

Data Salon Briefing:
Inaugural Meeting, May 31 2019

Invited Speaker and Topic:

Prof. Keir Winesmith: *How to rebuild digitally when you rebuild physically*

Keir discussed approaches to digital infrastructure renewal when an organisation is undergoing large physical change. He drew on examples from his time at the *Museum of Contemporary Art Australia* and *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art* during their respective building expansion and rebranding projects. He discussed digital ecosystem mapping; balancing resource allocation during digital infrastructure development; building cultural data management systems in-house vs buying off-the-shelf; the importance of planning for testing and iterative improvement beyond the launch of new digital culture projects; and how good governance practices can support (and protect) experimentation and innovation.

Research Opportunity: UNSW Scientia PhD Scholarship in Cultural Data, Sydney

We are pleased to announce a unique PhD scholarship in cultural data research. The candidate will investigate the potential of data-sharing across the Sydney Culture Network to produce evidence-based insights to inform cultural programming and policy. The project is led by Dr Lizzie Muller, Prof. Ross Harley and Prof Keir Winesmith of UNSW Art & Design.

For details of the project and to submit an expression of interest go here:

<https://www.scientia.unsw.edu.au/scientia-phd-scholarships/investigating-and-modelling-data-sharing-across-sydney-culture-network>

For details of the Scientia PhD Scholarship scheme and its highly competitive package go here: <https://www.scientia.unsw.edu.au/scientia-phd-scholarships>

About the Data Salon:

This series is designed to provide a unique forum to share experiences, approaches, strategies, and tools for leveraging data across the Sydney Culture Network (SCN). With invited talks, discussion and show-and-share opportunities the salon series will explore how data-led research and innovation can inform 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 Dr 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. The inaugural salon was hosted at UNW Art & Design. Future sessions will be held at SCN organisations across Sydney. Each data salon will be documented in a short briefing note, circulated to attendees and SCN member organisations. This is the first of those briefings.

Future salon dates for 2019: July 26th, Sep 27th, and Nov 29th. .

Sydney Culture Network's Data Working Group members:

Tim Girling-Butcher, Sydney Living Museums
Lizzie Muller, UNSW Art & Design
Jodie Polutele, Biennale of Sydney

Robin Phua, State Library, NSW
Keir Winesmith, UNSW Art & Design

Future Business:

If you have topics or speakers you'd like to suggest, or your institution would like to host future salons, please contact Dr. Lizzie Muller and Prof. Keir Winesmith (lizzie.muller@unsw.edu.au and k.winesmith@unsw.edu.au).

Who should be in the room? Are the right people from your organisation aware of it and being invited? Please let us know who we should add to the invite list.

Discussion Topics:

A record of the main points, examples and questions from the breakout discussion groups.

#1. Intersection of cultural data with other data - social media, “social listening”, audience atlas, other mechanisms.

- All present were very enthusiastic about the potential of social media to help their organisation and its activities, but nobody felt like they were leveraging it to anywhere near its full potential.
- There was a strong interest in the salon being an opportunity to share strategies and tools across teams and present on successes and learnings.
- There was interest in having social media specialists from other industries come and present case studies on effective social media management
- Each person spoke of the need to for effective dashboarding. No one was happy with the tools they were currently using to support this.
- There was discussion regarding the varying ways cultural organisations capture and report their digital metrics and that this made it difficult to compare across institutions.
- There was some discussion regarding audience segmentation and how differently each organisation approaches this. Some talked about how they use EDM platforms like Campaign Monitor as a way to segment audiences based on behaviours, however they wanted to a more holistic approach.
- The approach the SFMOMA took to changing systems and processes appealed to many people. Some felt it was unlikely their organisation would be in a position to make such a significant change however and were interested in exploring how they could take smaller steps to improve things.

#2. Cultural data as material - audiences as “prosumers” of collection data/materials, what do people want to do with our data?

- Supporting different types of users, and different user motivations, within different GLAM types (museums vs galleries vs libraries for example) was discussed at length
- There was much discussion about what we actually mean by cultural data and what we think users understand it to be
- Methods for going beyond simply publishing collections online were discussion (for example “meet the geeks”, hackathon, wiki editathon, creative commissions, fellowships, niche outreach). Online collection is just table stakes, not innovation
- Open access vs data sovereignty, especially regarding Indigenous collections, was discussed. Greater awareness, care, consultation and professionalisation is needed. Sometimes open access isn't the primary goal, which can lead to difficult decisions and nuanced approaches
- Examples of successful multi-institutional approaches were discussed such a segmentation models or the [Visitor Motivation Survey](#)
- Everything seemed to come back to telling compelling stories with and about our collections, regardless of user motivation/context/demographic

#3. Metrics - visitation metric methodologies, common reporting metrics, visitor behavior patterns

- Frustration on how visitation metrics seems to be used to justify political, funding, and existential requirements. Can be a fairly blunt and useless data point. An event or institution does not need to draw VIVID-like audience to be important/useful/good.
- Eagerness to develop better quality metrics, although there doesn't seem to have a lot of maturity/interest/knowledge. Getting quantity is sometimes easy, getting quality is much harder. Engaging the masses vs the important few. Library example -- engaging 1 academic researcher that publishes works that re frames a major national topic may be more important than having 1,000 people visit. How do you "stop chasing the numbers"?
- How best to measure what value an institution gives the people of NSW even though those people may not visit them. Only some people may visit a Symphony Orchestra, but the city, community, and culture benefits by having such a peak organisation in the city.
- Metrics can be bullshit. Trust in the numbers, how they are counted, variances/inaccuracies/noise, definitions differ, and implementation technologies differ. Even basic visitation numbers can vary widely between institutions. Is staff included in those numbers? Do you have facilities that may overcount in a single visit, e.g. cafe with both indoor and outdoor spaces? Do you count people in the forecourts who use the wifi but do not come in?
- Audience analysis, customer segmentation and Net Promoter Score adoption all vary in maturity across the cluster. Costly and sometimes insights don't justify costs.
- What we can do as a group: need to *communicate* metrics and value better.

#4. Sydney Culture Data Map - what could a place-based approach to data reveal? what data sets could we connect?

- A big opportunity for a Sydney Culture Data Map is to overlay different kinds of data, i.e. to spatially connect cultural data with other sources. Examples include (would be great to hear from some of these examples in future salons):
 - Festivals in Melbourne have worked with a number of data sources including depersonalized payment and ATM data
 - Create NSW and the Data Analytics Centre current efforts to map night time activity in Sydney to try and understand the night time economy.
 - Australia Council's relaunched electorate profiles that map arts participation data. They have included ticketing info from the analytics arm of Ticketek. Limited but experimental and promising. Overlays art and other entertainment and sport. No free events captured.
- A key question is how data can inform decision making and what data-driven decision making could and should look like in the cultural sector? Can comparative data (from grants management systems and other aggregating sources) be fed-back to organisations to help them see their position in the cultural ecology?
- A cultural data map could show patterns of engagement, including cross-genre data that can drive arts policy.
- Can an aggregated and fluently interactive map show the role of culture in everyday lives? A key question here is whether a map should be an industry-focused, professional tool, or an outwardly focused audience tool? Is it about making an argument to politicians and policy makers or to the public themselves? (Or both?)