

JUNE 2011 SEMINAR SUMMARY

The Arts and Social Media

6.00-8.00pm, Monday 27 June 2011

Australia Council, 372 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills

PANEL

Dr Lynda Kelly, Manager Web and Audience Research, Australian Museum
Shakthi Sivanathan, Director, CuriousWorks
Jen Cannock, Marketing Manager, Griffin Theatre Company
Bridget Jones - Research Manager, Australia Council

So you've got your Facebook page up and running, you're following every arts organisation in town and tweeting whenever you have a spare moment.

What more could you do?

A year is a long time in the world of social media, so it's about time for a follow-up to SAMAG's popular "Being creative with social media" seminar. Our panel will discuss the latest in social media - from audience development strategies to establishing social media policies and creative production with social tools.

CHAIR

Dr Lynda Kelly, Manager Web and Audience Research, Australian Museum

Lynda has published widely in museum evaluation and writes the Audience Research in Museums blog and the Web 2.U blog, which are widely followed and read. She is particularly interested in visitor experience and learning and how these can be measured, young children's learning, online learning as well as the strategic uses of audience research and new technologies in organisational change.

Lynda is the Director of Museum3, a not-for-profit social network site for museum professionals, with an active global membership of over 3,000. In 2010 her latest book, *Hot Topics, Public Culture, Museums* co-edited with Dr Fiona Cameron, University of Western Sydney, was released. Previously, Lynda was Head of Visitor Programs and Services at the Australian Museum, looking after the learning, outreach, audience research, visitor programs, events and volunteer functions of the Museum. Prior to that she was Head of Australian Museum Eureka Prizes, Web and Audience Research.

PANEL

Shakthi Sivanathan, Director, CuriousWorks

Shakthi has led CuriousWorks to deliver a series of creative initiatives which aim to provide sustainable and innovative outcomes for all Australians. His first initiative, *The Migrant Project*, brought together 40 Sydneysiders with cultural and artistic ancestries from across the globe in a series of live performances and forums, garnering an audience of just over 2,000 people. A feature film concluded the project. His second initiative, *All Around You*, developed a best-practice model for using digital media in a simple, positive, lasting manner in marginalised communities. It has led to long-term community projects in Western Sydney and remote Western Australia and a freely available resource kit and social media portal for artists, educators, media makers and curious creators everywhere. His latest projects are *The Stories Project*, a program that provides a pathway for potential cultural leaders to become employed, professional, influential

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media makers on behalf of their community; and The Lanka Project, a multi-platform initiative of theatre, audiovisual and community projects bringing the lives of Sri Lankan - Australians to the fore.

Jen Cannock, Marketing Manager, Griffin Theatre Company

Jen has been Marketing Manager of Griffin Theatre Company for two years. In this role she is involved in Griffin's social media strategies, including the collaborative Twitter/Facebook/YouTube/physical world campaign 'The Great Sydney Spoon Hunt', which promoted the production Angela's Kitchen. Previously, Jen lived in London and worked for Sotheby's, the auction house, creating marketing campaigns for the Contemporary Arts department, 19th Century Art department and Books department among others. She studied Cultural Criticism and English Literature at Cardiff University in the UK.

Bridget Jones - Research Manager, Australia Council

Bridget leads the research team to deliver insights into the arts and has produced several major reports for the Australia Council, including the new Connecting:// arts audiences online report.

Bridget has more than a decade of corporate experience in market research as well as several years working in strategic planning in the public sector.

Bridget has a Master of Arts from the University of Auckland. Her areas of expertise includes artist surveys, audience research, participation studies, social media analysis, user satisfaction surveys, and evaluation research.

*Panellist Stuart Buchanan, Founder of The Nest, could not attend due to illness.

The evening began with a welcome by Olivia Bolton (SAMAG), and an acknowledgement of the traditional land owners, the Gadigal people. Olivia also notified the audience of the SAMAG #- for tweets, before introducing the panel.

Chair: DR. LYNDA KELLY, AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/>

<http://museum3.org/>

Lynda invited the audience to leave their phones on and to tweet throughout the session.

In 2007, one of Lynda's museum colleagues in Austria suggested she join Facebook. It was at this point that Lynda could see the potential for social networking sites to help museums engage with audiences. The Australian Museum got into social media early on and set up a group they called M.U.G.S, a Museum User Group. The Museum now has a fully developed social media strategy.

Lynda is also the Director of Museum 3, a not-for-profit social networking site for museum professionals.

The site was built on the social networking platform Ning (www.ning.com).

Lynda encourages people to get onto the web to explore and experiment. She suggested looking beyond 'the arts' for inspiration, citing examples such as use of live Twitter feeds as part of audience's interactive



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experience on Dancing with the Stars and Q&A. She pointed out that there are 10 million Facebook accounts in Australia, which indicates just how popular social media is generally.

BRIDGET JONES, RESEARCH MANAGER, AUSTRALIA COUNCIL.

<http://connectarts.australiacouncil.gov.au/>

Bridget explained that the Australia Council's research into Connecting Arts Audiences Online was a further development of their More than bums on seats report. (www.australiacouncil.gov.au/resources/reports_and_publications/subjects/audiences_and_cultural_participation/arts_participation_research_more_than_bums_on_seats)

More than bums on seats found that many Australians are positive about the arts but don't attend much and that the internet is important to arts consumers for finding out about artists and arts events. One in three Australians were using the internet for engagement with the arts, hence this is a major opportunity for the sector to capitalise on it. Researchers wanted to understand arts audiences' online behaviour, and they wanted this research to be actionable.

Citing the Connecting Arts Audiences Online report, Bridget outlined 'The Journey' of consumer online behaviour as follows: Awareness (of an event) Research (into an event) Booking, Preparation (such as organising where to have dinner), At the event, and then After the event. The study found that consumers were going online at the following rates: Research stage 75%, Preparation stage 71% and After the event 66%. This demonstrates the opportunity for arts organisations to engage with audiences at each stage of 'The Journey'. The report lists the opportunities as follows:

- Get their clients attention
- Build word of mouth
- Engage your audience
- Enrich their experience
- Connect the dots
- Make it easy
- Know your audience.

Bridget highlighted that this is a paradigm shift for some organisations to implement. The researchers were surprised to see the extent of engagement after the event. Facebook is the most widely used social media site and the research found it was more universally used than anticipated. Different demographics, however, are using Facebook differently. For example, older demographics are a bit more passive than others.

Bridget then discussed the types of word of mouth which social media can feed into. These are conversations online through Facebook and via email. Hence, an awareness of the impact of social media is also useful when building your brand. She described Twitter as a niche market, not as universally employed as other social media tools by arts audiences. The key challenge for arts organizations is to get people talking online in public arenas, where they can join their audiences conversations and spread the word further. The research found that online fans will attend more frequently, they can invite others to attend, broadcast their attendance and recommend events. Therefore developing a fan base is important. The Australia Council will be hosting a series of forums and panels to coincide with the launch of connecting arts online.

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SHAKTHI SIVANATHAN, DIRECTOR, CURIOUS WORKS

www.curiousworks.com.au/

Shakthi suggests that social media is essential for any emerging arts organisation. Apart from physical technical infrastructure, CuriousWorks has not had to spend on technology to publicise their work. They have used “open-source software” which is loosely explained on the following site. www.coactivate.org/projects/opencore/project-home. Examples of open source software include Wordpress <http://wordpress.com/> and Ning www.ning.com/

Social media is now becoming part of people’s lives, so the social media strategy an arts organisation uses must fit into that life. One CuriousWorks project helped an Indigenous community to pass on their language and customs. They did this by giving the children in the community cameras to photograph their everyday surroundings and activities. The images were then uploaded on Flickr for the elders to annotate with the proper language names for what was depicted. Another project CuriousWorks facilitated in Penrith was part of the local council’s action plan. The project invited local residents to upload films about what they wanted for their community. CuriousWorks has also helped facilitate communication between children in Western Sydney and Indigenous people across the country. Social media, suggests Shakthi, is a good tool for people who want to set up small businesses within their own community. It is also a potentially subversive way of sharing art.

CuriousWorks uses social media holistically to effect a range of objectives. The CuriousWorks website contains a toolkit and other useful information. “The more you share your knowledge” says Shakthi, “the more you will benefit in the long run.”

The Penrith project: <http://neighbourhoodstories.net.au/>

Social network where kids from either side of the country chat to each other: <http://www.allaroundyou.net/>

Our Toolkit: <http://toolkit.curiousworks.com.au/welcome>

Training course: <http://www.curiousworks.com.au/services/>

JEN CANNOCK, MARKETING MANAGER, GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY

Jen examined a case study from Griffin Theatre Company for Angela’s Kitchen, a play by Paul Capsis. (www.griffintheatre.com.au/whats-on/angelas-kitchen) . The company devised a quirky promotion using a YouTube video. One thousand spoons – the spoon being a symbol for the kitchen - were placed around the city in ‘the great Sydney spoon hunt’. Griffin incentivised engagement by offering two for one tickets to anyone who found a spoon. 33 people took up the two for one ticket offer, but interest in Griffin’s online social media increased and the production sold out. Griffin collaborated with Billy Blue Design School to develop this project as a student internship. Jen concluded with the observation that social media is a very important for a small arts company . <http://www.griffintheatre.com.au/whats-on/whats-this-about-a-spoon/>

The Chair asked the panel for suggestions on how to incorporate social media into work practices:

Shakthi replied that CuriousWorks link to tweets and blog entries in their emails. He reinforced the usefulness of freely available sites and tools. Jen remarked that with social media, the marketing can be done for you. At Griffin, all content goes through Jen Cannock before it is published. Lynda explained that

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the Australian Museum looks at how marketing content can be repurposed for social media and indicated how easily an organisation can redirect content that has already been generated.

Bridget reiterated that as well as integrating online assets - for example featuring Twitter and Facebook links on a company website – it is also important to integrate social media with offline assets.

Discussion then moved onto the future of phone Apps in arts marketing. Bridget reported that the Australia Council's research shows massive growth potential. Apps are a powerful tool for bookings and provide an opportunity for the client to plan the whole experience, such as transport, parking, and restaurants. Shakthi added that people use phones in different ways and with that in mind, it is useful to build websites that will function on an Iphone. This requires information to be as modular as possible. Recently the Sydney Morning Herald featured their selection of 100 top Apps, a useful article to get an overview of what people are using Apps for in every day life. (www.smh.com.au/digital-life/digital-life-news/top-100-apps--the-definitive-guide-20110620-1gax4.html).

A member of the audience asked “What does the panel think the future of blogging for arts organisations is, taking into account Facebook and Twitter?”

Jen pointed out that a blog must be part of an overall strategy. Shakthi emphasised that blogging will demystify the organisation for an online audience, whereas Lynda put it thus: “The blog is the meat, Twitter and Facebook are the advertising.”

Shakthi considers social media a good tool for partnerships. If you can get a sponsor interested in looking at your blog, that can be the beginning of a working relationship.

The evening concluded with a question from the Chair, who asked the panel to characterise their organisations in a way that could be useful in defining their social media voice; for example, Dr Lynda Kelly described the Australian Museum as a “kind grandmother”, Jen thought that “a jaguar” would best describe Griffin Theatre and Shakthi sees CuriousWorks as “a time traveller”. Bridget described the Australia Council as “a golden Labrador.”

The Twitter feed was projected on a screen through the evening for the audience to follow and afforded an interesting platform for participation in the forum.

Other useful sites identified during the seminar:

www.tumblr.com/,
<https://posterous.com/>
<https://foursquare.com/>

Technical aspects of QR codes were then mentioned in a question from the audience, more information can be found on the following link http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/QR_code

The Horizon Report also contains useful information on the direction of new technology. <http://wp.nmc.org/horizon2011/>

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