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BRAVE NEW WORLD

SOCIAL MEDIA AND CULTURAL
ORGANISATIONS



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BRAVE NEW WORLD

SOCIAL MEDIA AND CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

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Thematic Advisor > Angelina Russo is an Associate Professor at Swinburne University where she leads the research projects *Engaging with Social Media in Museums and New Literacy, New Audiences*.

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Cover Image: *The Contextual Villains, The Present History – Remade 2007*. This work contains family photographs, the work of artists Tom Civil, Amber Wallis and Emily Robinson and images from the National Library of Australia. Image from 'Flickr @ The National Library of Australia' case study.

<http://www.nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an25110363>

<http://www.nla.gov.au/nla.map-rm1892>

CEO'S WELCOME



THIS TIME LAST year I had little understanding of Web 2.0, Face Book, wikis, You Tube and other social media tools. The recent **Social Media and Cultural Communication** conference and Museum & Galleries NSW's newly formed digital reference group has developed my understanding and revealed many ways that social and digital media can benefit museums and galleries.

A truism is that 'more people go to the web than to museums' and a web presence provides an opportunity to tap into a bigger market and entice greater engagement with both physical and media sites, and reveal the powerful experience that a museum or gallery can provide.

Social media tools also allow for wide community involvement and input – from interchange about programs and collections, to curatorial blogs discussing the rationale for an exhibition.

One issue raised by museum and gallery workers is concern that the voice of specialist 'authority', which they represent, may be diminished if museums allow too much public input through social media, into collection identification, or program direction.

It certainly can test our perceptions and values. The Powerhouse Museum, for instance, discovered that designer fashion ranks highly with web users – rather than items traditionally perceived as popular by the museum.

Some key learnings for me were that the web is an essential tool for communication with all potential audiences, particularly with the hard to capture group of young people, but even with a much older generation who are learning to use online tools for information gathering. A social-media approach will best succeed if it is Director-led, supported from the top, or by the committee in a volunteer initiative – and must be embraced by the whole organisation.

Social media is an incomparable tool for gauging public interest in a museum and its offerings. It also offers new channels for public involvement.

While we aim to achieve participation and engagement with audiences as they walk through our doors, we can also seize the opportunity to provide the learning, inspiration, interchange and even the museum shopping experience, as users tune into their computers to fill their leisure hours. ■

Maisy Stapleton

THE NEXT WAVE

“Cultural institutions could lead the next wave of cultural programming”

Above: Co-Chair Angelina Russo (Swinburne University) presents to the Social Media and Cultural Communication Conference. Photo: Jerry Watkins

How social media challenges cultural organisations | Angelina Russo

THE GROWING CONTRIBUTION of the creative sector to the innovation economy was documented in the **Building a Creative Innovation Economy report** recently released by the Cultural Ministers Council.

The report suggests that the creative sector has yet to fully benefit from new technologies. This may be partly due to lack of infrastructure and training in many creative organisations and enterprises. Yet it is quite telling that one of the most technologically and scholarly well-equipped sectors in the creative economy, cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, galleries and archives, are not considered major players in leading creative innovation and/or digital literacy.

At the recent **Social Media and Cultural Communication Conference**, speakers from Australia, the UK, the USA and Canada gave their insights into the adoption, value and sustainability of social media in cultural institutions. The use of social media such as blogs, podcasts and wikis has risen across the sector, providing unprecedented ways of reaching new audiences, generating conversations, collaborations and co-created content.

The Conference arose from research conducted through the ARC Centre of Excellence in Creative Industries and Innovation and provided a forum where issues of authority, authenticity, access and audience engagement brought lively debate.

Throughout the conference it became clear that social media fundamentally challenge the way in which sector professionals see themselves. It is interesting to note that while user-generated content was often seen as a technology which enabled new relationships with audiences, its uptake is still contentious in many organisations. This is interesting given that user-generated content is not so far away from the beginnings of the modern museum and library which, for the most part, were built on private collections, drawn together by amateur enthusiasts who saw the potential for a broader distribution and educational agenda that could arise from donating their collections to cultural institutions.

Cultural institutions, with their large technological infrastructures and well-developed education programs could lead the next wave of cultural programming, particularly through increased production of creative and cultural content across a wide range of digital platforms.

A great example of this is the collaboration between the British Library and

the BBC around the successful series *Who do you think you are?* Through the addition of social media, the British Library has captured audience interest generated by the television series and provided cultural tools and training to enable this highly motivated audience to undertake genealogical research. The synthesis of social media and traditional broadcasting through a proactive cultural institution has created opportunities for commercial spin-offs and brokered new partnerships in the creative sector.

It is up to Australian cultural institutions to demonstrate their leadership; show how they can improve access to cultural materials, increase production, community participation and user-created content through the intelligent use of technologies firmly focused on social networking.

As a starting point for this issue, I would like to suggest that there are four specific ways in which social media challenge cultural organisations, that is through: engagement, experience, environment and evaluation. Each of these four areas will be discussed in this issue.

ENGAGEMENT

Swinburne University's research has indicated that there are simple ways in which we can categorise the use of social media in the cultural sector. From beginning a conversation with our audiences, through to engaging in a co-creative relationship where organisations and audiences come together to produce new forms of cultural content, the breadth of social media provides the basis for structured many-to-many communication.

This strategic understanding of the type of engagement and potential outcome is particularly important in the social media environment, not because social media is resource intensive, but because it opens up the lines of communication in ways which have yet to be fully understood.

EXPERIENCE

Why use social media in our organisations? How will it benefit our audiences? How will we maintain it? What value is there in this type of experience?

I think these questions are often asked because social media is sometimes seen as a series of tools and less as a strategic form of communication. The planning workshop which Jerry Watkins, Sebastian Chan and I developed places these strategies and tools in a broader communication module to

suggest that the sustainability of social media comes from an understanding of the purpose of communication, the fit of purpose to audience and the appropriate tool.

ENVIRONMENT

There is a great deal of discussion around the digitisation of collections. A number of government agencies have produced reports which assess the need for structured funding to support the ongoing process.

To add to this, I would like to suggest that we consider our 'digital artifacts' – those texts, pictures, videos, sound files and activities where our audiences can, or have participated in, an exchange with the organisation.

How can we make better use of these artifacts and what environments or presence can we create to enable our audiences to collect this content and exchange it in meaningful ways?

In this issue we interview Caroline Payson from The Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum (a Smithsonian Institution). Together with a community of practice, the museum has developed innovative ways of extending their online audience by using their digital artifacts to create new audiences.

EVALUATION

In the mid-nineties the internet was beginning to be used by some of the larger and more technically-able cultural institutions around the world. As cultural organisations developed their online presence, the need to evaluate user-experience became critical. Across the sector, audience research took on a new measure, one where the challenge of identifying and categorising online audiences became a major task.

With social media, this is now a more complex question: how do we evaluate the experience of using social media by online audiences? What measures do we use and how are they in keeping with other modes of

evaluation within the organisation? How is funding attributed to these initiatives and how do we describe both the long and short term benefits?

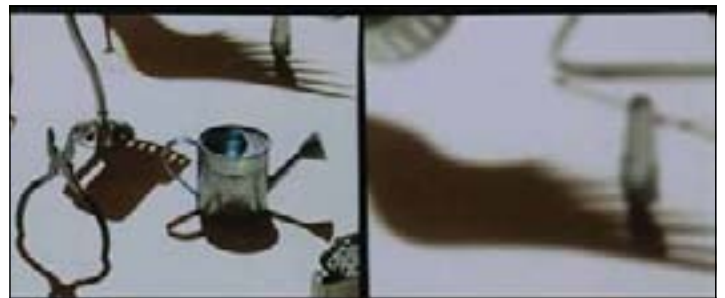
Throughout this issue we will be exploring these themes of environment, experience, engagement and evaluation in greater detail.

BIOGRAPHY

Angelina Russo is an Associate Professor at Swinburne University where she leads the research projects *Engaging with Social Media in Museums* and *New Literacy, New Audiences*. ■

"The sustainability of social media comes from an understanding of the purpose of communication, the fit of purpose to audience and the appropriate tool"

Below: Participants in the Social Media & Cultural Communications Conference 2008: Frank Howarth, Lea Giles-Peters, Caroline Payson, Louise Douglas and Angelina Russo (panel). Photo: Jerry Watkins.



MEDIA ART CURATING FORUM

FOR REGIONAL GALLERIES, MUSEUMS AND LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS

Media art: video installations, interactive artworks and web-based art are now part of mainstream contemporary visual arts and are continually growing in popularity. The forum addresses commonly asked questions and provides an overview of contemporary media arts for cultural organisation staff, creative practitioners, arts educators and students.

Topics covered include: an introduction to contemporary media art; exhibition design and presentation; technical/equipment requirements; maintenance and logistics; installation; invigilation; and audiences.

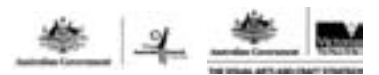
The forums will coincide with the Experimenta Playground exhibition in Adelaide and Perth (2008) and Bendigo and Albury (2009). The forums will also be held in Dubbo and Townsville to coincide with Shaun Gladwell: Videowork a new Artspace touring exhibition managed by Museums & Galleries NSW.

Please visit the website for all venue details, dates and RSVP contact details. Admission is free. Refreshments provided. Bookings are essential.

Image: Minim++, Tool's Life (2001), exhibited as part of Experimenta Vanishing Point 2005 – 2007.

This project is an initiative of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body and assisted by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, state and territory governments.

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SHAPING VIRTUAL SPACE

How social media is shaping the National Museums Online Learning Project, UK* | Carolyn Royston

IN THE UK there is an exciting initiative which brings together nine national collecting institutions** to create new digital content across an innovative digital cultural network. This three year project is funded by the UK Government and is due to launch in March 2009.

The project targets students, teachers and lifelong learners by providing resources for schools (WebQuests) and resources for lifelong learners (Creative Journeys). It is being developed to enable digital resources to be used and shared across all nine national institutions.

The strength of the project is its ability to engage new and existing audiences in creative ways. The lifelong learning element of the project aims to incorporate user-generated content and build creative communities using participatory methods which encourage engagement and critical use of the collections.

Early ideas for the project included using Web 2.0 applications such as blogs, forums and links to established applications such as Flickr and YouTube. At this stage, it was not envisaged that the applications would be connected across the partner websites or that there would be any kind of cross-institution searching.

It soon became apparent, through partner discussions and focus groups with potential users, that there would be greater benefit to users if a series of tools were built that encouraged engagement enabling cross-institution connections and collaborative co-creative opportunities. Importantly, this approach would build a unique network of participants across multiple, often unrelated, collections.

In order to test these ideas, a simple online prototype was built and real users volunteered to act as testers. The recruitment was undertaken via an advertisement on the partner website homepages. This process demonstrated the potential for engaging new audiences via social media initiatives.

Users were asked to use the prototype for approximately six weeks after which they completed an online questionnaire that asked what they looked for in this type of cultural engagement. Interestingly, the results tended to revolve around opportunities to:

- > talk about their creative work inspired by the collections,
- > link the collections together to make searching and research easier,
- > be inspired by other like-minded people,
- > discover new things through serendipitous browsing,
- > share ideas via a variety of different media, and
- > have a voice on a national museum website.

These responses informed the next version of the project. Following on from the user feedback, the prototype is being redesigned to reflect the types of creative engagement that had been described.

“Users will, for the first time, be able to access and use digitised collection materials from their federated searches and collect this material in bespoke lightboxes, creating personalised digital resources”

This stage of the project, provisionally named Creative Journeys, will enable users to document how the partner collections inspire their own creative work and processes. This will be achieved by incorporating the ability to:

- > create, post and share journeys on partner institutions' websites,
- > use different web technologies to present and author their journeys, and comment on other's journeys; and
- > explore dynamic, changing, user-generated content that is shared and integrated across the partnership.

In addition, 30 videos are to be created showing a range of people who have been inspired by the collections in different ways. These will be made by the partners and shared across the partner websites.

In tandem with the project development, researchers from the University of Edinburgh have identified the context within which this type of active participation occurs, interviewed the early prototype users and analysed their feedback.

Through this research, and in partnership with the production team, we have identified the challenges and advantages of building a network of active cultural participants.

CHALLENGES

Some of the challenges include: Tension between 'virtual and real'

Some users suggested that viewing objects in the virtual environment should not be considered a lesser experience to that which surrounds seeing the 'real' object. Instead, the object can often be seen to have a 'different' value in the virtual world, one which can be expressed through the ability to collect cultural content in various ways which are meaningful to the individual.

Challenge to curatorial authority and reputation

Users felt that the opportunity to have a voice on a national website was an innovation in its own right, though some felt intimidated by the possibility of adding their creative content. Others felt that the institutions might limit the ways in which they participated and that any creative content which they produced would not be valued by the organisation.

Developing a new relationship with users by actively participating in the online community

One of the challenges for the partner institutions has been that by agreeing to develop this type of network, their role can no longer be as passive onlooker. Increasingly, the partners have come to recognise that once the website is launched, they will need to actively maintain and sustain the network. This process in itself develops a new relationship between the organisation and its audiences.

Messiness and complexity around new ways of communicating and use of collections.

Active cultural participation through social media tools is inherently a 'messy' activity. It is difficult to estimate the number of people who will take up the opportunity to engage. At the same time, it is difficult to predict how the engagement will evolve. By acknowledging that this is the case, the partner organisations are preparing themselves for new forms of communication, some of which have been modelled in social media initiatives by other organisations.

ADVANTAGES

Increased user interaction with online collections

In some instances, this project represents the first time that collection materials from these organisations will be able to be viewed using federated search tools. Users will be able to access and use digitised collection materials from their federated searches and collect this material in bespoke lightboxes, creating personalised digital resources. This material is then able to be accessed and used in a variety of ways.

Reaching new audiences

For the partners, opening up their collections to users who might not be their traditional audiences brings new possibilities for further engagement and collaboration. The creation of a 'trusted' cultural network where audiences are introduced to institutions and collections they might not normally access is an important and innovative aspect of this partnership.

"The strength of the project is its ability to engage new and existing audiences in creative ways"

Opening up deeper layers of the collections

Serendipitous browsing enables users to access collections via individual interests, linking personal endeavour with deeper connection to a multitude of cultural resources.

Enabling users to personalise their relationship with the collections

By giving users a range of powerful tools to collect, edit, reconstruct and publish their own creative content, the project encourages a type of ambient cultural presence across the sector.

Developing communities of interest

Networking tools include commenting, posting, inviting friends, creating groups, participating in forums - all of which encourage the development of cultural communities.

Sustainability and scalability

The application will be hosted on each of the partner websites, enabling them to customise, maintain and administer the application to suit their capabilities and resources. There will be the potential for the partnership to grow and for other cultural organisations to join the network.

The next 12 months will be spent building and testing the application with a variety of users.

BIOGRAPHY

Carolyn Royston is the Project Manager of the National Museums Online Learning Project, UK, an innovative network of cultural organisations dedicated to providing creative social media tools for new audience participation. Special thanks to the research team at The University of Edinburgh. ■

*http://www.vam.ac.uk/about_va/online_learning/index.html

**British Museum, Imperial War Museum, National Portrait Gallery, Natural History Museum, Royal Armouries, Sir John Soane's Museum, Tate, The Wallace Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum (lead partner)

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SOCIAL MEDIA CASE STUDY

Babelswarm @ Lismore Regional Gallery and in Second Life | Steven Alderton

Babelswarm is an inter-disciplinary artwork that explores and combines possibilities of literary, music/sound art and real-time 3D arts practices within the virtual world.

There was a simultaneous installation in Second Life and in the 'real world' space of Lismore Regional Gallery. *Babelswarm* was launched on 11 April at Lismore Regional Gallery by Australia Council Chairman James Strong AO, and Australia Council CEO Kathy Keele. *Babelswarm* continued at Lismore Regional Gallery until 23 April 2008 and still exists online at Second Life.

Babelswarm is a metaphor for the Tower of Babel. The work uses voice recognition software that converts the spoken word of real and virtual world participants into 3D letterform images in an evolving tower of words. Words (literally) fall from the (virtual) sky and into the tower.

The letterforms generated relationships with each other through a combination of visual and sonic manifestations, fragments of narrative, environmental/user awareness capabilities and through interactions with existing data generated within Second Life itself - such as virtual winds, sunrises and sunsets.

The *Babelswarm* team consists of Adam Nash, Christopher Dodds, and Justin Clemens and their avatars: Mashup Islander, Adam Ramona and S1 Gausman. These virtual world explorers received the first ever Australia Council grant of \$20,000 to work within Second Life. According to Justin Clemens, Second Life is an already burgeoning platform for today's art, "Every era has a form that exemplifies it: in Shakespeare's time, it was the theatre; today, it's Second Life. It's a question of trying to meet the new challenges of a new time - and the new spaces that it generates". Chris says, "Virtual environments are the next logical progression for mass interaction and collaboration and we'll be there to enjoy, and hopefully influence, the ride".

THE IDEA > I have been looking at ways to extend our audience at Lismore Regional Gallery - to reach new and diverse audiences beyond the traditional reach of the Gallery, and also offer our local audiences challenging experiences in new media. As such, I have been investigating growing the services of our website, utilising new media, and considering establishing Lismore Regional Gallery in Second Life.

Babelswarm situates Australian artists and Australian innovation in the global digital environment, and contributes to the Australian creative innovation economy. This is where I was looking to point the Gallery as we embrace new art practices and new social platforms for ideas, innovation and connectivity.

Social media was the best tool as it is more interactive and immediately responsive. Contemporary art is the international medium of ideas and this project presented new ideas in an accessible place - Second Life. *Babelswarm*

depends on interactions between people as the discussion and integration of words builds shared-meaning, using technology as a conduit. As such, this project is alive, always changing and reacting. Our audience participates as the artwork evolves, *Babelswarm* is its own built in public program.

This is an artwork that is active day and night. If you view the site in the middle of the night, when we are closed, the Northern hemisphere audience starts to check in. It's like our programs are open 24/7.

The Gallery is a place for interaction. Our audiences are interacting in a creative digital global environment, meeting other people and participating in a creative concept. Social media has the capacity to contribute to Gallery programs like an interchange. There is always something going on, and it plugs Lismore Regional Gallery into a bigger global network. Social media platforms are very important tools for regional galleries to engage with current critical debates and practices immediately, both here and overseas. It affords the Gallery the ability to participate on the global playing field of art, ideas and with the creative community.

I undertook this project as part of an overall strategy that redefines Lismore Regional Gallery locally, nationally and internationally as a hub for ideas. We recognise our core audience as Lismore and the Northern Rivers, but through our programs our audiences are increasingly national and international. LRG is situated in a regional part of Australia with intent to develop innovative programs built from contemporary culture and new ideas. *Babelswarm's* concept, delivery and interaction achieves our program goals.

Babelswarm, our new exhibition space Lismore Contemporary, and the new website, are designed to provide a platform to present our programs and ideas to an extended audience. The Gallery is about ideas creation and the articulation of contemporary culture.

Simply we were seeking to engage new audiences and offer a regional/global platform for the presentation of Australian art.

AUDIENCE > With a project that operates in the real world and the virtual world, our target audience was Generation X and Generation Y, and local and international audiences.

IMPLEMENTATION > I read about the project through the Australia Council website and, eventually, researched the project in concert with the artists.

ENVIRONMENT > *Babelswarm* emerged from an environment of collaboration between the artists with funding support from the Australia Council. It was developed and operates in a sophisticated global digital environment.

For more information go to <http://babelswarm.blogspot.com> or www.lismoregallery.org



Above: Rom Anthonis, Artists and their avatars in Melbourne. From left to right: Adam Ramona, Adam Nash, Mashup Islander, Christopher Dodds, Justin Clemens, S1 Gaussman, 2008

“Our audiences are interacting in a creative digital global environment”

ENGAGEMENT > To engage with *Babelswarm* Lismore Gallery audiences are walked through the exhibition and given the theory behind *Babelswarm*, particularly the Tower of Babel. They are then shown how to use the controls on the computer that enable the Gallery's avatar to walk and fly through the *Babelswarm* foyer, onto the island, and interact with the sculpture. Avatars that walk onto the island independently can read about the project in the *Babelswarm* foyer and may be able to interact with the Gallery's avatar or with one of the artists.

Ultimately, the project is about engagement and participation as the avatar talks to and touches the sculpture – thus contributing to a socially constructed sound sculpture.

EXPERIENCE > We hoped our audience would experience interaction, both with the sculpture by means of contributing to its construction, and with other avatars/people from around the world.

For the visitors who are not accustomed to virtual worlds and interactive digital environments, they are experiencing a whole new place to experience art, ideas and community.

EVALUATION > Each visitor is walked through the exhibition and during and after this process we evaluate their interest, enjoyment and level of engagement. We also obtain feedback from the artists who have made contact with a lot of avatars who experience *Babelswarm*.

WHAT NEXT > Our next step is to work with the artists to develop a touring exhibition for *Babelswarm*. Also, we are building an exhibition space on our website to exhibit moving image work. The Space will work closely with our new space at the Gallery - Lismore Contemporary, and be interactive.

ORGANISATION > Lismore Regional Gallery produces a forward-looking program centred on ideas and contemporary culture. The Gallery is a platform for Australian and international contemporary art and 20th Century Australian art. The changing program of exhibitions, artists' residencies, off-site projects and talks offer opportunities for seeing, making and discussing contemporary ideas. The Gallery's aim is to involve people in the ideas and practices of today's artists and creative practitioners.

Lismore Regional Gallery operates regionally with a view to engage locally, nationally and internationally. The Gallery presents work by emerging and established artists and facilitates a connection to new media that articulates contemporary issues and ideas.

Lismore Contemporary is located upstairs at Lismore Regional Gallery. Its compact organisational form can absorb and respond to current developments in arts practice and contemporary culture. This space functions as an ideal catalyst for new ideas responding to societal developments. Oriented internationally and with consideration of the local context, Lismore Contemporary is a vital and discursive space for presenting and mediating contemporary art.

PROJECT BUDGET > Broadband costs were \$130 per month usage, \$65 early termination, \$129 set up fee, total \$324. Cabling and install was \$180 for the technician, \$70 for cables and connectors, and \$80 for a 5 port Ethernet modem and router, total \$330. We only needed the external broadband link for a month so we were penalised \$65 for early termination. Broadband usage was between 1,000 and 3,000mb per day, which equates to \$10 to \$30 per day. We signed up for 40,000mb usage per month, which means after approx 15 days we paid extra. The exhibition ran for just over 2 weeks but broadband was active for an extra week for set up and checking. Total for installation and run costs was \$700.

Extras were standard exhibition costs of invites, mailout, and opening night catering.

TECHNOLOGY > The artists brought all the software required as they have been working closely with it, in particular, they needed to download Second Life software.

We instigated a sponsorship package with the local Apple computer supplier, Powermax, and they supplied 4 brand new iMacs for the exhibition. We had to arrange a new broadband link from an external supplier as we are part of Council and our link is a microwave signal which would not have coped with *Babelswarm's* download/ upload capacity. Also, we did not want to allow public access to Council's intranet. We used our video projector to screen the work from one of the computers, and ran the sound through our speakers in Gallery 1 and Gallery 3.

We used the highest speed broadband available with 40,000mb usage per month.

PEOPLE > We managed the project internally, Director, Curator, Administration Coordinator, liaising with the artists, internet service provider and staff from Powermax. There were technical concerns, but they were alleviated over conversations with the technician from Powermax, and the artists.

BIOGRAPHY

Steven Alderton is the Director of Lismore Regional Gallery and is currently working on exhibition projects with Ricky Sawallow, Barnaby Furnas, Taring Padi, and Aquarius. He is a sitting member of the Australia Council VAB. ■

VALE PETER HANIGAN



“Peter had many more years of productive contribution to museums and life in general to make”

Left: Peter Hanigan, left, with Ian Petty at the National Film and Sound Archive, 2006

M&G NSW remembers the late Peter Hanigan | Robyn Hanigan

PETER HANIGAN, a respected Museum Advisor for M&G NSW, passed away suddenly on 11 March 2008.

Born in Sydney, Peter grew up at Bald Face on the Georges River and attended Canterbury Boys High School. He began his 12 year teaching career in Papua New Guinea when he was only 19, working in many remote areas and often helping to build the classrooms. During his time in PNG Peter became interested in the history and culture of its people, as well as developing an abiding interest in the history of WW2, which surrounded him in the form of relics of sunken ships, crashed aeroplanes and the sites of battles. These experiences led him towards his future work with history and museums.

Peter married Robyn in 1973 and they had two children, Kylie and Ivan.

After years of teaching in regional Australia including Wilcannia and West Wyalong, Peter moved to Canberra in 1992 where he studied history at the University of Canberra and the Australian National University. He later continued his studies at UTS and the University

of Sydney. As part of his study Peter spent a month at Arizona State University where he participated in activities arranged for students of Public History. This experience and the six month long world trip that followed enabled him to observe what was happening in museums in Arizona, Boston, Canada and the UK.

Peter worked as a Museums Advisor in Gundagai and Tumut Shires and with Canberra Historic Places as a guide at Mugga Mugga, Calthorpe's House and Lanyon. He was also heavily involved with Old Parliament House in Canberra.

Peter had many more years of productive contribution to museums and life in general to make, and he is greatly missed by his family, his fellow Museum Advisors, the museum and gallery sector and the wider community. ■

FORTHCOMING M&G NSW EVENTS

Powerful Places: models of convergence in the museum, gallery and library sector.

FEATURING INTERNATIONAL AND Australian speakers, *Powerful Places* provides a timely examination of the impact of the co-location and convergence of cultural facilities and services. Speakers will also explore current models of management and provide an analysis of the issues emerging from this approach.

A key event within the *Power of Place - Public Libraries NSW Country Conference*, *Powerful Places* is a significant opportunity for local government managers responsible for cultural development and for museum, gallery and library staff working in this environment, to gain a greater understanding of the challenges and benefits of converged services and facilities.

Speakers include: Bill McNaught - Manager, Puke Ariki Cultural Centre, New Zealand, Noelle Nelson - Library & Cultural Development Manager, Newcastle City Council, Michelle Brennard - Manager, Library and Heritage Services, City of Wanneroo and Sally Watterson - Senior Curator, Tweed Regional Museum. ■

EVENT DETAILS

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| DATE: | Tuesday, 29 July 2008 |
| TIME: | 9.30am - 4.00pm |
| VENUE: | Tamworth Regional Gallery |
| FEE: | \$130 full price/\$100 concession |
| REGISTRATIONS: | Open Friday, 30 May 2008. |

Powerful Places is presented by M&G NSW in partnership with the Country Public Libraries Association of NSW.

WHO VISITS OUR GALLERIES?



Above: Opening of *Unexpected Pathways*, Fairfield City Museum and Gallery, February 2008.

M&G NSW breaks ground with new research on local and regional audiences | Katy Alexander

IN 2006, MUSEUMS & GALLERIES NSW coordinated a scoping study that 'took the temperature' of the gallery sector in NSW. Commissioned by Arts NSW, the study was conducted by Sue Boaden of the Australia Street Company.

A key finding was the lack of consistency and benchmarking in audience research. This meant that statistics on the sector were patchy or inconsistent, that individual galleries lacked tangible visitor knowledge and there was no state-wide research available to promote the value of these galleries or to identify the broad community groups that participate in gallery programs across regions and across the state.

As audience development and research is vital to understanding the sector, M&G NSW approached the Australia Council to support an audience research project that would provide consistent data on audiences in individual galleries, across regions and eventually across the state. A pilot study was subsequently funded by the Community Partnerships and Market Development Division of the Australia Council.

In May 2007, *Cultural Intelligence - the Strategic Audience Development Study for Galleries & Museums in Regional NSW* commenced. The project is being managed by Katy Alexander, M&G NSW Audience Development Manager, with assistance provided by Danielle Neely, an intern from the Museum Studies Department of the University of Sydney.

"Audience development and research is vital to understanding the sector"

The pilot study aims to establish benchmark information on local and regional audiences at publicly funded galleries and museums in NSW. These results will provide galleries, museums, arts funding bodies and local government with key information and insights to improve audience numbers, access, engagement and diversity.

The study currently involves Blacktown Arts Centre, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Fairfield City Museum & Gallery, Gosford Regional Gallery & Arts Centre, Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery, Liverpool Regional Museum, Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Parramatta Heritage Centre, and Penrith Regional Gallery & the Lewers Bequest. The first year of the study will be completed in June 2008, and the Australia Council has confirmed funding for an additional 2 years of research.

For more information about *Cultural Intelligence - the Strategic Audience Development Study for Galleries & Museums in Regional NSW*, please see the Audience Development section of M&G NSW's website. ■



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INSIDER > JESSICA TYRRELL



"Don't Look Gallery is an artist run space in Dulwich Hill that I have a particular affinity with because of its because of its courageous programming"

INSIDER is a series of interviews providing readers with a unique insight into the people whose expertise, industry knowledge and passion for Australian culture, art and heritage have led them to work with Museums and Galleries NSW.

WITH **SOCIAL MEDIA** as the theme of this issue it seemed appropriate for **The MAG** to talk with Jessica Tyrrell, **M&G NSW's** new Marketing & Customer Relations Officer who is responsible, among other things, for producing the weekly e-bulletin *Alert!*, maintaining the website and providing technical advice and support in the office. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications (Honours) from UTS and her experience working on a variety of web based projects informs her role at **M&G NSW** where she hopes to further extend the organisation's online presence using social media tools.

Jessica is also a practicing new media artist who works at the intersection of installation, audio/visual performance, sound, video, online & locative media. Her work has been included at various festivals in Australia including *Liquid Architecture*, *Real Life on Film* (ACMI), & *Electrofringe*.

2008 Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

\$60,000

The Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship, **now valued at \$60,000**, is intended to enable an artist, at the outset of their career, to undertake further art studies overseas at a recognised art institution, or to undertake a study program with a senior artist, for one to two years.

Applications are to be submitted to Artspace, 43-51 Cowper Wharf Road, Woolloomooloo NSW 2011 by **Friday 27 June 2008**.

Application forms and guidelines will be available from Arts NSW Tel: 02 9228 5533, Free-call 1800 358 954 or www.arts.nsw.gov.au

The Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship is presented by the New South Wales Government with the generous support of the Helen Lempriere Bequest, managed by Perpetual Trustees.

What's your favourite object or work in a museum or gallery, and why?

I am most excited by underground work happening outside of institutionalised spaces. An example of this is the annual convergence of independent artists, musicians and writers for the amazing *This Is Not Art festival* in Newcastle which is made up of panels, exhibitions, happenings, concerts, workshops and much more in the abandoned buildings and unoccupied spaces of Newcastle's city centre.

What is your favourite museum or gallery?

Don't Look Gallery is an artist run space in Dulwich Hill that I have a particular affinity with because of its courageous programming.

What are you currently reading and/or listening to?

Reading: www.subtle.net/empyre, www.theartlife.com, www.sensesofcinema.com, <http://artlife.blogspot.com>, and of course my own blog and listening to David Bowie.

Who would you most like to sit next to on a plane?

Arthur Rimbaud or Chris Marker. They are both astounding poets - one with words and the other with

the moving image.

What is your greatest fear?

That we will forget our collective past and the lessons it has taught us.

What makes you laugh?

Corporate types jogging in the Domain at lunchtime.

If you had to grab one thing from your home, in the event of a disaster, what would it be?

The hard drive of my Mac computer. The machine has an imprint of my life on its hard drive!

Have you ever thought about doing something else?

I don't actually feel like I have a choice - you do what you love because what else is there?

Worst moment in your life?

Being told by my high school careers advisor that I might want to consider a career in designing *Hallmark* cards or cake decorating when I told her I wanted to be an artist. ■

"I am most excited by underground work happening outside of institutionalised spaces"

SOCIAL MEDIA CASE STUDY



George Hubert Wilkins, *A view of Anzac Cove as it appeared in February, February 1919* | www.cas.awm.gov.au/item/P03631.232



Left: George Lambert, *Anzac Cove, 5 March 1919*, oil with pencil on wood panel | www.eas.awm.gov.au/item/ART02839

Bloggng @ the Australian War Memorial (AWM) | Liz Holcombe

WE DON'T HAVE a name for the blog project, as it just grew, but AWM Blogs sums it up. It is not a project in the true sense of the word, but it is a direction.

The idea for the project was born from an acute and practical need: we needed a way to get exhibition related content online in a flexible form that would also allow for some public input.

THE IDEA > Each year, the AWM puts on a number of special and travelling exhibitions. By 2005, we were making a hand crafted online version of each exhibition, complete with branding. In principle, this was a good idea: it gave quality and long-term access to the exhibition for the public and other audiences, including the venues the exhibitions travelled to.

In practice, it was becoming difficult to support. With a web team of two, and a large site to maintain over and above exhibition microsites, we were finding it hard to keep up with the work. In addition, the whole notion of microsites was starting to worry us, they are effectively dead ends, focused on a particular event, and did not connect well with the other content on the site, even when there was direct overlap.

We wanted to use the web to expose the collection more, to explore themes and ideas that were related to, but not included in, the exhibition, to engage more actively and personally with the online audience, and to learn more ourselves.

A new approach was needed, and, as we did not have a suitable web publishing platform, blogs looked like meeting our requirements. These gave us what we needed in the short-term, with the promise of delivering more benefits long-term, depending on the response from the public.

There were four key requirements: ease of use, ease of design and development, informal conversation with our audience, and a way for staff to share their knowledge directly.

Social media was the best tool for the job, which was to enable curators to create and publish exhibition related material before, during and possibly after, a physical exhibition went on display. Curators also wanted to be able to discuss other aspects of their work that may not emerge within an exhibition or publication. The tool needed to be simple to use, not involve extensive editing, be able to include images, video, sound and links, and to be structured the way we wanted it. In short, blogs allowed a fast, flexible and light approach to sharing exhibition content and ideas with the public.

The first external blog was for the *Lawrence and the Light Horse* exhibition. The blog went live around 18 months before the exhibition

“We wanted to use the web to expose the collection more, to explore themes and ideas that were related to, but not included in, the exhibition”

opened, the sort of lead-time we could only dream about with the previous model, where we had to wait for the branding design elements and curatorial essays to be finished before we could construct the online version. The curator, Mal Booth, and his team really enjoyed blogging. Unlike our hand crafted online exhibition microsites, the Lawrence blog contained a diverse array of material, including stories of how the material for the exhibition was drawn together.

AUDIENCE > For the first blog, our target audience was anyone with an interest or a potential interest in T. E. Lawrence and/or the Australian Light Horse.

It is now much wider than that, as our blogs provide material on many aspects of our collection and Australian military history, along with a commentary on the development of an exhibition. Some of the material will by its nature appeal to a very small selection of the community, for instance those interested in the construction of First World War aircraft, while other stories have popular appeal, such as a post on the items in the collection from HMAS Sydney.

IMPLEMENTATION > The project was developed as a result of a combination of factors: reading articles, reading and using blogs, and at the same time coming to the realisation that hand crafted, stand alone online versions of exhibitions were not working for us on a number of levels. That led us to explore blogs more actively as a solution, and we did this by experimentation, plenty of conversations, and finally putting a successful proposal to senior management.

ENVIRONMENT > Staff from across the AWM have been blogging from the start, and continue to do so. We aim to educate staff who will then train their peers. There is no small group that owns all the expertise; we try to share and encourage as many people as possible to blog and to read the blogs. Success is mixed: as in any change, people have different approaches. A small group worked to get it started, a slightly larger group carried the blogs for a while, and now a new and larger group is becoming active as they become more familiar with the blogs and how they work. It is collaborative – staff from all levels are learning from each other and we aim to keep it like that.

ENGAGEMENT > Our audience engages with the project chiefly through comments on the blogs, but we have received emails, as well as phone calls, from the public and from media outlets.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL BLOGS

Lawrence of Arabia and the Light Horse exhibition
<http://blogawm.gov.au/lawrence/>

Focus Photography & War, 1945 to 2006
<http://blogawm.gov.au/lambert/>

George Lambert Gallipoli and Palestine Landscape
<http://blog.awm.gov.au/lambert/>

To Flanders Fields, 1917
<http://blog.awm.gov.au/1917/>

Gallipoli Battlefield Tour 2007
<http://blog.awm.gov.au/gallipoli2007/>

Australian War Memorial blog
<http://blog.awm.gov.au/>

“Blogging is about letting go, accepting the fact that there may be criticism or questions... to turn responses into opportunities”



Above: Photo: James Pinkerton Campbell, Three members of the 8th Australian Light Horse Regimental Signal Station, sit with their heliograph set up on the pier on the Sea of Galilee, 26 September 1918 | www.cas.awm.gov.au/item/B00277

EVALUATION > At present we are using Google analytics to gauge audience interest over time in the blogs. We are tracking visits, time spent on site, new audiences and bounce rates among other figures to get some idea of what people are doing on the blogs. The project's outcomes are harder to measure. In time we plan to do some more formal evaluation to explore what the analytics are showing us, but we are not ready for that yet. My feeling is that so far, the outcomes for the AWM blogs are positive, but we need more time, more posts and more data to see what is really happening.

IMPACT > The key impact for the AWM has been how we can use blogs to further expose the collection content that we already have online. We are about to implement new content management and digital asset management systems, which will make it easier for us to do that, and eventually allow us to open up for public tagging and a deeper and richer conversation with a growing community.

WHAT NEXT? > We have started our next social media step and it is a combination of approaches. We have decided to use three social sites to learn how they work and to assess what opportunities they present for the AWM. Late last year we set up a Facebook profile, a YouTube page and joined Flickr. On the static website, we have a page listing these forays into social media and will monitor use of that to see what sort of reaction it gets. We are in debt to the Brooklyn Museum for leading the way in this exploration.

PROJECT BUDGET > There was no direct budget allocation for the blogs. We relied, and continue to rely, on staff time and expertise.

TECHNOLOGY > We decided to use Wordpress - free, well supported and widely used open source software. Our IT section installed it and got it running properly on its own server.

PEOPLE > A two person web team and a key person from IT, plus curators, conservators, and interested staff from across the organisation. The number of people working on the blogs has increased over time. From the five who worked on the first blog, the AWM participation in blogging has grown to more than 65 registered contributors, working over the six external blogs and the one internal blog.

CREDITS > Mal Booth, Adam Bell, Chris Dowling, The Brooklyn Museum and a large and growing cast of dedicated, enthusiastic and blogging AWM staff.

BIOGRAPHY

Liz Holcombe has been the Web Manager at the Australian War Memorial since 2004. She is a librarian by training, and before becoming the Web Manager, worked as a curator and as a reference librarian in the Research Centre at the Memorial. She is almost half way through a Masters in Internet Communication at the University of Canberra. ■



Above: The Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum

“We are the National Design Museum and the only museum in the country dedicated to design, so we have to reach out to all those people and obviously the web is the way to do that”

INTERVIEW WITH CAROLINE PAYSON

Caroline Payson is the Director of Education at the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum (a Smithsonian Institution). She spoke to The MAG about ways in which museums and galleries can use social media technologies to enhance and deliver education programs.

AR: Would you mind giving us a summary of the Educator Resource Centre (ERC)?

The ERC is an online one-stop shop for teachers who want to integrate design into the classroom. It provides them with materials, regardless of subjects they teach, to manage this process by providing lesson plans and activities that are aligned to their local and national standards and a conversation space where they can talk to each other.

There are over 150 conversation strands, where they can talk to other teachers who are doing similar things as they are. Those forums might range from discussions about where to get free supplies to something more in-depth like, how to do a critique in the classroom.

We also provided video of our previous professional development activities so that teachers could ‘see’ what integrating design into the classroom actually looked like.

AR: Can you tell me about your walk-in audience?

Our walk-in audience tends to be primarily women over 60, very well educated, over 60% have advanced degrees and over 80% live within a mile radius of the museum. Our web audience is very different, again because we’re using teachers from around the country and we have teachers registered in all 50 states, they’re obviously coming from a more diverse demographic, tend to be much younger, less affluent and certainly more comfortable with technology.

AR: In your experience, how does social media change the online experience?

The ERC has such an enormous amount of user-generated content, the museum provides some content, but apart from the videos which model design in the classroom, the reality is that teachers are interested in what happens in the classroom and what they would need to do to model design in their classes.

Almost all of the advice they are getting is being generated by other teachers, who do what they do and comment on how they experience this. This considerably broadens their experience of the site and we're getting that much more feedback and support as opposed to us being a museum and them simply giving us suggestions.

AR: You have been proactive about developing new types of engagement, wanting your audience to talk to each other. What do you think leads to successful engagement?

We can run a program and give them an example of how they could run a program in their classroom. What we can't do, because we're not in the classroom, is to actually improve on our suggestion and go off in a million different directions to improve on that training in ways that we couldn't have suggested because we're not the person on the ground doing that.

That's one of the things that we're trying to be really clear about with our teachers, that is, we are providing them with basic training and information and we encourage and embrace the idea that they are then developing their own programs and activities which we would not have imagined. That's where you get the depth in the site and generate that type of enthusiasm because you've given it to them to decide how they can take it further.

AR: So what do you need from Senior Management to make these types of initiatives work in the museum?

Apart from money? Buy in. Support from the Board and the Director and buy in from the whole team. It's about taking a different approach to how we deliver programs, and it goes beyond curatorial initiatives, it's not just about the exhibition but about the process and how that can educate people.

When I was hired, it was to specifically explore how the web could be used in our mission to reach people nationally. It's important to remember that is our mission and we are the National Design Museum and the only museum in the country dedicated to design so we have to reach out to all those people and obviously the web is the way to do that. I think that our Director has worked hard to make everyone in the museum understand what our priority is and that's helped set up the environment for these types of initiatives.

AR: So into the future, what sorts of evaluations do you think will demonstrate the reach of your programs against your mission?

Because we're in the United States, the most effective evaluation in our classrooms is one that demonstrates the connection between what happens in the classroom and the standardised tests which are linked to educational funding. That's the holy grail of evaluation.

We're not there yet but we have been able to demonstrate our progress through participation on the web and the number of design generated activities that come with the enthusiastic responses teachers have had to the programs. Students who participate in the program are reported to be more enthused, they're talking more in those classes. In terms of looking at how students engage with content, we tend to look at evaluation as a mechanism for dealing with that. I think that increasingly we're looking at the web and particularly at every version of the ERC as a product of that evaluation – we're asking teachers what they think of the site and we're basing our developments on their observations. Evaluation is always happening on the user-generated content; teachers can rate the lesson plans and the forums give feedback on the ways they are used in the classroom.

www.cooperhewitt.edu.au

“It's about taking a different approach to how we deliver programs”

Image: Carolyn Payson



MUSEUM 3.0

How social media can enhance the learning environments of cultural institutions | **Lynda Kelly**



Photo: Ariel Bogle, Australian Museum

“Web 2.0 puts users and not the organisation at the centre of the equation”



Photo: Carl Bento, Australian Museum



Photo: Brooke Carson-Ewart, Australian Museum



Photo: Stuart Humphreys, Australian Museum

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT ONLINE USAGE?

An online survey of 2,006 participants across eastern Australia was undertaken in November 2007 asking about the kinds of online activities undertaken in the previous month, as well as where they accessed the internet, how comfortable they felt with technology and demographic information (Australian Museum, 2007).

They were also asked whether they had visited a museum or gallery in the previous six months, with 41% (n=829) having done so. These visitor group results were separated and compared against the rest of the sample to see if there were any differences in their online behaviour.

The data shows that museum or gallery audiences participated at higher levels across all activities. Apart from using social networking sites, statistical tests revealed that these differences were highly significant across all categories. (Table 2)

A one-day *e-kids' college* was held in November, 2007 with 24 students from nine schools across New South Wales (Groundwater-Smith & Kelly, 2007; Kelly & Russo, 2008) to further examine these findings.

Students were consulted on a range of issues encompassing their use of digital technologies in leisure and for learning. They undertook a behind-the-scenes tour of the museum, spoke with a number of scientific staff and experienced the public areas of the museum in order to provide feedback about the museum's potential online offer. An important component of the research was to seek feedback and advice about how the museum's research and collection could be better utilised through digital media to match students' needs and interests.

The overall impression from the day was the overwhelming interest by the students in our content, our staff and sensory engagement primarily through touch, but also the visual aesthetic. They were very thoughtful about how the museum could complement what is already available online while carving out its own place.

One student who had attended kids' colleges in both 2006 and 2007 had this to say: "Last time I came here [in 2006] we focused mainly on new technology and we were constantly saying we needed more screens, games and interactive displays, but since then I have been thinking: I can do that at home. If I come to the museum I want to be able to get information, read it and be able to learn from it. The website needs to suit all audiences - we are not the only people that use the museum. It is unlikely that the reason we are at a museum site in the first place is to play the games. We can do that anywhere. If we are there we are probably looking for information of some kind".

These findings have broad implications for collecting institutions and their relationships with both their online and physical audiences. The data suggests that not only do those who visit collecting institutions participate in more online activities, they are engaging in activities that are participatory and two-way, such as posting and reading customer reviews, reading blogs, listening to podcasts and tagging content.

What does this mean for collecting institutions? Do audiences bring increased expectations and different modes of behaviour to their physical visit based on what they are doing online?

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT: ON AND OFFLINE

Research has found that audiences appreciated the role collecting institutions could play as authoritative, trusted and credible sources of information, and that they were accessed by a wide range of people. (Ellenbogen, 2002; Kelly, 2006).

In research conducted looking at controversial topics it was found that audiences welcomed collecting institutions having exhibitions and programs on these kinds of topics as long as they could comment on them somehow. (Kelly, 2006).

At the time that research was undertaken the Internet was in early stages of development, a Web 1.0 environment with a primary focus on access to information (Seely Brown & Adler, 2008). Since that time the Internet has opened up a whole new way of engaging users, with Web 2.0 now giving access to people – where those with common interests can meet, share ideas and collaborate. Seely Brown and Adler feel that the most profound impact of the Internet is "... its ability to support and expand the various aspects of social learning and therefore, to solve problems together".

"Do audiences bring increased expectations and different modes of behaviour to their physical visit based on what they are doing online?"

TABLE 1. Comparison of museum audiences and total sample

| CONSTRUCTIVIST EXHIBITIONS | SOCIAL MEDIA |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Free choice | Free choice |
| Many entry points | Many entry points |
| No specific path, no beginning, no end | No specific path, no beginning, no end |
| Based on prior knowledge and experience | Based on prior knowledge, experience and interests |
| User-controlled | User-controlled |
| Usually visited in own time and as part of structured educational experience | Usually visited in own time and place, may be part of structured educational experience as well as leisure |
| Present range of points of view and perspectives, museum seen as authority | Present range of points of view and perspectives, authority can be questioned or unclear |
| Provide materials that allow experimentation, conjecture and the drawing of conclusions | Information and programs allow for experimentation, conjecture and drawing conclusions |
| Used for leisure, entertainment and learning | Used for leisure, entertainment and learning |
| May be difficult to remain up-to-date | Usually up-to-date, constantly changes |

The strong synergies between the physical and online experience are becoming more evident. The museum's work over the years suggests that when it comes to designing fantastic physical and online museum experiences for young people (and for all kinds of audiences), the principles are the same and include a range of elements:

- > experiences that encourage discovery, interaction, cater for the unexpected, provide many pathways to
- > explore, give a taste for what happens behind-the-scenes and are fun,
- > content that is challenging, real, authoritative, meaningful, encourages questions and is well-organised
- > and easy to navigate,
- > staff that can relate to young people, are respectful of their ideas and views, are knowledgeable in their
- > field and are easy to talk to, and
- > opportunities to socialise, hang out with their friends and learn together.

Collecting institutions are generally getting better at their physical offerings yet it's the Web 2.0 environment where we are lagging. Given that social media is a great way to fulfil these requirements – it supports learning objectives, is relatively low-cost, is being used by Australians and has a close relationship with the physical – then why has it not been taken up by collecting institutions in greater numbers?

MacArthur (2007) identified that *institutional bias* is the most pressing problem in the uptake of Web 2.0 in museums. Ellis and Kelly (2007) remarked that "Web 2.0 puts users and not the organisation at the centre of the equation. This is threatening, but also exciting in that it has the potential to lead to richer content, a more personal experience".

Many years ago, Weil stated that museums need to transform themselves from "... *being* about something to being *for* somebody" (Weil, 1999, emphasis in original). Social media, when thought about in conjunction with the physical museum, provides the perfect vehicle to take this idea further, with museums being about something, *being for somebody in a two-way relationship with everybody*.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Lynda Kelly is the Head of Audience Research at the Australian Museum, Sydney. She has published widely in museum evaluation and writes the Audience research in museums blog as well as the Administrator of Museums 3.0 – a social networking site for global museum professionals. In 2007 Lynda completed her PhD in museum learning, and now that's finished looks forward to the adventures the new web will bring. ■

TABLE 2. Comparison of museum audiences and total sample

| ACTIVITY | Total sample (n=2,006) | Museum/gallery audiences (n=829) |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Watch a video | 43% | 46% |
| Use social networking site | 34% | 36% |
| Participate in discussion board/forum | 32% | 39% |
| Read customer rating/review | 37% | 48% |
| Read blogs | 27% | 34% |
| Tag web pages | 19% | 27% |
| Listen to podcasts | 16% | 23% |

SOCIAL MEDIA CASE STUDY

Podcasting @ Coffs Harbour City Library | Enzo Accadia

THE PROJECT > The *Voice of Time Online* is a digitisation project that involved providing original taped material of the *Voice of Time* Coffs Harbour Oral History Project, to the community and wider audiences via the Internet.

The *Voice of Time* audio collection was gathered in 1988 as part of the Bicentennial celebrations. It features the voices of 150 descendants of the area's first European settlers and other long-time residents of the city.

The recordings cover a huge number of events and recollections of daily life in the Coffs Harbour area including the famous day the lions escaped from a travelling zoo, the Depression era, flooding in the 1920s and 1950s, school life, the banana industry's beginnings and memories of the city's more colourful characters.

The interview summaries are reproduced online, in full, along with photographs of interviewees and selected audio snippets in MP3 format.

The interview summaries are contained in the Library's searchable database and the full interview audio recording is available on CD at Coffs Harbour City Library.

THE IDEA > The original catalyst for the digitisation project was the 1996 flood in the Coffs Harbour town centre which saw 40cm of dirty water pour through the library - luckily this material was off the floor!

In 1999 the Project Coordinator started in a new IT role in the Library and initiated the project with the support of the Library Manager.

The Internet was still quite new and downloadable audio was identified as a new online opportunity. The MP3 audio format was chosen for web delivery as it seemed to have good support and was the closest thing to a 'standard' option at the time.

MP3 audio downloads were limited to 3 per interview to limit data storage requirements, keep the online record display aesthetically pleasing, and provide copyright protection on the full audio interview.



Left (detail): *Voice of Time Online* interviewees banner, Enzo Accadia, 2007

Website and an online catalogue were used as these provide the widest public access '24/7' and because the material lends itself to online delivery.

The purpose of the project was to preserve and improve access to local heritage material. The key outcomes of the project were identified as: interviews preserved digitally for future generations, increased access to material via the Internet, increase usage of the library facilities, increased in the donation of local studies/ heritage material, and increase the profile the library in the community.

AUDIENCE > The project's target audience was identified as researchers, historians, students and the local community.

IMPLEMENTATION > We conducted research through the web and industry publications and sought information and advice from Rosie Block, Oral History Librarian at the State Library, the Oral History Section of the National Library and from other public libraries. We implemented the project in stages as funds became available. First we undertook the audio digitization work, then interviews were converted to text documents and portraits scanned by volunteers using library facilities. Finally we implemented the web access project involving Spydus customisation, cataloguing and the creation of supporting web pages.

EXPERIENCE > We hoped that our audience would search and browse interviews online, read interview summaries online, download and listen to selected MP3 snippets online and visit or contact the library to access full interviews.

EVALUATION > We evaluate our audience's experiences through informal feedback and via an online feedback form.

While only a handful of users have listened to the full interviews on CD at this stage, our website statistics show steady usage of the *Voice of Time Online* homepage.

WHAT NEXT > The next step for this project is further promotion via library journals, and a possible local community radio feature as MP3 snippets lend themselves well to this medium.

We also see the potential for partnership with our local museum to digitise further oral histories and make them available to the community via podcasts within the existing online oral history database.

We are already working on other projects using social media technologies including the *Picture Coffs Harbour* project. This project commenced at the beginning of 2008 in partnership with Coffs Harbour Regional Museum to digitise their extensive collection of historical photos, catalogue them and make them available online using the library's web catalogue. This project has two key goals: preservation and improved access. We also see the potential to set up our web catalogue so that the community might add 'comments' to each photo - in other words using online interaction with users to improve the description of the photograph and adding value to the database.

TECHNOLOGY > We used the Spydus Library Management System, an online database search and retrieval system. Spydus was used as the web interface as it was cost effective, had excellent search and retrieval features, we could use the Library catalogue format for interview records and have them display online in an acceptable format. The interview summaries were converted to text documents by volunteers, and the audio component was outsourced to a local sound studio which converted the analogue versions to two digital formats - high quality / archival: CD (WAV files), and web/ network computer access (MP3 files).



PEOPLE > Project Coordinator:

Enzo Accadia (Library Team Leader, E-Services & Circulation)

Library Cataloguers:

Pat Bailey and Bronwen Dyer

Audio Digitisation:

Martin van Veluwen (Oceanway Studio, Coffs Harbour)

Spydus Customisation:

Civica (Vendor)

BIOGRAPHY

Enzo Accadia is currently Team Leader - Electronic & Circulation Services at Coffs Harbour City Library & Information Service. He has worked at the Library for nearly 20 years, starting as a trainee librarian and moving through various positions within the Library. Enzo has a degree in Librarianship from Charles Sturt University in which he majored in Information Technology. ■

SOME FACTS >

ORGANISATION:

Coffs Harbour City Library and Information Services (Coffs Harbour City Council)

PROJECT BUDGET:

Audio digitisation - Royal Australian Historical Society grant (2001).

COST: \$1,500

Audio digitisation - Library Council of NSW grant (2002).

COST: \$4,500

Audio digitisation - Library Council of NSW grant (2003).

COST: \$4,500

Web access, cataloguing, project completion - Library Council of NSW grant (2003).

COST: \$10,547

TOTAL: \$21,047

SOCIAL MEDIA CASE STUDY

Flickr @ the National Library of Australia

THE PROJECT > The National Library of Australia's (NLA) Flickr Project is an initiative to open the online pictorial gateway, Picture Australia www.pictureaustralia.org to contributions from the Australian public.

Launched in January 2006 in collaboration with Yahoo7!'s Flickr www.flickr.com photo-sharing site, the project enables individuals to contribute their own images to three dedicated Flickr image pools:

- > 'Picture Australia: Our town' www.flickr.com/groups/pa_ourtown
- > 'Picture Australia: People, Places and Events' www.flickr.com/groups/PictureAustralia_ppe
- > 'Re-Picture Australia' www.flickr.com/groups/re-pictureaustralia.

THE IDEA > A Survey of Users of the Picture Australia service undertaken in 2003 found that 43% of users were looking for contemporary images. Flickr was suggested as an easy way to let the public upload and provide metadata for their images, which the NLA could then harvest. This approach also ties in well with the NLA's Strategic Directions, which includes the objectives to 'ensure that Australians have access to vibrant and relevant information services' and to 'ensure our relevance in a rapidly changing world, participate in new online communities and enhance our visibility.' The project has two key objectives: to add contemporary images and to increase visitation to Picture Australia.

AUDIENCE > The project target audience is individuals and small agencies wanting to contribute to the nation's visual record.

IMPLEMENTATION > Research was undertaken to ascertain the extent of Australian content and users on Flickr prior to implementation of the project.

ENVIRONMENT > Web-based communities are challenging the restrictions of corporate content owners and providing a grassroots mechanism to enable collaboration and artistic growth in independent production, distribution of, and debate around cultural product. Web 2.0 tools offer cultural institutions the ability to actively engage with their user groups and thereby better service their organisational goals.

ENGAGEMENT > Members load their images into one of the three Picture Australia Flickr groups and then add tags including subject, event, location, geographical feature, date and photographer. These tags become searchable fields in Picture Australia. One week later they can find their images in Picture Australia using the tags that they created.

EXPERIENCE >

- > Flickr members can:
 - Gain hyper distribution of their images to national and international researchers and curators,
 - Discover the wealth of historical images in public collections in Picture Australia while searching and finding their own images ,
 - Learn about copyright through the application of Creative Commons licenses and;
 - Monitor the progress of the project through monthly news items.
- > What else are they experiencing?

Some Flickr photographers have had their works acquired into cultural institutions permanent collections and others have sold reproductions of their works through Picture Australia's request a copy service.



Above: Ross Beckley (R&V Photographers), Moments in Time, 2008. Image courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

EVALUATION > The NLA's Flickr Project has overwhelmingly fulfilled its two key objectives. It has been the most successful online marketing tool that Picture Australia has yet utilised with a 43% increase in page views. Over 1,300 members have already added more than 31,000 images to Picture Australia.

The Administrator monitors the groups and responds to comments and feedback. An online survey was placed on Picture Australia soon after the launch to gauge user feedback. Feedback from Flickr members is extremely positive.

"I simply can't thank Picture Australia enough for the exposure I have received worldwide since contributing some of my images to the Flickr / Picture Australia collaboration. It's a brilliant partnership". Ross Beckley.

WHAT NEXT > A public event is planned to celebrate Flickr members' contributions to the NLA and to profile both public and private collections in Picture Australia during the Vivid National Photography Festival in July-October 2008. The Vivid Festival will celebrate the vital role of photography in Australian life and history <http://www.nla.gov.au/vivid/>. There will be further exploration of Web 2.0 technologies to support the NLA's strategic directions.

For cultural institutions to collaborate with the public to:

- > Develop research user groups who can assist with the implementation of new models for the creation of quality metadata for collection development in collaboration with creators,
- > Educate Flickr members in the importance of preservation at the point of creation of a record, and
- > Build a common rights frameworks through the use of Creative Commons.

BIOGRAPHY

Fiona Hooton holds a Bachelor of Arts Fine Arts Visual ANU, a Grad Dip Arts Education Canberra University, and a Masters of Arts (Hons) Arts Administration COFA. Fiona's career in the cultural sector has involved employment as an artist, educator and administrator in both state and national collecting institutions. Over this time she has acquired an ongoing interest in Australia's still and moving image heritage. ■

Below: P.J. Rosenberger, Pura Cup: Brett Lee Pins Batsman with Short Ball, 2008. Image courtesy of the National Library of Australia.



ABOUT M&G NSW

Museums & Galleries NSW (**M&G NSW**) is the key support agency for the museum and gallery sector in NSW. A non-profit company established in 1999, the strong relationships **M&G NSW** has established within metropolitan and regional communities enable the organisation to contribute significantly to the development of the sector throughout the state.

Through the provision of advocacy, assistance and information services, **M&G NSW** plays a pivotal role in nurturing sustainable museums and galleries within their community ensuring the ongoing provision of enjoyable, enriching cultural experiences for the people of NSW.

Our sector encompasses galleries and museums throughout NSW, the professionals and volunteers who work in these organisations, and the many people who use their services. There are over 540 museums, 34 regional galleries, 27 artist-run spaces and 15 Keeping Places in NSW. In addition **M&G NSW** has an increasing association with the 175 historical societies and 266 libraries throughout the state.

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Museums & Galleries NSW receives core funding from the NSW Government through Arts NSW, with additional funding from project grants. Museums & Galleries NSW is also assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory board.



Australian Government



PARTNER PROFILE: MUSEUM OF SYDNEY

Image: Museum of Sydney Historic Houses Trust, Patrick Bingham-Hall.

OUR PARTNERS

Museums & Galleries NSW values the strong and vibrant collaborative partnership held with the **Museum of Sydney** and the **Historic Houses Trust NSW**.

Since 2000 **M&G NSW** has worked closely with the **Museum of Sydney** to present an annual seminar series for the museum and gallery sector. In the early days, **M&G NSW** CEO Maisy Stapleton approached Sue Hunt, then Curator at the **Museum of Sydney**, to provide a venue for sector seminars. This partnership proved a great success, with the inaugural series focusing on new technology, the changing role of the curator, and scholarship vs. popularism in museum exhibitions.

Over time, the **Museum of Sydney** and **M&G NSW** have collaborated increasingly so that the program has become a joint initiative. Addressing the latest topical issues, inspiring leadership and critical debate, the seminars continue as an outstanding professional development program for the museum and gallery sector.

This seminar series has developed a significant critical mass, and is well valued by the museum and gallery sector from metropolitan and regional NSW and interstate. Seminars attract leading executives from the Australian and international collecting sector to present their insights and engage in discussion. Fostering networking and engagement across the industry, many lively debates have spilled over from the lecture theatre to the drinks in the museum foyer after the event. **HHT NSW** and **M&G NSW** have worked closely together to develop the series, and **M&G NSW** particularly thanks Carmel Aiello, Mark Viner, Sue Hunt, Louise Doyle and Caroline Butler-Bowden from the **HHT NSW** program and curatorial teams.

The **Museum of Sydney** provides a unique context for critically evaluating our collecting sector. As a leading contemporary museum situated on the earliest foundations of British colonialisation of Australia, and with imaginative and relevant exhibitions and programs of cultural significance, the **Museum of Sydney** provides invaluable insight into our history and future. This partnership draws upon the expertise of **HHT NSW** and **M&G NSW** within the context of local heritage and the broader cultural industry. **M&G NSW** is proud to continue working with the **Museum of Sydney** in delivering professional development programs to the sector.

Strategic Creativity – progressive spaces, programs and partnerships in Asia and Australia is the 2008 seminar series, to be held 26 September 2008 and 7 November 2008. Stay tuned to www.mgnsw.org.au and www.hht.net.au for further program and registration details.

the M&G

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Each issue of **The MAG** is dedicated to a particular theme and overseen by a Thematic Advisor selected by the Editorial Committee. Contributions are welcome. Proposals for articles should be emailed to info@mgnsw.org.au. All submissions to **The MAG** are edited and, if necessary, rewritten for space, clarity, legal or other reasons. All contributors are provided with the opportunity to peruse edited versions of their contributions.

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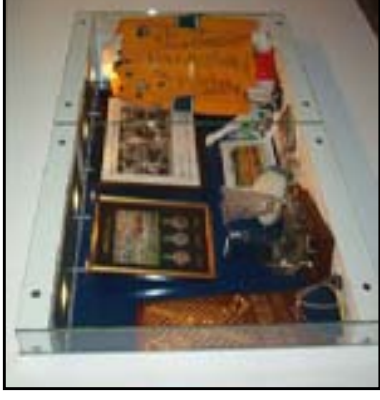
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The Australian Rugby Union Hall of Fame – St Leonard's NSW

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