

Data Salon #8 Briefing: Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Date: September 25th 2020

Hosts: Jazz Money and Nathan Sentance

Nathan “Mudyi” Sentance is a Wiradjuri man from the Mowgee clan with experience in First Nations programming in the GLAM sector, including at the Australian Museum. He is also author of the blog [Archival Decolonist](#).

Jazz Money is a multi-award winning poet, filmmaker and educator of Wiradjuri heritage, with experience developing digital projects at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia. Jazz Money’s article [Sacred Data](#) was an important reference point for the discussion.

Key themes

Digitisation of Indigenous cultural objects:

Nathan and Jazz discussed practices and examples from within and beyond the GLAM sector, along with their own experiences, that are focused on bringing First Nations perspectives to the displays and materials developed by memory institutions. In particular how the stories told (onsite and online) can be told and controlled by First Nations peoples. They cited a few articles, beyond Sacred Data and Nathan’s blog, that are useful reference points including [Tear It Down](#) by Dr Mariko Smith and [Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward an Agenda](#) (editors Tahu Kukutai and John Taylor).

Stories and knowledges:

By taking a pluralistic approach to the interpretation of cultural objects and histories, and pushing against the western idea of a single truth or explanation, and by using a First Nations approach, institutions can open up many different perspectives and acknowledge different audiences and their truths. This extended to the colonial / taxonomical nature of the collection management tools GLAMs use for their data collection, management and dissemination. The [Ara Irititja](#) Keeping Culture KMS and the the State Library of NSW’s Mukurtu instance [Gather](#) were both mentioned.

Decolonial approaches to archival practices, displays and institutions:

Beginning with a discussion on managing First Nations objects and, in particular, the data and stories that document or connect to them. Also discussed was the ethics of data storage & preservation, given many cultural institutions and universities are increasingly using large, opaque U.S. tech companies (Amazon, Microsoft, etc) to host their data. When sacred objects are digitised, those files can be considered sacred too and require appropriate care. This stretches sector understanding of data sovereignty, data storage and “access”. This also complicates on data collection and data that is not related to physical objects. More on this topic in the [Archival Decolonist](#).

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.

2021 Salon conveners: Megan Lawrence and Rory McKay.

Salon founders and 2019/2020 conveners: Lizzie Muller and Keir Winesmith.

The salon is held bi-monthly on the last Friday of the month.