

# **Bursary report for Museums Galleries Australia ACT**

## **Digital Directions Symposium**

**Canberra, 19 October 2017**

**Alana Sivell**

Around 180 attendees congregated at the National Film and Sound Archive for the third annual Digital Directions symposium, delivered in partnership with the National Archives of Australia and the National Library of Australia.

This symposium brought together people working with collections, creatives, leaders in the cultural sector and policy makers to discuss issues surrounding bringing digital collections together with users. The speakers posed thought provoking ideas that we could relate back to each of our workplaces:

- How can we better facilitate access and participation?
- What are the ethical concerns in digitising Australian Aboriginal collections?
- How can we collaborate to achieve our aims and meet user needs?
- How can we open up search functions to introduce serendipity and curiosity?
- How do we overcome copyright issues?
- How do we evaluate how users interact with digital collections and what they want?

Advancements in digital technology and its presence EVERYWHERE in society is forcing us to make choices in reimagining how we work and ensuring collection engagement is central to our journeys. The keynote speaker, Jan Müller, NFSA CEO, inspired different thinking on how to view and respond to user needs as digital technology and cultural institutions intersect. We have entered a digital ecosystem where our audience want to participate and digital technology is evolving to allow increased participation. We were all encouraged to think deeply about our users – the categories they fall into and how we can know, educate, engage and reach users through our digital collections.

Much conversation over the day also regarded the evolving purpose and role of cultural heritage institutions in the digital domain– we keep memories alive through the stories we tell with our collections, and how do we do it? Jan Müller believes – by being smart (use appropriate technology in meaningful ways), connected (form partnerships) and open (access).



Know, educate, reach		
	Off-site / before & after visit or use	On-site / during visit or use
Know	Collect data (identity/motivation) Analyze customer segments Data driven curatorial decisions	Collect data (visit/users patterns)
Educate & Engage	Collections online New tech: AR, VR, AI	Multimedia experiences Voices and Influences Personalized Refresh
Reach	Effective websites Consistent social media presence Tailor online content to relevant audiences	

*Jan Müller, Keynote address*

James Kavanagh, National Technology Officer, Microsoft offered insight into the emerging role of the user in digital collections and how artificial intelligence could assist in creating data on digital collections for users to then correct and add to. This collaboration between technology and human users could be the way forward in digitising collections of a large scale.

In the concluding panel discussion, Jan Müller made the observation that next years symposium may need to be renamed to Digital Direction – as final comments and discussion with all speakers showed similar thinking on how to bring users closer to collections through digital initiatives.

I left the symposium feeling motivated and glad to have the opportunity to interact with key industry leaders working in the digital domain and my peers across a variety of cultural institutions. Thank you to MA ACT for allowing me to attend this event with your generous bursary.

If you could not make it on the day - but are interested to find out more, follow this link to the live recording of the symposium <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/about/our-mission/digital-directions-2017>



*Final panel session with all speakers*