

Data Salon Briefing:
December 6th 2019

December host:

Bruce Richards, Collection Digitisation Manager, MAAS / Powerhouse

Topic: Digitisation at scale

Bruce led a tour of the recently launched Powerhouse Digitisation Studio. The studio is part of the MAAS/Powerhouse digitisation program which will document and image over 300,000 objects from their collection, as part of their move (first to Castle Hill and then Parramatta) and Parramatta precinct redevelopment. The museum has dedicated a large gallery space to the program, with a number of different photography and cataloguing stations. Bruce explained that this is the pilot phase, where they are digitising a variety of objects to check that calculations around data requirements, costs and time frames are realistic for the overall project. Bruce gave an overview of; workflow across object research, rights and permissions, registration and conservation; the tools and technical set up; naming conventions, storage and metadata; and systems integration.

Discussion Topics:

Collaboration and funding

Experiences of attempting to source funding for the large, medium and small scale digitisation efforts of the many museums and libraries present was a large focus of the discussion. The state library reflected on their experience mid-way through a large government digitisation grant. The central question was how to support genuine aspirations to share technologies, capacities and data between institutions. A number of attendees were part of the consortium bid for collaborative digitisation funding from government that has not progressed, raising a number of ideas of how to build upon that existing collective effort.

Digitisation volunteerism

The [DigiVol](#) program, adopted by [60+ institutions](#), is a web platform that invites volunteers to transcribe data from natural history collections, through the metaphor of expeditions, with some pretty impressive numbers. There was also discussion of digitisation volunteers who do the work of capturing images of pages of books and other items, however the majority of this work is specialist and requires paid and trained staff.

Collection activation

The crucial question of what to do with material once digitised was raised and there were some good examples and ideas for how to activate digitized collections. This is something that we will dig into in a future salon.

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: Feb 28 (Sydney Living Museums), April 24, June 26

Sydney Culture Network's Data Working Group members:

Tim Girling-Butcher, Sydney Living Museums
Lizzie Muller, UNSW Art & Design

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