

Consultation on Digital Innovation in the Performing Arts

May 11, 2016

Participants: Brenda Leadlay, Marc Stevens, Sara Meurling, Al Cushing, David Pay, Inga Petri, Jason Westerlund, Lindsay Naft, Rachel Berdan, Raji Aujla, Nancy Morgan, Katherine Carleton, and four unknown dial-ins (16 participants in total).

Moderator: Frédéric Julien, Director of Research and Development CAPACOA

Introduction

As part of its Digital Innovation initiative and in preparation to the pre-consultation on Canadian content in a digital world, CAPACOA led a dialogue on Digital Innovation in the Performing Arts via web conference on May 11, 2016. 16 participants attended, including presenters, performing arts organizations, service organizations, and for-profit companies.

Summary

Technology is seen as a means of providing greater connection and access. However, participants are concerned with ownership issues with large online content providers, with the discoverability of both online content and live arts, as well as with the sustainability of certain modes of cultural consumption. Solutions put forth include branding initiatives, to encourage consumers to turn to Canadian art and content or to opt for modes of consumption that offer fair compensation to artists and creators.

Participants acknowledge generational differences: millennials engage heavily with culture via digital media, but mostly at home or through smart phones. Virtual goggles, which will be entering the mainstream market at Christmas, may accentuate this trend. The arts sector needs to learn how to create the link between online engagement and offline/live enjoyment: outdoors festivals are doing better than soft seaters in terms of integrating mobile technologies at their events. We must not confine ourselves into an either/or paradigm.

In the same vein, cultural policies must also consider the needs of the bricks and mortar world. Arts venues are not going away and they must remain sustainable.

“We have to consider how generationally people are engaged in the arts, and make it accessible as a live experience.”

Participants expressed the need for more data – on audiences’ behavioural patterns, as well as on the intrinsic value of the arts. There is both a lack of data, and a lack of capacity to use data to inform artistic and marketing decisions. Participants would like leadership from the government in creating or funding accessible tools so that organizations of all size can share data, access data, understand data, and track data over time.

“We need to understand how the next wave of patronage will be like.”

Participants mentioned several digital initiatives over the course of the dialogue, including:

- [Culture Fox](#): an online promotion initiative for all organizations funded by the Ireland Arts Council;
- LA Phil's [VAN Beethoven](#): a virtual reality performance taken on tour and into people's homes;
- YouTube's [FanFest](#): which turns online engagement into major live events;
- Tele-Québec's [La Fabrique culturelle](#): a hybrid between a webzine, a video platform and a social media;
- And a number of live streaming or video-on-demand initiatives such as the Berlin Phil's [Digital Concert Hall](#), the [Opera Platform](#), [live.Coachella](#) and [Stratford HD](#).

There are however concerns about capture and dissemination of performances, as well as fair compensation of artists. First, only the largest organizations have access to the resources and critical mass. Then, restrictions with labour agreements create additional obstacles.

"Is the tail long enough or can the asset be monetized over a long enough period to make it sustainable?"

Transcription

Note: This isn't an integral transcription.

Introductory questions: Looking ahead to 2020, what would you like your world to be like if you weren't constraint by your current business model? What government policies would like to see support you to explore new ways of presenting Canadian artists, of reaching audiences?

The digital world in 2020 should allow communities to find each other and connect to art forms in new and meaningful ways.

Access is really important. It can allow us to attract a broader, national audience. It may allow remote communities to interact with larger communities.

Ownership is also an important point. Digital producers who leverage third-party content websites such as Youtube face ownership issues. Not having ownership of the platform restricts capacity to monetize contents.

**How can we increase the "discoverability" of live performing arts events?
What is being done in other countries, jurisdictions and the private sector that could be instructive to the Government of Canada in terms of best practices for supporting content creation and discovery in a digital world?**

There is a new economic initiative in India driven to increase GDP and to reinforce the India brand. It's a both concept and conference called "Make in India". The conference allows creators to interact with consumers. It was fluid and interactive conference. Something like that could allow us to brand "made in Canada" at the national level and to the world.

This could also take the form of a “created in Canada” brand.

There are consumers who care to ensure that the money they spend goes to those who created the works. A “fair trade art” brand might be of interest to these consumers. However, such a brand could make the case that no money should ever go to administration, which would not be good for presenting organizations.

Participants nonetheless acknowledged that there are modes of consumption that are sustainable, others that are less so.

Regarding discoverability, Ireland also has created an online site where all of the Arts Council funded events are listed. For the whole country. <http://www.culturefox.ie/>

Online service providers have strong competitive advantage with regard to convenience and affordability. How can we reduce the convenience and affordability gaps between live performing arts and online content providers?

There's a disconnect with Millennials: they don't understand performing arts value. We find it inaccessible, unless we're directly connect to it. When I speak to my fellow millennials, they think it's a cool experience, but won't make the step to attend a first show.

LA Philharmonic did a virtual reality project with C.J. Harvey. They toured the show with a van equipped with virtual reality goggles. LA Phil brought the production to the millennials.

We have to look at the trends of the cohort we are trying to engage with. The fact is a lot of them are staying at home and are engaging with content mostly through digital media. We have to be cognisant on behavioural patterns.

As new technology is taken in, we dive in, there is trendiness. The written word appearing on paper is making a comeback. Bookstores are returning to city centres. Right now we have a technological renaissance. We don't know how it is working. We don't know how it will work in 8 years. We have to consider how generationally people are engaged in the arts, and make it accessible as a live experience. We're seeing movements about stepping away from our phones.

On bookstores: Amazon is now building an actual "brick and mortar" store.

I agree with your point that there is a return to real life experiences.

At a meeting with Google Canada, we were told to anticipate a surge in virtual reality goggles at Christmas 2016. It opens new possibilities for arts experiences and marketing.

I would love to be able to drill through data, assessing success, how we are reaching people online, accessing content. I would like leadership from Canadian Heritage in create or funding accessible tools so that organizations of all size can access data, understand data, and track data over a long period of time.

It doesn't have to be an either or. The fact that we think about digital technologies doesn't mean that the performing arts will disappear; they will change. And the business model around it will change. I would love for the government to consider – we have a history of impact of digital technologies on book and music industries – how the performing arts will evolve, but also bear in mind the needs of the bricks and mortar world. These buildings are not going away and it has to be sustainable. Markets will be fragmented: some of us may watch live shows on augmented reality. But we should lose sight of the impacts we want to have with our organizations.

We should never underestimate the need for administration.

We must have a holistic perspective.

I don't think the pendulum needs to swing one way or the other. Instead, we have to learn how technology and digital capabilities can support our bricks and mortar organizations.

Agree, Raji. One thing we talk about as a digital agency is creating the link between online engagement and offline enjoyment.

At Music on Main, we are embarking on a WolfBrown intrinsic impact study. It's exploring what people are looking into with the arts, what impact it has on them. I'm also interested in data to know how to convert people in ticket buyers, how to price tickets.

There is a lack of data. For example, Hill Strategies just suspended the Statistical Insights series for lack of data. Too much data is proprietary. If we could share more data, that could be helpful, especially for the smaller organizations who will never have the money or the skills set to tap into data.

There is an interesting report at the Wallace Foundation about inculcating research into artistic and marketing decisions. David's call for better information about motivation and more sharing of this data is huge. There has to be discernible benefits for arts organizations to share what they've got rather than do research on a cottage basis, one at a time.

The Audience Finder, in the UK, integrates data from many different sources: ticketing data, exit survey data, psychographic data. It requires privacy safeguards but it can be replicated in Canada.

Business for the Arts has a report for Ontario. It's designed by Nick Nanos, it will inspire the Culture Track Canada that we are planning to do in the next year. This report (survey conducted last month) indicates that key talent and millennials are most interested in arts and culture when they decide where they would like to work and sports was the least driving item.

Looking at the Survey of Household Spending, we see a significant increase in communication expenses, whereas entertainment expenses outside home have plateaued. Even though we don't want to be stuck in an either or dichotomy, when money is tight consumers may find

themselves in this situation. Is there any way to make more room for mobile technologies at live events?

Outdoors festivals have tons of activities that we don't see in soft seat theatres, including tweet walls, people taking videos or selfies in front of the stage. There's a whole other philosophy, driven by patrons.

There are generational differences. Often, decisions are made by people from older generations who may not understand who our audiences are. We need to understand how the next wave of patronage will be like, what compels them and what they would like our institutions to be like. We need more of these discussions like these.

What is being done in other countries, jurisdictions and the private sector that could be instructive to the Government of Canada in terms of best practices for supporting content creation and discovery in a digital world?

Technologies are being used in Arts Education. The Amsterdam Concertgebouw (the venue) has been developing curriculum material supporting kindergardent to grade 8 music education.

Philharmonia Orchestra has a fabulous iPad app, including opportunities for coaching and instrumental techniques.

Youtube Fest was one of the most attended festivals in India last year. It flew in Youtubers from around the world and many people in attendance knew who these youtubers were.

I hear the Berlin Phil has been evolving their digital concert hall - to secure much greater adoption. Also Opera Europe I need to learn more about I have been told by a colleague.

<http://live.coachella.com/> - I'm also looking forward to understanding Coachella

There are concerns about capture and dissemination of performances, as well as fair compensation of artists. There used to be a time when the CBC was doing a lot of broadcasts. Stratford Festival and a few others are doing are capturing and webcasting their performances, but is it sustainable? Is the tail long enough or can the asset be monetized over a long enough period to make it sustainable?

One of the issues in digitizing performances in unionized environment is that for dissemination and marketing purposes make it sustainable only for the largest organizations. There are particular issues. If you have a five minute video on your website for promotional purposes, it's fine with the unions. If you post this video on Facebook it becomes the equivalent of a television advertisement and the cost of boosting that post to 50,000 people would cost tens of thousands of dollars. We need to work with associations and unions to determine how to control costs for digitization.

There is a number of high profile Youtubers, including one who lived in Scareborough until she recently moved to LA. We're losing content drivers to the head office of Youtube. These people could go to the CBC if there was a structure to support this type of content. Integrating traditional media with new media should be a high priority in the government's agenda. That way, we are not losing talent and we are not losing potential revenue.

Platform ownership is a topic well worth contemplating. Youtube will evolve, but we don't know what it will become.

Youtube provides studio access to their content creators, giving them total autonomy. We have to emulate this with our traditional channels. CBC must integrate that type of business protocol into their services otherwise they will become irrelevant to a global content sharing world.

Youtube just launched Youtube Red, a paid channel which provides access to VIP coveted music. Youtube is CBC's greatest competitor.

And CBC is prevented to be that by labour agreements. Yet, there remain issues about remuneration: creators wait to get paid and don't receive much. Somehow, artists need to be able to live.

The UNESCO Convention on the protection of cultural diversity could provide a framework to find balance and ensure that artists receive fair compensation in the digital era.

We need to make our assets like CBC relevant again to a new generation of consumers – whose behaviour we have yet to understand. There's a disconnect between what they are charged with doing and what people want.

Can public broadcasters from provincial jurisdiction collaborate with the CBC, put their contents together and reach a broader audience.

I'm interested in the notion of critical mass. What is the critical mass for public broadcasters, for our sector?

There isn't any one content provider that is getting the majority of eyeballs or eardrums. Youtube isn't curating for me. It's just a crossroad where I find content. Because, people don't know where the eyeballs are, they upload their contents to Youtube. What makes it possible to have this richness is that nobody is getting paid.

I would like to know how technology could be used in a positive way for advocacy. Using it to promote the idea that culture is essential to our lives. Technology can be useful to conduct surveys and have conversations with the general public. The measurement of the value of arts and culture is a challenging thing. We need to find a way to make arts and culture essential.

CultureCounts developed an app to conduct exit surveys on the artistic quality and impact of a work. It focuses on the intrinsic value of the arts.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council in the US, Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture, looked at people as creative beings. Most of the culture happening nowadays is in peoples' homes.