Data Salon Briefing:
September 27th 2019

Sydney Culture Network

September Invited Speaker:
Kaho Cheung, DX Lab Technical Lead at State Library of New South Wales

Topic: #NewSelfWales by the numbers

Kaho first provided some background on the State Library's DX Lab, an experimental innovation lab within the library. The DX Lab produced #NewSelfWales, a community generated selfie exhibition that generated a corpus of visitor selfies that are mixed in with photographic portraits from the collection. The project is comprehensively detailed in a series of blog posts by the team. Kaho described the formative research that showed that the majority of library users were not aware of the upstairs galleries, as well as other details about demography and reasons for using the library. Beyond what is detailed in the blog posts, Kaho did live demos of the content via the web and the selfie camera interface with a data salon audience member, and shared detailed usage statistics.

Discussion Topics:

Photo selection and moderation

There was discussion about the fact that a State Library staff member selected 5,500 images from the roughly 30,000 images from the Library's database that were initially found using a face detection algorithm. People asked; how did the algorithm work? how were the human selected images chosen? how were they tagged? There was also a discussion of how the user generated images were moderated (the Library did no pre-moderation onsite, but did pre-moderate Instagram photos tagged #NewSelfWales), as well as how the user generated images were then catalogued.

Specifically Sydney

Given the Library's state wide remit, questions were asked about the Sydney-centric nature of the Library's visitation (online and onsite) and how that affected the content of the exhibition. The Library had set up opportunities for people in regional library branches to contribute photos, selecting images from their collection beyond Sydney and including Instagram images and to tour elements of the exhibition outside Sydney. There was also a discussion about shareable and reusable elements of the exhibit and it's underlying codebase, that could potentially benefit other institutions.

Usage and engagement

Overall, the number of images created by visitors to the exhibition and number of tagged Instagram photos was significantly less than would be expected from the number of people who attended the exhibition. Why this is the case is a topic for future evaluation, offering an opportunity to bookend the formative evaluation that preceded the project.

About the Data Salon:
The Salon series provides a unique forum to share experiences, strategies, and tools for leveraging data across the Sydney Culture Network (SCN). With invited talks, discussion and show-and-share opportunities the salons explore how data-led research and innovation informs a holistic view of audience experience and institutional practices to influence daily decision making, strategic planning and sectoral collaboration.

The data salon is co-convened by A/Prof. Lizzie Muller and Prof. Keir Winesmith from UNSW, with input from the SCN Data Working Group. The salon is held bi-monthly on the last Friday of the month.

Future salon dates, locations and topics for 2019:
If you have topics or speakers you'd like to suggest, or your institution would like to host future salons, please contact Lizzie or Keir (lizzie.muller@unsw.edu.au and k.winesmith@unsw.edu.au).

Future salon dates for your diaries in 2020: Feb 28, April 24, June 26

Sydney Culture Network's Data Working Group members:

Tim Girling-Butcher, Sydney Living Museums	Robin Phua, State Library, NSW
Lizzie Muller, UNSW Art & Design	Keir Winesmith, UNSW Art & Design