Sydney Culture Network

Data Salon #7 Briefing:
June 26th 2020

Topic: Data driven decision making for a post COVID transition
Host/Location: Online

Speakers:
Rebecca Mostyn, Australia Council for the Arts
Tim Snape & Pam McMillan, Sydney Opera House

At our previous Data Salon #6 in June, there was a strong sentiment that the cultural sector in Sydney will not be returning to business as usual in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In salon #7 we built on this by pairing the broad sectoral data gathered by *Audience Outlook Monitor* conducted by Patternmakers and WolfBrown for the Australia Council for the Arts with the specific data generated by Sydney Opera House's *From Our House to Yours* digital program.

Rebecca Mostyn from the Australia Council shared insights about digital activity from phase one of the *Audience Outlook Monitor* summary, and demonstrated various ways to slice and layer data using the dashboard. Rebecca described the next two phases of data collection, and invited organisations to help shape what data should be gathered. She identified business models in online engagement as a key area for research.

Tim Snape described the strategic focus of the Sydney Opera House *From Our House to Yours* digital program. Top level objectives included reaching new Sydneysider audiences and maintaining relevance and positive experiences during COVID-19 shutdown. He shared a range of interesting analytics across platforms and modes of engagement. For example there's a notable difference in viewing duration for the same content on different platforms, with YouTube audiences spending nearly 6 minutes with content as opposed to facebook video viewers spending nearly 2 minutes.

Pam McMillan gave a great insight into the audience research that SOH have carried out alongside the program. This includes triangulating their own research with the *Audience Outline Monitor* and the Category and Consumer Impact Monitor (CCIM). Her key insights included that audiences:
 - miss being social,
 - have shifted priorities (to be more wellbeing focused - and are cooking more!)
- want to support the entertainment industry,
- are overwhelmed by news and want to feel relaxed, entertained and peaceful
- are concerned about screen time.
SOH responded to all these insights in the way they focused their programming.

Discussion Topics:

Putting audience attitudes to culture post-COVID-19 in the context of other sectors - Is there a way to discover through the Audience Outline monitor or other means where culture fits in people's priorities in relation to other leisure and optional activities as they return to normal-ish life? This kind of relational modelling might also be a better gauge of when and how people return to venues and live performance.

Business models - Is there data available - or can we get some - on where specifically people see the value in what they're paying for in online experiences? What makes them willing to pay? Discussion of subscription models - would audiences subscribe to a purely digital offer or a mixed (digital/physical) offer?

International collaboration for digital content, e.g. Is there scope to build international alliances between cultural organisations to continue to access international audiences through subscription models and "add value".

Quality of online programming and material - What about quality of experiences? Organisations have skilled people (including volunteers), but we're all learning. It's mainly the bigger orgs that are best able to provide slick, seamless experiences. Are people also getting tired of digital content? We've been doing so much online – what's the impact of that on what the digital offerings should be going forward? Participants reported on discovering a surprising degree of intimacy and engagement in online experiences.

Nurturing core audiences - One interesting point was that for some organisations their view of their digital offering had changed from an audience building, wide funnel to bring people into contact with the organisation to a space for deeper engagement and nurturing core audiences.

Capacity building - an ongoing and huge issue across the network. Smaller organisations do not have the capacity for generating high quality content. Can this be addressed through partnerships. Can we make the argument to funders and government that now is the time for digital investment in arts orgs? What might this crisis enable - in terms of investment or support - that wouldn't otherwise be available. But at the same time what kinds of practice does it demand that aren't sustainable long term?

Distribution of culture from the centre - Audiences are reluctant to travel into the city centre on public transport. Is now the time to build partnerships between large CBD organisaitons and smaller local venues and orgs so that audiences can access culture locally? What might be the role of local authorities in this?

Shifting balance from physical to digital - Even as the balance between digital and physical engagement shifts from week to week, there is a growing need for organisations to plan for a future in which digital platforms play a much larger role in all our cultural lives.

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 2020:
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: August 28th, October 30th.

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