

## **AMA Symposium: The Whole Picture Recommendations**

On 8 May this year, the first AMA Symposium was held at Sadler's Wells in London. The event was titled The Whole Picture and aimed to bring together 90 senior arts professionals for an intense 24-hour discussion-led event looking at audience behaviours and how we are measuring them.

The Symposium produced a series of recommendations, which fall into four broad categories:

### **Data**

We need to articulate a vision and long-term strategy for a data-driven industry including how we can improve and broaden the kinds of data captured. Suggested actions included

- setting minimum collections standards individually by organisations or across the industry
- for performing arts, Clear Channel/Ticketmaster need to be included
- investigating the use of swipe/smart cards to improve data collection
- creating strategies for collecting data for non-ticketed events
- making arts research and data comparable to other sectors and compatible with work already happening (for instance the regional cultural data framework developed by the Department of Culture, Media & Sport)

### **Skills, Training & Tools**

We need to develop training and qualifications that can move people up the career ladder and that can fill the skills gap between data analysis and its application ("boxing cleverer" as one delegate suggested). Skills retention within the sector is a major issue and not just in the area of data analysis. There was also discussion of how we could make existing tools (e.g. ACORN, MOSAIC) more robust and how analysis tools could be integrated into ticketing systems.

### **Advocacy**

There was much discussion on how we could support change within organisations and how we could work with the arts councils and government departments. Suggestions included

- helping organisations to understand the implications of being customer-focussed and to be able to make evidence-based decisions
- finding channels and events to communicate with Chief Executives e.g. TMA conference or similar in other sectors
- continuing to share existing best practise
- nominating representatives (AMA, Network?) to input into and work with DCMS, the Scottish and Welsh executives, the arts councils, the Regional Development Agencies and Regional Cultural Consortia – and to lobby for resources

### **Evaluation and New Qualitative Methodologies**

We should look at how we can encourage organisations to realise the value of evaluation within a strategic context and to investigate new ways of measuring the impact of the arts. Suggestions included

- developing a common framework for analysing the social impact of an arts event across each sector
- creating a databank of outputs and outcomes from earlier evaluation studies
- lobbying for funds to commission pilot studies into the emotional impact of the arts, the 'total experience'

Across all these areas there was a realisation that this was “too big to do on our own”.

The AMA Board needs to consider how these recommendations fit into its current business plan, how to take forward certain recommendations and whether the AMA needs to consider strategic partnerships (e.g. TMA, Network) to take others forward.

Ivan Wadeson