

Jane Finnis, Culture 24 and Sebastian Chan, Powerhouse Museum *Digital Innovation – what’s working and what’s not?*

Sebastian Chan, Powerhouse Museum

Sebastian Chan leads the Digital, Social and Emerging Technologies department at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. His teams include the museum's web unit, audio visual and photography, rights and permission and the photo library, the research library and Thinkspace, the Powerhouse's digital media teaching laboratories. He helps other organisations internationally to strategize and implement cutting edge technologies in the cultural sector. Seb was also a member of the Australian Government's Government 2.0 Taskforce examining ways of improving citizen engagement with government and opening access to public sector information. Seb writes the popular Fresh & New(er) blog in the museum world, and leads a parallel life in electronic music and art as editor-in-chief of *Cyclic Defrost Magazine*.

Jane Finnis, Director of Culture24

Jane Finnis is Director of Culture24, an independent charity that supports the arts and heritage sector to reach audiences on digital platforms. Culture24 has thrived in the digital space for over 10 years. Originally conceived as just one website, it has grown into the UK's digital hub for arts and heritage. The network includes 4,400+ UK cultural organisations (museums, galleries, libraries, archives, heritage sites and more) with a database holding information on events, exhibitions, resources and collections. They collect, curate and distribute this content both to their own channels www.culture24.org.uk and www.show.me.uk but also package and share it across a range of third party services which include the BBC and more.

Culture24 coordinates the hugely successful *Museums at Night* weekend of late night openings across the UK. They are also leading a unique action research project with 23 cultural sector partners on 'How to evaluate success online'. Jane is the founder and Chairman of Culturemondo, the informal international network of people who are all developing, building and running online cultural services around the world. Jane has worked in the arts professionally since 1989, starting in artist film and video production then moving into arts development and artist commissioning. Blog: <http://janefinnis.wordpress.com/>
Twitter: @janefinnis

Part 1: Jane Finnis

Jane introduced the session by playing a musical version of the keynote speech marketing copy from the conference pack, which had been turned into a song with the app songify.

We are overloaded these days with things that we are now able to measure, but none of them are useful until we can figure out what 'effectiveness' is. I have been working on a project with a group of arts and cultural organisations:



These people (representing a range of performing arts organisations, galleries and museums) have been measuring things online and they wanted to know whether it is working or not. They are not sure they are measuring the right things or using the right tools and so this action research project, **How to evaluate online success**, started in March 2010 and will end in September 2011. Culture24 coordinated the project and Sebastian Chan was engaged as an external expert.

Failure is not as popular as success, especially within the public sector. Failure can be a good thing; it's only a problem if you don't know that you're failing. The people involved in this project all saw a value in coming together, sharing what they were learning, and benchmarking.

The online environment is constantly changing. Facebook is colonising time spent online; the web is shifting from being an information medium to primarily a communication medium; more people are spending more time online and increasingly in social spaces; the use of mobile is accelerating and transforming these technologies rapidly.

The organisations involved in the project:





The money

17 organisations contributed £1,000 each to the project, DCMS contributed £5,000, Arts Council England contributed £4,000 and the Heritage Lottery Fund contributed £3,000, leading to a total project budget of £29,000.

What we did

- A series of meet ups and mini-workshops
- Google Analytics health checks for all participating organisations
- Google Analytics data analysis for 2008-2010 and shared segments
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr
- Sector and nationwide comparative data from Hitwise

We searched comprehensively, including brand sites associated with the participating organisations (e.g. for a museum, the brand site for an exhibition).

Results: Healthchecks

- Low level of analytics sophistication (even amongst those organisations who had engaged external experts/agencies to set things up for them)
- Very few organisations had set up 'goals' of any kind in their analytics
- Very little integration with other systems, even of e-commerce
- Minimal use of data beyond basic reporting

Quantitative data analysis 2008 – 2010 revealed that

- In the 4th quarter 2010: online visits ranged from 200K to 4.6M
- Design Museum and Kew had the highest % of non-UK traffic (61% and 55%)
- Roundhouse and Imperial War Museum had the highest % of local city traffic (48% and 35%)
- Roundhouse & Royal Shakespeare Company had the highest % of UK mobile traffic (8% and 7%)
- Organic search (i.e. coming to a web site after using a search engine to find what you are looking for, not a direct link or a paid search) was the dominant traffic source averaging 58.41%
- Social media as a whole averaged 3.31% (very low)
- IOS is the dominant mobile platform averaging 80.22% of mobile traffic

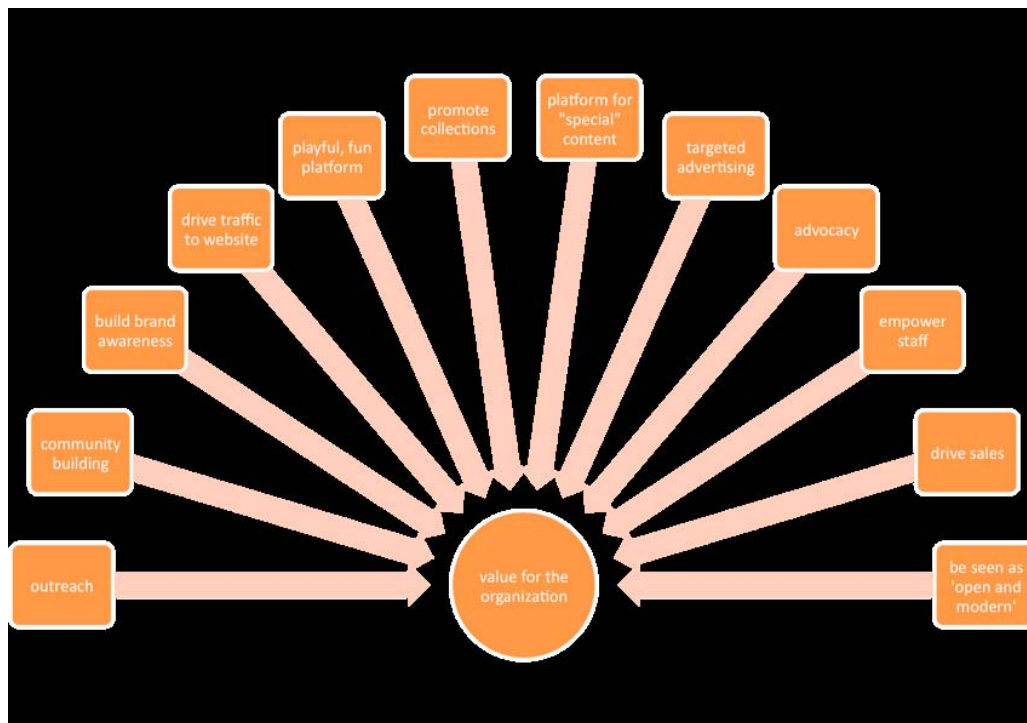
Basic recommendations as a result of these analyses:

- Search Engine Optimisation matters. Still. A lot.
- Mobile is growing many times faster than social media traffic. Invest in mobile versions of your site
- Segment visitors by: city/region/international. brand/content

Some key questions that arise from this work in relation to organisational change:

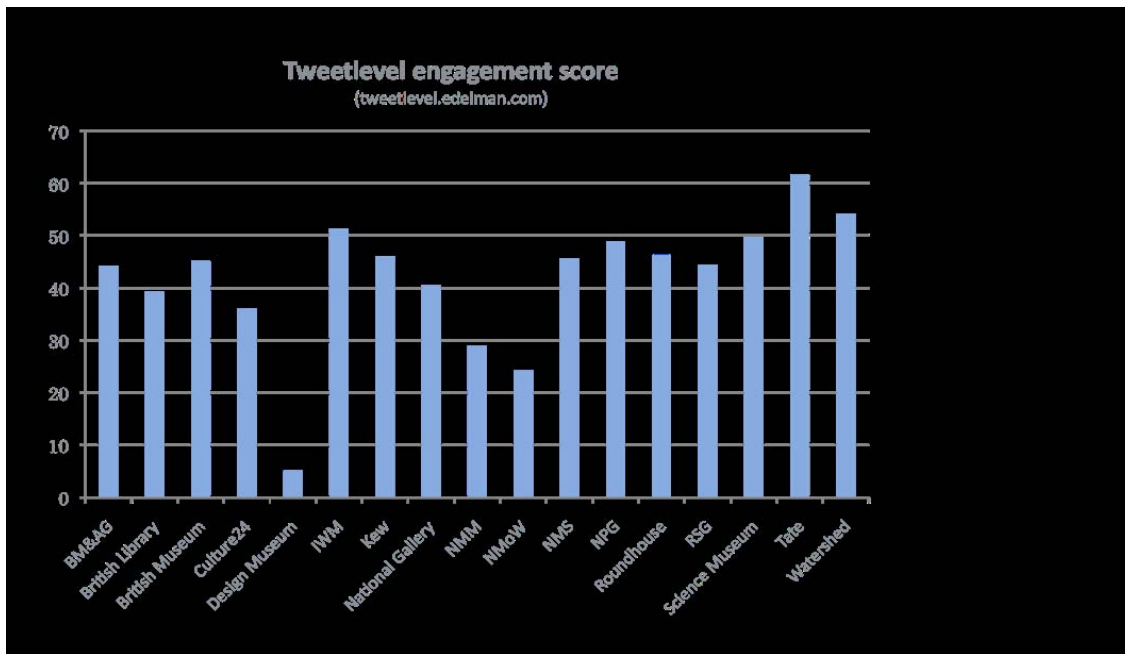
- New ways of carrying out internal reporting (to management, etc)
- New ways of carrying out external reporting (to funders) using Google Analytics et al. It's important to be clear internally and externally how the results from different types of reporting will differ. For example, moving from log file reports to Google Analytics reports will produce more meaningful data but will also mean a reduction in recorded figures.
- New relationship to other KPI's and marketing activities.

Perceived value of social media by participating institutions:



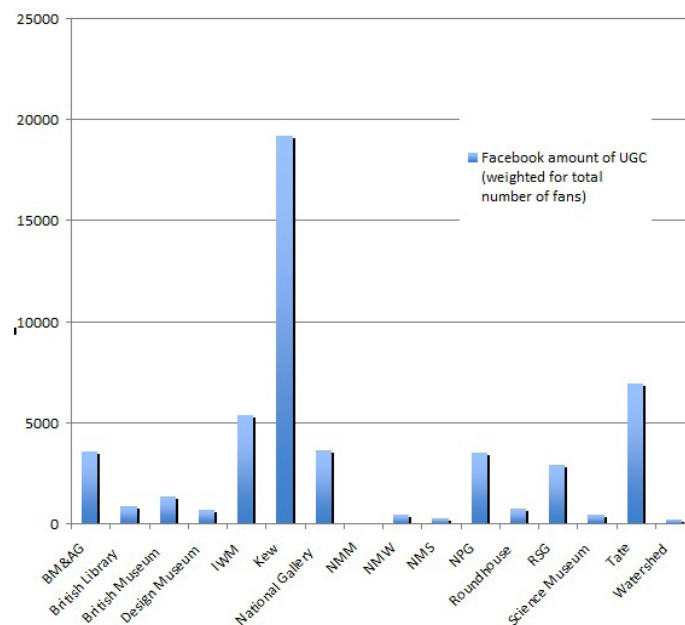
This shows the broad range and depth of participants' hopes and expectations about how they would be using social media, at the start of the project.

The project examined popularity versus engagement. The Tate and The British Museum had high numbers of Twitter followers, but when we looked at Twitter engagement levels, the numbers evened out amongst the organisations. We used Tweetlevel to measure this.



The Design Museum had one of the biggest number of Twitter followers but one of the lowest levels of engagement. This can be good or bad depending on what the aims of the Twitter channel are: if it is a broadcast channel then maybe it's working; if it's about conversations, then it's not working.

Facebook engagement is harder to measure as there are no tools to do this yet. We looked at user-generated-content factors such as number of post likes, comments. This graph below shows the weighting of the number of ugc contacts (Comments and Post Likes) in proportion to the number of fans. This shows, for example, that Kew, although they do not have a huge number of Facebook fans relative to some of the larger institutions, have very high levels of engagement. This may be the result of them talking with their fans about niche content.



Results: Social Media

- Popularity has little relationship to level or type of engagement
- The big culture 'brands' are most 'popular' (with the exception of Design Museum)
- High engagement levels don't correlate to high investment
- Social media had negligible effect on traffic to organisations' websites

There are also lots of conversations about you going on in private social media channels. One way to track this is by the use of bitly, a url-shortener. If you tweet a link and you start a bitly account and you can track how many people are retweeting in their private networks.

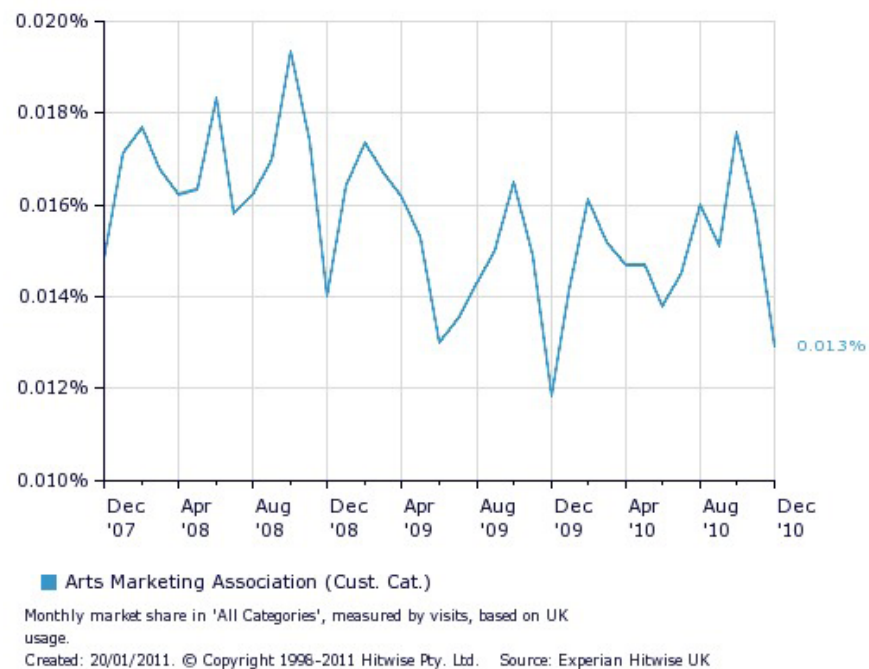
Basic recommendations

- Think carefully about the numbers you collect (the tools are immature)
- Outline your social media goals *explicitly* before you choose measurement tools and strategies
- Social media is resource intensive if you want to generate anything beyond basic 'popularity'.

Hitwise data

Hitwise is a commercial service which looks at UK domestic traffic only. It tracks IP addresses and maps them to postcodes. It does not include schools or commercial organisations; it's a consumer brand tool. It is very expensive, but Culture24 worked with Hitwise to produce a number of reports within the sector.

This chart (right) represents all the traffic from all participating organisations added together from 2007 to 2010. It shows the aggregated 'attention share' of the web that the participating organisations had during that period. Even though more people are spending more time online, the 'attention share' of the sector is heading downwards:



Reality check for the arts/cultural sector

Out of the UK's top 1,000 web sites in June 2011, only two of them were cultural organisations: the National Archives and the National Trust.

The traffic to ten national museum web sites is equivalent to the traffic to 'Tesco clothing', 'Belfast Gumtree' or 'Sports Direct' sites.

The Hitwise data relates IP addresses to postcodes and integrates with Mosaic. Looking at Mosaic Type 061: Convivial Homeowners, represents 21.4% of the UK traffic to participating organisations' sites, but it is an over-representative segment as this group makes up only 1.68% of the population.

Basic recommendations following Hitwise analysis

- Clearly defining audience outcomes *concretely* before and during the project will allow you to use this data to improve your projects
- Knowing the user journey online (downstream and upstream) can inform marketing strategy (Hitwise can inform you what online visitors do before and after visiting you)

Shifts in thinking

- Failing is good (if its failing forward), only a problem if you 'don't know' you are failing
- It's time to get real about what is happening and what is really working and why
- Working together, sharing leaning and insights helps to see patterns so that everyone benefits

There is a Culture24 Conference taking place in September. At the conference, everything I've presented about today will be published as a final report. Google are supporting us and putting up about £30,000 in Analytics to support the project, going across the UK and launching this at the conference too.

If 50 AMA organisations wanted to put in £1,000 then Culture24 could buy a Hitwise licence for us to use to examine UK domestic traffic. If you are interested, please get in touch (jane@culture24.org.uk / @janefinnis)

Part 2: Sebastian Chan

Our strategic plan 2009 focused on three main areas, to:

- Be an 'open' Museum – open to rich engagement, to new conversations about the collection and transparent in how we work and make decisions
- Develop a comprehensive customer service ethos throughout the Museum
- Promote an internal culture of dialogue, experimentation, transparency and individual accountability

The Powerhouse Museum is 76% state funded, with other income deriving from admissions and membership, donations, visitor services (shop, café) and content services (research, image sales, exhibition sales). Some key audiences are: children & families, under 30s, culturally active adults and makers, tinkerers, creators, designers. Some tensions exist – families v scholars; exhibitions v collections; buildings and galleries v platforms and media; formal education v inspiration; experience v information; serendipity v efficiency and accuracy.

The Museum has a small, 'agency' sized web unit of about six people and we manage a number of sites for other design organisations. The web unit makes about ten new projects each year and all the exhibition sites have a five year life span after the exhibition closes. Content generation has been spread across the whole organisation. We see the web and mobile as part of the pre-visit experience.

Museums have reached a 'post-web accord':

1. The exhibition halls offer an *experience* of objects
2. The web gives access to the *data cloud* that surrounds objects
3. Museums are a form of (collective) storytelling

Digital is a key part of delivering the mission and building the brand.

We follow these guiding digital content principles:

Findable – where people are and where they look

Meaningful – people can understand it

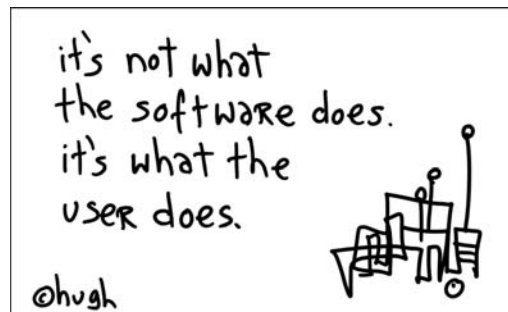
Responsive – to people's interests and location

Usable/sharable – people can pass it on and share

Available in all locations – (online, mobile, gallery, in the field)

Museums are also about creating and delivering public value. This is a key to the mission. It has meant putting the collection at the core of what the Powerhouse does. The value of the collection and its reach greatly increases as we allow it to move out to the network. This in turn enhances the public value of the collection.

Constant evaluation is key when opening the collections out in this way. This happens to be one of the things that the web is really good at. Ultimately, the things that matter are time and attention. The truism in the web space now is that it doesn't really matter what your software or content does, what matters is what the user or the visitor does.



Measurement, evaluation and analysis are therefore integral to any plans to create digital content. The intelligence that emerges has an immediate effect on the development of a project and also feeds into longer term organisational change. This means, for example, curatorial staff learning about the terms people use to discover things within the collection

and finding that they are not necessarily the terms they thought people would use. It may also mean looking at the things that school children highlight and cut and paste from a collection to their assignments to allow you to better structure the way things are written on the web site and within the collection databases.

The Powerhouse is currently being rebuilt and this is bringing up many issues around visitor satisfaction. After closing down one of our favourite facilities (Zoe's House – a play area for children), it should not be a surprise that someone set up a Facebook petition to get it back.

Neither should we be surprised that when we announce its closure on Facebook, it starts a dialogue with some specific and detailed issues that a simple press notice would not address. The Powerhouse's CEO had to post messages on her own Facebook account to answer some of the enquiries and continue to answer them until people were satisfied. This also happens when you have blockbuster exhibits about to launch: a recent bitly report showed that there had been almost 3,000 private comments on Facebook about our forthcoming Harry Potter exhibition and over 1,100 Facebook 'shares'. The Powerhouse set up its own Harry Potter page – but there are more conversations going on in the private Facebook pages than the Museum's, which is exciting.

Exhibitions are multi-channel productions now. Almost 50% of the contents of a recent exhibition were sourced through the exhibition's fan page and curatorial blog whilst it was in development. The exhibition web site was coupled with YouTube, Facebook and Twitter and also a blip.fm account for radio for a while too.

There's a sprawling array of things now in the digital sphere that we need to track. Here are a couple of things the web unit is currently collecting data on to inform decisions for the next year or two:

Testing deep Facebook integration with opengraph.

Sydney Design is the annual design festival for the city. Facebook 'like' pages are being used. As the user moves from the home page to an event page, you get recommendations for events that your friends are also going to. During the three weeks of this project we are also testing the difference between having a mobile app and a mobile web site which has just as many features. We would like to know whether Appstores will bring us a different set of people than web users. We've also been using this in relation to a schools holiday events calendar. Do parents who've been looking up events for their kids behave differently within a mobile web site from a traditional web site? We've built analytics into the design of the mobile site and the app so that we can track behaviour. Results have shown us that the median session length within the Mobile app is 1.5 minutes and that users of that app on average do 1.9 sessions per day. We also build in the things we want them to do, such as viewing favourite events, searching nearby venues using the mapping feature, or visiting venues.

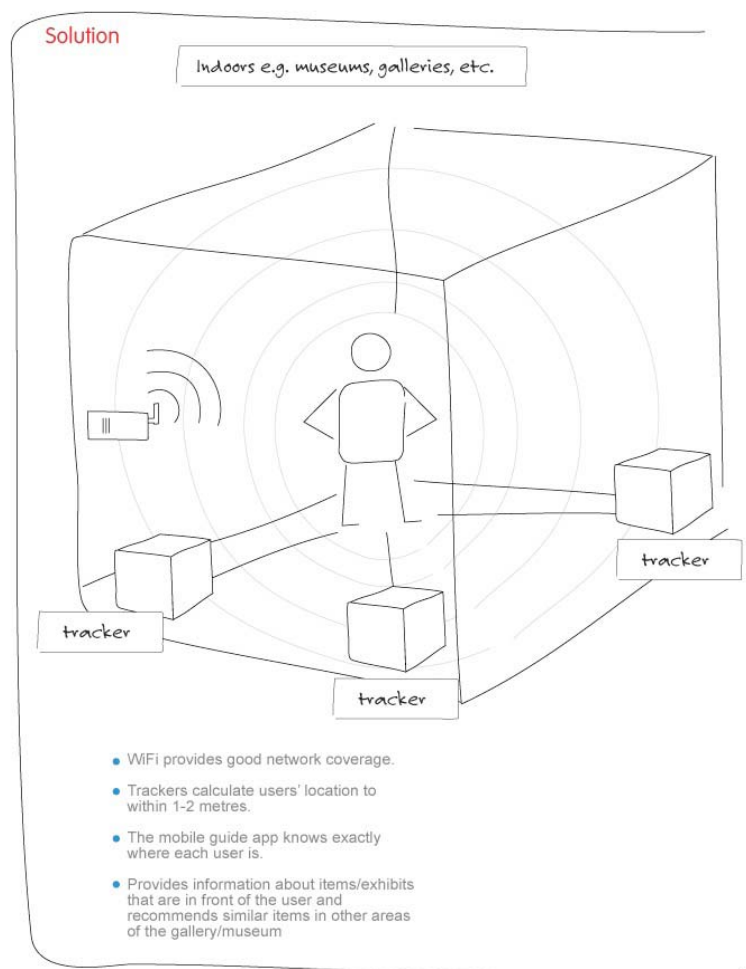
QR Codes

We are experimenting with QR codes again, having carried out early research three years ago. At one exhibition, we simply put urls on our labels:

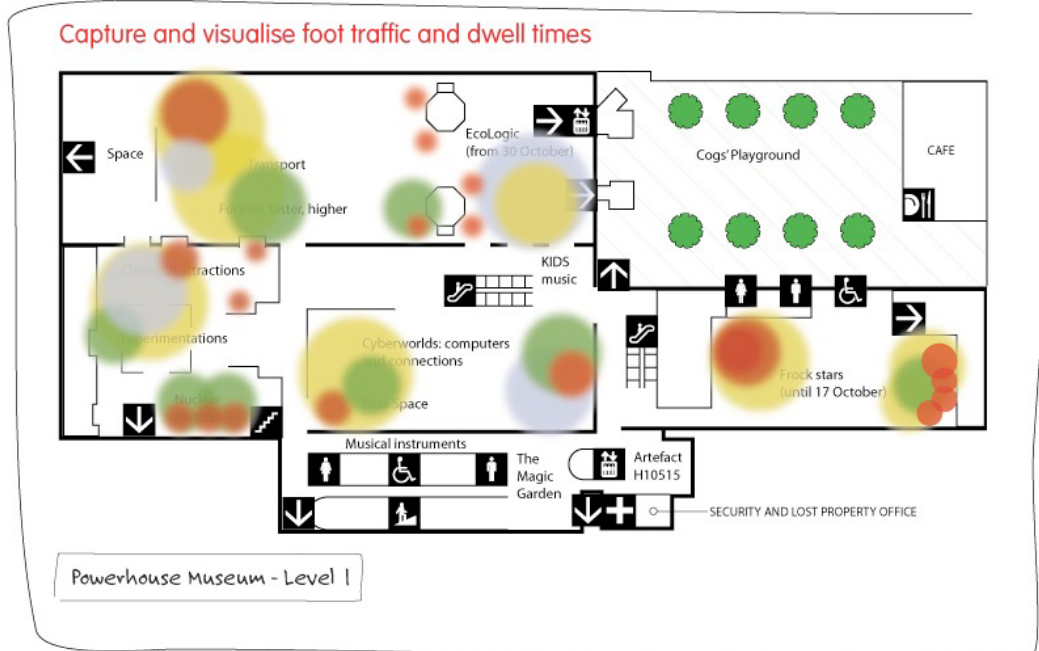
The problem with urls is that they are too subtle. QR codes, on the other hand, stand out better and encourage curiosity. Plus, typing urls on phones still sucks!

With our new Lace exhibition, we are building a new free catalogue app with the QR code built into the exhibition app itself.

The scanning is the first step. In the next step, we will build wi-fi tracking into the app which allows automated content aware delivery without scanning at all! It detects your location within the gallery and pops up with the object dynamically. We will analyse whether that is used more than the act of scanning.



Another benefit of this system is that it allows us to create heat-maps of where people go within the gallery and their dwell times. The results of this will inform better exhibit design and spatial layouts. This technology is already being used in the big shopping malls.



Building analytics and metrics into the design of projects is already leading to mission change:

- The museum is changing from bricks and mortar experience to a hybrid, cross-platform media experience
- New services, new customers, new users, and the impact on mission
- Building measurement toolkits into the design of projects and products
- Improving and creating new experiences, processes and products through observing behaviour
- Transforming the customer's notion of what a museum 'is' and 'does'

Sebastian Chan, @sebchan

fresh & new(er) blog: www.powerhousemuseum.com/dmsblog