

Report from the seventh Culture24 Action Research Project

LET'S GET

REAL 7

**Developing deeper human connection
across digital channels**

by Jane Finnis, Anra Kennedy and Sejul Malde

Foreword

Culture24 have been leading Let's Get Real action research projects for nearly ten years and the need to ensure we are relevant, resilient and responsive as cultural organisations has never been more pressing.

On top of all the well understood pressures around our ability to find the time, skills and literacies needed to keep up with the pace of digital and technological change, comes a profound new set of questions around how we make sure our digital work reflects the values we hold as a sector.

These questions are compounded by serious concerns about the third-party platforms we are all working on, which provide us with huge opportunities for deepening engagement, but at the same time exploit our audiences, behave unethically, and undermine our civic values.

The organisations who took part in LGR7, and the reflections and experiments in this report, focus on how as cultural organisations we can start to deepen human connections to our digital output by using a values-led practice.

Where is the sweet spot between digital, people and values? How can digital help us express and enact our organisations' values in compelling and relevant ways? How can we promote truth and authenticity online?

Working out how we do this is crucial so we can collectively understand and develop new definitions of good practice and success for our sector. Culture24 believe that it will be values-led thinking that will provide the conceptual frame through which we can challenge the status quo and influence change. It gives us all a powerful intellectual and practical tool to make change happen and get real.

Viva la revolución.

Jane Finnis, Culture24 CEO
February 2020

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Our lovely Let's Get Real 7 participants and partners



Project story

Overview

Let's Get Real 7 (LGR7) aimed to test how participants could use their existing digital channels in more thoughtful and socially purposeful ways, to foster more meaningful connections with people and communities. We did this by exploring how cultural organisations can align their digital activity more closely with the values-led practices that are beginning to happen more overtly in their physical spaces.

Small scale interventions were conducted in the participating organisations' existing activity on digital channels or within their internal teams, which prioritised and responded to social purpose, meaning and values. For example, some experimented with facilitating conversations or campaigns on social media with the aim of nurturing values such as kindness, integrity and forgiveness.

The project brought together a community of people and organisations with a shared sense of purpose to foster open, honest and collaborative learning between participants as a cohort of peers.

The project builds on the learning from Let's Get Real 6, which explored the relationship between digital practice and social purpose and how they can be better understood and practiced by arts and heritage organisations.

Participating organisations

Nineteen arts and heritage organisations participated in this collaboratively-funded project, each contributing in the region of £1,450 to £2,950 (depending on size). As part of our desire to encourage smaller organisations to attend, two subsidised places went to Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life and the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon. Their travel costs were kindly supported by their local Museum Development Services.

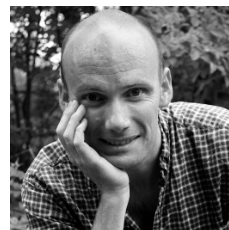
Partners

We developed and ran LGR7 in partnership with Carnegie UK Trust, Common Cause Foundation and Wellcome Collection.



Carnegie UK Trust seek to improve the lives and wellbeing of people throughout the UK, particularly those who are disadvantaged. LGR7 worked with Cliff Manning, associate, who contributed to the project as a workshop facilitator and

mentor. Cliff has a particular interest in how technology impacts real people's lives through education, government, art and science. For LGR7, Cliff shared his knowledge and ideas around social/contextual design within digital culture and the significance of design and digital literacy, social purpose and digital inclusion.



Common Cause Foundation strive to give voice to the compassionate values that underpin social and environmental concerns. LGR7 brought in Tom Crompton, director, as a workshop facilitator and mentor throughout most of

the project, helping the organisations to map their intrinsic vs extrinsic values and develop values literacy for concepts and practical ideas. Tom brought his expertise in values-based thinking and having previously worked for nearly a decade with some of the UK's best-known charities, including NSPCC, Oxfam and Scope, on values and social change.

Wellcome Collection's aim is to challenge how we all think and feel about health and create opportunities, through their programming and exhibitions, for people to think deeply about the connections between science, medicine, life and art. The Wellcome Collection kindly hosted our four collaborative workshops at the Wellcome Trust and also joined the project as a participant.

barbican

BLETCHLEY PARK



culture team

The British Museum



ENGLISH HERITAGE



Manchester Art Gallery



Manchester Metropolitan University



Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon



MUSEUMS PARTNERSHIP READING

NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM



National Trust

ramm
Home to a million thoughts

Royal Botanic Gardens
Kew

TIVERTON MUSEUM
of Mid Devon Life

TYNE & WEAR
archives & museums

V&A Dundee

wellcome collection

Framing a question

At the start of the project we initially posed the question: *How can cultural organisations adapt their practices on existing digital channels in order to nurture deeper human connection?*

To unpack this question, we needed to understand what connections were important to people and how should we quantify a quality connection, or at least define it in a way that appealed to everyone? How we talked about connections led us to values thinking and the language used around values-orientated approaches, which we could then apply to our digital practices. This evolved into the following provocations that were then embedded in the focus of LGR7:

- For us to get to the core of what connections are important, it's imperative for cultural organisations to connect their digital practice with social purpose. It's not a 'nice to have'.
- Cultural organisations have a vital role in shaping the ethical and social impacts of digital culture in society. They therefore hold some level of responsibility in how this is shaped.
- Cultural organisations' existing work on digital channels tend to be led by operational priorities rather than social purpose.
- We ought to design our approaches on digital channels for humans, not just users (thus humanising the process)

The redrafted title for the project then became: *LGR7: Developing deeper human connection across digital channels.* Organisations were asked to consider how to generate stronger personal connections and more meaningful relationships through their digital work.

Testing our hunches

One of the most important things we ask participants in our Let's Get Real projects to do is to find a hunch to test or explore, something that has come up through their work which they would like to explore further and evidence. Among our own hunches – the areas that Culture24 wanted to better understand – were the connections between organisations, their values and the values that matter to their audiences and communities. How can we use existing digital channels to nurture deeper human connection?

The LGR approach

LGR7 not only looked outward for best practice ideas and approaches, but also related these to the specific context of arts and heritage organisations' work. We took a ground-up approach to understanding this relationship, defined by the thinking and practice of our participating organisations. This ensured our understanding was always rooted in the specific contexts and nature of their work.

Learning from others

We worked with a range of talented and experienced individuals and practitioners, who brought in a variety of perspectives from within and beyond the cultural sector. They were:



Ben Bedwell, Digital Research Specialist at University of Nottingham

Ben is an experienced researcher with a history of delivering innovation to industry, third sector and academia at the cutting edge of digital consumer

technology.

Ben ran an ideation and prototyping session at the second LGR7 workshop, helping participants to come up with ideas for their experiments using VisitorBox¹. This free toolkit, developed by Ben, is based around a set of playing cards for cultural heritage institutions who need to know how technology might help them achieve their audience engagement goals. A specific LGR7 deck² was used in the workshop and given to participants to use within their organisations.



Matthew Cock – Chief Executive at VocalEyes

Matthew has previously worked for the British Museum and V&A, and has a wealth of experience of museum digital and access projects. VocalEyes works with museums, heritage sites and

theatres across the UK, increasing opportunities for blind and partially sighted people to experience art and heritage. Matthew joined us in workshop 3, encouraging the participants to think about inclusivity within the language used by their organisations when providing access information. He encouraged the group to use honest, detailed and descriptive language that has a purpose and human tone.



Rachel Coldicutt OBE – former Doteveryone Chief Executive

Rachel is a British technology expert who works on ethics, regulation and digital literacy. She is the former Chief Executive Officer of Doteveryone, a UK-based responsible technology

think tank that champions responsible technology for a fairer future. Rachel spoke at workshop 2 and asked the group to consider 'can measurement and KPIs help you deliver social value?'



Hilary Jennings – Project Director at Happy Museum

The Happy Museum looks at how the museum sector can respond to the challenge of creating a more sustainable future. In workshop 3, Hilary Jennings, project director, shared her expertise on survival resilience in today's climate.



Ben Thurman – Policy and Development Officer – Carnegie UK Trust

Ben joined LGR7 for workshop 1 and 4, drawing together ideas around radical kindness to help the participants recognise parallels around opportunities

and barriers between the public sector and arts and heritage organisations. Specifically, the session led by Ben was aimed at inspiring ideas around fostering greater human connection through kindness.



A pledge card from the National Trust's LGR7 experiment

1. <https://visitorbox.org/>

2. <https://visitorbox.org/deck/lets-get-real-7/>

Learning by doing

LGR7 encouraged practical action research. We supported participants to experiment in the context of their everyday work, testing out hunches developed through our collaborative discussions. The Culture24 team and partners supported participants to conceive, plan, track and analyse experiments using agile-based methodologies with a focus on clear objectives, audience involvement, a willingness to create and iterate and a culture of learning from failures.

All of the experiments had the following characteristics:

- They sought to answer a question
- They involved a practical action
- They were simple and small-scale
- They used existing resources, content, channels and technologies
- They were time-bound
- They had feedback or tracking mechanisms built in

Participants were asked to form LGR7 working groups within their organisations, nominating colleagues from other roles or departments to work and consult with on the experiments. In this way the experiments sought to uncover organisational opportunities and challenges as well as personal ones.

Learning together

LGR7 aimed to create a community with a shared sense of purpose. We wanted to foster open, honest and collaborative learning between participants as a cohort of peers. We encouraged the LGR7 group to share perspectives, ways of working, opportunities and challenges - it is always important in our Let's Get Real projects that participants feel able and supported to share failures and concerns as well as their successes. This was supported via structured and unstructured discussions across the group either online, face-to-face at workshops or over a drink at the pub!

This was the second LGR project to invite each participating organisation to nominate two individuals to represent them on the project. Not only did this ensure that participants had a wider peer group to draw support from, it also sought to promote more collaborative working within each participating organisation and to increase the likelihood of better effecting and embedding change.



An LGR7 participant using the VisitorBox ideation cards

Structure

The LGR7 project followed a structured process involving:

- Four collaborative workshops at Wellcome Collection full of participatory activity and discussion, expert presentations, individual reflection and informal networking. These took place in March, May, July and September 2019
- Four research periods between workshops when participants were supported to run experiments to test out their thinking and ideas in their own contexts
- Regular remote mentoring sessions, run by Culture24 with LGR7 partners, to help guide and support participants during research periods
- Ongoing online collaboration between all project participants via Basecamp.
- **Understanding** – pinning down the key issues/themes in the project
- **Define** – how project issues relate to each participant according to own personal and organisational context
- **Ideation** – generate project ideas in a creative and non-restrictive way
- **Planning** – shaping experiments based on the best fit between the define and ideation stage.
- **Review** – where everyone is at and focus on approaches to unblock any issues/problems they are having to move forwards
- **Test** – everyone runs their experiments with possible iterations depending on time and scope
- **Reflect** – everyone reflects on their work and key learning

The project follows the fundamentals of design thinking which are embedded into all the workshops, mentoring and the actual 'doing' of the experiments. Each step is iteratively reflected upon so that learning is embedded throughout:



A group activity at one of the LGR7 workshops

In conclusion

From Culture24's perspective, this Let's Get Real project was challenging and fascinating in equal measure. As Sejul describes in his reflective pieces (see 'Reflections') framing the project before we began, we knew this was a complex area with no easy or right answers. It felt important to create a space in which our participants could delve more deeply into the values-driven and human side of their digital work because it lies at the heart of cultural organisations' raison d'être.

Alongside LGR7 we were working on consultative, collaborative projects to define and frame digital skills and literacies³; to define organisational digital maturity⁴ and to create a Digital Culture Charter⁵ for museums and the wider cultural sector. Time and again across these projects the same conversations took place and the same issues arose. Our LGR7 participants' journey through their experiments felt to us like the wider sector in microcosm and their findings will have resonance for many.

- In order to weave values and social purpose meaningfully into our digital work and in order to make genuine human connections, we need to consider the following:
- Being digitally skilled – capable and competent using, managing and creating with digital – isn't enough. We need to develop digital literacies across our organisations, particularly at leadership level in order to understand the environment in which we're operating.
- Effective, meaningful progress requires time and space for experimentation and reflection, and we need to value those activities properly (without always expecting tangible outputs or products). The impact of having this space to learn can be transformational.
- Emotional intelligence, empathy, collaboration, communication and other 'softer' skills are integral to digital practice and again, need to be valued, understood and given space to develop.
- Learning and community engagement practitioners have so much experience and understanding to share with more digitally focused colleagues - these two areas of practice are particularly ripe for collaboration when it

comes to human connections and values-driven approaches.

- The place of digital within our organisations needs to be re-evaluated – taken out of tech-led silos and truly integrated across all areas of work, building everyone's skills and literacies, without de-valuing specialist digital and tech expertise we will always need.
- We need to remember this is still a very new area of practice, we're all learning and need to take the pressure off a little, to recognise this is a learning curve.

As a sector, we're only just beginning to explore and understand the impact of digital transformation society is going through. We don't have all the answers yet and there will never be a rulebook – it's difficult, complex and ever-changing. Continuing to learn together, learn from others and learn by doing is the only way we will progress.

As you read through our participants' and partners' reflections and responses in this report we hope you appreciate, as we do, their honesty, openness and willingness to share their experiences. As ever, it was a joy to gather and work with such a wonderful bunch of people. Thank you all.



3. <https://one-by-one.uk>

4. <https://digitalculturecompass.org.uk/using-the-tracker/>

5. <https://digitalculturecompass.org.uk/charter/>

The experiments: a summary

The experiments LGR7 participants ran are detailed in full in chapter 7 and summarised as follows:

Barbican Centre	Wanted to investigate if their digital channels could create a sense of space and destination for their visitors, rather than only being seen as an events venue. Using digital screens and channels, they wanted to encourage visitors to explore the building beyond the free Wi-Fi public desk space and create a sense of community.
Bletchley Park Trust	Wanted to explore how a values-based approach that integrates digital and onsite activities, might attract, engage and broaden their family audiences whilst enhancing a sense of community and celebration.
Bristol Museums	Wanted to see if they could get a more representative range of responses to call-outs if they used simple and familiar technology.
The British Museum	Wanted to explore how cultural organisations are presently welcoming to unaccompanied young people, and in future could be more hospitable environments for these visitors. Specifically, they looked at what measures are currently in place to make the British Museum an inviting space for young people outside of their normal programming, and what young people expected from a visit to their museum.
English Heritage	Wanted to find a medium or method to engage their audience with complex and controversial histories on digital platforms.
Manchester Art Gallery	Underwent a transitional change with their vision and programme, so took this opportunity to find out how the gallery could reflect and stay true to their values online. In particular, they wanted to test this value: 'Manchester Art Gallery is a meeting house for the city, a place for citizens to plan, make decisions and talk to power'.
Special Collections Museum, Manchester Metropolitan University	Wanted to understand what their capacity for meaningful digital engagement was and how they could grow it.
Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon	During most of LGR7, the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon was closed for building work. They wanted to find out if by changing their online approach, this would create a deeper engagement within their community. They explored the use of video online with voices from different partner organisations and individuals.
Museums Partnership Reading	Wanted to reflect Reading people's stories, Town values and a Town identity on their social media channels, contributing to placemaking in Reading.

<p>National Army Museum</p>	<p>Explored how to foster wider discussion around their exhibitions, particularly among people who might not be able to visit themselves, as well as how to widen and deepen attitudes towards the Army among the wider British public and nurture relationships with related community groups while acting as stewards for their knowledge and/or collections.</p>
<p>National Museums Liverpool</p>	<p>Wanted to create a sense of community and collective ownership using a new technology called blockchain and to break down the idea of blockchain to a process that was easy to understand for visitors and internal colleagues.</p>
<p>National Trust</p>	<p>Sought to find out whether they could use their social media channels to encourage deeper connections with their audiences, by encouraging small acts of kindness both on and offline. The experiment was inspired by HumanKind at Calke Abbey, a project which focuses on themes of isolation and loneliness, and aims to tackle modern-day loneliness.</p>
<p>Royal Albert Memorial Museum</p>	<p>Wanted to investigate what young people’s perception of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum were, and how to improve their engagement, both digitally and physically, with this audience. This also tied in to themes of social isolation and questions of how to create positive digital connections, within and away from the museum space.</p>
<p>Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew</p>	<p>Wanted to explore how they could engage differently with audiences and connect better with them through creating. They looked at the use of vox pops as a way to engage in a playful manner.</p>
<p>Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life</p>	<p>Wanted to find out whether they could use their digital platforms to help shape and develop a sense of place for Mid Devon. They also wanted to see if there were ways that they could place themselves at the heart of the community helping to create a sense of place for isolated members of the rural community and those coming into the town. They particularly wanted to see if they could look at their photographic collection from a different perspective, connecting it with the values that underpinned the wider LGR7 project.</p>
<p>Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums</p>	<p>Were interested in finding out what families thought of Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums, and compared the observations of families to how they see themselves. In addition, they wanted to learn more about the community surrounding the museum and bring their neighbours together using the museum space as a hub.</p>
<p>V&A Dundee</p>	<p>Looked into how they could work across departments to engage with community groups in an informal and transparent way. They also explored to see if they, as a museum, could work with a community group to showcase the voices of those who might not feel as represented in the museum.</p>
<p>Wellcome Collection</p>	<p>Wanted to find out whether they could create space for under-represented voices to talk about health, using their collections.</p>

Reflections

Reflection 1: Why should the cultural sector change their existing digital practices to prioritise deeper human connection?

This article by Culture24's Sejul Malde was written as part of the projects development and set out Culture24's broader thinking behind LGR7.

Our human need to connect

In these fraught socially divided times, there is growing recognition of the importance of human connection and relationships for individual and societal wellbeing. It's easy to see how so many of the challenges we face in our society today have been produced, or exacerbated by, a breakdown of understanding and connection between people. (Yes, Brexit, I'm looking at you!)

Humans are social beings and we need to belong. Human connection refers to our innate need to create a social rapport with others, to feel heard, seen, and valued, and to belong. We evolved into social beings through necessity: cooperation with each other enhanced our ability to survive under harsh environmental circumstances. Cave paintings dating back to 30,000 BC were a way to communicate warnings and celebrate success, and demonstrate how early people conveyed information to each other. Our living circumstances today may have changed, but this fundamental need to be nested within social relationships has not. As human beings we need to feel part of something connected: a family, a group, a team or a tribe.

The impact of digital technology on human connection

Having moved on from cave paintings, connection and communication today can be actual, or virtual. Our digital culture has developed the tools to help us belong to the 'global village'. With our daily use of digital technologies we live in an age of instant global connectivity. We are more connected to one another today than ever before in human history. Digital technologies have also enabled individuals to use these connections for social betterment, for example by mobilising quick and effective civil protests in times of societal unrest, which would have been impossible in a purely analogue age.

Yet digital culture also has a significant shadow side when it comes to fostering deeper human

connection. Over the last few years, the connections we seem to be making are less interpersonal and more individual, focused on the digital devices in our pockets. Intuitively, this feels like it's having an adverse impact on social relations. Ride the Tube or walk down the street, and it's not hard to notice how increasingly people have their heads down, deeply lost in their own customised individual worlds mediated by their smartphones, completely unaware of everyone around them. You might argue that public transport isn't a particularly social environment to begin with, but these new behaviours interrupt our planned social interactions too — like dinner with friends and family. Now we increasingly become confronted by the 'tyranny of the buzz' — the constant checking of phones amid the relentless tide of nagging notifications, providing immediate gratification for the user, but negatively impacting on others present.

The adverse impact of digital usage, in terms of human connection, can also create damaging effects for the user. This is supported by research which demonstrates that while real life face-to-face social connectedness seems to be strongly associated with feelings of well-being, this can change when our interactions happen virtually. For example, one study⁶ demonstrated that those who spend the most time digitally connecting on social media — more than two hours a day — had more than twice the odds of feeling socially isolated and lonely, compared to those who spend only a half hour per day using social media.

The Prince's Trust, who have been gauging youth opinion for 10 years, found that just under half of young people who use social media now feel more anxious and 'inadequate' when they compare themselves to others on social media sites⁷. It seems that the initial promise of digital technology in being connected more widely to people than we ever imagined has morphed into something far darker for us in term of the real human impacts. If, now more than ever, we need greater mutual understanding and connection, then is the answer to turn all our devices off?

6. <https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797%2817%2930016-8/fulltext>

7. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/feb/05/youth-unhappiness-uk-doubles-in-past-10-years>



It's complicated

There is certainly a credible case for limiting use. However, let's not start letting our knees jerk too wildly. A careful review of the literature paints a more complicated picture. It's certainly true that a number of studies have found a connection between social media use and a decline in well-being. But other studies have found the opposite results, with people feeling more socially connected as they spend more time on social media. For example, some studies have shown⁸ that Facebook helps reduce barriers that students with lower self-esteem might experience in forming the kinds of large, heterogeneous networks that are sources of necessary social capital to build esteem. Other research⁹ has demonstrated the positive benefits of social media usage for children in care. Rather than presenting a risk to their wellbeing, seeing updates about everyday life events actually provided them with a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Social media also offers opportunities for the development of social-emotional skills that are vital in forming relationships, in ways that face-to-face interaction may not. danah boyd in her study of the social lives of networked teenagers¹⁰ argues that young people are doing what they have always done

as part of their journey into adulthood, including socialising with peers, investigating the world, trying on identities and establishing independence, but now they are just doing so online. The ability to access public spaces for sociable purposes is a critical component of the coming-of-age process, and yet many of the public spaces where adults gather — bars, clubs, and restaurants — are inaccessible to teens. Social media channels are providing teens with new opportunities to participate in public life.

To complicate matters further, a review of the research linking loneliness to internet use found that using the internet socially can lead to both increases and decreases in loneliness — depending on how it is used. In short, the relationship between digital culture and human connection is a complex one that is impossible to address in absolutes. To navigate this complexity, its specific use, context and conditions need to be better understood.

8. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.156.4913&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

9. <http://theconversation.com/how-social-media-can-make-life-better-for-young-people-in-care-91123>

10. <http://www.danah.org/itscomplicated/learn-more/>

The roles and responsibilities of cultural organisations

So what does all of this have to do with cultural organisations? After all, we create exhibitions, put on performances, and showcase collections. All this discussion about human connection via digital channels is interesting, but does it really have much to do with us as organisations and as a sector? Well – yes!



'We have a social responsibility to prioritise meaningful personal connection in all our work as cultural organisations, and that includes our digital activity.'



The work of cultural organisations is vital in building mutual understanding and relationships. So much of what we do is about nurturing human connection, whether through the art or exhibitions we showcase, through the human stories we mediate or through our civic spaces, which are open to everyone to engage and participate within. Arguably, human connection is our raison d'être.

As cultural organisations we are also trying to embrace digital technologies to build more meaningful relationships with our audiences, communities and society — particularly through social media channels. Given that digital channels provide an essential route to these publics, if we want to remain relevant to our audiences and society at large, it's imperative that our digital activity prioritises our desire to promote deeper human connection.

Unfortunately, the reality is starkly different. The existing digital activity of many cultural organisations is operational rather than purposeful. This means that their use of digital channels tends to prioritise organisational orientated objectives, like driving footfall, increasing brand awareness or promoting ticket sales, rather than promoting social values such as human connection. Even when cultural organisations develop a human voice on their digital channels, showcasing an online personality and

engaging in forms of digital storytelling, the primary focus is often still the organisation, its profile and objectives. There may be genuine positive human impact, but it's usually of secondary importance.

We have a social responsibility to prioritise meaningful personal connection in all our work as cultural organisations, and that includes our digital activity. This does not mean that the current organisational objectives we are aiming for in our digital work need to be ditched — far from it, actually. It's about re-prioritisation, focusing on why we exist as cultural and heritage organisations, and what makes us unique. If we can look at our digital activity in a different way, by focusing on the need to drive human connection first and foremost, then the necessary business benefits of increased footfall, brand value, ticket sales etc. will follow naturally.

So how do we practically do this? This isn't straightforward, given the challenges that digital technologies present in sometimes creating social isolation rather than connection. But at the same time it's important we don't approach this challenge by doing something entirely new that is alien to us as cultural organisations. We need to use digital technologies in different ways, according to the principles we adhere to in our other work. We need to critique and challenge what digital channels can do and test their boundaries. We need a new mindset when approaching our digital work. This is what we set out to explore within LGR7.



Reflection 2: Taking a values-orientated approach to redesigning our digital practices

In this article Sejul Malde delves deeper into the thinking behind Let's Get Real 7. Both of these reflections were published on Medium before the project started.

The language of values

If, as cultural organisations, we are serious about the need to develop greater human connection through our digital work, we need a useful way of thinking about this objective, one that helps us to plan our next steps on digital channels in more definitive and practical ways. Focusing on human values helps us to do this.

Values are important. Values are the aspects of people's identities that reflect what they deem to be desirable, important, and worth striving for in their lives. If we are interested in finding ways to foster deeper human connection, finding ways to align with people's values becomes essential. Moreover, the language of values is one that most cultural organisations should be comfortable with, and increasingly values-led practices are happening in our non-digital work. Could this thinking also be applied to our digital activities?

Not all values are productive when considering solutions to social problems. Research collated by Common Cause Foundation¹¹, a partner in the Let's Get Real 7 project, looked in-depth into historical and present-day research and its findings confirmed that regardless of culture or place, human values can be broken down into two main categories: **intrinsic values** and **extrinsic values**. Intrinsic values refer to those principles that are more inherently rewarding to pursue, for example a sense of community, affiliation to friends and family, and self-development. Extrinsic values, on the other hand, are values that are contingent upon the perceptions of others — they relate to envy of 'higher' social strata, admiration for material wealth, or power. Campaigns for social and environmental change tend to resonate more readily with those who give importance to intrinsic ('bigger-than-self') values and less readily with those whose values are more extrinsically orientated. Therefore, when striving for deeper human connection to address particular social problems, it's important to design solutions according to particular intrinsic values.

Values-based design approaches

Values-based design approaches are already being explored in a number of other areas where there is a need to recognise and reassert the impact they have on people, not just as users but as human beings. This is particularly prevalent in the design of ethical and fair-trade products. For example Fairphone has particular values based design features that has enabled it to become the world's first ethical smartphone. It is designed as a 'modular' phone to promote principles of agency and re-use, ensuring that issues with broken screens, failed audio jacks, and failed batteries can be addressed and repaired easily as a separate module to the phone, rather than having to replace the whole phone which creates a huge environmental impact. Similar values-based design approaches can be seen in architecture, aiming to reassert people's control over their built environment by considering the impact they have on people in human ways. For example, buildings can be designed to promote health and wellbeing¹², not only addressing physical or environmental wellbeing concerns, but also mental and spiritual, through the design of sightlines, exposure to light and presence of greenery.

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'It's important to recognise that design-based approaches are not limited to designing physical things like phones or buildings.'
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It's important to recognise that design-based approaches are not limited to designing physical things like phones or buildings. We also design social environments and systems, and you could argue that many of the social problems we face today are caused by the failure of these social environments and

11. https://valuesandframes.org/resources/CCF_report_think_of_me_as_evil.pdf
 12. <https://www.cladglobal.com/architecture-design-features?codeid=31242>



systems to support people in living by their values. Some social environments make being honest more difficult, while others make it easier. It is similar with courage, creativity, and with every other manner in which a person wants to act or relate to others. As Common Cause explains, environments that give a particular importance to extrinsic values will consequently undermine pro-social and pro-environmental behaviours.

Values-based approaches can therefore be seen in how particular social environments or systems are designed. Carnegie UK Trust, another Let's Get Real 7 project partner, is currently exploring ways that values, and in particular kindness, can be used as a way to redesign public policy¹³. They argue that the great public policy challenges of our time — rebuilding public trust and confidence, encouraging behaviour change — demand an approach that is far more centred on relationships and human connections. They propose that adopting more relational approaches that are premised on human values such as kindness, rather than more transactional and rational approaches that prioritise harder facts, metrics and evidence, is a much more effective way to begin addressing these challenges. Values-based design approaches also exist in connection to the economy. There is recent renewed interest in the moral economy, an economy designed on the principles of goodness, fairness, and justice, rather than one where the market is assumed to be independent of such concerns.

All of these examples demonstrate the counter-cultural nature of values-based thinking. Each example involves challenging established and entrenched philosophies and mind sets, be it neoliberal free market economics, evidence based policy making, cultures of replacement rather than re-use or an architectural design sensibility focused on aesthetics. Values thinking therefore represents the conceptual frame through which to challenge the status quo and to influence change. At the same time, the 'design' element prevalent in all of these examples provides a practical and human centred focus to deliver the change. Taken together therefore, *values-based design thinking* represents a powerful intellectual and practical tool to make change happen. If cultural organisations want to change how they use their digital channels; to use them more purposefully than operationally in order to foster deeper human connections; then can they apply values-led design approaches to this task?

Redesigning existing digital practice with values

Digital channels create social environments that people use to connect, exchange and relate with others, and so like the other social environments and systems discussed, they can be re-designed according to values-based thinking. Digital channels are actually embedded with pre existing values¹⁴. They are intentionally designed to be used in certain ways, and teams of designers with specific sets of values make

13. <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/kindness-emotions-and-human-relationships-the-blind-spot-in-public-policy/>

14. <https://medium.com/what-to-build/dear-zuck-fd25ecb1aa5a>

decisions about these intended uses. They are designed to simplify and expedite certain social relations, and certain actions. Whether that be to 'like' something or 'follow' someone, for example. If these simplified actions and relations don't match a particular user's values, then the use of the particular digital channel makes it harder for that person to live by their values.

Social media channels are rich sites for extrinsic values (those based on the perceptions of others), such as those relating to image and status. However, whilst the environment of social media sites is skewed towards extrinsic values, the users, on an individual level, will be mixture of those who predominantly lean towards extrinsic values and those who are more intrinsically inclined. There comes a misalignment when someone who is looking for particular intrinsic values to be fulfilled is using a particular digital channel that is designed with the objective of pursuing extrinsic values. For example, it may be harder to live by the value of honesty on Instagram, if honest posts get fewer likes. Similarly, a courageous statement on Twitter could lead to harassing replies. The design challenge becomes about pushing the boundaries and finding the gaps in how a particular digital channel can be used in order to nurture intrinsic values that support you to foster deeper human connection. For example, facilitating conversations or campaigns on Twitter or Instagram that aim to do more broadcast messages or sell tickets, but rather nurture particular human values like curiosity and creativity — familiar ground for many cultural practitioners — but also deeper and arguably more personal values like kindness, integrity, honesty and forgiveness.

Calderdale Council in Halifax showcased the kindness of people in the borough during its latest Vision2024 social media 'takeover' week. Over 2,500 residents, organisations, community groups, volunteers, businesses and council employees got involved in #Kindness Week from Monday 14 to Sunday 20 January 2019. Several social media posts told incredible stories of people who go the extra mile to help each other and demonstrated Calderdale's community spirit. Another example is the hugely popular #nomakeupselfie campaign¹⁵ which encouraged women to post pictures of themselves wearing no makeup on social media sites and nominating their friends to do the same, in order to promote greater confidence and honesty around appearance on social media.

By challenging the way digital channels can be used in this way, you might come up short. You might

discover that some digital platforms have such established design features promoting extrinsic values that it's impossible to meaningfully promote anything different. That, actually, is a great outcome. You are already so much more informed in making particular channels work for you, rather than the other way around. You might also find out that other channels might provide a better fit with that particular value. For example, you might discover that WhatsApp, because of its closed and more personal sense of community, might be the type of online safe space that participants need to feel comfortable being themselves and being more creative and supportive of each other. A great example of this is 64 Million Artists' Creativity in Mind project¹⁶.

Other platforms like Wikipedia are already well set up for use in more intrinsic values-orientated ways (through promoting openness, community and shared knowledge) and could be pushed further towards other intrinsic values such as equality, for example, by running a Feminist Wikipedia Edit-a-thon, as some cultural organisations have done.

Arguably your own website or blog provides the best opportunity for experimenting with promoting intrinsic values through the creation of online editorial content. Whilst website-building software also has various constraints in how it can be used, particularly in creating the look and feel, you are generally free to create editorial content based on a combination of text and images that responds to whatever value you like. A great example of this comes from the Wellcome Collection, another Let's Get Real 7 project partner, that promotes values of inclusion in the diversity of voices and stories they showcase on their website. For example 'In My Own Words'¹⁷ which offers disabled people a platform to share their priorities, their concerns and their lived experiences of health through stories as told by them.

Creating value from values

There are several benefits for cultural organisations in taking a more values orientated design approach to their existing digital work. As I already outlined, this will help cultural organisations prioritise deeper human connection in their digital work, which is essential if we want to stay true to our civic and social responsibilities and remain relevant to our audiences and society at large. It also outlines a low-cost, high-impact approach to developing existing digital activity; not only in human and societal terms, but also in how we as cultural organisations approach, and get more relevant value from our existing digital work.

15. <https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2014/mar/25/nomakeupselfie-viral-campaign-cancer-research>

16. <https://64millionartists.com/our-work/creativity-in-mind/>

17. <https://wellcomecollection.org/series/W1sD2CYAACcAvRh4>



There are further benefits in improving the digital and design skills and confidence of our staff. These are no longer just about a specific set of technical competencies, that relate to say coding or building a product that can feel alien to many of us. Instead they related to a broader set of literacies that we all need, not only professionally but also in other parts of our lives. Taking a values-orientated design approach to our existing digital work helps us to apply these literacies in ways that make sense to us as cultural organisations. As digital channels provide an immediate and low cost way of testing out approaches, such an approach could also inform cultural organisations' offline values based practices too.

The bigger prize

We can accrue some or all of these tangible benefits if we adopt this approach. But the real prize is far bigger and it benefits not only us as cultural organisations or as a sector, but every member of society. Values-based digital design approaches can help us contribute to building a much more socially responsible digital culture.

There is a huge need. An important public discussion is currently taking place on the values and ethics of digital technologies¹⁸ as society navigates a myriad of digital cultural challenges from misinformation campaigns to online harassment and extremism, biased algorithms, data breaches, workers rights, tech monopolies, automated labour and drone safety and use, to name just a few. Scarcely a day passes without a news story highlighting a new ethical dilemma triggered by new technologies, and we are grappling to make sense of it all.

To navigate this vastly different environment we need

to become more informed about the digital culture that is increasingly impacting our lives. We need to pose certain critical questions and engage in discussion. What do we want the internet to become and why? What tech do we want in our lives? This is not a neutral discussion, but rather a values-driven one that challenges us to consider who we are as a society and who we would like to become. As technologies increasingly mediate the ways we work, relate to others, learn, and participate in society, an interrogation of the values technologies deliberately or inadvertently promote becomes inescapable.

If we believe that cultural organisations, as public and civic institutions, cannot be neutral in the face of such societal upheaval, then surely they also have a vital role to play in shaping our understanding and response to the current digital cultural questions we face.

If we accept this responsibility then how do we begin to respond? As organisations we need to become more critically informed of these digital cultural issues and identify our unique role in responding to them. This can only really happen by reflecting on our own usage of these technologies, and testing out how we can use them in more socially responsible ways. Taking a values orientated design approach to our existing digital activity allows us to do this.

In the short term this will enable us to be more informed about which digital channels we use and how we use them. But in the long term, armed with this critical knowledge, perhaps we might actually come together as a sector to develop new technology solutions, like the creation of a Digital Public Space advocated for by the Warwick Commission¹⁹ or a cultural sector version of the Public Media Stack²⁰ discussed recently by Matt Locke of Storythings. Solutions that are embedded squarely with the values which we support, free from political and commercial interference, and designed solely for the public good.

It might feel like a bold ambition, but as a wise person once said: from small acorns mighty oaks grow. If we really are values-orientated organisations, and we believe in the importance of those values to illuminate the path ahead, then we have the perfect place to start.



18. <https://medium.com/doteveryone/start-with-values-how-innovation-can-be-bold-fast-and-responsible-799a5629438d>

19. https://warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/warwick_commission_report_2015.pdf

20. <https://medium.com/storythings-ltd/the-public-media-stack-4c6c2accdbb>

Reflection 3: Human connections matter

Looking back at what happened on Let's Get Real 7

By Ben Thurman, Carnegie UK Trust

We know that human connections matter. The everyday relationships and interactions we have with people in our community are fundamental: they contribute to a sense of belonging, and make other things possible. They are at the heart of our wellbeing.

Although these experiences of everyday relationships are often unnoticed and taken for granted, we know that there is an "infrastructure of kindness" that makes them more or less possible²¹. The places and spaces that we have to gather and meet, the nature of the opportunities for social connection, and the stories we tell about the values we share: all of these contribute to kinder communities²².

Cultural organisations already play an active role in sustaining this infrastructure of kindness, by providing welcoming places where people can bump into each other, by using these physical spaces to foster opportunities for connection between people and communities – by being a "living room" or "meeting house" for the city (or town). But as the distinction between online and offline becomes increasingly blurred, could they be more active in building "digital meeting places"?²³

However high the footfall through a museum or gallery, it will communicate with a great many more people – all of whom have potential for meaningful human engagement – through its digital channels. If we accept that the work of cultural organisations is building understanding, human connection and wellbeing, then there is a strong argument for spending time to consider what this looks like in a digital space – not as something that is separate or an add-on, but as something that complements 'analogue' activities and forms a core part of how organisations deliver their social purpose.

A values-based approach

One way to explore this is through the lens of values, and over the past four years, the Carnegie UK Trust has been exploring the value of kindness as a way to redesign public policy. We have found that this focus shifts our thinking away from *what* we do towards *how* we do it.

Over the last forty years, public policy and organisational decision making has increasingly lent on what Julia Unwin calls 'the rational lexicon' – the language of rules and procedures, targets and metrics, value for money²⁴. And while all of this is important, there is also another language: of relationships, human intuition and kindness. We know from evidence and also personal experience that people do better when they experience meaningful human connection; but we have also seen these relationships being squeezed out by systems and structures that prioritise efficiency and accountability.



'Our attitudes towards risk and professionalism inhibit kindness: an array of rules and regulations and a culture that prizes a clinical and dispassionate approach leave little space to focus on what really matters to people.'



Working in partnership with a range of organisations to embed kindness into practice identified a number of barriers. Our attitudes towards risk and professionalism inhibit kindness: an array of rules and regulations and a culture that prizes a clinical and dispassionate approach leave little space to focus on what really matters to people. And our approach to performance management, focusing on measuring narrow targets and outputs, rewards transactions rather than relationships.

Kindness, then, far from being nice and 'fluffy', is disruptive: it demands challenging systems and structures and rethinking the way that things are run and managed. Adopting a values-based approach to digital communication similarly challenges attitudes

21. <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/public-policy-and-the-infrastructure-of-kindness-in-scotland/>
 22. <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/place-kindness-combating-loneliness-building-stronger-communities/>
 23. https://warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/warwick_commission_report_2015.pdf
 24. <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/kindness-emotions-and-human-relationships-the-blind-spot-in-public-policy/>

and established ways of working. It asks us to think beyond branding and footfall, to develop something more human and engaging – and to assess ‘risk’ and measure ‘value’ in a different way.

Values-based design may not be new to organisations with a defined social purpose. But because ‘digital’ is often viewed in isolation, there is space to explore how cultural organisations can align their digital activity more closely with values-led practices that happen in physical spaces – and because of the unique ‘amplifying’ capacity of technology, embedding values into digital practice can feel risky and radical.

Radical digital

Nine months of digital experiments in eighteen different organisations elicited a number of themes – both where integrating values into digital had enhanced organisations’ social purpose, and where it highlighted challenges and gaps between values and practice.

- Creating space to consider how to build values into digital communication enabled organisations to *change the nature of engagement* with people and communities. Experiments were rooted in simplicity: asking people “what makes a great day out” (Tyne & Wear), or sharing photos and stories (Tiverton). These approaches used digital tools to create space for a conversation that allowed organisations to engage with and involve people in a much less linear way – and which diffused with and influenced how organisations seek to use their physical spaces.
- Shifting the purpose “from promotion to representation” (MERL), however, sharpened the focus on *ethical dilemmas*. Issues around privacy and safety, and the ethics of co-production, have to be navigated in the analogue world; yet they feel more complicated due to the mass sharing capacity of social media platforms.
- One way of countering this was to engage with people using different digital spaces (Bristol Culture). However, if cultural organisations do wish to use existing social media channels to drive human connection, there needs to be flexibility and ‘permission’ to sometimes get things wrong. Encouraging people to “stop talking as a representative and start talking as a human being” (Barnstaple) brings certain risks. In some cases, concerns about organisational reputation

prevented participants from translating the sorts of conversations they routinely have in physical spaces onto digital platforms.

- Partly, this is because the way we currently use digital tools “feels different” to face-to-face engagement. However, the process of integrating values and human connection into digital practice also highlighted instances where organisational rules actively inhibited organisational values – where “policy is incongruous with values” (British Museum). Digital experiments, then, opened up space to debate and challenge organisational cultures.
- By “holding up a mirror” to the organisation, LGR7 participants came full circle. Having set out to embed values and deliver social purpose through digital projects, six months later they were often challenging and questioning the organisational structures and procedures that prevented them from doing so. Rather than being discreetly “digital”, conversations became about system change.
- This realisation led to participants taking on projects that were too ambitious – indeed, the most successful experiments (in terms of delivering outputs) were those that were tied to existing projects and slightly narrower in focus (Bletchley Park). Changing the way a whole organisation uses digital tools to foster human connection is about more than simply enhancing outreach: it requires breaking down silos and developing a “digital mindset” (V&A Dundee; Wellcome Collection). While this change may not have been achieved, many organisations had opened up the conversation and begun the “process of in-reach” (Manchester Art Gallery) that is required in order to develop a more joined-up approach to engagement.

Looking through a ‘digital lens’?

In the final reflections, the barriers to developing a more human approach were not ‘digital’ but structural, bound up in organisational processes and cultures. Themes of safety, risk, ethics and complexity – and the tension between values and practice – resonate with experiences working to embed kindness into organisational cultures²⁵, and the shift towards a more relational approach more generally²⁶.

In particular, people spoke about fear. The shift in focus from transactions to human relationships is

25. <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/the-practice-of-kindness-learning-from-kin-and-north-ayrshire/>

26. See, for example, Hilary Cottam. 2018. *Radical Help: How We Can Remake the Relationships Between Us and Revolutionise the Welfare State*. London: Virago.



challenging; it demands taking a risk and, crucially, it requires being allowed to get things wrong. LGR7 participants talked about the difficulties of negotiating this within risk averse environments. Perhaps because digital amplifies people’s voices, it is sometimes held to different standards of success and failure. Yet, if organisations are serious about embedding relationships into digital practice, then there needs to be a different approach to ‘risk’, predicated on greater trust of those working within digital channels to ‘be human’, and a different response to negative feedback. This in turn is based on a reassessment of the way that we measure success – not in terms of clicks and ‘likes’, but focusing more on the quality of engagement and how people feel.

Another key theme was time and investment. Recognising the challenges outlined above, digital teams cannot be expected to ‘do’ human connection as an add-on, within existing organisational structures. There needs to be an investment of time and support to experiment with and deliver what is a much more complex offering. Equally, digital tools are one part of a much broader approach to connecting with people and delivering social purpose; and it therefore needs to be integrated across the organisation, rather than treated as a silo and ‘add-on’ to relationships in physical spaces.

These themes of time/investment and risk/fear in many ways are not about digital at all, but rather about (radical) organisational change. In this way, LGR7 highlighted the potential for digital to be a lens to explore the tension between values and practice. At the same time, it taught that the size and scale of the challenge should not cause inertia: even small tests of change can act as a catalyst for bigger conversations.

Embedding values and human connection into digital practice is certainly not easy, but it feels like an important journey of travel for cultural organisations. Whether approached from a values or a digital perspective, it is one where every step has the potential to improve the way that cultural organisations involve, engage and represent people and communities; and more broadly, to inspire a more socially responsible and more relational digital culture.



The experiments: in full

Barbican Centre



<p>Name</p>	<p>Rachel Williams Content Marketing Manager</p>
<p>Name</p>	<p>Suzanne Zhang Content Editor</p>
<p>Organisation</p>	<p>Barbican Centre</p>
<p>What did you want to find out?</p>	<p>We wanted to investigate whether we could use our digital channels to create more of a sense of space and destination amongst our visitors, rather than us being simply an events venue.</p> <p>We wanted to utilise our digital channels to invite audiences into the Barbican’s history by encouraging visitors to explore the building beyond the free wifi and desk-space in our public areas and demonstrate the Barbican’s values to provide an art experience for all and create a sense of being part of a community when you visit.</p>
<p>What did you do?</p>	<p>For our experiment, we created a series of destination-based plasma screens highlighting architectural and historical features of the Barbican to educate visitors about the building and the organisation to inspire them to take a break and explore the Centre.</p> <p>The content would be united with a hashtag #MyBarbican which was used on plasma screens and social networks to share visitors’ views of the Barbican, such as ‘My favourite place to relax in the Barbican is _____’, ‘The best view of the Barbican is _____’</p>
<p>What was difficult?</p>	<p>The main experiment phase during LGR7 coincided with a very busy time at the Barbican – namely in the middle of us migrating our email system, a season launch, design team holiday and our own annual leave.</p> <p>A knock-on effect of this meant that there were challenges communicating what we had in mind for the design and landing on a creative we were 100% happy with.</p> <p>We wanted our experiment to be a logical continuation of last year’s experiment when we took part in LGR6 – deepening connections with our existing audiences. We also wanted this experiment to have its own visual identity, and it was difficult for us to depart from our own branding and our own plasma screen designs, which usually advertise events.</p> <p>We now know where this project is headed, but it took us a while to get there.</p>

<p>What surprised you?</p>	<p>Perhaps the surprise came in that we chose another design-reliant campaign, despite coming up against very similar challenges with last year’s experiment!</p> <p>A happier ‘surprise’ is that launching our experiment later worked in our favour – the theme of our campaign sits well with our 2020 annual theme, Inside Out, which looks at the relationship between our inner lives and creativity.</p> <p>As part of this annual theme, we are looking at how we can make our public spaces more reflective and mindful and so this campaign will be a good accompaniment to this by encouraging people to take a break and a moment for themselves when they visit.</p>
<p>What next?</p>	<p>We have rolled out the first in a series of plasma campaigns into the Centre and will now monitor any engagement on #MyBarbican. Following this, in the Spring, we plan to use visitor posts as part of a destination campaign, featuring them in our monthly guide, social media and plasma screens, to help recognise the community of Barbican visitors.</p> <p>Should this be successful, we hope to establish a second phase which would be more ‘values-based’ and introspective, for example asking ‘When was the last time you cried in the cinema?’.</p>
<p>What 3 quick takeaways would you give?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find your foundations for an idea in an existing brand campaign rather than coming up with something completely new. 2. To create a quick experiment, do it yourself (at least at first...). 3. Set yourself a (realistic) timeline - factoring in other major projects taking place - and try and stick to it.

Bletchley Park Trust



Name	Kat Harper Head of Communications
Name	Kate Travers Head of Learning
Organisation	Bletchley Park Trust
What did you want to find out?	To explore how a values-based approach that integrates digital and onsite activities, might attract, engage and broaden our family audiences whilst enhancing a sense of community and celebration.
What did you do?	<p>We worked in partnership with the charity Gingerbread to reach single parent families in surrounding local areas of Bletchley Park.</p> <p>The aim was to design a project focusing on Bletchley Park's value of 'Brilliance' to align with a previous Gingerbread 'You're Brilliant' Campaign.</p> <p>Through social media engagement, parents were invited to participate in a co-created family event based on a celebration of 'brilliance' – acknowledging the WW2 history of Bletchley Park and discussing what brilliance means and how we see brilliance in ourselves and our family members. Four families participated with suggestions from both children and adults on how we could make the museum more accessible to them and reduce barriers to access and engagement. The participants also shared information about their use of digital channels and their preferred ways of communication. Findings informed the activities offered in a pilot family workshop (delivered onsite in October 2019) and feedback provided valuable insight for future onsite events and digital engagement with this audience.</p>
What was difficult?	<p>The timescale; even working with a charity partner that was very proactive, we found aligning diaries to discuss, share and advertise the project challenging. We had only just over a week following the completion of consultations to advertise the workshop for single parent families and then deliver it during October half term.</p> <p>Two new families attended and there were three additional positive digital responses about future events from another three families who said they would have attended if they had not had other pre-existing commitments.</p> <p>Gingerbread forums and both owned and partner social media channels were used to reach single parent families, however the tight timeline resulted in fewer responses than desired. We did also attempt to engage museum influencers and had some success with a parent influencer, who posted and retweeted the event for us.</p>

<p>What surprised you?</p>	<p>The overwhelming positive verbal feedback received from the participants. One parent said: 'Why is Bletchley Park so forward thinking in this area? Not many museums offer this.'</p> <p>We noticed that single parents with young children responded very well to the call out for a family workshop specifically tailored for single parent families.</p>
<p>What next?</p>	<p>We are continuing our work with Gingerbread to offer discounted tickets to their members and, internally, we are aiming to offer a broader family ticketing model.</p>
<p>What 3 quick takeaways would you give?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Speak directly to the audience you want to engage with. Include more people and their voices in the planning stage of activities to share ideas and help foster a sense of community; and recognise it takes time. Gingerbread and single parent families helped us to understand how best we could support them, their children and their wider families. 2. Build in more time to pilot activity that can be used to inform a permanent programme. These audiences need flexibility and a choice of consultation dates and times. 3. Digital engagement can be even more effective when the partner organisation's values are aligned with your own organisation.

Bristol Museums



Name	Finn White Engagement Officer (Communities)
Name	Lauren MacCarthy Marketing and Communications Officer
Organisation	Bristol Museums
What did you want to find out?	Can we get a more representative range of responses to call-outs if we use simple, familiar technology?
What did you do?	<p>We wanted to see if we could work with text messaging.</p> <p>We decided to test the tech with the <i>You Make Bristol</i> project which requested nominations from the public for inspiring Bristolians.</p> <p>Researched text services – discounted Mailchimp and others.</p> <p>Decided to buy a mobile and a SIM instead.</p> <p>Wrote some messaging – three different variations to test which worked best.</p> <p>Produced postcards and distributed them to residences and local businesses (pubs, cafés, hairdressers, tattooists and shops etc) in Knowle West – an area of multiple deprivation in south Bristol.</p>
What was difficult?	<p>Finding the time within working day.</p> <p>Data protection – how were we collecting and storing phone numbers etc.</p> <p>The right wording – using language appropriate for the audience.</p>
What surprised you?	<p>How successful it was! We got about a 5% response rate which is more than we anticipated. The responses were meaningful and genuinely informed the project.</p> <p>At least two of the nominations were for people from Knowle West which led to greater local interest in the project from local media.</p>

<p>What next?</p>	<p>The <i>You Make Bristol</i> project is about to be installed in M Shed including some of the nominations we received through text.</p> <p>We want to try it again with another project. We often ask for community contributions to exhibitions and projects.</p>
<p>What 3 quick takeaways would you give?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Get out more – speak to people in their own communities 2. Simple tech can be more effective and generate a more diverse response 3. Social media tends to reach an already captive market

The British Museum



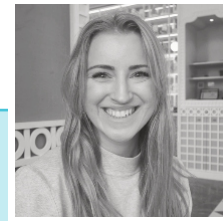
<p>Name</p>	<p>Ed Lawless Samsung Digital Learning Programme Manager</p>
<p>Name</p>	<p>Emilie Carruthers Samsung Digital Learning Programme Manager</p>
<p>Organisation</p>	<p>The British Museum</p>
<p>What did you want to find out?</p>	<p>As education managers of the Samsung Digital Discovery Centre (SDDC) in the Schools and Young Audiences team we work directly with schools, families and young visitors. In April 2019 the SDDC secured an additional five years of sponsorship from Samsung. As part of our programming plan for the next five years we are developing a new strand of informal digital programming for young people, specifically teenagers, who visit the Museum’s physical site in Bloomsbury. However, we recognised at the outset that we do not work in isolation from the rest of the organisation nor from the rest of the sector. This led to our first priority; to better understand how The British Museum and other organisations in the sector value young people.</p> <p>This realisation coincided with the opportunity to participate in Let’s Get Real 7 and gave structure to our year-long period of reflection and research into the above challenge.</p> <p>The power of museum visits for young people is not underappreciated. However, many organisations attempt to become welcoming, hospitable locations for young people by funnelling a relative handful of them into small scale programmes rather than providing something which operates at a proportional scale for their overall visitor numbers.</p> <p>Randi Korn in the introduction to their book <i>Intentional Practice for Museums</i> relates the power of encountering a single object in the Metropolitan Museum of Art; “...I first saw it at the age of 16 – on my first visit to NYC by myself. Alone in the city, the world felt large and loud, and I, like many teens, was searching for who I was.” This took place, not as part of a structured programme of multi-day workshops but as an unaccompanied young person in a museum.</p> <p>We wanted to explore how cultural organisations presently are welcoming to unaccompanied young people, and in future could be ever more hospitable environments for these visitors. This led us to two branches of investigation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outside of specific programming aimed at this age group, what measures are currently in place to make the British Museum a friendly and inviting space for young people? 2. What do young people expect from a visit to the British Museum?

<p>What did you do?</p>	<p>To investigate the first question we had to review the place where these measures should be solidified; its policies which affect this age group. We also saw value in benchmarking these against those of the wider sector. It became clear that a foundational element of these policies was the age at which visitors under the age of 18 are permitted to enter cultural venues without an accompanying adult. We felt that by getting an answer to this, we could better understand how cultural organisations value these visitors and their attendance.</p> <p>However, it also became apparent that there was inconsistent knowledge and understanding of the Museum’s policies by its staff. Regardless of what is stated in the policies, if they are applied with uncertainty and inconsistency, they are ineffectual and inadequate. Therefore, we convened and hosted conversations with staff who were working either directly or tangentially with this age group to discuss the policies and help us uncover how deeply and widespread the issue may be.</p> <p>To respond to the second question, what do young people expect from a visit to the British Museum, we convened a consultation event with 33 young people aged 16–17 as part of a National Citizen Service event in August 2019. We intentionally downplayed where that we worked for a museum. Instead we framed the event as a more general investigation into their experiences of visiting third places, that is to say places that are neither home nor places of education or work.</p> <p>We discussed instances where they were turned away from venues such as shopping centres, libraries and public spaces because of purported age restrictions. The focus was on how those instances made them feel and what values they thought those organisations place on young people. We also investigated what they felt would be a reasonable age limit for a young person to attend their local museum without an adult.</p>
<p>What was difficult?</p>	<p>The outcome of our experiment revealed that young people’s expectations do not always align with organisational policies. There exists a deep discrepancy between how young people expect to be treated and what our organisation permits. For example, our research showed that young people expected to be allowed to visit a museum without a parent or guardian from 12 years old, while many museum policies do not allow visitors under 16 or even 18 years old to visit unaccompanied.</p> <p>Due to the investigatory and exploratory nature of the experiment we found it difficult to predetermine how much time we needed to complete each step and therefore incorporate the time we needed into our workloads. We uncovered things as we went along which brought new challenges and made it difficult to plan ahead.</p>
<p>What surprised you?</p>	<p>We were surprised that we were unable to identify a widely adopted best practice, standard, or guiding policy which dictates at what age young people should be able to attend a cultural organisation unaccompanied.</p> <p>We were pleased to discover that other sector support organisations are also interested in this area. Organisations such as GEM and Kids in Museums had previously researched how exhibition tickets are sold to different age ranges and visitor group compositions.</p>

<p>What surprised you?</p>	<p>We uncovered that there is potential for a deeper and sector-wide piece of research to be done to investigate this further.</p> <p>We also found that this was a topic area that has previously been explored in the media and within the museum professional community: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/feb/27/museums-teenagers-salford-safety</p> <p>https://twitter.com/MarDixon/status/1140515156906205184</p> <p>http://www.mardixon.com/wordpress/2019/06/are-10-year-olds-too-young-to-go-to-a-museum-on-their-own-a-twitter-debate/</p> <p>We uncovered a number of policies, documents and information about our organisation that was not widely known by staff. We were surprised by the degree of uncertainty from staff about the British Museum’s policies involving unaccompanied young people. We found that staff had a genuine desire to understand, but were being given conflicting information depending on what or who they referred to.</p> <p>Our hypothesis was that the age at which under 18 year olds expect to be granted entry to museums would be lower than the age at which our policy dictates. Our conversation with young people therefore did have the outcome that we expected.</p>
<p>What next?</p>	<p>Internally, we will strive to get a definitive, clear, comprehensive understanding of the British Museum’s policy and advocate for its effective understanding by all members of staff who interact with young people. This includes everyone from visitor services and security through to ticketing decision makers and safeguarding representatives.</p> <p>We understand that much of this policy making lies outside of our direct remit so we will continue to raise this as an unanswered question internally, advocating for the conversation to continue among colleagues and influencing decision makers.</p> <p>We will work with young people over the course of the next five years as they transition from their role this year as explorers and informants to consultants, testers, users and, hopefully, eventually advocates of the large scale teens programme we have taken the first steps to create. In this vein, an immediate next step is to apply the same questions we took to the 33 young people at the National Citizens Service event and apply it to a broader range of young people.</p> <p>Finally, as we know other museums, sector support organisations and professionals are interested in this area of investigation, we would like to support others to continue to have conversations around this topic.</p>

What 3 quick takeaways would you give?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Young people expect to be allowed to enter cultural organisations unaccompanied.2. To engage young people at scale in the heritage sector requires organisations to take a holistic approach and cannot be the sole responsibility of one individual, team or department.3. To truly demonstrate that an organisation values young people, one-off programmes and temporary projects are insufficient. The whole organisation should be welcoming, and this must be solidified in its infrastructure and codified in its policies.
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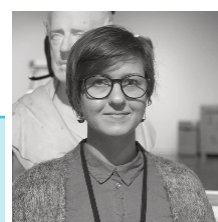
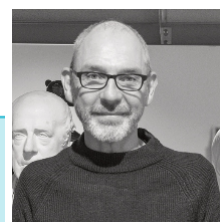
English Heritage



Name	Charlotte Hancock Social Media Executive
Name	Rachel Broomhead Digital Content Editor
Organisation	English Heritage
What did you want to find out?	To find a medium or method to engage our audience with complex and controversial histories on digital platforms.
What did you do?	<p>Met with colleagues in different departments to seek advice on the project and gained their support.</p> <p>We decided to focus on the story of black prisoners of war held at Portchester Castle. The story was the subject used by sound artist Elaine Mitchener. To understand the story and how it could be represented through non-traditional media we visited the castle and met with the artist to help develop our ideas.</p> <p>Initially, we identified letters we could use to replicate the experience of the prisoners and their wives, however after obstacles with content, we found another solution and brought an external historian on board to develop the project further.</p> <p>After consultation with internal and external experts we decided to focus on the stories of three prisoners of war that were captured in St Lucia and taken captive in Portchester Castle. We wanted our audience to, as much as possible place themselves in the position of these prisoners to highlight how human experience transcends national identity – highlighting how English history and heritage is not confined within our borders.</p> <p>We decided the best way to present this on our digital platforms was using a Twitter decision tree, where users are placed in the shoes of historical characters in St Lucia. Users are confronted with the complex historical narrative in which their choices are limited, and whilst given options, ultimately are trapped within a colonial system of oppression.</p> <p>The Twitter tree is linked to a webpage that enables the nuance and complex history to be fully understood. We plan to publish this in January 2020.</p>
What was difficult?	<p>The controversial nature of the topic.</p> <p>Using unpublished sources.</p> <p>Lack of trust in digital platforms from historians and artists.</p> <p>Communicating a nuanced digital idea to inexperienced digital users.</p>

<p>What was difficult?</p>	<p>The timeframes of a large organisation.</p> <p>Using an external consultant.</p>
<p>What surprised you?</p>	<p>We started out this experiment thinking that our organisation was resistant to change. However, consulting with colleagues, it is clear that there is an institutional desire to change how we present our history. Whilst there is the desire, there are not yet the processes in place - but we are more assured that with time these will be more ingrained in our working practices. We were pleasantly surprised at the internal support for this project.</p>
<p>What next?</p>	<p>We are finalising the decision tree copy and illustrations to run in Jan 2020. If this format is successful we plan to use it for other historical characters and more complex historical narratives. We will be sharing our findings and results of the decision tree with colleagues to hopefully show a desire from users for this style of content. This experiment has been particularly useful for us this year, in preparation for our theme next year which will be 'The Voices of England'.</p> <p>The value mapping exercise was potentially the most useful activity we brought back to the office. We had other colleagues complete the task and used it as an example of how we might be able to talk to a divided audience next year. The subject of English heritage and heritage can mean very different things to different people, but in practice, this exercise will hopefully help us find common values.</p>
<p>What 3 quick takeaways would you give?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When you vocalise ambitions for your work that are values focused, you can start an important conversation that many colleagues are willing to have, but current ways of working are not promoting. This experiment allows for these conversations to be had. 2. Working in silos damages progress. We like working together. 3. Having the opportunity to share industry practice and knowledge is invaluable and inspiring.

Manchester Art Gallery



<p>Name</p>	<p>Emma Freeman Social Media Assistant</p>
<p>Name</p>	<p>Martin Grimes Web Manager</p>
<p>Organisation</p>	<p>Manchester Art Gallery</p>
<p>What did you want to find out?</p>	<p>As the gallery begins to change its vision and programme under the new direction of Alistair Hudson, we hoped to find out how the gallery can reflect and stay true to these values online. In particular, we wanted to test this value: ‘Manchester Art Gallery is a meeting house for the city, a place for citizens to plan, make decisions and talk to power’.</p>
<p>What did you do?</p>	<p>The gallery hosts sessions every Monday morning for all staff, and we decided to use these sessions to both inform staff about the project, and to involve them as participants in our experiment. We ran three sessions; the first was an overview of our past and current digital work – defining its extent and purpose, and to introduce the Let’s Get Real project. It clarified the range and depth of the digital work and highlighted the operational nature of most of it. We also did the value-mapping exercises as a staff group, and introduced the concept of the ‘Perception gap’.</p> <p>The second session was a meeting with a small project group that came out of the introductory session we ran. The project group all agreed that we must avoid the drive to create yet another project that we should start from where we are and with what’s already happening through the gallery’s Monday morning sessions.</p> <p>In the third session we asked whether we should attempt to have the same kinds of debates online that we are currently having in our physical spaces; addressing civic planning or transportation infrastructure and policy for example. The overwhelming feedback from this session was that we needed to look inwards first and sort out our own house before getting involved in potentially contentious debates online. The main outcome of this session was ‘Inreach’, a term coined by Helen, one of our Visitor Services team.</p> <p>So, rather than a social media policy shift, or an online experiment taking shape, we have begun to look at the environmental issues we can tackle within the physical space of the gallery. We started with a simple intention of adding bike racks to an external space to encourage staff and visitors to cycle more. (Even this tiny action has become mired in bureaucracy though). Also, as a result of the staff discussions, we signed up to Culture Declares, and have joined a newly formed group looking at carbon reduction across the gallery. The intention is to use our social media channels to maintain transparency about our thinking and actions here.</p>

<p>What was difficult?</p>	<p>Getting everyone to grasp what it is that we actually do on a day to day basis and keeping the focus on digital!</p> <p>Realising that most staff didn't think we should or that we were ready to get involved in environmental, political or social debates online.</p> <p>Finding the time to work on the project with the limited time we have. I also had issues with accessing Basecamp – it consistently crashed! (Emma)</p>
<p>What surprised you?</p>	<p>The outcome! We expected to have a digital project or campaign at the end of the experiment, what we have is a commitment to address environmental concerns within the building and do so transparently.</p>
<p>What next?</p>	<p>Joining the carbon reduction/sustainability group to help drive the gallery's commitment to address environmental concerns. Use social media as a tool of transparency in this process. Use our social media to further support the aims and activities of the climate and sustainability groups now using the free meeting spaces in the gallery.</p>
<p>What 3 quick takeaways would you give?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Never assume that other staff understand your role. 2. Change is a slow process. 3. Keep an open mind.

Special Collections Museum, Manchester Metropolitan University



<p>Name</p>	<p>Janneke Geene Head of Special Collections Museum</p>
<p>Name</p>	<p>Louise Clennell Engagement Officer</p>
<p>Organisation</p>	<p>Special Collections Museum, Manchester Metropolitan University</p>
<p>What did you want to find out?</p>	<p>What our capacity for meaningful digital engagement was and how we could grow it.</p>
<p>What did you do?</p>	<p>We ended up not doing an experiment, for a number of reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our attention was diverted by having to do an emergency decant of our collections stores over the summer (for an emergency repair). 2. We realised that while as a the team we were willing in principle to look at digital, our level of knowledge was low and very few of us really felt capable to dive in. 3. We tried to grapple with the question whether as a team we should be the ones doing the digital engagement, or whether really it is a specialist job (we don't have a dedicated communications or marketing person on the team). 4. We also realised that in order to effect any lasting change of practice, we needed to embed a digital focus at a strategic level – and that maybe that should come first. <p>So it would be fair to say we did some deep thinking, contextualised by an emergency decant, which luckily went very well, and concluded that in our case, rather than run a small and not-so-perfectly-formed experiment, we really need to take a strategic approach as well as up our collective confidence and skills.</p>
<p>What was difficult?</p>	<p>I think it would be fair to say we found everything difficult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - staying on course - finding time - making it a priority <p>And it would also be fair to say we feel we failed on all fronts...</p>

<p>What surprised you?</p>	<p>As we didn't do our own experiment, I will answer this in a slightly oblique way: in taking part in #LGR7 we were reassured when we realised that most of the other participants were also struggling with the same issues as us and that even much larger organisations with more staff were struggling with the same essential issues.</p>
<p>What next?</p>	<p>Our biggest challenge will be to find and sustain some form of momentum so that digital finds a place in our day-to-day operations as well as in our strategic focus.</p>
<p>What 3 quick takeaways would you give?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If you're thinking to engage in something like this, make and fiercely protect enough time (think of a number and double it) to engage fully with the programme. 2. If at all possible try to make it so 'digital' becomes part of your organisation's strategy. 3. It can be hard to know when digital is just a tool (like using a keyboard rather than a quill) and when it is a specialism needing people with a special skill to be involved. It will be interesting to look back in 10 years' time and see what has happened.

Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon



Name	Adam Murray Learning and Access Officer
Organisation	Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon
What did you want to find out?	We wanted to find out if by changing the way we used our online approach (especially regarding the building and collections) we could start a deeper engagement with our community.
What did you do?	We asked five individuals or partner organisations to take part in a series of short videos designed for social media. The participants were asked three questions on how they saw the museum within the community and what it meant to them.
What was difficult?	Difficulty was with restraints on my time and technical issues of using the videos throughout our social media channels, particularly with subtitles and uploading.
What surprised you?	A nice surprise was how on board the community groups and individuals were with sharing how important they felt the museum was to them.
What next?	We will be using the videos and feedback to inspire and shape a new way of engaging with our partners and the public through our online presence, particularly events.
What 3 quick takeaways would you give?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Involve as many people with your project. 2. Be prepared for it to take longer than you think. 3. Bring your project and ideas into your organisation's programme.

Museums Partnership Reading



<p>Name</p>	<p>Sheila Fisher Volunteer Coordinator</p>
<p>Name</p>	<p>Joe Vaughan Digital Editor</p>
<p>Organisation</p>	<p>Museums Partnership Reading</p>
<p>What did you want to find out?</p>	<p>To reflect Reading people’s stories, Town values and a Town identity on our social media channels, contributing to placemaking in Reading.</p>
<p>What did you do?</p>	<p>Inspired by Humans of New York, we piloted ‘Humans of Reading’.</p> <p>We worked with Reading residents and volunteers.</p> <p>We first recorded a test interview, then we interviewed a local Volunteer of the Year, recording 45 min worth of footage.</p> <p>Transcribed interview.</p> <p>Created social media copy.</p> <p>Posted / amplified.</p> <p>Taking part in the process meant we could share and develop skills among participants, with a values-centred approach driving the activity.</p>
<p>What was difficult?</p>	<p>Managing diaries (time is always running out) both for planning, training and for coordinating the interview.</p> <p>Tech literacy (what do buttons do).</p> <p>Representation vs. promotion.</p> <p>Spirit of experimentation vs. assuring quality.</p> <p>Negotiating expectation.</p>
<p>What surprised you?</p>	<p>It was the most fun I had this summer!</p>

What next?	Extend campaign (more activity, more volunteers, more content). Look for feedback. Review performance over time to gauge success/ways of working. Agility!!
What 3 quick takeaways would you give?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Power of communication.2. Benefits and virtues of diverse views/voices/experiences/backgrounds.3. Values as practice.

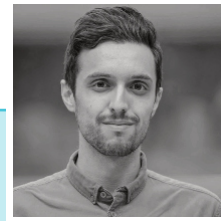
National Army Museum



Name	Kirsty Parsons Curator
Name	Vicky Suzman Digital Marketing Executive
Organisation	National Army Museum
What did you want to find out?	From our Scoping card “How to foster wider discussion around our exhibitions, particularly among people who may not be able to visit themselves, as well as widen and deepen attitudes towards the Army among the wider British public, and nurture relationships with related community groups while acting as stewards for their knowledge and/or collections”. We wanted to see what challenges and opportunities came from trying to use a social media platform to do this.
What did you do?	We set up a closed Facebook group specifically for Women’s Royal Army Corps Association members. We did this in order to create a safe space for these women to discuss not only the recruitment posters aimed at women we were posting for the group, but also to reminisce about their career with the British Army. We posted a recruitment poster from our own collection every Thursday at 11am and gave some prompt questions to start the conversation.
What was difficult?	We found it difficult to get conversations going between the women themselves. Their main engagement was in a teacher-pupil style question and answer between us and them. Basically, we would post a poster up each week with some prompt questions and they would respond to us by answering the questions, but they would rarely speak to each other. Additionally, we found that dedicating time to anything more than our weekly post was difficult as it was expected that we would retain our normal workload on core projects which did not leave us much time to strategically experiment or monitor our progress.
What surprised you?	The fact that the participants, while very keen to engage with us, seemed much less keen on engaging with each other. Fostering conversation between members is something we want to experiment with in future.
What next?	We are intending to write up a report about the experiment for our senior management with suggestions as to how to maintain the group. We intend to suggest keeping the group going as a sort of focus group on projects going forward, such as exhibitions.

What 3 quick takeaways would you give?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Plan ahead in order to make the experiment viable – we planned what and when we would post, including writing out the posts in advance. This meant when we had other unexpected pressures on our workload, we could still do the post without any added pressure.2. Calculate time required for upkeep of the project while it runs and agree this with management.3. Establish more defined goals and how to measure them ahead of time (we couldn't do this, this time, as part of the point was to test the waters, but we can now that we have an idea of the environment on the page).
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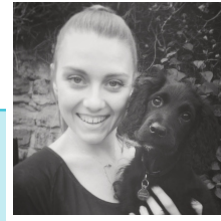
National Museums Liverpool



Name	Scott Smith Digital Content Manager
Name	Laura Johnson Communications Manager
Organisation	National Museums Liverpool
What did you want to find out?	Through this project we wanted to create a sense of community and collective ownership using a new technology called blockchain and to break down the idea of blockchain to a process that is easy to understand for visitors and internal colleagues.
What did you do?	<p>To do this we tried to hold experiments and workshops in order to engage everyone with the idea of object ownership and collective ownership.</p> <p>The participants were required to choose both personal objects and objects from the museum that mean something to them. These will then be digitised and created into collectibles. This will culminate in an online exhibition showcasing participants' chosen museum objects, with descriptions written by the participants and with provenance/ownership attributed to them.</p> <p>Throughout the workshops participants will get to really engage with the museum and our collections and will hopefully leave with a deeper understanding, a feeling of ownership and like they have a real say in the objects in the museum.</p>
What was difficult?	Getting both the participants and internal colleagues to really understand what blockchain was, was probably the biggest barrier to getting people to agree.
What surprised you?	The willingness from people to want to understand blockchain. Participants were going away saying they'd done further research/googled/watched YouTube videos.
What next?	A lot of people confirmed for the original workshop but turnout on the day was low. We're going to reschedule and try again in January to get more participants engaged enough to create the online exhibition. This project will go on to form part of a PHD in collaboration with Frances Liddel, a student at the University of Manchester.

<p>What 3 quick takeaways would you give?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The 'personal' element is what attracted people to take part. People enjoy sharing their own stories.2. People aren't as scared of technology as we think (but the ability to understand was a barrier).3. We were quite ambitious with this project for the timescales. In retrospect we would have gone for an experiment that was smaller and more manageable.
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National Trust



<p>Name</p>	<p>Caroline Icke Marketing and Communications Officer</p>
<p>Name</p>	<p>Tom Webster-Deakin Digital Consultant</p>
<p>Organisation</p>	<p>National Trust</p>
<p>What did you want to find out?</p>	<p>We wanted to find out whether we could use our Social Media channels to encourage deeper connections with our audiences, by encouraging small acts of kindness on and offline. The experiment was inspired by HumanKind at Calke Abbey, a project which focuses on themes of isolation and loneliness, and aims to tackle modern-day loneliness. Our experiment was specifically based on the Pledge Wall – a place where visitors to Calke can find inspiration for small acts of kindness.</p>
<p>What did you do?</p>	<p>We posted one pledge of kindness on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram each week for a month, using the same content for both the Calke Abbey and the National Trust Midlands social media accounts. We started simple, then changed or scaled up the posts each week, to include additional posts or video content. Throughout the experiment, we encouraged participation from the wider National Trust, University of Leicester (whom the National Trust collaborated with for the HumanKind project), and the Let’s Get Real 7 networks.</p>
<p>What was difficult?</p>	<p>Working at different sites has challenges: Caroline being based at Calke and Tom at the Hardwick Hub meant that the opportunities to work on the project were limited – time and resources are always a limiting factor.</p> <p>We also found it challenging to narrow down the experiment and decide what to do, and we ended up trying to do a lot in a short space of time. This meant it was difficult to analyse the results and establish clear learnings, as there was a lot of information to sift through.</p>
<p>What surprised you?</p>	<p>The lack of consistency/patterns across the results was surprising, and we’d hoped to have a clearer way forward by the end of the experiment.</p>

<p>What next?</p>	<p>We'll be sharing our evaluation and learning internally within the National Trust, and plan to continue the experiment about kindness at Calke Abbey, where the project is more relevant. We'll be looking for opportunities to tie the experiment into national themes of wellbeing and nature connection, as well as kindness.</p> <p>We're also planning to look for an outdoors/nature property to work with on a revised version of the experiment. We'll share some specific nature/conservation content from their channels and the regional ones to see if these get better connection at a regional level.</p> <p>So far this year, we've used the VisitorBox ideation cards to help scope out experiences at Woolsthorpe Manor, as part of our commitment to sharing our learning within the National Trust.</p>
<p>What 3 quick takeaways would you give?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make sure the values you use are aligned with both organisation and audience expectations. 2. Keep it simple/less is more/don't be too ambitious. 3. This stuff is hard and takes time.

Royal Albert Memorial Museum

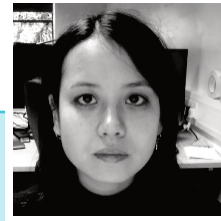


Name	Charlotte Reardon Assistant Visitor Services Supervisor
Name	James Richardson Events Coordinator
Organisation	Royal Albert Memorial Museum
What did you want to find out?	What are Young People’s perception on RAMM, and how can we improve our engagement, both digitally and physically, with this audience? This also tied in to themes of social isolation and questions of how we can create positive digital connections, within and away from the museum space.
What did you do?	Met with several groups of young people (repeated meetings with project groups) and initially just discussed their general ideas of RAMM and how they feel about different forms of digital engagement and how they physically interact with the museum space. As the meetings have progressed we became focused on the GIFT experience app ²⁷ and how this may be one form of connecting with young people, and young people connecting with the museum and its collection.
What was difficult?	Time restraints (!) for keeping the project moving forward and meeting with staff across the different museum departments. It was also difficult to develop our initial discussions into something tangible that could impact the museum.
What surprised you?	Based on assumptions (which we quickly learnt not to do) we had thought that creating a new digital activity, trail or reaching out through social media would best involve Young People – however our discussions or ‘experiment’ showed that a format like the GIFT experience app would give young people the freedom to engage with the collection whilst also sharing this with friends, rather than forcing a digital trail or game on them. It was also a surprise that even through our social media posts, younger people aren’t necessarily interested in engaging with us on those platforms.

27. <https://gifting.digital/gift-experience/>

<p>What next?</p>	<p>To get the GIFT experience app integrated within our programme. RAMM's participation with the international GIFT project, particularly the GIFT experience app (alongside Blast Theory) gives us an opportunity in developing the app to curate it specifically for RAMM (In December, our Digital Media Officer had a day demonstrating the tools at Europeana and the new project website has since gone live). Alongside the Let's Get Real Project, RAMM has also formed its first Youth Panel, a group of 18-25 year olds that was formed to help "shape the museum's exhibitions and events programme and maximise the engagement of younger audiences." Through the ongoing project groups, the Youth Panel and Work Experience students (15-17 year olds) it is hoped that this year we can trial the app at the museum and continue our engagement with direct feedback from this younger audience.</p>
<p>What 3 quick takeaways would you give?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Young people' don't actively engage with the museum space. 2. Allow young people's ideas to start to curate future digital projects – what will actually engage them with the museum and our collection? 3. Our aim is to experiment/trial the GIFT experience app through project groups such as the Youth Panel and Work Experience students.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew



Name	Aline Dufat UI Designer
Name	Ellen McHale Content Editor
Organisation	Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
What did you want to find out?	How we can engage differently with our audience. Connect better with them through creating conversations rather than telling them about Kew's work.
What did you do?	A vox pop. We have tried to engage with our audience in a playful manner.
What was difficult?	Finding time to do the experiment was difficult as well as making sure all the people involved were available on the same day.
What surprised you?	We got lots of positive responses internally.
What next?	Sharing the vox pop on our social channels and trying other idea for experiments.
What 3 quick takeaways would you give?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make sure you have regular catch ups with people involved in the project. 2. Go for it. Don't wait for stakeholder approval! 3. Think small.

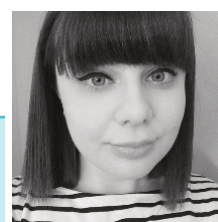
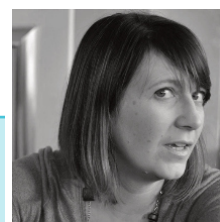
Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life



Name	Carrie Thomas Visitor Information Officer
Organisation	Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life
What did you want to find out?	<p>We wanted to find out whether we could use our digital platforms to help shape and develop a sense of place for Mid Devon. Our local community is changing with a large housing development in progress, and the museum is preparing for a major redevelopment. We wanted to see if there are ways we can place ourselves at the heart of the community helping to create a sense of place for isolated members of the rural community and those coming into the town. As the museum is in a period of change it was also perfect timing for us to look inwardly at how we operate and communicate with our community. Through this project we particularly wanted to see if we could look at our photographic collection from a different perspective, connecting it with the values that underpinned the wider LGR7 project.</p>
What did you do?	<p>Our experiment focused on sharing images from our photographic collection through social media. We chose images that reflected a particular value to encourage conversation and asked people to share their own photos, past and present, which they felt reflected the same value.</p>
What was difficult?	<p>As a small museum with a very small paid staff, finding time to dedicate to the project alongside our other duties was tricky. We had initially planned to do a larger scale experiment using work experience students to produce a stop motion animation, but found that we had over-estimated the young people's digital skills and confidence. This meant that it would have been far more time-consuming than anticipated. Scaling it back actually made the project more engaging.</p>
What surprised you?	<p>We found people weren't engaging in the way we expected them to. People didn't want to share their own photos reflecting a certain value. Instead they were commenting and sharing the photos of old scenes and picking out people and places they recognised. This meant we were able to add detail to our database which was an unexpected bonus.</p> <p>We gained a lot of real positives out of the project beyond the actual experiment and its results. This has really made us think about the way we interact with the public, our volunteers and each other.</p> <p>As a smaller organisation there was potential for feeling intimidated working alongside much larger organisations on the project, but it was reassuring to learn that they face similar challenges. In fact, as a smaller organisation we perhaps have more freedom to test new things as we have fewer organisational hoops to jump through.</p>

<p>What next?</p>	<p>Keep sharing photos. People have really enjoyed seeing images they wouldn't otherwise have access to. It's a really easy way to share more of our photographic collection without expecting anything in return from the public.</p> <p>The way we think about our digital output as a whole has changed and we are now more aware of how our social purpose as an organisation can feed into this. There's more effort made to find a balance between broadcasting posts where we're selling a product or event, and posts which have no other motive than sharing stories or items from our collection. It has also led us to think more carefully about how we communicate with our visitors in other ways; through signage, on donation boxes, around the museum.</p>
<p>What 3 quick takeaways would you give?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Better team-working. 2. More social media experience. 3. Less fear of trying new things.

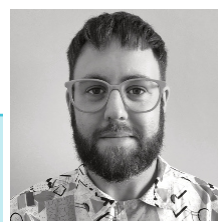
Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums



<p>Name</p>	<p>Kylea Little Keeper of History</p>
<p>Name</p>	<p>Sarah Younas Digital Producer</p>
<p>Organisation</p>	<p>Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums</p>
<p>What did you want to find out?</p>	<p>As part of the beginnings of our research for a redevelopment of Discovery Museum, we were interested in finding out what families thought of us, do their observations match up with how we see ourselves? Do our values align? We wanted to use Let's Get Real as an opportunity to address our family programming and think about how it could be improved.</p> <p>We also wanted to find out about the community surrounding the museum. Who is on our doorstep? Are people actually aware of the museum and have they visited before? How can we bring our neighbours together using the museum space as a hub to create a sense of community spirit?</p>
<p>What did you do?</p>	<p>Our experiment was split into two sections.</p> <p>To address family programming, we invited families via a call out through Facebook to come in to a session led by Matt Wright, our Inventor in Residence (who has a wealth of experience in working with and designing experiences for families) where we facilitated a number of exercises focusing on the question 'what makes a great day out?' Families were asked to tell us about the things that they were interested in, examples include favourite films, TV shows, books, colours, toys to places that they visit as a family and why, how they use social media and find out about events. We then asked them about Discovery Museum, looking at how often they visit, the frequency of visits, exhibitions – do they like them? Don't they like them? Events, customer service, the café etc.</p> <p>To find out more about the community surrounding the museum we decided to get out into it. We went on 'neighbourhood walks' where we took the time to visit each business in the surrounding area and talk to them about themselves and their businesses – what did they do? How long had they been there? Why did they choose that particular street and that business? We then spoke to them about the museum, asking if they knew it existed, had they been before? What did they think? Etc.</p> <p>Over the course of a few 2 hour sessions we spoke to 22 local businesses.</p>
<p>What was difficult?</p>	<p>It was very difficult to ask the right questions. We found that on the whole, people were overwhelmingly positive.</p>

<p>What was difficult?</p>	<p>Although the family session was quickly booked (we promised free tickets to a very popular event!) only 2 families showed up (out of 10 families that had booked) which in some ways was helpful because it meant that we had an opportunity to work one on one with families and ask some more in depth questions, but it did mean that we didn't get a range of responses or opinions. We held the sessions (one for families with children under 5 and one for families with children aged 5+) on a Saturday for 90 minutes each. Given that the sessions were fully booked, it's hard to tell what we could have done differently.</p> <p>Whilst the museum neighbourhood experience was positive it also felt like we weren't getting very deep with some of the discussions. People were mostly positive about the museum. We wondered if they didn't want to offend us. Some people didn't want to chat at all but that was interesting in itself; wither the museum was not a priority and they were busy working in their business or they seemed to think their opinion wasn't valid and we needed to contact the business owner.</p> <p>The process itself was really interesting. Sometimes it was difficult to trust in it and see whether anything would actually come of what we were doing.</p>
<p>What surprised you?</p>	<p>From a digital perspective it was really reassuring and really nice to not actually be expected to produce a digital outcome as part of the project. The project was about people, we needed to start with people and to carry out some research (we still need to do a lot more research before we can produce anything) and it was lovely to have that space and not have any pressure.</p> <p>It's not really a surprise, but getting away from the desk and talking to people has been really refreshing. However, it does take a lot of time. We were surprised at how much we were wondering if it was ok to take time out to actually go and speak to people (which might speak to our working culture ;))</p>
<p>What next?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to develop a family advisory panel where we can involve families in our programming. • We would like to host a neighbourhood event where we invite local businesses to Discovery Museum for an informal, social get together inspired by MIMA's community days. We could also look to develop a museum neighbourhood ambassador programme. • We could potentially develop some digital stories focusing on people in the neighbourhood for our Must-see Stories platform • We will share our learning strategically and promote to other TWAM venues who look to do something similar.
<p>What 3 quick takeaways would you give?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Just try something – it doesn't matter if it doesn't work, you'll learn something. 2. Go out and talk to people. 3. Always start with people – never start with tech.

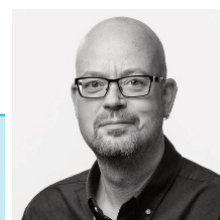
V&A Dundee



<p>Name</p>	<p>Russell Dornan Digital Content Editor</p>
<p>Name</p>	<p>Lauren Bassam Assistant Curator</p>
<p>Organisation</p>	<p>V&A Dundee</p>
<p>What did you want to find out?</p>	<p>We wanted to see how we could work across departments to engage with community groups in an informal and transparent way, getting Digital and Curatorial team members involved in a kind of outreach, as opposed to relying purely on the Learning team to do that.</p> <p>We wanted to see if we as a museum could work with a community group in a way that benefitted the group and was in many ways led by them, as a way to get truly meaningful engagement and showcase the voices of those who might not feel as represented in the museum.</p>
<p>What did you do?</p>	<p>The experiment consisted of Lauren, Russell and Peter from Learning meeting with three different community groups and having an open and honest conversation about the museum, what they thought of it and how they might imagine we can work together on something.</p> <p>We fed this back to our senior management team to discuss how to take it further. It was a fantastic opportunity to talk about how we want to meaningfully engage with people in our city in a way that gives them something meaningful out of it too.</p> <p>It also led us to better understand the communities we work with and ‘de-silo’ our teams – in taking an assistant curator and digital lead to the community felt like something the museum hadn’t done previously, we learnt more about the work our communities producer does, and vice versa.</p>
<p>What was difficult?</p>	<p>Asking a group of older people something like "what, if anything, would you like to do with us as a group, blue sky thinking?" is hugely challenging. It's a really hard question to answer and, while we didn't want to lead them too much, they would have benefitted from us maybe giving them specific options.</p> <p>We offered ideas and suggestions as we chatted, but it didn't go too far. It was easier to simply chat and then ideas naturally rose out of that.</p> <p>It was also challenging keeping the museum abreast of the project. Although we tried and we talked to different departments, there were concerns about what we were doing and why. There was an assumption that because the project involved ‘digital’ we would be producing something tangibly digital immediately, rather than using the project as a period of exploration and experimentation.</p>

<p>What was difficult?</p>	<p>So we had to convince and justify to teams. This didn't take us by surprise because, well, museums, but I think next time we'll make sure we engage the wider teams much more firmly and make sure the working group we form is reporting back to their teams.</p>
<p>What surprised you?</p>	<p>Not a huge surprise in hindsight, but I don't think we expected the chats to be such an intense moment of museum-bashing from the groups. We get it a lot and are used to it, but half the conversation was about all the things wrong with the museum.</p> <p>However, we always had our cheerleaders in the groups too who spoke up in our defence. But because of this honesty, it was a great opportunity to discuss all these issues with people, allow them to understand our position a bit more. If anything, it made us realise that we need to be more transparent with our audiences and tell them the truth and be open about how the museum operates and why.</p> <p>We know this, to be honest, but to have that confirmed in such an active way was useful. We think people from across the museum should get some facetime with our audiences and not rely on the learning team to be facilitating these face-to-face conversations. This was something we fed back to senior management, as a simpler way to understand our local community, what we offer them and how we tell them about all the activities and events we already do.</p>
<p>What next?</p>	<p>After our chat with senior management, Lauren, Peter and Russell will meet to put together a one-page proposal for a pilot project with one of the groups, to be discussed at another meeting with senior management.</p> <p>We also discussed the need to tailor the print-based materials we offer audiences such as community centres and libraries, so that our friendly warm and informal online voice translates into what they receive in print.</p>
<p>What 3 quick takeaways would you give?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nothing beats talking to the public honestly. 2. You have to really handhold people in your organisation; people are very quick to get concerned about budget, about territory, about sensitivities. 3. Be focused in your experiments.

Wellcome Collection



Name	Danny Birchall Digital Content Manager
Name	Helen Wakely Inclusive Collections Lead
Organisation	Wellcome Collection
What did you want to find out?	We wanted to find out whether we could create space for under-represented voices to talk about health, using our collections.
What did you do?	<p>We began by identifying a group of colleagues who we wanted to involve in our thinking. Talking with them helped us refine our idea of what we wanted to do, and we shifted from an idea about collections engagement to an idea based on research.</p> <p>With this idea in mind, we identified and met with an individual to work with, and discussed a project that would involve a short period of paid research and writing for her.</p> <p>Unfortunately, her involvement fell through and we lacked capacity to restart the experiment.</p>
What was difficult?	<p>We found coordinating our internal group of advisers difficult: particularly getting buy-in and attention during a period when our multi-departmental organisation was concentrating on a lot of other strategic work.</p> <p>We found it hard to create a meaningful project that could create internal change, but that could also be achieved within the timescale and resources.</p>
What surprised you?	We were surprised at how difficult it actually turned out to be!
What next?	We're going to continue to think of opportunities to develop our idea, in a more strategic way in 2020, through including it in organisational plans.
What 3 quick takeaways would you give?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Other peoples' ideas challenge yours & this is good! 2. Small projects can be hard in big organisations. 3. This project helped us build relationships across departments.

Next steps

Ten Years On

2020 is the 10th anniversary of Let's Get Real and we have decided to revisit the theme of the first phase which was 'How to evaluate online success'. That first report has been downloaded over 23,400 times in the last ten years, so we know that this is still a question that the sector struggles to answer!

We want to come back to this question ten years on. Consider what it means now, how far we have come over the last decade, how much the world has changed and how, despite all our work, many of the same issues are still challenging for our sector.

Keep track of all the Let's Get Real developments at:
<https://weareculture24.org.uk/lets-get-real/>

Digital Pathways

Culture24's Digital Pathways is a resource bank that provides people working in and with museums with the tools and knowledge they need to build their digital skills.

All of the work that Culture24 does feeds into the website. As an Arts Council England Sector Support Organisation (SSO), our ambition for our SSO programme is to create a step change in museums' understanding of digital by working with individual museum practitioners and leaders, supporting them to become agents of change inside their own organisations.

<https://digitalpathways.weareculture24.org.uk>

Digital Pathways / Pathways / Resources / Everything (137)

Resources to help museum people understand and use digital tools and channels, hand-picked by Culture24

Resources

Our resource bank is packed with case studies, how to guides, blog posts, toolkits, explainers and more, all chosen or created to help museum people use and understand all things digital.

About

This website is part of Culture24's work to support staff and volunteers in museums, arts and heritage organisations in developing digital skills and literacies.

What does digitising collections involve?

If you want to digitise your collections this pathway gives an overview of the issues you need to consider before you begin.

Digital on a shoestring

A post by Izzy Bartley with insight and resources on creating web-based and in-gallery digital learning resources in-house and on a minimal budget.

Developing staff digital skills: approach & process

This guide supports you to identify digital potential and build a digitally literate workforce.

Let's Get Real - the story so far

The Let's Get Real²⁸ story has thus far led over 1,000 project participants from 500+ different organisations on a journey of open and honest enquiry. LGR began by seeking to shift the 'digital change' debate from just evaluating metrics of success or better understanding audiences, moving towards exploring how to work in more joined-up ways, building digital confidence and developing deeper human connections within our networks and for our visitors.

Download all the reports at <https://weareculture24.org.uk/our-research-reports/>

LGR1: How to evaluate success online?

June 2010 to September 2011

This first phase of action research brought together 24 cultural organisations to collaboratively look at the state of the sector regarding metrics and measuring success.



LGR2: A journey towards understanding and measuring digital engagement

July 2012 to June 2013

The second phase of the project involved 22 cultural organisations and explored what digital engagement could mean for each of them. We tried in particular to better understand audiences' online behaviours and motivations.



LGR3: Is your content fit for purpose?

April 2014 to December 2014

This third phase involved 29 participating cultural organisations and explored how to adapt online content to better meet the needs of audiences.



LGR4 and LGR North America: What's the story?

April 2015 to December 2015

The fourth phase involved 30 cultural organisations and explored ways of helping arts and heritage organisations to respond more meaningfully to the audiences of today.



LGR Young Audiences

Nov 2015 to June 2016

This new strand of LGR involved 19 arts and heritage organisations exploring ways to better reach and engage children and young people online.

LGR5: What's the value of online cultural retail?

June 2016 to Jan 2017

Working with 9 arts and heritage organisations, this fifth phase looked at how they could better recognise, articulate and generate value from online retail.

LGR6: Connecting digital practice with social purpose

Jan 2018 to Oct 2018

This sixth phase involved 18 participating organisations and looked at understanding the social purpose of digital technology for arts and heritage organisations.



LGR7: Developing deeper human connection across digital channels

Mar 2019 to Nov 2019

This seventh phase, and the subject of this report worked with 19 organisations to help them understand how to generate stronger personal connections and more meaningful relationships through their digital work.

28. <https://weareculture24.org.uk/lets-get-real>

About Culture24

WeAreCulture24.org.uk

Culture24 is an independent charity that brings arts and heritage organisations closer to audiences. We challenge outdated notions of what arts and heritage organisations are and offer new ways of working through our unique brand of action research, digital publications, festivals and events. We lead the sector in developing the necessary skills and literacies to use digital as a force for positive change, building resilience and capacity.

Our vision is for a thriving and relevant cultural sector able to connect meaningfully with audiences of today. Our mission is to support arts and heritage organisations to have the confidence, imagination and skills to make this happen.



The Culture24 team at Charleston Farmhouse in Sussex. L-R Rosie Clarke, Nick Stockman, Sejul Malde, Jane Finnis, Alison Groom, Anra Kennedy, Richard Moss, Kate McNab, Judith Burns

Credits



Goodbye Captain Thinky, from all of us at Culture24!

Report authors

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With contributions from Ben Thurman, the LGR7 participants and Janet Alderman

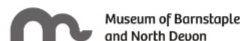
Report designed by

Kate McNab

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

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