandly 'selling some products' and presenting a load of tedious information that serves no purpose than to be some sort of odd, permanent funding application...'* - **Ash Mann**³⁷

As arts and heritage organisations we have proven skills in telling stories and shaping narratives. We do it all the time in the physical world from exhibitions to plays and performances. Yet when it comes to telling stories and curating content online, many organisations forget the principles that work so well in their physical spaces. Content is often pushed without being shaped, curated, constructed or edited according to the channel or context. As a sector we can and should do so much more to make the rich content we hold more fit for our audiences' purposes online.

Are we still expecting our audiences to come to us to engage with our stuff rather than going out and finding them, on their channels, within their communities of interest?

29. www.curve.gettyimages.com/article/brands-as-publishers-inside-the-content-marketing-trend
 30. www.jeffbullas.com/2013/11/08/is-this-the-top-content-marketing-company-in-the-world/
 31. www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2012/oct/22/brands-becoming-publishers-content-marketing
 32. www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/briefing-papers/standards-watch-papers/what-are-metadata-standards

33. www.readwrite.com/2013/09/19/api-defined
 34. www.programmableweb.com/news/cope-create-once-publish-everywhere/2009/10/13
 35. www.linkeddata.org/
 36. www.gov.uk/design-principles
 37. www.bigthingsandlittlthings.co.uk/2013/11/04/digital-in-the-arts/

5.3 Moving forward

Create content to build communities of interest

Building engagement with your audiences through content requires credibility and relevance to the subject matter. Arts and heritage organisations are often able to do this offline, through their work with artists or through the showcasing of historical objects for example. Building engagement online however is more challenging, where relevance to themes can often become diluted in the sea of voices, chatter and information. Getting your audiences to engage with individual pieces of content is difficult if you haven't engaged them first in the related ideas and themes. Consider longer term content publishing strategies to build and engage communities of interest around a theme.

Watershed, Wales Millennium Centre and Gulbenkian were all interested in exploring this to varying degrees for their research experiments. **Watershed** have started to work more with stories and themes and are looking to engage their audiences more in conversations about ideas and events. Their research sought to create an online community of interest around relevant programming related themes. They experimented with different content sharing triggers on different social media platforms to help build an interest around these themes. These triggers included content to elicit a personal story or memory, to generate a response to a question or to cause a reaction to a provocation.

'We are interested in how we can create online experiences that satisfy a need for both depth and breadth? How do you engage audiences with themes and ideas, rather than programme or collection objects?' - Watershed



How do you engage audiences with themes and ideas, rather than programme or collection objects?



Watershed David Redfern Claire Stewart



Our research question

How can we create an online community of interest around a theme and get that community to contribute content and engage with our content, and then convert that engagement into a ticket sale or mailing list sign up? How do we measure it?

Why this was important to our organisation

Watershed's purpose is to extend audience choice beyond the mainstream and engage them in conversations about ideas and events. We are starting to work more with stories and themes and want to investigate how we can get audiences engaged before the full event details are confirmed.

What we did to implement this

We explored triggers and stimuli on Twitter and Facebook that would cause an engagement with content that we published on these channels. The conditions for engagement that we focused on were:

- Time of day: 10.00am / 2.00pm / 6.00pm
- Type of content: content written to stimulate sharing, content to elicit a personal story or memory, content to generate a response to a question and content to cause a reaction to a provocation.

We did this through two themed iterations over two 12 day periods, these themes focussed on Sci Fi film sound tracks and the actor Bill Murray.



What happened

We hadn't fully looked at all the results at the time of this report, but we discovered that there do seem to be patterns to people's behaviour and that it was different on the two different social media channels. On Twitter, of the three different times of day that we tested content, 10.00am had the most engagement, whereas on Facebook 10.00am and 2.00pm had very similar levels of engagement. We also learned that on Twitter, content created to stimulate a share was the most successful content type, whereas on Facebook people responded best to a question.

In the second iteration of our content experiment we included a link through and campaign tracking. There was a marked difference in the ratio of people following a posted link on Twitter compared to Facebook. Approximately 80% of all conversions took place on Twitter and around only 20% on Facebook.

What we learned

It's ok to repeat things at different times of day. People didn't seem to be annoyed by our regular tweeting on a theme. It takes a lot of research to find interesting content. You need time to reply – no way to generically respond, have to talk to individuals. You lose control – people have their own responses to themes. There are some people that are more of an expert than you. People can be sceptical of your motives – e.g. "are you marketing at me?"

Behaviours that appeared in the first iteration were different for the second therefore at this stage it is hard to conclusively say that this same experiment gives us a definitive pattern of audience behaviour.



There is also a danger of internal theme fatigue. Some themes lend themselves more to this type of activity i.e. Sci-fi is much broader than Bill Murray.

Having a detailed content plan was a good thing. However scheduling it all with Hootsuite etc. means you can forget it's happening, which can make it hard to respond in the moment.

What the organisational challenges were

Limiting scope and expectations, time, access to expertise.

What the personal challenges were

Staying interested and motivated around a theme.

What next?

Repeat and analyse to see if there are more conclusive audience behaviour patterns that we can leverage for greater gains from our efforts and embed into working practice. If not, to understand that the mechanisms of our experiment, results aside, provide future tools and methods for gaining better understanding of our online audiences' behaviours going forward.



Wales Millennium Centre were interested in discovering new and interesting ways of promoting content which engages with their existing audiences but also to find new ways to engage with new audiences on social media platforms. They experimented with a social media communication framework that could help their team think more about the content put out on our social networks in order to build more communities of interest. The framework was based on them talking less about themselves and looking more widely at the arts in Wales. The framework implemented (5:3:2) aimed to talk 50% about others, 30% about them and 20% personal tweets from members of the team at the Centre, who were interested in building more credibility.

'I think the experiment has been particularly useful in informing us of the type of content our audience like to engage with.... As a result of the experiment, we will shift more importance to posting information about others and personal information. The #LoveTheatre day was a good example of a day where increased activity based around a theme really worked so I'd be keen to do more days like these. By making it a wider day (including theatres UK wide) helped increase engagement so encouraging other organisations to be part of it would be key aspect.' – **Wales Millennium Centre**

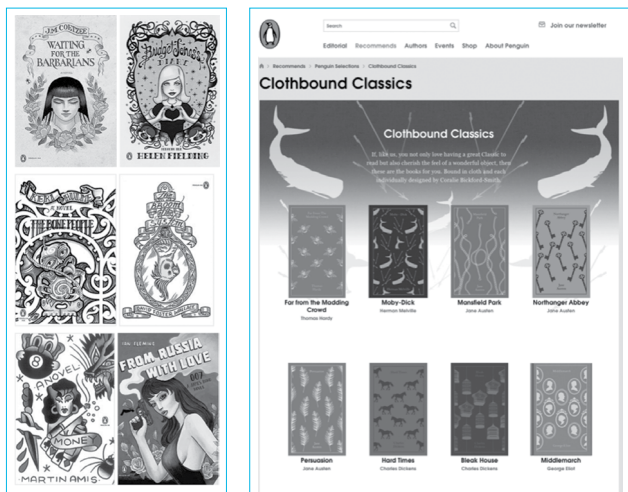
The **Gulbenkian** sought to build a broader community of interest around their Christmas Show – Snow Play, focusing not just on directly promoting tickets or on those people booked to attend, but instead creating a competition that encouraged anyone, not just those attending, to download a basic outline of a snowman and colour it in the most imaginative way possible. Whilst a very simple idea, such an approach has a clear intention to engage audiences outside of the usual direct marketing tactics, to hopefully generate a broader interest in the Gulbenkian.

'I definitely think this is something that will work for our family audience in future and we will repeat in future"...I would shift our mentality from a sales driven format, to a more 'journalistic' approach, so we all look for and harness the interesting content and not just the nuts and bolts of what is on when.' - **Gulbenkian**



Curate and repurpose existing content

Audiences are increasingly interested in curating and repurposing other people's existing content in interesting ways, as illustrated by social media sites such as Pinterest and Tumblr as well as the abundance of 'design your own...' websites such as those that allow you to design your own trainers.³⁸ One way to respond to this behaviour as an organisation is to mirror it. Businesses such as Penguin are increasingly using curation and repurposing approaches when reaching out to their audiences. For example the Penguin Ink project,³⁹ where Penguin teamed up with leading tattoo artists to redesign the covers for novels. Or their Penguin Selections section of their website that recommends titles according to curated themes such as Clothbound Classics.⁴⁰



Penguin Ink Images and the Clothbound Classics section of the Penguin website

Various Phase 3 organisations explored this further as part of their research experiments. **Leicestershire County Council** commissioned a dress historian to curate a series of images from their fashion collection, which did not have a significant profile online before.

'We grouped these images into 12 themes and ascribed a narrative to each image and each theme. These images were then published to Tumblr as the primary source of content over a course of 10 weeks, with social sharing enabled.' – **Leicestershire County Council**



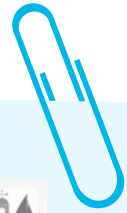
The 'Leicestershire Fashion in Detail' Tumblr page

Curation isn't just about selection and grouping of content, it's about telling stories in interesting ways. For example for their experiment, **The Beaney House of Art & Knowledge** were interested in whether creating a blog written by artists was a better way to promote an artistic commission than just a normal web page on the Beaney website.

'We learned that correctly curating your content and taking it to your target audiences can be hugely powerful in growing audiences and engagement... We are now looking at how we can develop this idea further and have started a regular blog themed around our collections' – **The Beaney House of Art & Knowledge**

We learned that correctly curating your content and taking it to your target audiences can be hugely powerful in growing audiences and engagement...

38. www.converse.com/landing-design-your-own
 39. www.stylist.co.uk/books/book-covers-get-tattooed
 40. www.penguin.co.uk/recommends/penguin-selections/clothbound-classics/



The Beaney House of Art & Knowledge James Williams



Our research question

To what extent can the concept of taking your content to the audience have a positive impact on audience engagement?

Why this was important to our organisation

A big part of our museums and galleries strategy is around audience development, building current audiences and developing new ones. Our web hits have now stabilized to a regular amount and we need to explore different ways of reaching out to wider audiences that don't currently engage with our offering.

What we did to implement this

We used an artist commission at the Beaney (a Christmas tree with bespoke handmade decorations) as the basis for our research experiment. By creating a dedicated blog to promote the artist's work and a static web page on our Beaney website we hoped to compare the engagement both approaches received and draw a conclusion as to which was the most effective.

What happened

The blogging activity attracted significantly more engagement than the static web page and was successful in attracting new visitors who were inspired by the story of the Christmas tree.

What we learned

That correctly curating your content and taking it to your target audiences can be hugely powerful in growing audiences and engagement. It also led us to question the purpose of our website and the way we use it.

What the organisational challenges were

Some believe that you should carry on doing things the way you have always done them because that is what we do. The only challenge was questioning what we had done historically but the results spoke volumes.

What the personal challenges were

Blocking out sufficient time to complete the work associated with the experiment whilst completing the regular day-to-day activities of my role.

What next?

We are now looking at how we can develop this idea further and have started a regular blog themed around our collections. We are tracking the engagement our collections receive via this method and have carried out a review of our current collections web pages as a result. Some pages are hugely under utilised.

Repurposing is not only about varying the presentation of content, it's also about implementing the necessary technical steps that ensure the content has usefulness and appeal. For example in their experiment Leicestershire County Council faced challenges around the metadata:

'None of the images were labelled according to an asset management strategy, so I had to spend a month in the 'frock box' identifying the garments from the images and manually noting down the labels and then updating all the meta information on each of the images.' - **Leicestershire County Council**

Find the right voice

There was significant discussion across many of the Phase 3 participants throughout the project about the tension between the growing need to communicate content in the voice and language of audiences and the tendency for organisations to broadcast in their organisational voice.

'We learnt that our use of terminology was curatorially driven and did not necessarily mesh with what people are searching for online' – **Victoria & Albert Museum**

At the first Phase 3 workshop, Padma Gillen and Lana Gibson of the Government Digital Service spoke to the group about the various content transformations undertaken by GOV.UK, all with the audience in mind. In particular the focus on promoting clear usable English and non-Governmental language, free of jargon and buzzword, to better meet the needs of audiences. They have even put together a 'plain English' list⁴¹ that details words to avoid. *'This isn't just a list of words to avoid. Plain English is the whole ethos of GOV.UK: it's a way of writing.'*⁴²

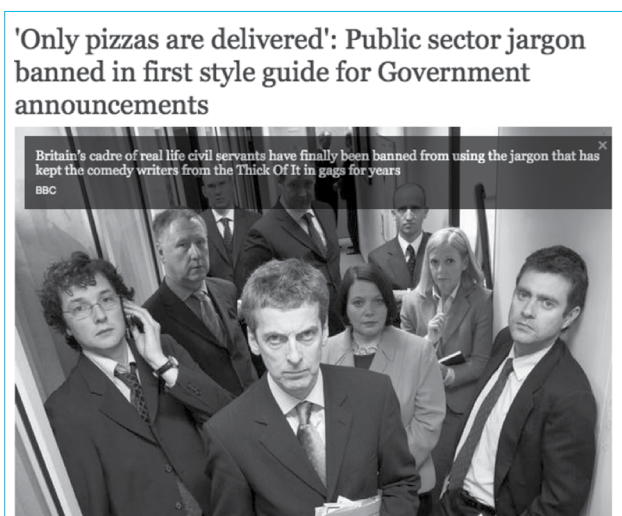
Repurposing of cultural content can also happen through adapting its voice, language and manner of communication. The Royal Shakespeare Company explored this through the repurposing of their synopsis content (as illustrated on page 26).

'We are now reviewing the tone of voice of synopses to ensure they are written in a more accessible way. We have begun to add audio synopses re-purposed from audio material created for visually impaired audiences, and we are now commissioning short video synopses in which a creative (such as the Writer or Director) from the production tells the story to camera. Finally, we have renamed the pages to more attractive to new audiences.' - **Royal Shakespeare Company**

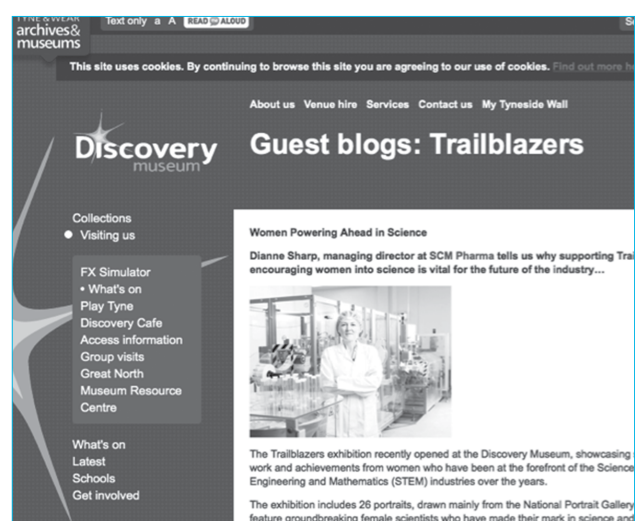
Another approach is to allow voices from across the organisation to be heard as part of a content publishing strategy. This not only ensures a variety of voices, it also taps into their own respective reflections or experiences, producing rich and varied content.

'We should ensure that junior project staff are allotted time to write about their experiences e.g. documentation staff can regularly blog about interesting items in the collection they have been working on. That would provide a regular stream of stories from behind the scenes.' - **Royal Pavilion and Museums**

This could also be taken one step further, seeking out and engaging voices from outside the organisation. This could include promoting guest blog posts as the Beane House of Art & Knowledge did in their experiment (see page 37). Or, as Tyne and Wear Archives & Museums have done in the past, commissioning guest-curated Pinterest boards of your content or commissioning artists to take over your social media channels to run virtual residencies as the Photographers' Gallery has done with its Instagram Takeover.



From The Independent, 24 July 2013



Guest blog from Discovery Museum, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums

41. www.gov.uk/guidance/style-guide/a-to-z-of-gov-uk-style#words-to-avoid

42. www.gov.uk/guidance/content-design/writing-for-gov-uk



The Photographers' Gallery Instagram Takeover

Other examples of cultural organisations thinking proactively about engaging other voices in connection to their content include the partnerships that some museums, galleries and libraries, such as the British Museum,⁴³ have established with the Wikimedia community through projects such as the 'Wikipedians in Residence' programme.⁴⁴

Kill your content?

Editorial approaches do not always have to focus on creating new content, repurposing existing content or finding alternative ways to communicate, it is also editorially vital to remove content that is not working.

Within the project many organisations were faced with large amounts of legacy online content, much of it out of date and irrelevant. There was a desire to look for useful approaches that could support the killing off of redundant content. Focusing on thorough content audits, using data to advocate for change and becoming more comfortable internally at blocking the publishing of superfluous content were all methods that were discussed within the group. The **Museum of London** shared their experiences of removing a significant amount of legacy and/or redundant content:

'We had tons of old microsites and webpages (108 microsites!), mostly with old, out of date information that had few visits. Often these were in completely different designs, brands and formats (old platforms that are no longer supported). Keeping these sites going and moving them to new servers would mean a lot of time and money would be required to make them work better.

So, we audited all the content we have online, assigned level of interest and priority against each, and used a combination of Google Analytics stats and identification of content that were already in our Collections Online, to decide what content we should keep, what content we should possibly develop in the future, and what content can be completely removed. The possible cost of redeveloping these sites verses number of visits to the sites, was a major factor in the decision making process.

Rather than waste a lot of time, effort and money maintaining these, we decided to remove the vast majority of the content. I estimate we removed about 80% of our original content. We can now focus our efforts and time towards making the main website better and of a higher quality.' – **Museum of London**

Take your content to where your audiences are

Audiences now engage with online content within a broad social ecosystem that is no longer just focussed on websites, but also within different communities, social media channels and networks. Increasingly they simply want to find things in the communities where they congregate.

The Digital Culture 2014 report⁴⁵ highlights that arts organisations are increasingly using social media to share content with their networks, with almost 9 in 10 organisations (88%) now publishing content onto free platforms, such as YouTube and Facebook. This represents a first step at tapping the social ecosystem, but taking your content to where audiences are requires more than simply creating and posting to social media accounts, it requires prioritising which channels work best for you and then shaping the content appropriately for those.

Social media platforms are not really free. They require massive investment in time to get right. That is why it is really important to understand which ones work best for you and focus on these. In 2014, the Brooklyn Museum announced that it was coming off certain social media channels that weren't representing the type of engagement it was seeking with their primary audiences, namely those local to Brooklyn.

*'As part of a social media strategic plan, we are changing gears a bit to deploy an engagement strategy which focuses on our in-building audience, closely examines which channels are working for us, and aligns our energies in places where we feel our voice is needed, but allows for us to pull away where things are happening on their own.... Over the years, we've come to learn there are some places where our own presence is not needed and the community functions beautifully on its own.'*⁴⁶

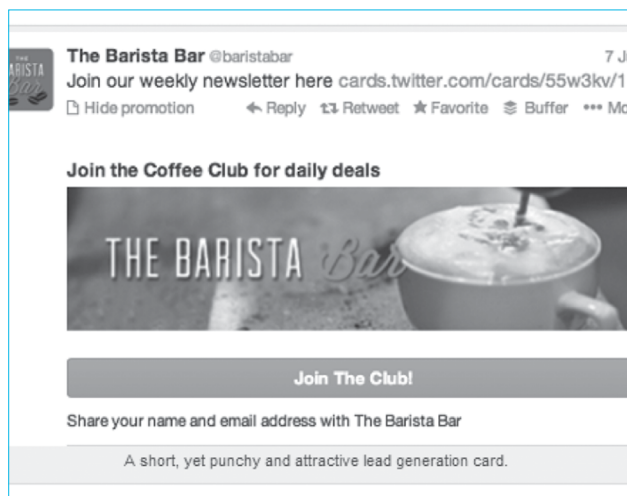
43. www.outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/GLAM/Case_studies/British_Museum

44. www.outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/GLAM/Model_projects#Wikipedians_in_Residence

45. www.artsdigitalrind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Digital-Culture-2014-Research-Report2.pdf

46. www.brooklynmuseum.org/community/blogsphere/2014/04/04/social-change/

In terms of shaping content for the changing social ecosystem, Matt Locke of Storythings introduced the LGR3 group to the concept of 'cards'. Cards⁴⁷ are small interactive pieces of content that are built for the social ecosystem in that they can be shared over networks and are not static but rather designed to be rich and interactive. He explained how we increasingly browse online information based on streams now (eg Twitter, Facebook) and cards are built for these streams. Crucially, cards allow organisations to bring their content, such as images and video, and their calls to action, like mailing list sign-ups, which may usually live on their websites, directly to the audience in social channels without having to click back to the website. This reduces the number of steps between your audience and your content.



An example of a 'lead generation' card on Twitter

Several Phase 3 participating organisations explored moving away from their own websites and instead began experimenting with creating content for other platforms. **The Tricycle Theatre** were interested in how they could engage more with the under 26 demographic via online activity and so were keen to experiment via channels beyond their own website – Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. One of their key aims was to drive up the numbers on their under 26 email list, so they explored setting up a Twitter 'lead generation' card which they were eventually able to successfully do.

They also experimented with using other tactics and tools on Facebook and YouTube. Whilst it was impossible to assess the overall success of these strategies on under 26 engagement in the short term, the primary aim was to try out these techniques.

'We've been steering our digital in the right direction as a result of this project, pushing to use new tools and techniques we haven't used before such as twitter cards, targeted YouTube advertising, Facebook power editor and GA campaign tracking. We've definitely had some pretty substantial achievements' - Tricycle Theatre

The Photographers' Gallery were keen to explore how Pinterest Rich Pins (a form of Pinterest related card that enhances pins with additional product related information such as price and a direct link to the product page) could be used to drive sales to their bookshop. Whilst the experiment was valuable in understanding the process of creating Rich Pin content, it was delayed by challenges of technical support and so is still ongoing.

Both Royal Pavilion and Museums and Fitzwilliam Museum wanted to seed their collections content into social media channels in engaging ways. The **Fitzwilliam Museum** created a small Twitter campaign around a single object, a Roman 'Swiss Army Knife'. They identified that whilst they were getting some meaningful engagement on Twitter, very few people were clicking back to their website for more information. If organisations need to increasingly reach out to audiences where they are, you could argue that not clicking back to the website isn't necessarily a problem. The Fitzwilliam were keen however to keep experimenting in this way.

'We will continue to explore the potential of seeding content in this way and build it into our online strategy.' – Fitzwilliam Museum

Royal Pavilion and Museums trialled sharing digitised collections across a variety of social media platforms over a week, in order to connect collections with a broader audience.

'If we are going to invest in digitising our collections, we need to be able to demonstrate that they are not just of value to 'researchers'.' – Royal Pavilion and Museums

Whilst meaningful results for the experiment could only be obtained by running this over a much longer period, they were able to identify some insights from existing data around their collections content on these channels. They identified that for them Flickr seemed to have had a surprising revival:

'A year ago it felt very moribund, with little convincing evidence of use, but our views increased 87% in Q2 2014-15 (without us adding any new images) and the photos used in the experiment received more genuine engagement than on other social media channels.' – Royal Pavilion and Museums

They also found that in respect of Facebook 'sharing of our collections is most successfully driven by others sharing our material - our own use of Facebook has very little impact.' Perhaps like Brooklyn Museum (see page 39), Royal Pavilion and Museums might consider reprioritising their social media activity - using Flickr more and stepping away from Facebook where their own presence is not needed and the community functions well on its own.

47. www.blog.bufferapp.com/twitter-cards-guide

www.socialmediaexaminer.com/rich-pins-on-pinterest/



Fitzwilliam Museum David Scruton



Our research question

How can we be more proactive in seeding interest in our collections by focusing a multi-channel campaign on a few objects (or possibly a single object) and analysing how these are picked up?

Why this was important to our organisation

We have tended to use social media primarily to generate interest around events and exhibitions, not for audience engagement with the permanent collection or as an alternative to highlighting objects on our website.

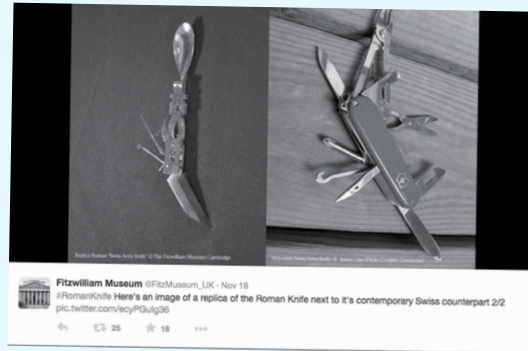
What we did to implement this

We decided to use Twitter as the channel, experimenting with different approaches to promote engagement around a single object - linking to different types of content. The campaign was run over a week with a series of posts about an object in the Fitzwilliam Museum - the Roman 'Swiss Army Knife', which has generated interest online in the past.

What happened

A series of 9 tweets that have to date received approx. 15,300 impressions and 400 engagements. The campaign appears to have sustained interest over the week although, predictably, tweets with images generated the highest level of engagement. One of these, comparing the Roman artefact with a modern equivalent has been the subject of an engagement rate of around 6%, significantly higher than the norm for the Museum's

tweets (even those including images or links to other media) of 1% - 3%. One of the tweets contained a link back to the online catalogue page on the Museum's website. Very few people, however, clicked through on this link.



What we learned

A focused campaign around an object or collection-based theme can work - at least in terms of numbers. Our experiment did not really get to grips with the nature of the engagement. The lack of link through to the museum website was interesting and perhaps something that will make future initiatives of this kind more difficult to sell to others in the organisation when there is still a lot of emphasis on website traffic.

What the organisational challenges were

Getting up to speed with Google Analytics and Twitter analytics.

What the personal challenges were

I would like to have had the chance to follow individual retweets and analyse the type of discourse that may have developed. Did any of them go beyond 'isn't this interesting'? Were new threads of thought initiated that might not have been directly related to the initial content?

What next?

We will continue to explore the potential of seeding content in this way and build it into our online strategy. We intend to produce a series of short video pieces on objects in the collection and what/how they are produced is likely to be influenced by this experiment. We hope to run a similar experiment with other objects (including those with less popular profile) and potentially through other channels.

Mark up your content for other channels

Marking up and tagging content appropriately can enable this content to become more discoverable, shareable and useful to audiences. A number of Phase 3 organisations explored doing this as part of their research experiments. These include work done in setting up Twitter cards (Tricycle Theatre), Pinterest Rich Pins (The Photographers' Gallery), Google rich snippets (Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives and Manchester International Festival) and the metadata enhancement of collections (Leicestershire County Council).

'If your content isn't 'searchable', you won't be found and someone/somewhere else will pick up your traffic. Simple as!' - Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives

Adopting standards to mark up content helps to optimise the number of publishing platforms that can publish your content, yet standardisation is difficult as different publishing platforms often require different forms of tagging. Various projects and initiatives are exploring ways to collaborate across content providers and portals to standardise content mark up and metadata. These include www.schema.org which seeks to standardise how web pages are marked up in order to be recognized by major search providers, and Europeana which advocates for standardised metadata for digital collections.⁴⁸

Adapt your content presentation

Whilst standardising the technical mark up of content is an aspiration for better content sharing and usage across publishing platforms, you should always adapt the presentation of content according to the specific publishing platform. Improving the presentation of content is more than just making it look nicer, it is also about designing your information architecture correctly so that information is presented logically.

Good content presentation is also about decluttering and killing it where appropriate.

National Museum Wales were interested in evaluating page clutter when exploring whether featuring collections highlights on their webpages acted as a help or hindrance to people's original goals for visiting.

'In redesigning our website we require clear examples of why we need to alter our internal working practices when it comes to publishing content online. We need to strategically change perceptions internally to 'less is more' We have since completely rethought and revamped our visiting pages, providing only minimal essential information, clearing out all extraneous content, images and navigation. We are planning on testing this version and comparing historically to the old pages to see what difference to 'time on page' these improvements make.' – **National Museum Wales**

Southbank Centre were interested in understanding the impact of content presentation on converting specific goals, namely ticket sales. Their experiment looked at event 'tiles' on the homepage, exploring the effect of homepage position and duration of presence of these event tiles on ticket sales. Whilst their analysis seemed to indicate that the position of the event tile on the homepage has more of an effect on ticket sales than the length of time the event is on the homepage, they were keen to explore this further.

The **Horniman** were also interested in understanding the impact of content presentation on a specific goal, in this case selling memberships online. They undertook a variety of small activities to change either the prominence, images or promotion of memberships. They found out very quickly that these changes made no difference whatsoever:

'I feel I know why our visitors don't buy online, and it really is because of their motivation. There is no motivation to buy online when they can visit in person and do so. Changing images, prominence etc is not going to change that motivation.'

This was nonetheless extremely useful as it means they should consider stopping investing more time towards promoting memberships online and reprioritise this towards alternative approaches to selling the memberships in person.

48. www.pro.europeana.eu/technical-requirements

Mobile optimise your content not just your website

The Digital Culture 2014 report illustrates that arts and cultural organisations are responding to the wider shift in media consumption away from desktops and towards mobile devices, with over half of the organisations surveyed having a web presence optimised for mobile in some way.⁴⁹

However it's important to recognise that a mobile optimised website, such as a responsively designed one where the layout of the website is adapted to the screen size of the device being used, is not always enough to meet the needs of a mobile audience. Your content should be optimised too. This means thinking about adapting the amount, design, layout and functionality of content to respond to the behaviours of your audiences who are on smaller mobile devices whilst on the move and looking for easier and quicker ways to get to the content they are after.

For example, following their participation in the Phase 2 project, the Victoria & Albert Museum redesigned their Visit Us related webpages to make them easier to use on a mobile phone by simplifying site structure and content. They did this by streamlining and de-duplicating the text on these pages and drastically reducing the number of unnecessary images, as well as reconsidering the overall nature and balance of page content.⁵⁰

For their Phase 3 research experiment, the **British Museum** explored how they could better present their exhibitions, with mobile-first as their priority. They also did this by experimenting with content type, layout and quantity. Could they strip out generic or unnecessary content without damaging bookings and could they also increase bookings by providing timely, relevant and interesting content that leads users to book tickets online via their mobile?

They A/B tested various elements of their exhibition pages in respect of mobile users, such as the position of booking buttons, use of straplines, the balance between contextual content versus marketing blurb, the surfacing of key information and dropping subpages that were repeated across multiple exhibitions.

Through this enquiry the British Museum identified some interesting and unexpected results. They found out that for mobile users some booking buttons (further down the page) weren't being used at all and that these users were not needing the full exhibition section to sell them the tickets, meaning that they were missing a trick in failing to offer direct booking from the home page and the main what's on page. They did also however discover that once on an exhibition page, users were more likely to book when more context was offered (e.g. such as the details for each mummy on show).



Adapting the amount, design, layout and functionality of content to respond to the behaviours of your audiences who are on smaller mobile devices whilst on the move and looking for easier and quicker ways to get to the content they are after.



49. www.artsdigitalrind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Digital-Culture-2014-Research-Report2.pdf

50. www.vam.ac.uk/blog/digital-media/making-mobile-users-experience-better

6. Navigating change: becoming a fit for purpose organisation

6.1 The challenge

To generate value across the organisation and become fit for purpose in the context of content publishing, you need to become a 'content fit' organisation. This is about building capacity across the business to ensure that your content can engage audiences. To do so organisations need to change. But what is needed to become a content fit organisation and how can these changes be navigated?

Every organisation faces the challenge of how to create, adapt and deliver content to audiences in ways that account for their behaviours, interests and motivations and make sense to them. If you can do this, you generate value, building capacity across the business and a way to become a content fit organisation.

Mainstream publishers have been on the journey to become content fit organisations for many years now and there is much that the arts and heritage sector can learn from their experiences.

Better to have a content strategy than a digital strategy

The Guardian adopted a 'digital first' strategy in 2011 that saw it change from being a print-centred organisation to a digital one. This was more than a shift of focus towards its website. They brought in strategic change throughout the organisation that was 'digital first in philosophy and practice.'⁵¹ This has led them to explore open journalism where editorial content is collaborative, linked into and networked with the rest of the web. For the Guardian, this brought their content and digital strategies together.

The New York Times on the other hand has struggled to adapt its content to respond to the changing demands of audiences and readers. One of the key influencing factors on this has been its inability to align editorial/content strategy alongside its broader digital change business strategy. A leaked New York Times innovation report says: 'At the Times, discovery, promotion and engagement have been pushed to the margins, typically left to our business-side colleagues.' And even more tellingly: "We've abdicated completely the role of strategy," said one masthead editor.

"We just don't do strategy. The newsroom is really being dragged behind the galloping horse of the business side."⁵²

It seems publishers have now moved on from the print v digital debate. 'Digital with its power to fuel destabilisation and innovation in equal measure, might once have been a label for the new and unknown, but today it is an accepted underlying force within the sector'.⁵³ For publishers this means increasingly that separate print and digital strategies are a thing of the past. Developing content strategies is a more relevant strategic response to fast paced digital change than just developing a digital strategy.

Breaking down organisational silos

Content production, for publishers, is the lifeblood of their organisation but within traditional organisational structures is only seen to take place within certain departments. This creates barriers to change and can prevent organisations making their content more fit for audiences.

When the Guardian undertook its digital-first changes it had to challenge these structures. Tanya Cordrey, Chief Digital Officer at the Guardian speaking at the Let's Get Real Conference 2014,⁵⁴ explained how they did this through developing new disciplines, such as product management and user experience and creating small self-empowered, cross-functional teams that sat together.



More recently the Guardian has similarly challenged existing structures within its content and editorial teams. For example the new Guardian Visuals team brings together the graphics desk, picture desk, interactive team and parts of the digital design and multimedia teams. Aron Pilhofer, Executive Editor for Digital, hopes the organisation of the new team will break down the barriers that currently limit some projects 'The problem when you have these kind of silos is that it's hard to assemble teams that are cross-disciplinary ... and have the right combination of designers, developers, graphic artists, photographers.'⁵⁵

51. www.theguardian.com/gnm-press-office/guardian-news-media-digital-first-organisation
 52. www.niemanlab.org/2014/05/the-leaked-new-york-times-innovation-report-is-one-of-the-key-documents-of-this-media-age/
 53. www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2012/oct/03/publishers-beyond-print-digital-debate
 54. www.weareculture24.org.uk/lets-get-real-conference/
 55. www.journalism.co.uk/news/guardian-forms-new-editorial-teams-to-enhance-digital-output/s2/a562755/

Building and responding to audience insight

Publishers are increasingly integrating audience insight within their content publishing, looking to better understand audience behaviours and then respond to these. The Guardian recently launched its new website showcasing a design which moved away from the standard 'print' columnised format and instead responded to the behaviours of its readers. The foundations for the new site were laid using insights from the Guardian's in-house analytics platform into how people were reading its previous site.⁵⁶

A key part of using audience insight to inform content strategy is identifying the right metrics to draw insight from. Aron Pilhofer again: *'What I want to get past is a reliance on the metrics that work well with advertisers but not necessarily for content ... Elements like total reading time and other meta-metrics that tell you how the audience is behaving will be explored by a team of analysts to help the newsrooms make better decisions around their content.'*⁵⁷

Similarly, Penguin recently set up an Insights team to ensure that the needs and behaviours of the audience are at the heart of their content publishing. Charlotte Richards heads up the team and spoke at the Let's Get Real Conference 2013⁵⁸ about how building in audience insight *'is not a systems or data challenge... it's a long term cultural shift in how people view the role of data in their day to day jobs, and build confidence and knowledge in using and talking about this data across the business.'*⁵⁹

Navigating change holistically

These lessons can be applied across other sectors and organisations, with real change being delivered when considered holistically. For example a significant element of the Government Digital Service's (GDS) digital transformation of government has been led by changing its approach to content publishing. These changes have been well documented, but are about more than just enhancing their content. Rather they are about leading the whole digital transformation of government through understanding and responding to audience insight;⁶⁰ changing working practices and organisational structures⁶¹ and establishing effective communication strategies. *'We're not here to improve government websites; we're here to improve government.'*⁶²

6.2 The state of play

There is still a long way to go before arts and heritage organisations can be considered fit for purpose for publishing. Our problems lie in a lack of a holistic content strategy and an absence of buy-in from those in leadership.

Online content production is viewed as the preserve of certain teams, in particular marketing and digital. Almost 70% of the LGR3 participants came from within these teams, with just 6% from programming and events teams and none from learning or curatorial.

40% of participants also identified a lack of joined-up working in their organisations when it came to making their content fit for purpose.

'The biggest challenge is lack of parallel buy in. To really develop an open culture - that is more geared towards making our assets, stories and processes public facing - will take a big cultural change. When I encounter resistance, it's rarely from management; it's usually from colleagues who feel they don't have the time, or are personally uncomfortable, with the necessary changes.'

– Royal Pavilion and Museums

'There was significant desire amongst participants to engage other teams in the importance of online content - 'I'd like to engage curators and conservators more deeply with online content, so online content is seen to be as important and as central to their roles as exhibition and gallery text and research.' - **National Museums Scotland**

40% of participants identified technical issues, such as disconnected and out of date technical systems and an inability to make technical changes quickly as another significant organisational barrier to making their content more fit for purpose. This was also illustrated within some individual experiments when some organisations struggled to get the necessary web developer support they needed to implement basic technical elements of the experiment.

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I'd like to engage curators and conservators more deeply with online content, so online content is seen to be as important and as central to their roles as exhibition and gallery text and research.
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56. www.journalism.co.uk/news/key-principles-behind-the-new-guardian-website/s2/a563921
57. www.journalism.co.uk/news/guardian-forms-new-editorial-teams-to-enhance-digital-output/s2/a562755/
58. www.weareculture24.org.uk/lets-get-real-conference-2013/

59. www.weareculture24.org.uk/2013/09/what-can-culture-learn-from-penguins-new-insight-hub/
60. www.gds.blog.gov.uk/2014/08/12/helping-government-find-user-needs-with-analytics/
61. www.gds.blog.gov.uk/2011/05/13/agile-does-work-in-government/
62. www.slideshare.net/intscotland/tom-loosemoregovernment-digital-service/

The Digital Culture 2014 report shows that a large proportion of surveyed arts organisations are using data in some way to drive insight, with a particular increase in organisations using data to understand audiences for marketing profiling and to identify high net worth audience members for fundraising. But what is less clear within the report is how much data insight is used to develop content strategies more widely.

As Elena Villaespesa points out: ‘the options listed in the survey are primarily focused on marketing or funding activities which follows the objective of generating revenue. It would be interesting as well to see how audience data is used to create content or experiences for different audience needs and also from a learning or outreach perspective.’⁶³

The report does show that over half of the organisations do not use analytics or other research methods to understand and improve their websites. Trying to understand your web content should be a fundamental part of any organisation’s content insight and it is shocking that so many organisations have not yet begun this process.

For those that are trying to glean insights into content usage, such as via web analytics, there are still challenges. 41% of our Phase 3 group (all of whom were using web analytics to some extent) still cited lack of analytics skills as a major obstacle in getting their content fit for purpose. There are also challenges with what is being measured. Many of the organisations we speak to relating to their use of web analytics do so to respond to organisational reporting pressures rather than to derive any useful strategic insights. Supporting Phase 3 participants in the analysis of their individual content experiments highlighted the importance of resisting metrics for metrics sake and instead only focusing on what is useful to support audience engagement for that organisation.

‘I also think my experiment and the rest of the LGR project is more broadly illustrative of how as a sector we need to focus less on top-line numbers for reporting purposes, because taken out of context these really mean very little in terms of actual audience engagement.’ - Royal Shakespeare Company

6.3 Moving forward

How can these challenges be navigated by arts organisations to realise meaningful change?

Align content with your core purpose

Examining your organisation’s core purpose and understanding the role your content publishing has within this, will allow you to think more strategically about content across the organisation, challenging departmental silos and transcending unhelpful real world/digital divisions.

For example, when Rijksmuseum put 125,000 of their masterpieces online for audiences to freely download and ‘remix’ as they choose, it was a decision that aligned with their mission which was to bring the collection closer to the people.⁶⁴ By allowing audiences to access and download high resolution online masterpieces and also supporting them to use the images in interesting ways via the Rijkstudio, the museum not only realised this mission, but also facilitated content production that was physical as well as online.



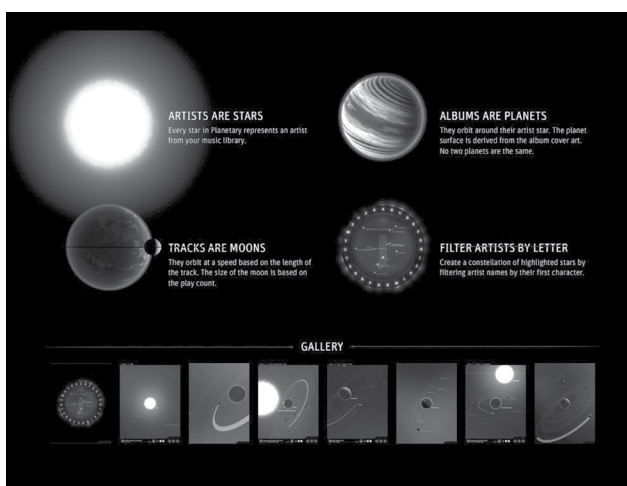
Tattoo by Droog, based on the 17th century painting Still Life with Flowers by Jan Davidsz. de Heem



I also think my experiment and the rest of the LGR project is more broadly illustrative of how as a sector we need to focus less on top-line numbers for reporting purposes, because taken out of context these really mean very little in terms of actual audience engagement.



63. www.artsmetrics.com/en/how-arts-organisations-use-audience-data/
64. www.mw2013.museumsandtheweb.com/paper/rijksstudio-make-your-own-masterpiece/



The Cooper Hewitt's Planetary iPad app.

Similarly when the Cooper Hewitt began collecting source code, such as the Planetary iPad app,⁶⁵ it was not because of a geeky obsession with code in and of itself, but rather to conform to its modern purpose as a design museum, namely to 'come up with new ways to interpret, contextualise and communicate the 'how and why' of these objects (and the choices the designers made)' to the museum's visitors.⁶⁶ Also by connecting people with information, not just objects, they had 'begun to restore the old purpose of the Cooper Hewitt: a kind of teaching database of physical objects. Writing about the museum in the early 20th century, Eleanor Hewitt made it clear that her main goal was not to save the objects in the collection, but the information within them.'⁶⁷

Within the LGR3 project, we promoted this idea of aligning content with core purpose through the scoping phase of the individual content experiments. We sought to encourage participating organisations to keep checking back how their experiments supported their overall organisational purpose.

'I think it's really important that cultural organisations are doing this kind of work, encouraging each other to think more carefully about what we're doing and why. It's easy to get caught up in the day to day churn of more exhibition content, more event content, more collections content, without thinking about why we're producing it or who it's for. This project has made me make more time for this, and that's been really valuable.' – **National Museums Scotland**

Make data-driven content decisions

The LGR3 work highlighted the need for every organisation to understand data within their own individual contexts. Having access to all participating organisations' Google Analytics accounts allowed us to look for insights by benchmarking and comparing everyone's data. However whilst we could share comparisons in areas such as

device usage (see page 24) and the proportion of frequent or recent visitors or 'deep' visitation, it is only when these statistics are looked at in the context of the organisation's own purpose, the specific needs of their audiences and the typical nature of their content, that they become useful. There is no one-size-fits-all with analytics data.

'Of course it is necessary to be able to benchmark and monitor performance, but we also need to acknowledge that it is more granular understanding of data that is important to understand and improve.' – **Royal Shakespeare Company**

It was therefore largely through supporting organisations to measure, track and analyse their individual content experiments that they could begin to understand data in connection to themselves. By connecting this to a specific content-related question, it also allowed them to consider data specifically in relation to their content not simply in isolation. This gave them the building blocks to begin to understand how to make data-driven content decisions.

'Gathering and analysing statistics is an interesting and lengthy procedure that is vital for providing insightful and irrefutable evidence for content creation or change. Only by doing this can you possibly know whether your content is fit for purpose.' – **Victoria & Albert Museum**

'I think it's helped us appreciate the importance of evaluating content. Not just creating content on our social networks for the sake of it, but looking at the way audiences engage with it to better inform us in the future. By continuing to measure, test and evaluate our social networks, this will help us strategize in a more direct approach.' – **Wales Millennium Centre**

'It has confirmed the usefulness and importance in being data-driven in how we make our decision making. We are beginning a large digital redevelopment, with all the planning, proposals and assumptions being tested using real data.' - **Royal Shakespeare Company**

It is important to remember that web analytics is not the only data that organisations are seeking to understand and respond to audiences. For their research experiment **Live at LICA** were seeking to understand audience usage in connection to their newly launched 'Taking the ArtWork Home' mobile application for Android devices (www.bit.ly/takearthome). At the research scoping phase they initially explored ways they could develop the app further to include user feedback, analytics, and social sharing options in order to capture data. They decided however that such an approach, whilst not only having clear time and cost implications, was not an appropriate way to capture the information they were really after which was more qualitative in nature. So instead they ran sets of user focus groups which gave them useful insights that challenged certain pre-existing assumptions about the app's usage, giving them opportunities to tailor it more effectively to audience needs in the future.

65. www.cooperhewitt.org/2013/08/26/planetary-collecting-and-preserving-code-as-a-living-object/

66. www.labs.cooperhewitt.org/2014/why-are-we-collecting-source-code/

67. www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/01/how-to-build-the-museum-of-the-future/384646/

Give it a go, keep trying and don't be scared to fail

Getting organisations to run content experiments was about changing working practices as much as deriving useful insights to support content engagement. Feedback regarding the usefulness of the experiments was extremely positive with all participants confirming that they would plan to run more of these small-scale experiments within their own day to day work going forward.

Many highlighted the importance of being provided with the time and space to focus on this work.

'This project has been incredibly helpful in allowing the space to concentrate and focus on specific user testing experiments. This sort of work and subsequent analysis would ordinarily have been pushed down the ever lengthening 'to-do' list!' - **National Museum Wales**

Adopting an agile approach to trying stuff out was also important. Several participants discussed the importance of continuing to understand audience, but also the importance of creating or doing something that you can evaluate against.

'Making time for identifying user needs via research experiments is worthwhile, but needs to be evaluated continually and you need to have an agile approach.' - **Southbank Centre**

'Less talk more action. Don't sweat the small stuff, just get on and do it, without endless rounds of sign offs. People need to be given the confidence to act on data-based findings and make improvements.' - **British Museum**

The value of iteration was promoted throughout the project. At the first project workshop, Lana Gibson and Padma Gillen of GOV.UK, talked about how the GOV.UK website will never be finished as audience needs are always changing and it was vital to iterate. Matt Locke of Storythings also talked about how "good content isn't made, but grown" and the need to "relentlessly iterate over time". As part of the experiment process participants were encouraged to build in time to iterate their experiments based on their findings and many organisations aim to run subsequent experiments based on what they have learnt.

'One of the main things I took away was the value of iteration (learnt this in the GOV.UK presentation early on) and experimentation – it's good to just have a go.' – **Yorkshire Sculpture Park**

The project also emphasised the importance of being open to failure, exploring organisational vulnerability⁶⁸ and learning from all outcomes, even if unintended.

'We learnt the importance of embracing and celebrating well-intentioned failure - and sharing an understanding of what we've learned from the failure (and how we won't repeat the same mistakes).' - **Historic Royal Palaces**

Invest in content for resilience

Investing in content doesn't mean spending lots of money commissioning new content, buying new content management systems or building expensive apps. Focusing instead on investing in time, skills, processes and people will help you build organisational resilience to create fit for purpose content in an ongoing and sustainable way.

Several LGR3 organisations advocated for building content creation skills across teams.

'Training across all departments in adopting a more user focused approach to producing content involving analytics training and storytelling is needed.' – **National Galleries Scotland**

'What about training everyone on 'writing for the web' and providing examples of what is fit for purpose?' - **Museum of London**

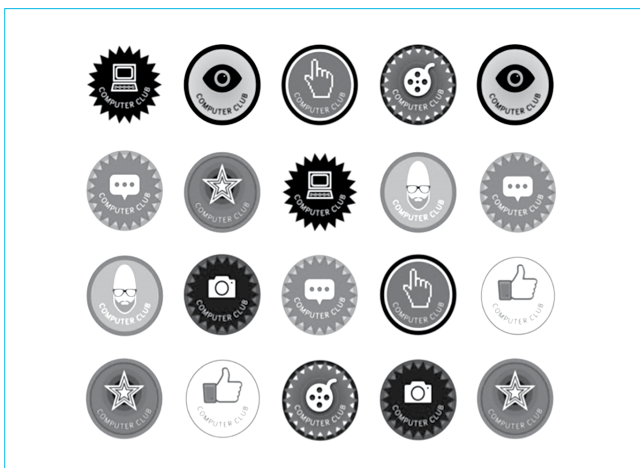
'Consider writing social media skills into all job descriptions and contracts.' - **The Photographers Gallery**

Almost 80% of participants identified lack of time as being one of the major challenges within their organisations in getting their content fit for purpose. There is no easy solution to this aside from the organisation re-prioritising the importance of developing content skills, running content experiments and spending time using and analysing data. Perhaps building these skills and tasks within job descriptions could be a start?

Another approach could be to follow a similar model to the Computer Club which was developed at the Imperial War Museum. These are monthly lunchtime sessions that aim to develop digital awareness and skills across the museum.

68. www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2014/sep/03/beyond-failure-digital-vulnerability-arts

Carolyn Royston who helped start up the club explains on the Museum Geek blog: *'I think Computer Club has caught people's imagination partly because it's different to anything else that staff have been offered before at the museum and also that it's not tied to more formal training. It's light touch sessions that people come along to because they're interested and want to learn more about an area that perhaps they don't feel very confident about. You come for a fun taster session that lasts an hour, get a sticker to say you've attended and then go back to work. Why can't that approach be adopted for other areas of skills development?'*⁶⁹



The Computer Club stickers

Perhaps this model could be applied to building skills in copy writing, social media etc? This type of approach not only allows for time and space to focus on skills building, it does so in a fun, informal way that is pitched to people not as key for their specific roles, but rather as useful skills to use and apply as individuals. If staff become more confident about using these skills in their normal lives, they are more likely to apply them professionally.

If money is to be spent on content production, consider prioritising it to fix bottle necks to help staff more actively engage in the experimentation, data usage and skills building that have been highlighted earlier. We have already seen how organisations identified an inability to make technical changes quickly as another significant organisational barrier to getting the content fit for purpose. Having technical support available to make quick updates to web code is key if you want to promote the agile experimental approach detailed. Some LGR3 organisations struggled with getting their experiments off the ground because of this. Remember that your website is never finished - even if you have just rolled it out, it will always require iteration. It is essential to always allocate budget and set expectations when hiring web developers, for ongoing availability and resource for future development and changes.

Collaborate through content

The project discussed opportunities to promote collaboration and build partnerships through content in various ways.

Jon Davie, MD of Zone, a commercial digital agency, highlighted to the group how content partnerships with commercial organisations could be explored. He helps these businesses develop content marketing strategies that help them define the right subjects to talk about. This is not always easy for some large commercial organisations whose audience could be everyone and whose proposition could be everything. By examining subjects based on legitimacy v relevance to audience, Zone helps these businesses understand which areas they should invest in content for, partner with, include or ignore. Jon highlighted how arts organisations often have legitimacy and relevance to audiences in lots of subject areas as well as possessing rich content that can promote these areas - perhaps a basis for potential content partnerships in the future?



Jon Davie of Zone presenting to the LGR group

Potential partnerships and collaborations based on content could include finding other voices for your content as explored on page 38, and partnerships with travel-related companies and websites as discussed in the 'downstream analysis of web behaviours' discussed on page 28.

Arguably the most important content collaborations should take place with other cultural organisations. As public value organisations we should be collaborating rather than competing. One simple way is to link to each other's websites where relevant and promote and discuss other's events and exhibitions via your own social media feeds. This is not going to make fewer people come to you, but rather help you build credibility as a connected organisation with broad expertise of the relevant area of arts and culture, over and above what is going on within your own organisation.

⁶⁹ www.museumgeek.wordpress.com/2013/07/08/computer-club-awesomeness-an-interview-with-iwms-carolyn-royston/

Another way to collaborate through content is by sharing your own challenges with other organisations. We are all on a shared journey of trying to engage audiences with our content and no one is doing it so well that they have nothing to learn from others. A key focus of Let's Get Real is encouraging organisations to share their reflections, challenges and solutions with their peers in a supported, informal environment that allows them the space and time away from their usual routines. Participants found this immensely valuable and as a sector we should explore more ways to encourage this.

'The key learning point is to keep sharing. We are all similar organisations but varied and not competitive, we should be sharing and inspiring each other.'
– **Manchester International Festival**

'It's important to undertake experiments independently, but also as part of a wider collaboration - this allows sharing of best practice and helps us to understand issues that others are faced with. Together we're better.' – **National Museums Wales**

'Networking with people in similar roles to my own has been great. It's been very interesting to hear about other people's successes and failures and realise that we're all in similar positions. It's also rewarding to be able to offer help or solutions or insight if you can - we should be much more collaborative as an industry.'
– **Victoria & Albert Museum**

'I enjoyed the honest discussions with other organisations. It was helpful to talk through projects that have worked and failed, and why.' – **Design Museum**

'It was great to have the opportunity to network with people who are working in a similar field in a very open, honest and supportive environment; getting headspace to think away from the office; having a reason to say "I'm blocking off some time today because I have to do this for the project."' – **National Museums Scotland**

'I really valued the chance to network and have a forum to discuss common issues and ideas - in the day-job there are few opportunities to have space to think more widely.'
– **Royal Shakespeare Company**

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It's important to undertake experiments independently, but also as part of a wider collaboration - this allows sharing of best practice and helps us to understand issues that others are faced with. Together we're better.
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Appendix 1: Experiment ideas summary

The ideas for each participating organisation's experiments are summarised below.

ORGANISATION	CONTENT EXPERIMENT QUESTION	WHY IMPORTANT?
Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales	Does featuring collections act as help or hindrance to people's original goals for visiting?	In re-designing our website we need to obtain real world evidence to ensure that this content is centred around user need rather than institutional assumption.
The Beaney House of Art & Knowledge	To what extent can the concept of taking your content to the audience have a positive impact on audience engagement?	A big part of our museums and galleries strategy is around audience development, building current audiences and developing new ones. Our web hits have now stabilized to a regular amount and we need to explore different ways of reaching out to wider audiences that don't currently engage with our offering.
Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives	Can rich snippets help us to promote what's on content more effectively and help us to implement online ticketing?	We have found that two thirds of traffic to our website (launched in May 2014) comes from search and that people go straight to museum home pages via search/referrals/direct/social. So we need to make sure the content that two thirds of people see before they even get to our website, e.g. on search results, is 'fit for purpose'.
British Museum	Can we present content for exhibitions with mobile-first as our priority?	Move to mobile is a priority. Exhibitions are a key revenue stream.
Design Museum	What are young people's expectations of the Design Museum online? How would they like to engage with design online and how can the museum facilitate that?	We wanted to find out if the people using the Discover Design website were engaging with the content, which content worked, and what new content should be created for future engagement.
Fitzwilliam Museum	How can we be more proactive in seeding interest in our collections by focusing a multi-channel campaign on a few objects (or possibly a single object) and analysing how these are picked up?	We have tended to use social media primarily to generate interest around events and exhibitions, not for audience engagement with the permanent collection or as an alternative to highlighting objects on our website.
Gulbenkian	How can we pilot ways of using digital platforms to increase our engagement with key audiences, specifically Canterbury residents, and to generate more visits to Gulbenkian as a consequence?	We have a strong local following, but spend all our resource communicating to people who already know us.

ORGANISATION	CONTENT EXPERIMENT QUESTION	WHY IMPORTANT?
Hampshire's Big Theme 1914	Can a Facebook page be a viable alternative to a website to promote a series of exhibitions that all focus on one subject but are aimed at very different audiences?	Tackle the lack of organisational understanding of what users want from a museum online.
Historic Royal Palaces	What is our social media audience profile in terms of Culture Segments (the Morris Hargreaves McIntyre audience profiling tool we use throughout the organisation) and how do these respond to different content types and formats?	Culture Segments is the way we profile and target our audiences for all other content producing functions throughout the organisation. So it makes sense to apply this same system to social media, so we can start to compare our online and on-site audiences with this shared system.
Horniman Museum and Gardens	How can we sell more memberships online?	Memberships are a new vital revenue stream which contribute to our funding.
Leicestershire County Council Communities and Wellbeing Service	How to increase engagement with museum collections online?	We are in the process of exploring how we can 'create an exciting brand online' - this question will allow us to test (hopefully) which platforms work best on presenting collections information in order to increase engagement with collections. This is one of a number of projects looking at presenting collections content online and along with developing a social media strategy for the service, this project will feed into guidance on what makes good content.
Live at LICA	What is the user feedback on our newly launched 'Taking the ArtWork Home' mobile app, which allows you to create a virtual exhibition and then display the artwork using augmented reality?	Live at LICA is involved in numerous projects that the public/industry might not be aware of. By being part of the research group of LGR it allowed us to run further testing on the app and to publicise the app and the work we undertake that the public/peers/industry might not be aware of.
Manchester International Festival	How can we drive people to the members page of our website to help push membership sales?	During the period of the experiment the Members page is the only place we expected to be able to push traffic. Commissions had yet to be announced and we had a very large sales target.
Museum of London	What content & layout results in more visitors buying tickets to events and exhibition and making a donation?	To increase ticket sales and donation to the museum.

ORGANISATION	CONTENT EXPERIMENT QUESTION	WHY IMPORTANT?
National Galleries Scotland	How do we understand more about the users of our online collection and their needs and preferences with the view to re-developing the online collection?	Online Collection redevelopment is a major forthcoming project for us, as part of our wider digital engagement objectives. This also comes at a time when we are undergoing a major digitisation programme which will expand our online collection. Engaging with the public and sharing information about the collection both on site and online forms a notable section of our corporate plan so developing the online collection with a user focus serves this goal.
National Museums Scotland	What do people want to get out of our collections content?	Our website relaunched in August with a new hub for all collections content, Explore (previously, this had been scattered around the website). However, the section is very much a work in progress, and before investing in further development I wanted to get a better idea of who was using the information and why, and what they would like to see improve.
People's History Museum	What are people's motivations for visiting our website? What content are they looking for? Are we providing what they need/want?	We have a fair amount of data around motivations for physical visitors to the museum but do not have any equivalent data for online visitors.
The Photographers' Gallery	Can creating Pinterest Rich Pin content drive sales for our bookshop publications?	One of our key objectives is to drive income from enterprise.
Royal Pavilion and Museums	What is the impact of sharing digitised collections on social media and old media channels?	If we are going to invest in digitising our collections, we need to be able to demonstrate that they are not just of value to 'researchers'.
Royal Shakespeare Company	Is there a predictable life-cycle to online content that will allow us to maximise the impact of that content on audiences?	As all content takes effort and resource to produce, it is essential that we maximise the impact a particular piece of content has, as well as being able to more accurately assess the likely effectiveness of content at the strategy/planning stage.
Southbank Centre	Does the position of an event on the homepage have more impact on how many tickets are sold over the time it is featured on the homepage?	Marketing currently produce a website schedule for where event tiles should be featured on the homepage and for how long. Currently there is no insight in the effect of position or duration of event tiles on the homepage, and the schedule is put together with no strategy. The research should help inform marketing when and how to schedule events on the homepage.

ORGANISATION	CONTENT EXPERIMENT QUESTION	WHY IMPORTANT?
Tricycle Theatre	How can we engage more with the under 26 demographic via online activity?	This relates to the Tricycle’s audience development aims to encourage attendance to the breadth of the main Tricycle Theatre programme by a diverse and varied audience. We are aiming to increase the percentage of audience members aged under 26 from 6% to 15% by 2018. We have just launched a new, free membership scheme for under 26s called Trike, so these experiments fed into building up that new scheme.
Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums	What content should be present on the new Laing Art Gallery site?	TWAM's websites are all being redeveloped and this is our opportunity to ensure that all the content is high quality and fit for purpose. In the past, time pressures have meant that copy has been moved over from old sites to new without it being reviewed and revised where necessary. There are also conflicting demands in terms of prioritising content and no agreed way of resolving these. Also, TWAM has increasing amounts of content (e.g. film footage, digitised collections) and we want to share these more effectively on the new site.
Victoria & Albert Museum	How to cull/shape/create content based on a workable content audit template.	We want people to be able to easily access quality and relevant content about our collections, building and public programme in whichever format is most useful for them.
Wales Millennium Centre	How can we use social networks to change people's perceptions of Wales Millennium Centre? How do we get a sense of usage/behaviour to inform a framework?	Our key target for Wales Millennium Centre's social network strategy is engagement. It is important to us to discover new and interesting ways of promoting content which engages with our existing audiences but also to find new ways to engage with new audiences on these platforms.
Watershed	How can we create an online community of interest around a theme and get that community to contribute content and engage with our content, and then convert that engagement into a ticket sale or mailing list sign up? How do we measure it?	Watershed’s purpose is to extend audience choice beyond the mainstream and engage them in conversations about ideas and events. We are starting to work more with stories and themes and want to investigate how we can get audiences engaged before the full event details are confirmed.
Yorkshire Sculpture Park	What is our website for? And how can it best serve different visitors?	‘Great art for everyone’ has been YSP’s goal since opening to the public in 1977, enabling access, understanding and enjoyment of art and landscape, whilst dismantling the barriers that often exist between the public and contemporary art. I want to make sure the website reflects this goal.



Appendix 2: Full list of project partners and URLs



ORGANISATION	LEAD CONTACT	WEBSITE
Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales	Graham Davies	www.museumwales.ac.uk
The Beaney House of Art & Knowledge.	James Williams	www.canterbury.co.uk/Beaney
Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives	Fay Curtis	www.bristolmuseums.org.uk
British Council	Nadja Noel	www.britishcouncil.org
British Museum	Harriet Maxwell	www.britishmuseum.org
Design Museum	Sarah Haddon Grant	www.designmuseum.org
Fitzwilliam Museum	David Scruton	www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk
Gulbenkian	David Yard	www.thegulbenkian.co.uk
Hampshire's Big Theme 1914 <small>(A partnership project delivered by Hampshire Cultural Trust and Southampton City Council Arts and Heritage Service).</small>	Linda Ellis	www3.hants.gov.uk/1914.htm
Historic Royal Palaces	Tim Powell	www.hrp.org.uk
Horniman Museum and Gardens	Adrian Murphy	www.horniman.ac.uk
Leicestershire County Council Communities and Wellbeing Service	Lucia Masundire	www.imageleicestershire.org.uk
Live at LICA	Jamie Wooldridge	www.liveatlica.org
Manchester International Festival	Ben Williams and Janina Mundy	www.mif.co.uk
Museum of London	Bilkis Mosoddik	www.museumoflondon.org.uk
National Galleries Scotland	Philip Hunt and Gregory Stedman	www.nationalgalleries.org

ORGANISATION	LEAD CONTACT	WEBSITE
National Museums Scotland	Elaine Macintyre	www.nms.ac.uk
People's History Museum	Louise Sutherland and Karen Moore	www.phm.org.uk
The Photographers' Gallery.	Richard Thompson	www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk
Public Catalogue Foundation	Andy Ellis	www.thepcf.org.uk
Royal Pavilion and Museums	Kevin Bacon	www.brighton-hove-rpml.org.uk
Royal Shakespeare Company	John Benfield	www.rsc.org.uk
Southbank Centre	Tess Schuberth, Navin Motwani and Paul Vulpiani	www.southbankcentre.co.uk
Tricycle Theatre	Dawn Lewis	www.tricycle.co.uk
Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums	Emma Pybus	www.twmuseums.org.uk
Victoria & Albert Museum	Joanna Jones	www.vam.ac.uk
Wales Millennium Centre	Jo Marriott	www.wmc.org.uk
Watershed	David Redfern and Claire Stewart	www.watershed.co.uk
Yorkshire Sculpture Park	Nina Rogers	www.ysp.co.uk

Who are Culture24?



www.WeAreCulture24.org.uk

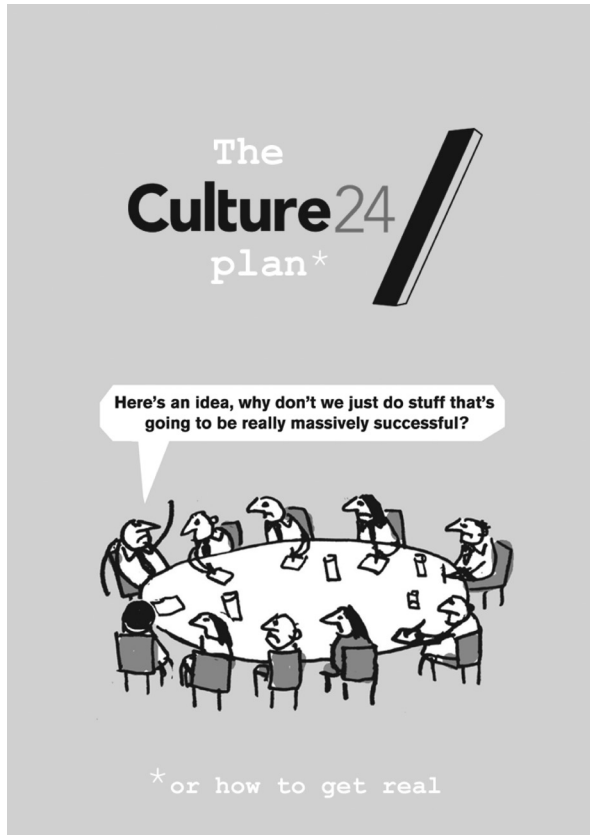
Culture24 is an independent non-profit company which exists to support the cultural sector to reach and connect with audiences. We are a small and dynamic team of writers, thinkers, producers and publishers who love arts and culture, understand digital and believe that cultural organisations have a vital place in a better world.

We are best known for publishing great websites about culture; producing the successful Museums at Night festival of after-hours openings and leading Let's Get Real, the collaborative action research project involving cultural organisations across the UK and Europe.

Culture24 provides platforms, networks and safe, collaborative spaces within which cultural organisations can work together to reach and engage audiences, benchmark, experiment and learn. We broker partnerships and strategic opportunities that it would be near impossible to access as individual organisations.

Our work has three main strands of activity:

- Programming and co-production
- Publishing
- Research and knowledge sharing



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Credits

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As a collaborative project we could not have done this without the help and support of all the individual project participants and the following people:

Abhay Adhikari
 Richard Austin
 Hasan Bakhshi
 Jon Davie
 Lana Gibson

Padma Gillen
 Anra Kennedy
 Matt Locke
 Kate McNab
 Richard Moss
 Sandra Murphy
 John Newbiggin
 Peter Pavement
 Joanna Prior
 Anna Rafferty
 Max St John

Report designed by

Crush
 @crushed.co.uk

With the financial support of:



