

## **Steve Crossan, James Davis and Bill Thompson** **Chaired by Jo Taylor**

This session was an opportunity for delegates to ask further questions of the keynote speakers, Steve Crossan (SC) and Bill Thompson (BT) and to debate the issues raised. They were joined by James Davis (JD), Programme Manager at the Google Cultural Institute. He is part of the core team at GCI, has an art background and worked with Tate for 7 years partnering with Google on the Art Project while there. He then moved to Google Cultural Institute.

*Georgina Ratcliffe (GR), Tate: Can anyone make an ‘exhibit’? Like the Anne Frank example you showed in the keynote? How do you regulate the content?*

Anne Frank – her life, her diary, her legacy

[www.google.com/culturalinstitute/#!/exhibit:exhibitId=wQi4ISly&position=0%2C31](http://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/#!/exhibit:exhibitId=wQi4ISly&position=0%2C31)

Steve Crossan (SC): Right now the project is a partnership project where we are working with the organisation and have agreed the content. From the total number of projects currently on there, about 60% are projects that we’ve started and 40% are where people have come to us and said that they would like to get involved. There is no payment involved and it is simply a partnership. This is our start-up phase and many of the exhibits on there are simply the ones who have agreed and said ‘yes’ to working with us.

As we go forward we are trying to open it up and make it easier for people to get involved. If you are interested in setting up an exhibit you should sign up on the website and someone from Google Cultural Institute (GCI) will get in touch with you. We’re moving towards self-serve platforms.

Jo Taylor (JT): So – anyone can sign up but you need to wait for someone from GCI to get in touch with you.

SC: At the moment, yes, but we are hoping to move towards an easier way of getting people involved.

James Davis (JD): GCI supplies the tech and the platform but leaves the organisation to provide the content and bring their curatorial expertise to the partnership. We’ve had conversations with our partners to ask how it should be done, will this / that work and we leave it up to the partner to decide what appropriate content might be – we don’t make any curatorial decisions.

Bill Thompson (BT): It reminds me of the early days of ‘Blogger’ where you’ve taken that blogging platform to the next level by bringing in a load more material.

*Sally Goldsmith (SG), Theatre Royal Stratford East: Your presentation today inspired a project idea for me. You were talking about opening it out and I would like to do a similar project with Secondary Schools across England that could have a connection to this project – so I was wondering if in the next phases is there a possibility that other non-arts organisations – such as schools – could get involved?*

JD: With version one of the Google Artproject [www.googleartproject.com/](http://www.googleartproject.com/) there was an interesting eco-system developing around education and teachers building their lesson plans and using it in that way. We started to build that into version two of the project to cater for those kinds of scenarios. It gives people the opportunity to 'hang out' and see the Art Project content within the hang out. It offers educational opportunities and video conferencing etc. and while the start was from the arts side of things we are now delving into history and other aspects of culture.

*SG: ... as sort of two-way dialogue.*

JD: Yes ... this is the sort of thing Steve thinks about strategically... where are we going next?

SC: Connecting to schools and universities and other cultural organisations is very important for GCI.

*Mawa Rodriquez (MR), London Calling Arts: Who owns the copyright of the content?*

SC: We have a very simple approach. Rights wise we are not Google Books we are more like YouTube – we claim no rights over material and they stay with the user/partner that are responsible for the rights of the content they upload. If a partner puts up content they subsequently realise they don't have the right to they can very quickly take it down.

JT: It's the partner's responsibility to be sure of the rights and that they have the right to upload that content.

*Delegate: Is Google Search indexing galleries and the components within the galleries ...*

SC: Unless you tell it not to, Google searches everything! We don't have any influence over if it shows up at the top of Google Search. But yes, it does get indexed so if you search for it you will find it. If you search for something specific such as the exact name of the exhibit then that will show quite high up.

*Delegate: And that would be to the item within the exhibit?*

SC: That would probably be to the exhibit rather than the item.

*Delegate: Do the items themselves have unique URLs?*

SC: Yes.

*Rachel Piggott (RP), Glyndebourne Opera: You've said that as partners there's no monetary partnership so what's the criteria for an exhibit? We have extensive physical archives. Are you looking for more of a story? Does it need to be something that's not seen otherwise or would be hard to get to? What is it you are looking for from your partner organisations?*

SC: We're not making any editorial decisions at all or looking for specific criteria although some things work really well and many successful 'exhibits' are about the specific, individual story. We're letting that emerge rather than making the decisions.

JD: It currently manages itself well as people manage themselves and understand the platform and their own materials. But that may change as it grows and we might need to finesse the process.

RG: It's nice at the moment as it is very organic and in its purest form but I guess that might change if money did become involved etc.

SC: There are no plans for commissioning as this might not fit with the themes – we don't have that expertise, we are technologists. At the moment the mix of exhibits is very eclectic and it's often the niche things that are more interesting. As with YouTube and similar platforms there might be featured exhibits on the home page. We want it to be open to everybody to create the exhibits that they want.

JT: Would you commission if you found there was a gap?

JD: This becomes self-explanatory and self-correcting with guidance from partners and their experience. There are common sense and agreed topics i.e. the main content is from the Twentieth Century but didn't include anything from the two World Wars then that would be addressed with expertise from our partners and in this it becomes self-correcting.

SC: We're not trying to build a 'destination' – we want it to be available on lots of different channels including on our partners' websites and being able to access it through Twitter or as a stand-alone embedded object.

*Emma O'Neill (EO), New Art Exchange: Is there any research done, especially with the Google Artproject into the impact and how this might affect visitor numbers to physical galleries? Our gallery was specifically built in an under-privileged area and the idea is to get people into the actual building. Does it help people come to the gallery and how do we sell that idea within our organisations?*

JD: I strongly think that it does promote physical visits. I don't know of any formal research although there's anecdotal evidence from our partners that tells us that visitors mention the project when they are walking around or they've come to see

something that they saw online. Ultimately it opens up your organisation to a wider audience and an audience that may never have previously heard of it. If a single one of those eventually becomes a visitor then surely that's a 'win'.

BT: There's also the danger however that people might see your virtual presence and it could deter them from attending. That, however, could be a good thing – as it might be that your organisation is just not for them and they haven't then wasted their time.

SC: I don't believe that's a danger. If I see beautiful sandy beaches online from the travel industry it doesn't make me not want to go there – it has the opposite effect – I now really want to go there. It's the same for me with cultural institutions. There's also the idea that they may not have found that gallery if it wasn't online. An example might be the *World Wonders* project. Our first partner in that project; Pompeii, were worried that people wouldn't come as they had seen it all online but they did a before and after study, and saw a marked increase in visits in the three months after going online with GCI and linked and tracked it online to their demographics.

[www.google.com/intl/en/culturalinstitute/worldwonders/](http://www.google.com/intl/en/culturalinstitute/worldwonders/)

BT: A really important point is that very few cultural institutions are adequately rewarded for their online traffic and in particular for *sharing* their online traffic. A big part of what Google tries to do or what we do with The Space is to encourage people to take journeys between different collections and different institutions but if you come to the Tate's website and saw something there about the V&A and then went through the door of the V&A – the Tate would not be happy. Because, their KPI's are all about their particular silo and there's no recognition that a shared data model, easy access to digital resources makes that way of measuring not only redundant but dangerous. It stops organisations from doing things that the technology would make very easy and significantly enhances the experiences of the visitors.

JT: I agree that our organisational models are set up to serve our own purposes as opposed to recognising the fact that it is a shared market. We should be set up to serve that market better, as you say. Bill, you've talked about offering arts organisations a chance to interact with a wider audience but presumably another objective is offering the audience a chance to connect with a wider selection of arts organisations.

BT: With The Space it was about bringing together as many organisations as we could afford to into one virtual place.

SC: Future successful projects will be those that allow the user to communicate with the organisation and not just the organisation to communicate with the user. Doing that successfully is going to be way more powerful than the other way around. What's interesting about that is that even very simple things work really well. In fact, it might even be the case that the simpler something is the better works. Take for example the comments system around the Yad Vashem project – a really dark comments

system and the user experience around comments is not very nice – but we got some incredible material and this incredible engagement just because users were able to place themselves in the same context as the material.

The first thing people look for on Google Earth is their own house. With Google Cultural Institute they look for their home town and then they Tweet about it. Twitter is an example of something simple that has become incredibly important. Twitter users invented Twitter – it started as a very simple service that users made work for their own purposes adding reTweeting, hash tags etc. and making it much more powerful.

BT: It's about building the tools that allow people to express their creativity, for both individuals and arts organisations and eventually the distinction begins to break down. If you have a curated collection and you let people make things with it then some of those will be more interesting than the things you began with.

*Leanne Griffin (LG), Tate: The Space is a relatively short-term project and you are going to go away and do another one, take it apart and possibly start again. With regards to short-term projects that need different websites have you got any advice for organisations with a smaller budget – we can't just keep taking things away or fixing them. What works? What doesn't? What should we focus on when not everyone has the expertise?*

BT: It comes down to the data model. Build an online presence around components that are well defined and well understood and properly catalogued and tagged then your opportunities to re-use and re-configure them always exist and you won't have to actually throw stuff away. If you build something as a monolithic piece of Flash that just does one thing then a) having spent the initial cost of around £10K and b) when you don't like it any more, it goes into the virtual tip. The key is to have tools that let you build in a modular way so that you can then afford to be more flexible and at each level and at each stage of development you can rethink and then when you do want to get rid of something you can keep the rest of it. That's why I think that usable meta-data and the tool-building approach are so important. If you have everything on your website properly tagged, catalogued and you know the formats and what the rights are then you can do different things with it. What Google is building is not a particular presentation but a presentation layer for the assets that you can incorporate onto that platform.

SC: I agree. Having your stuff be modular is really important and a good way to go. If it's not working from you then take it down. It also makes it easy to take things down and stop doing it. Google closes down projects and experiments – it requires some effort and we have a team who decides what it is important to focus on and what to do with any content / data that is no longer needed. Closing things down is really important to keep focussed. The meta-data point is also important but don't wait until it is perfect to get stuff online.

JD: There's another step on the journey to getting to that good data model and that's about your relationship with your audience / market / users. Tate is already in a great place because of John Stack who realised that Tate really wasn't that special online. He realised the website should be a dialogue not a monologue, it shouldn't be broadcasting, it should be a relationship. This is a huge philosophical change that then allows you to get to 'right, what is a good data model' that represents this completely different approach to our relationship with our users.

BT: You do need people who understand the technology to work with you. The things that you want to do that are exciting remain technically quite complex at some point. You can build some beautiful things quite easily but because there are things that you want to do and you are bringing your creative imagination, understanding of your audiences and all these things, there will be something that you can't do at some point.

*James Baggeley (JB), Spektrix: It seems like there's two subtly different models to getting culture online – The Space with quite a bit of investment, some curation, some partner work and beautiful outputs such as the John Peel library and those tending towards the more self-service model where you might end up with something that's a bit more standardized. What do you think can be learned from the opposite end of things? Will The Space be more self-service in the future? Will you have to introduce an element of editorial in order to decide what counts as culture and what doesn't when you become self-service?*

SC: To the second question I really don't think we'll ever enforce / have control over the content / editorial. For the foreseeable future we're talking about organisations and not individuals uploading content. We don't want just to have the same experience for everyone – it's not appropriate for different organisations, cultures – it's not currently great for the performing arts but if the meta-data / set up is programmatically available to third parties then they can take it and change it and build an amazing performance space.

BT: With The Space – there is no one model and The Space incorporates things created with lots of different methods and embeds material for third-party sites. It's *not* the BBC commissioning TV – it is the BBC building a platform in collaboration with Arts Council England to help every arts organisation to do the thing they want to do to the best of their ability – it is supporting and sustaining. <http://thespace.org/>

Tim Woodall (TW), Intermusica: Does Google make any money out of this?

SC: No. It wouldn't work – it would make it very complicated to get partners to work with GCI. It is part of Google's corporate / social responsibility work and as part of the detail of their partnerships they are not allowed to make any cash from it. I'm not ruling out the possibility of creating revenue streams for partners in the future but there aren't currently any plans.

BT: The BBC and Arts Council England have been thinking around pay-per-view options within The Space platforms. There may be opportunities for arts organisations 'living' on The Space to have the option to turn on a commercial service. The BBC is building a platform that could enable lots of different business models that the BBC itself would use.

*Linda Uruchurtu Gomez: Are adwords and other commercial options working on the platforms?*

SC: It could be done but it wouldn't work for the user experience or for our partnerships. We don't necessarily want to emphasise Google as the destination for this stuff and want it to live on the partner's site so if they then want to have that option on their site then that's fair enough as long as they are talking about their own material. For example the Mandela Site has a huge 'donate' button on its home page.

JD: And equivalent on the Artproject is that museums have the option to add whatever links they like to their page so if they thought something like that was the best thing to add for that user's journey then they can go ahead and do that.

*Nicky Webb (NW), Artichoke: Could you just talk a little bit about the opportunities for live streaming through these platforms?*

JD: Google Hangouts [www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/](http://www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/) allows up to 10 users to 'get together' and have a video conference – a bit like Skype. You can be engaging with the site and then begin a hang out to talk about something of interest to you. You can pre-arrange hang outs and curator hang outs that several other people can join. These can be watched by anyone in the world as they are taking place as they are broadcast and streamed via YouTube. They are also recorded and can be viewed later.

SC: More specifically – YouTube does streaming live performance and GCI links with them but doesn't do it separately. Right now, GCI would be better used for creating an exhibit that goes alongside a live performance or reviews past performances or the history of the performance of this particular work.

BT: The Space does lots of live performance and we have quite a close partnership with USTREAM. For example, *War Requiem* was taking place at Coventry Cathedral and we tapped into the satellite that was beaming it to several European broadcasters and streamed it online via USTREAM. It does take a lot of expertise and technology and is therefore not for the faint hearted.

<http://www.ustream.tv/new/search?q=war%20requiem>

*NW: It can be difficult and expensive for art organisations so it's interesting to know that there's a platform there for the live streaming.*

BT: We did a project with Pilot Theatre where there were three cameras, where we took a 3G backpack with an HD camera and about 24 SIM cards to enable HD streaming live from a backpack.

SC: That's a good example that the cost of production is plummeting and will continue to happen. Technology that seems difficult, expensive and clunky today will be in your phone in a few years.

JB: It's not just a case of equipment but also the skills to use it. Any plans for some 'how-to' guides and any help for people who want to get stuff up online'?

SC: We do have some outreach activity, especially with schools but we don't currently have a best practice guide.

BT: I use the paid-for service; Google Apps which has a level of support / assistance. The scope for guidance comes when it reaches a different level of maturity or scale. BBC Academy includes some generic top tips and core skills on topics such as filming.

*Jack Wright (JW), Richmond Theatre: How much do you currently work with schools? Is it something you would like to see more of for the future?*

JD: This throws up some interesting challenges for us. What level of organisation / education show we focus on? We're still thinking about how best to answer that question and in the meantime we're working with particular organisations on pilot projects. How should we scale it? We would never have the capacity to work with every organisation that would want to work with us.

SC: Some of the work emerges organically ... Artproject features allow people to put together a user gallery and add some commentary to it as well and that has been used by teachers to devise lesson plans. It's a tool that wasn't particularly designed for that use but as we've discussed previously, users will use these platforms how they want.

BT: BBC Education does quite a lot of work with schools. Next spring (2013) will see a new product from the BBC; *Knowledge and Learning* allowing school students to curate resources and learning materials initially from the BBC's own website but eventually spreading out to third parties.

JT: Bill, in your keynote you asked if 'arts organisations can do digital?' and concluded 'not'. What can we do? How do we move forward from that?

BT: Not in the context of what we were trying to do with The Space when it started out as there was an enormous number of challenges and barriers. It would be foolish to suggest that this is going to be easy. Part of the problem is that we are *still* seeing digital as being separate from other things. The differences say between a print campaign and an online campaign in marketing, what you might be doing with a



theatre company or artwork in the 'physical' world, there still remains significant dividing lines and it will be longer than we would like before that completely disappears. There's also the challenge of the creative imagination – people not having had enough experience with the technology to appreciate the possibilities resulting in their thinking being shaped by the potential of the technology.

SC: I'm a bit more optimistic. Conversations I've had with partners in the last two years show big changes. They not only want to use digital as a core part of what they are doing but are starting to do it autonomously. I.e. Facebook is making it easier for everyone to have a web page, Twitter helps engagement with audiences / users. A generation in the arts is bringing on the creativity.

JD: I don't necessarily agree that arts organisations *should* be trying to get digital and would rather that arts organisations are good at arts and technicians do the 'tech'.

BT: There's a danger then though that arts organisations are restricted by what the techies can do / show and that they will only take organisations down a path that they believe in while you may be depriving them of the opportunity to evaluate the alternatives.

SC: Another thing is that when it comes to technology it's a case of the Emperor's New Clothes or Smoke and Mirrors and is not as hard as you might think it is. Great projects can be carried out with simple tools and the hard part is probably the arts organisations' programming.

SG: I'm not sure about the conversation around digital experts doing the digital and that the arts organisations should capitalise on that as it feels a bit like starting with the art and then thinking about the audience. There's a danger that if there are too many standardised brilliant digital tools that you can 'clunk and click' in to then you start to homogenise the creative digital offer out there and it becomes less responsive and tailored to our diverse arts organisations and audiences.

BT: I agree – it should be led by the arts organisation but there will come a point when not knowing / having that technical understanding could limit ideas and creative thinking.

JT: It's a valid point and it's up to us to remember that we should continue to build the tools and suggested solutions to make it easy and possible and allow creativity to flourish.

*RP: If I can stream and disseminate my content via your platforms, do I need my website?*

BT: You need your URL but what's on your website might simply be a link through to other platforms. Your website might not need to be more than a 'hold up' for links to these other platforms.

JD: I'd say it depends on the size of the organisation. Maybe the smaller ones could use our platforms to save resources but over a certain size, I'm not sure what that size is, I'd say you need your URL and to keep your website.

BT: Make sure to use services that allow access to your data and gives it back to you quickly and easily. Google has a good track record of letting you get the data out and of getting data back to you.