

Rachel Coldicutt

The Social Arts Organisation

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The Social Organisation

Econsultancy has created a four-stage model to help businesses become “social organisations”, showing how social media activity might grow from being *ad hoc* marketing to permeating the entire business. This paper is an attempt to understand what a “social arts organisation” would look like, and to describe how it would behave.

The following table outlines the Social Organisation model and is taken from the Econsultancy Quarterly Digital Briefing on Social Data (2011):

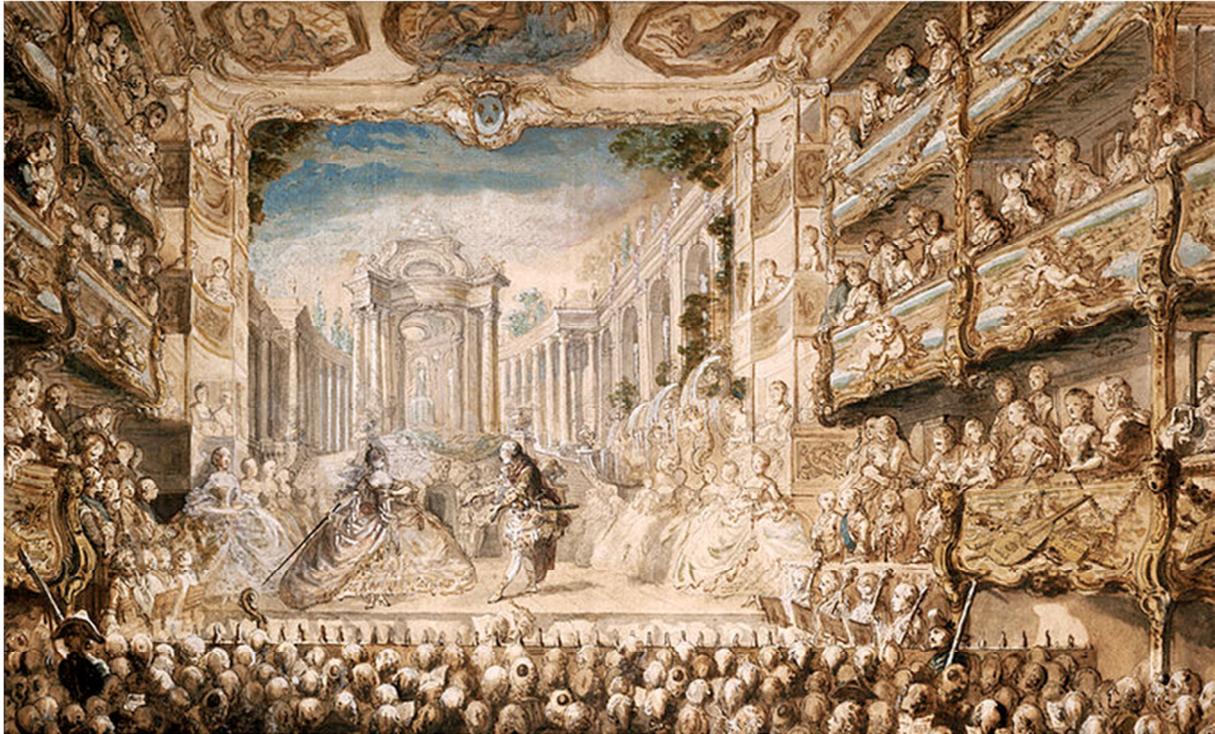
Table 1: Becoming a social organisation – a four-stage journey

	Social as a Tool	Social as a Channel	Social as a Platform	Social Organisation
Main objective	Listen and reach – achieve a critical mass of audience.	Participate and publicise – broadcast standard marketing via social media channels.	Engage and capture – understand sentiment, measure engagement and drive purchase intent.	Build and propagate – unveil patterns among interactions, deepen relationships.
Systems and processes	No guidelines or policy.	No consistent standards for engagement and facilitating interaction.	Policy and guidelines formulated, dedicated roles. Social media performance dashboards.	Fully integrated tools and systems, social media strategy in line with business objectives.
Leadership and culture	Decentralised / distributed, experimental phase. No dedicated resources.	'Pockets' of social media activity within departments, no department manages or co-ordinates efforts.	One department controls all efforts, hierarchical structure.	Cross-functional social media teams, collaborative culture. Co-ordinated use of data / findings.
Customer experience	Directly addressing comments, reactive, often taken by surprise.	Basic customer service via social channels, focus on sales.	Social data in CRM. Social used as a lead generation and service channel.	Seamless customer experience across all touch points. Loyal communities.
Measurement	No measurement.	Measuring direct ROI of social.	Measuring total ROI of social.	Use social to measure ROI of social and non-social channels.
Use of insight	Basic listening, focus on reach / volume of brand mentions.	Identifying influencers / advocates / detractors.	Product and services development, cultivating relationships with influencers, building advocacy.	Listening integrated with internal processes for change.

It is worth noting that this has been developed for the corporate sector, with a focus on profit generation and return on investment, based on a survey of member organisations. Although these are both important factors for contemporary arts organisations, it is worth noting that the scale of both the return and the investment is sizeable: 22% of the US companies surveyed worked for clients earning more than \$1bn, and in Europe 46% for companies with revenues of more than £50m. It's also worth noting that in many of these instances, the people creating the integrated social dashboards were agencies, not lone marketing managers, looking after physical and digital.

While the scale of activity associated with this kind of “social organisation” might at first glance seem unachievable, there is much about the underlying model that can help arts organisations to integrate social thinking and practice into their organisational strategy and development. This paper explores what becoming a social organisation means for both digital content creators and for wider organisational culture.

Being Social



Picture: Lully's Opera "Armide" Performed at the Palais-Royal, 1761. Pen, watercolor and gouache over graphite pencil. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Many arts and cultural organisations were “social” before digital communication was invented. For example, the reason it’s so difficult to see the stage in a horseshoe theatre is because, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the main attraction was seeing – and being seen by – the other members of the audience. Likewise, anyone who has spent an afternoon in the British Library will know that social dynamics are at play even in the quietest corner of the Reading Room. Going to a blockbuster exhibition is as much about the hustle and bustle of the gallery experience as it is about the works that are hung on the walls. And so how does the online experience differ?

The first difference is that organisations tend to use social media to drive audience reach and engagement. Very few social strategies are written entirely to serve a core audience; they often have the aim of widening appeal and understanding, selling tickets and raising awareness. In this context, the meaning of the word social is radically changed: no matter how popular a cultural destination your organisation is, it is no longer the venue for the conversation. It is instead a part of a much wider conversation, and understanding how your content appears and functions in this wider milieu is an important first step to developing the confidence to behave as a genuinely social organisation.



Recent Instagram images from <http://instagram.com/badgalriri> and <http://instagram.com/tategallery>

The first thing that happens when you produce social media content is that you lose control of context. Your Instagram pictures might be sandwiched between a photograph of Rihanna’s bum and a picture of a friend-of-a-friend’s cat; they might be viewed when someone is on the bus, on the loo, not paying attention at work. Each tweet or pin or status update is a little content atom going out to play with the hundreds of millions of other atoms that are generated every second. This can seem both incredibly risky and trivialising, but doing this well creates an opportunity to transform your relationship with your audiences: it is a chance to create a persistent level of engagement that puts your organisation’s work in the pocket and under the pillow of individuals who might have never previously explored your content.

As such, the first building block of a social organisation is attitudinal. This can be the most difficult and complex to achieve, but the best and most painless way to start is by listening.

Managing your organisation’s social media presence has much in common with hosting a party. Although it is absolutely your responsibility to have invited all of the right people, weeks in advance, on the night your job is not to simply do a headcount as everyone walks in. You need to make sure everyone has a drink, that they are comfortable and that they are talking to someone wanted to meet. Similarly, there is a limit to what analytics can tell you about how your content appears in each user’s feed, and so you need to develop a sensitivity about how people are responding to your content. Rather than creating a complex KPI dashboard that measures every element of each interaction, try to experience your content in the same way as at least some of your audience. Also, make an effort to participate in the wider conversation and demonstrate that you are listening. Standing up and giving a speech isn’t a social activity; sitting down and having a conversation is.

Knowable Human Scale

As mentioned, the Econsultancy model of the social organisation assumes a considerable scale of investment and activity. The challenges of becoming social at this scale are significant, but they are not relevant for many arts and cultural organisations; however, the principles remain similar, and it is important to understand what this approach might practically involve if you have limited resources to invest.

If you are at one of the handful of arts and cultural organisations that can number its social media following in the millions, then you are looking at an entirely different approach to the majority for whom activity is happening at knowable human scale. Whatever size your organisation is, you should be employing at least some rudimentary analytics to see who is talking about you and when, but that is secondary to listening and taking part in the conversation.

At a certain scale, “listening” might become professionalised into sentiment analysis (see the above table, “Social as a Platform”). But if you don’t have enough time to read what people are posting about your organisation on social media, it’s possible that you might not have time to extract worthwhile insight from incredibly granular analytics. Develop a simple, manageable approach that can be sustained and improved upon over time: use human sensitivity in conjunction with the appropriate level of analytics and automated measurement to understand how people are interacting with you, and absorb that knowledge into future plans.

So, if you have 30,000 followers on Twitter, it’s still possible to keep track of your mentions via a few judicious search terms in Tweetdeck or Hootsuite. At the point that your Facebook or Instagram comments begin to tip into the hundreds on each post, you do need to become more strategic, but again, much of this can be managed at human scale: the people who manage your social media accounts should have the savvy to know that 300 comments of the “<3 <3 this is my favourite” variety can be happily left to become 900, but that possibly controversial topics should be carefully managed and monitored.

There is a list of practical resources and further reading at the end of this report that will help you to set-up useful social media analytics. But remember that the analytics are only useful if you use and interpret them. And while they are invaluable for business cases, ACE reports and understanding unusual events, a plugged-in member of staff – who knows your community and the wider context – is just as important: after all, a social organisation isn’t one that simply counts and analyses.

Return On Investment

For a publicly funded organisation, return on investment goes both ways. If a proportion of your work is funded by the tax payer (and even if it isn’t), your social-content strategy shouldn’t just be a cynical attempt to increase spend-per-head. Every time an audience member presses the “follow” button, they are entering into a contract with you: a contract that you will bring some combination of usefulness and delight into their feed. Gaining a financial return on investment (e.g. promoting activity, selling tickets or merchandise, releasing offers), might well be one dimension of your social media strategy, but only one. As an arts and cultural organisation, your social content should also demonstrate the beauty and wonder of your art and create value for your followers; it should offer a glimpse of magic among the banal and quotidian, create a refuge or produce a point of inspiration. After all, your physical building may contain a café and a shop, but it is also home to a gallery or an auditorium.

If you use social media to do the thing your organisation is best at, you are more likely to grow an engaged audience and gain buy-in and understanding from your peers and senior management team. In a social arts organisation, the artistic director should be thinking about the Internet as a creative platform – making work that permeates through social networks or which takes place on Tumblr or SnapChat. In an arts context, this is as important as achieving a holistic customer view and understanding the number of ticket sales that were inspired by a single tweet. All parts of a social organisation contribute to the social strategy, creating an extension of the real-world organisation in the digital space.

And while this may seem radical, it is born out by the Econsultancy model, which posits that a social organisation should offer a “seamless customer experience across all channels” and a “social media strategy in line with business objectives”: if your objective is to create great art for everyone, this should persist throughout your digital delivery.

Organisational Change

The Econsultancy model in which an organisation graduates from using social as tool to becoming a “social organisation”, has much in common with Tuckman’s stages of group development, a business psychology model that is often used as a performance management tool with new or struggling teams.

For Tuckman, teams go through stages of “forming, storming and” norming” before they start “performing”. This is a useful way of understanding the effect of disruption at organisational scale: in becoming a social organisation, you are not simply creating one or two really popular social media accounts, you are transforming the way that you communicate and make decisions. It is a holistic shift that might take years to achieve.

At the forming stage, no one really knows why they’re in the team or what they’re doing; some conflict can be expected as the team grows in confidence and understanding; and then, over time, the quality of performance increases until the team becomes effective and high-functioning. Not every team makes it to “performing”, and it can be a hard slog.

Being a truly social organisation – one that “integrates listening”, has a collaborative culture, recognises patterns unfold across disparate activities and offers a seamless customer experience – also requires audience behaviour to be a part of your organisation’s decision making at the highest levels. The advent of social media hasn’t created this problem, it has simply made it manifest. As such, the first practical step might be to identify where your organisation currently sits on the social scale and develop a plan that helps you move to the next stage. This sort of incremental planning will make the transition to being an entirely social organisation more achievable and realistic.

Conclusion

Becoming a social arts organisation, then, is about more than integrating social analytics with your CRM data. A social organisation is one that:

- Enables collaborative decision making across functions (digital, marketing, learning, artistic, etc.)
- Listens to its audiences
- Understands that digital platforms can be creative and artistic
- Captures appropriate analytics data that help the organisation to grow and make appropriate decisions

Achieving this sort of maturity will ultimately change the way your organisation is managed; it will make it more responsive, agile and digitally savvy. It may well have an effect on artistic programming and commercial activity, and it will certainly change how your work is understood by your audiences. This may seem completely unachievable, but it begins very simply with listening to your audience, which should be achievable at scale or size.

The Social Organisation: Case Studies

Speaking in a Different Voice

One part of being a 'social organisation' is allowing your social media channels to be populated by a range of voices. Although everything you publish should stay true to your organisation's values, remember that your organisation isn't just made up of a marketing department. This sort of social communication is about more than enacting a formal comms strategy via Twitter; it's about demonstrating the purpose and uniqueness of the wider offering. The following examples show ways that Twitter can be used to give a voice to inanimate parts of your organisation, or parts that are rarely heard from.

Tower Bridge Itself

https://twitter.com/twrbrdg_itself

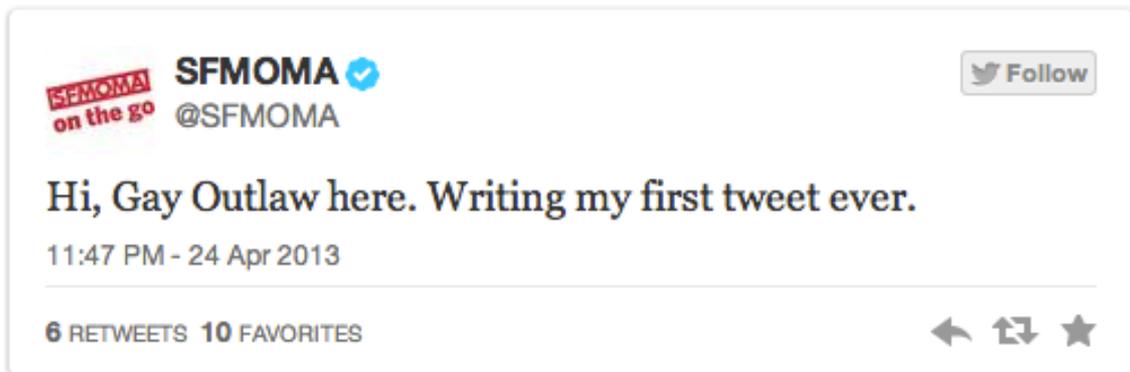


Picture: Tower Bridge at Twilight, Wikipedia Commons

Created by technologist Tom Armitage, this is the unofficial voice of Tower Bridge. Rather than dispensing fun facts, opening times or useful customer service messages, @twrbridg_itself is an automated service (known as a 'bot') that lets people know when Tower Bridge is opening and closing. This is a beautiful, understated way of connecting people from all over the world with the innate purpose of one of London's most striking landmarks.

SFMOMA Slow Art Day – Twitter Hijack

<http://blog.sfmoma.org/2013/04/slow-art-day-sfmoma-twitter-hijack/>
<http://blog.sfmoma.org/2013/04/hijack-one/>



As part of Slow Art Day, SFMOMA handed over their Twitter account to four artists for 30 minutes each and asked them to describe looking at a single work of art. Artist Gay Outlaw's monologue in response to the work of Trisha Donnelly was a performance-art piece in its own right.

Mark Ravenhill's adaptation of *Candide* on Twitter – the RSC

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/about-us/updates/read-volatires-candide-on-twitter.aspx>
<https://twitter.com/TweetCandide>

As well as writing a play based on *Candide*, Mark Ravenhill has adapted Voltaire's novel into 140-character snippets. Ravenhill has said of the experience, "It has deepened my appreciation of Voltaire's writing: it's incredible to see how every single sentence of the book advances the story and how almost every sentence stands alone as a great quotation all by itself."

Using Content in Elegant and Unexpected Ways

Social media is very good at offering discrete glimpses into deeper reserves of content. Not only does this create intrigue, it can also be an opportunity to showcase content that might be disruptive, challenging or otherwise thought-provoking. In exactly the same way the “Art Everywhere” campaign is putting great art onto advertising hoardings, the following examples have slipped extraordinary cultural artefacts on to social media in plain sight, making space for reflection and beauty.

Samuel Pepys’ Diary

<http://www.pepysdiary.com/>

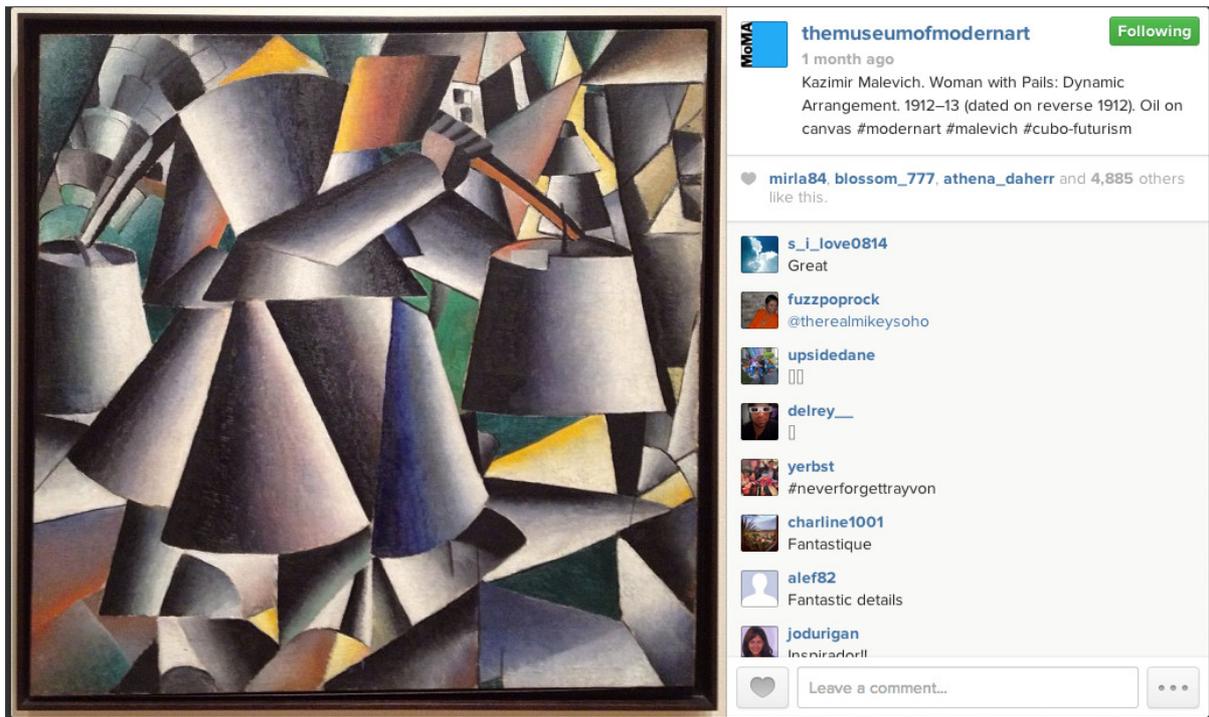
<https://twitter.com/samuelpepys>



From January 2003 to March 2012, technologist Phil Gyford published an entry from Pepys’ Diary every day, in equivalent real time. This is accompanied by a Twitter feed. The screenshot shows Pepys’ tweets in June 2013, nestled between discussion of Angelina Jolie’s recent mastectomy and Commander Hadfield’s narration of his real-life adventures in space, showing how effectively 140 characters can transport a reader to another time and place.

MOMA on Instagram

<http://instagram.com/themuseumofmodernart>

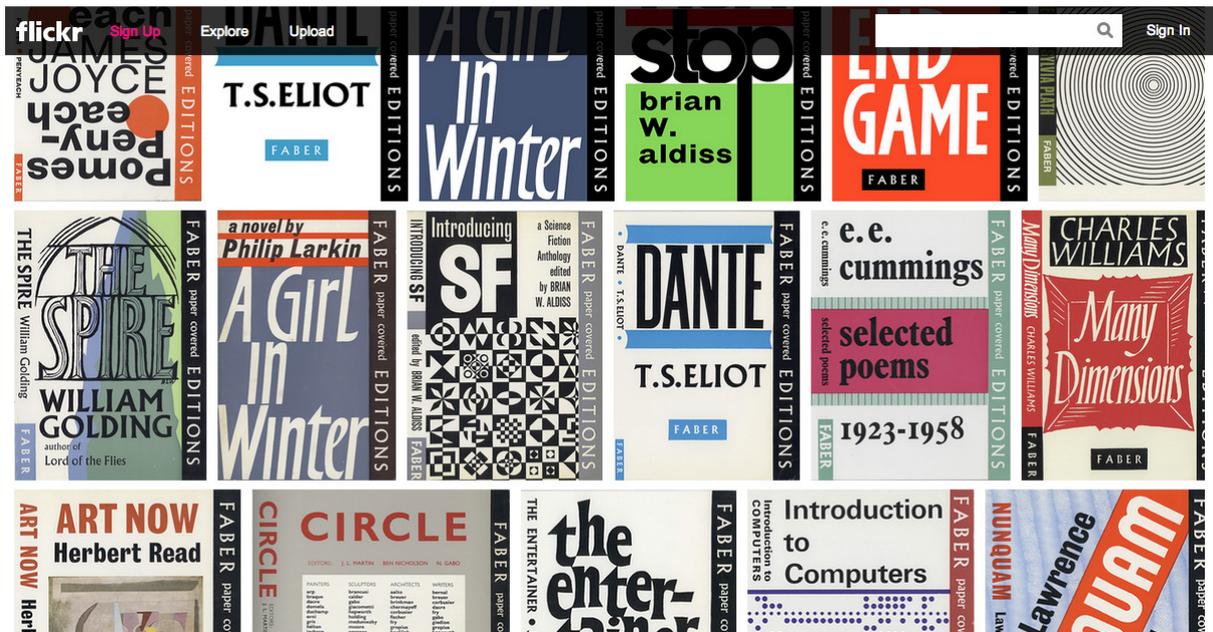


Picture: A screengrab from MOMA's Instagram account.

Beautiful artworks, simply captioned, which intrude on and improve the every day banality of Instagram. The MOMA feed is also notable for its general restraint: nothing makes a great picture feel cheap so much as a bad filter and a string of 20 random hashtags (#igers). MOMA isn't trying too hard, it's simply doing what it does best: showing exceptional art.

Faber & Faber on Flickr

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/22703722@N04/>



Picture: A screengrab from Faber & Faber's Flickr account.

Book jackets, letters from T. S. Eliot and photographs of Sylvia Plath feeding deer in Ontario. The Faber Flickr feed offers a thrilling tour of the publisher's archive, combined with promotional shots of new books and reissues. Again, this is an understated use of social media: Faber doesn't need to show people interacting with its content to demonstrate how great it is, it simply needs to show the content.

BBC Radio 3: Spirit of Schubert

BBC RADIO 3
90-93pm

The Spirit of Schubert

23-31 March 2012

A Viennese Scrapbook, accompanying 8 days and 200 hours of Schubert's music on @bbcradio3

[About](#)

 Listen online



Schubert's Death



Schubert's death certificate said he had died of Nervenfieber (nervous fever). Otto Erich Deutsch decorously interpreted this as typhus or typhoid fever. Those less squeamish of Schubert's true nature think that mercury poisoning - a treatment for syphilis - may have been the cause. Others have pointed to Schubert's well-documented

Picture: Screenshot from <http://bbcspiritofschubert.tumblr.com/>

And what as heritage for us is left behind:
The works of fond affection and of power,
The sacred, noble truth we have for dower
Shall stay for ever in our heart and mind.
What music profits and what friendship gains
By thee, we hear it in celestial strains.
So let us ever follow each sweet note,
That we may meet again in worlds remote.

– Franz von Schober

1828 Friends Quotes
Schober Schubert

31 March 2012

Schubert's Last Letter to Schober



We brought these two kinds of social thinking together in a campaign for BBC Radio 3's Spirit of Schubert season. To accompany 10 days of back-to-back Schubert on-air, we produced three social media accounts that each gave a voice to a different element of the season:

- 1) Practical: <https://twitter.com/schubertnow> - a Twitter bot that told listeners which piece of music was coming up next
- 2) Creative: <https://twitter.com/franzisunwell> - an authored Twitter feed that gave a whistle-stop tour of the composer's troubled life
- 3) Informative: <http://bbcspiritofschubert.tumblr.com/> - a Viennese scrapbook on Tumblr, that updated several times each day, often in synch with broadcast content, with links to secondary material that explored the composers' life and work.

Openness and Transparency

This third kind of content shows a willingness of the organisation to be open and social in a more fundamental way, by talking about its work and processes and sharing its resources. This kind of openness is about more than the judicious use of social media platforms, it's an indicator of a more holistic approach.

Royal Opera House News

<http://www.roh.org.uk/news>

The ROH blog is an integral part of the ROH website. As well as covering news about the ROH, its repertory and artists, it also includes features about the wider worlds of music and dance. Each post has comments turned on, and questions from commenters are answered in a timely manner. During the 2012-13 season, this section of the website attracted 2.6m page views (<http://www.roh.org.uk/news/ballet-and-opera-audiences-of-201213-we-salute-you>).

Cooper Hewitt Labs

<http://labs.cooperhewitt.org/>

The Cooper Hewitt Museum is currently closed to the public, but the Digital and Emerging Media department are keeping the museum visible and engaging online. As well as finding new ways for people to explore the collection (such as “Browse by Color”

<http://collection.cooperhewitt.org/objects/colors/>), the team are sharing the thinking, practice and codebase, that underlie their work (see,

<http://labs.cooperhewitt.org/2013/giv-do/> - a post that explains exactly how “Browse by Color” works and links to all of the data sources and APIs). This is truly working in the open.

Further Reading

The **Walker Arts Center** in Minneapolis seems to be very close to operating as a social organisation. Their outgoing Digital Marketing Associate, Kristina Fong, has compiled some very useful advice for others starting off in similar roles:

[Secrets of a Museum Social Media Manager](#)
[On social media as a job at a museum](#)

If you are just setting up social media analytics, then **Culture 24's Let's Get Real** project includes excellent guidelines (see the [Social Media Metrics Toolkit](#) for more information).

Chris Unitt is writing a series of blog posts on Arts Analytics, based on a sample of 100 organisations. Topics covered so far include YouTube views and subscribers, and a post on Facebook activity is coming soon. <http://www.chrisunitt.co.uk/arts-analytics/>

AMA Screencasts (free to AMA members):

- Google Analytics – a beginner's guide: <http://www.a-m-a.co.uk/page.aspx?id=348>
- Creating a successful fan page with Facebook Insights: <http://www.a-m-a.co.uk/page.aspx?id=268>