

Culture24



The Digital Transformation Agenda and GLAMs

A Quick Scan Report for Europeana

Culture24, July 2020

Lead: Jane Finnis

Collaborator: Anra Kennedy



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Why this report, why now?

This report was commissioned by Europeana to help them understand how best to move forward to support and promote a ‘digital transformation agenda’ within their network of GLAM institutions, in particular in the area of ‘capacity building’.

Behind the decision to commission this report is the broader landscape of the European commission's reevaluation of their own policy recommendations in this area ([public consultation](#)¹ live until September 2020) and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sector.

Europeana is open to this moment. They have made it clear that they are ready to hold up a mirror, hear some hard things, listen to new voices and take action. They approached Culture24 to write this report because of its expertise in this area. Europeana have asked Culture24 to include its own opinions in the forming of the conclusions and recommendations in this report and this is done in good faith, on the understanding that it is up to Europeana and its network if they choose to act on them.

Note: When we use the term ‘GLAM’ we refer to the widest definition which means galleries, libraries, archives and museums.

‘In the midst of struggle we’ve always seen a spike of creativity so I wonder where inspiration and creativity is going to take us after this pandemic?’

[Andrea Montiel de Shuman](#)

Methodology

The report has been produced by independent charity [Culture24](#)² drawing upon its substantial knowledge and experience in building the digital capacity of GLAM professionals and organisations, and its network of key individuals and organisations across Europe and internationally.

In preparing this report Culture24:

- looked into the differences between the terms digital transformation, digital maturity, digital literacy, and digital skills offering definitions and distinctions
- researched existing national or regional initiatives (ie those working at scale), within and beyond Europe, that support digital capacity building in the GLAM sector

¹

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/public-consultation-opportunities-offered-digital-technologies-culture-heritage-sector>

² <https://weareculture24.org.uk/>

- carried out eight structured in-depth insight interviews with expert stakeholders to map hot spots of activity by people leading best practice within and beyond the GLAM sector
- worked closely with [Michael Peter Edson](#)³ and [Jasper Visser](#)⁴ to take part in and follow the series of [sensemaking workshops](#)⁵ they organised across the Europeana network in June 2020 and look for connections
- researched relevant reports, articles and best practice in this area

The report is structured into four main sections:

1. Terminologies and language
2. Themes and analysis - seven themes are explored
3. Current practice: snapshots of selected digital capacity-building initiatives - what can they teach us?
4. Framing and recommendations

There is also a summary of references from the research for further reading.

Woven into all of these sections are the insights from the eight interviews and insights from the sensemaking workshops, along with the relevant findings and insights from the reports, articles and best practice identified during the research.

The eight interviews held were with:

- [Zak Mensah](#)⁶, Head of Transformation in the Culture and Creative Industries Service, Bristol City Council, UK
- [Jessa Agilo](#)⁷, Founder of ArtsPond / Etang d'Arts, Toronto, Canada
- [Nikita Mathias](#)⁸, Senior Concept Developer, Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway
- [Maaïke Verberk](#)⁹, Director of the DENFoundation, Netherlands
- [Milena Dobрева](#)¹⁰, Associate Professor in Library and Information Studies, UCL Qatar
- [Andrea Montiel de Shuman](#)¹¹, Digital Experience Designer, Detroit, USA
- [Abhay Adhikari](#)¹², Owner of Digital Identities, Rotterdam, Netherlands
- [Fiona Fieldsen](#)¹³, Director of Digital Experience at National Library of New Zealand and [Virginia Gow](#)¹⁴, independent Contractor and Coordinator of the National Digital Forum

³ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/michael-peter-edson-6582291/>

⁴ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jaspervisser1982/>

⁵

<https://pro.europeana.eu/post/building-capacity-for-digital-transformation-how-our-workshops-support-the-cultural-heritage-sector>

⁶ <https://www.zakmensah.co.uk/speaking/>

⁷ <https://artspond.com/people/>

⁸ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nikita-mathias-b72a90b6/>

⁹ <https://www.den.nl/over-ons/medewerkers>

¹⁰ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/qatar/people/dr-milena-dobрева-mcpherson>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/andreamontiels?lang=en>

¹² <https://twitter.com/gopaldass?lang=en>

¹³ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nikita-mathias-b72a90b6/>

¹⁴ <https://www.virginiagow.com/about>



Interviewees were chosen to offer a diverse range of perspectives from across the globe. Some work inside GLAMs, others work with them. Some work exclusively with GLAMs, others work more broadly. All have been working in the heart of digital and cultural practice for many years. All have been impacted personally by Covid-19, with one losing their job in a museum as a result. They are a mixture of people from inside and outside the Europeana network with some names being familiar to the Foundation and others not.

Interviews were carried out in the first week of July 2020 using Zoom and then transcribed. All interviewees were asked the following ten questions:

1. *How would you define these terms?*
 - a. *digital transformation*
 - b. *digital maturity*
 - c. *digital literacy*
 - d. *digital skills*
2. *Do you work in a language other than English and if so how do these terms translate?*
3. *Is there consensus and understanding in your organisation and networks about these terms? How important do you think a shared understanding of these definitions is?*
4. *Changes - What are 3 digital trends or developments in our sector in response to (or made apparent by) the Covid-19 crisis?*
5. *Challenges - what are 3 challenges the GLAM sector faces, within the digital domain, in adjusting to the post-Covid-19 world?*
6. *Digital can be a powerful agent of strategic and societal change - what does this mean for GLAMs and their mission?*
7. *What needs to happen and what needs to be in place to build digital capacity:*
 - a. *For an individual?*
 - b. *For an organisation?*
 - c. *For a network?*
8. *What examples of best practice in digital transformation, or building digital capacity for, are you aware of within or beyond GLAMs?*
9. *Where in your country can GLAMs go for help with this kind of thing?*
10. *What role could or should Europeana and its network play in this new reality?*

Out of scope for this report:

- [Definitions of digital transformation from outside the GLAM sector](#)
- [Comprehensive mapping of global initiatives or an attempt to present the entire sector](#)
- [An investigation of resources across every member state](#)
- [A comprehensive research initiative to benchmark, evaluate or catalogue digital transformation within society](#)



Terminologies & language

'Digital transformation' is part of the current language of [EU policy](#)¹⁵ and is mirrored in [Europeana's strategic priorities](#)¹⁶. Success here will be more likely if Europeana is able to better understand what digital transformation means for GLAMs and to listen to the language being used inside their network around the term. Ultimately they will need to identify a way to build consensus and a sense of shared understanding with their network about the term. As highlighted (on p43) of the report from the sensemaking workshops, *'Confusion about the meanings of digital transformation, and doubt about the usefulness of the term, undermines the sector's ability to work deeply on positive change.'*

Across the GLAM sector it is important that we all know broadly what we're talking about with regard to the language of digital terminologies. In this section of the report we will explore the definitions and distinctions between four key terms: digital transformation, digital maturity, digital literacy and digital skills.

'[Shared understanding] is very important otherwise people might work very defensively or they might feel threatened or find it a bit fishy, a bit sketchy and they're not really committing to it and not really showing any interest a certain unwillingness at first to contribute and to actually dedicate time to doing this which I think has a lot to do with prejudices towards digital.'

Nikita Mathias

Our interpretation and understanding of these terms is very closely related to our own digital maturity, which is why the terms are often misunderstood and confusing to people. As highlighted in the report from the sensemaking workshops - *'Digital transformation is largely in the eyes of the beholder, and meaningful digital transformation can take place along a variety of scales and scopes.'*

The report also acknowledges that *'Digital transformation is not one thing: it is a variety of activities, mindsets, and outcomes that improve people's lives by using technology in new and creative ways.'*

It also asserts that any definition needs to be cognisant of the nature of GLAMs - *'A definition of digital transformation should include stories that reflect the work, values, and purpose of the Europeana network.'*

¹⁵

https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/shaping-europe-digital-future_en

¹⁶ <https://pro.europeana.eu/page/strategy-2020-2025-summary>

Digital

Before considering digital transformation, let's start with defining the word [digital](#)¹⁷. A useful definition here comes from Tom Loosemore, partner at [Public Digital](#)¹⁸ and architect of the UK's [Government Digital Service](#)¹⁹, 'Applying the culture, processes, business models & technologies of the internet era to respond to people's raised expectations.'

For GLAMs, the term digital refers to all of our content, services, experiences, data, systems or technologies.

'Digital is therefore all that: a technology made of terminals and networks, and its appropriation by humans in all dimensions: bodily, emotional and social.'
[Emmanuelle Bermes Blog post - Qu'est-ce que le numérique?](#)²⁰

Digital transformation

Wikipedia defines digital transformation as *'the use of new, fast and frequently changing digital technology to solve problems.'*

This is a good starting point but it doesn't reflect the degree of profound change and challenge that digital transformation brings to every sector it has touched and disrupted.

Perhaps a more useful definition is made again by [Public Digital](#)²¹ - *'Digital transformation is the act of radically changing how your organisation works, so that it can survive and thrive in the internet era.'*

Public Digital's definition differs from the Wikipedia definition in an important way. It introduces the notion of surviving and thriving in the internet era, which goes beyond just problem solving. For the cultural sector, as with any business that has people at its heart, thriving demands that the needs of those people are understood and met in a direct way.

At the heart of digital transformation is the notion of (often) profound change. An individual's or an organisation's ability to deal with that change is defined first and foremost by their own digital maturity and digital literacy. This level of maturity and literacy also defines what they think the term means.

¹⁷ <https://definitionofdigital.com/>

¹⁸ <https://public.digital/>

¹⁹ <http://digital.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/>

²⁰ <https://figoblog.org/2019/08/02/quest-ce-que-le-numerique/>

²¹ <https://public.digital/>



MIT's 2015 report, [Strategy, not technology, drives digital transformation](https://sloanreview.mit.edu/projects/strategy-drives-digital-transformation/)²², focuses on the importance of becoming digitally mature, seeing this as the difference between being focused on integrating digital technologies in the service of transforming how your business works and simply focusing on individual technologies that are decidedly operational in focus.

The [National Digital Forum](http://www.ndf.org.nz/)²³ (NDF) in New Zealand uses Tom Loosemore and Public Digital's definitions for 'digital' and 'digital transformation' and extends them beyond just digital transformation to the three other key concepts as follows:

- Digital maturity - the level of how developed your ability or capability is (as an individual, organisation or network) to apply the *'cultural practices, processes and technologies of the internet era to respond to people's raised expectations'*
- Digital literacy - competence, knowledge and navigating - around the *'cultural practices, processes and technologies of the internet era'*
- Digital skills - the ability to use knowledge and expertise effectively to shape or adopt the *'cultural practices, processes and technologies of the internet era'*

The NDF describes the reasons behind its approach as, *'If you've got a shared definition of digital whatever you tack on the end of it - transformation, maturity, skills, literacy - these are common terms that we use in common parlance so it's more about having a shared understanding of what you mean when you say digital.'*

It works consciously and deliberately to promote these shared definitions with its network and is making progress in building a shared understanding. So far, *'Nobody has said, "I don't like that definition of digital or I don't agree with it".'*

This high level, strategic work in New Zealand illustrates the value of a shared understanding at a national level. The [One by One project](https://one-by-one.uk/)²⁴ in the UK has worked with its community of practice to develop its own shared understanding of these terms that is more practical and detailed.

They are:

- 'Digital transformation' is the act of adopting digital technology or digital thinking to significantly transform an organisation's operation, and/or the reframing of the organisation to be inherently digital in its purpose.
- 'Digital maturity' is an individual's or an organisation's ability to use, manage, create and understand digital, in a way that is contextual (fit for their unique setting and needs), holistic (involving vision, leadership, process, culture and people) and purposeful (always aligned to the institution's social mission).

²² <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/projects/strategy-drives-digital-transformation/>

²³ <http://www.ndf.org.nz/>

²⁴ <https://one-by-one.uk/>



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- 'Digital literacy' is the ability to reflect upon an individual's or organisation's competency with digital (using digital tools) and their capability with digital (achieving tasks with digital), but also how they understand and review this digital practice in an informed way within the wider contexts of their institution, professional networks, sector and society.
 - 'Digital skills' have three elements: 'competency' (action), the ability to use a digital tool; 'capability' (intention), how that ability is then applied successfully to a task; and 'literacy' (reflection), being able to evaluate the appropriateness of those competencies and capabilities. Together, these three elements are essential to building digital confidence.

The key point with whichever definition of these terms is ultimately adopted by Europeana and used within the GLAM sector is that there can be a shared understanding.

This shared understanding can then be a secure foundation from which the terms can take off in contextual ways wherever they are used - from a large library to a tiny museum.

Below are examples of this contextualisation from our interviewees:

On digital transformation ...

'We were trying to find a way to get people to realise that it's [digital transformation] not just about technology, that it's about society and the humanness of digital ... that's a mindset as much as it is a skills set.' [Fiona Fieldsend & Virginia Gow](#)

'The fundamental change in customer interaction and customer experience, value propositions and business models, operational processes ... The customer is at the heart of the services and traditional structures change and make much more use of the network society.' [Andrea Montiel de Shuman](#)

'I define digital transformation as the ability to constantly make changes, it's a continuous improvement process ... changing existing practice but also looking at what's emerging, so as technology and as society changes, we can evolve.' [Zak Mensah](#)



On digital maturity ...

'What basically shows that something is mature is that it can be benchmarked, so there is a clear idea of the level of quality and it can be compared with other solutions or the work done by other institutions, so this gives this feeling that it is not a work in progress but it arrives at the stage where it can be properly evaluated.' [Milena Dobreva](#)

'Digital maturity is how people, organisations and the world understand and move from digital as a bunch of technology tools to human engagement through digital tools ... understanding about how this makes sense within the world, within human beings making meaning in general. A more immature perspective on digital for me is flashy technology, being enamoured or being fascinated by just the new thing that is coming out.' [Andrea Montiel de Shuman](#)

On digital literacy ...

'[Digital literacy] is a complicated concept because it's part of a whole set of literacies on one hand and then also it's shifting because the digital domain is shifting, the requirements, what we need to know, and what things are able to do in this domain are also shifting.' [Milena Dobreva](#)

'Digital literacy speaks to understanding more and more how the world moves around digital.' [Andrea Montiel de Shuman](#)

'The thing to draw out there is that you can have people who are highly proficient with digital tools and technologies but they don't have the broader literacy to either use them well or to understand the content.' [Virginia Gow](#)

On digital skills ...

'Digital skills are the skills needed for GLAM professionals to be digitally literate and therefore make use of the possibilities that digital transformation offers.' [Maaïke Verberk](#)

'[Digital] skills help us to identify the right tools in the digital domain according to our task and then to use this in an effective and efficient manner.' [Milena Dobreva](#)

'You realise that digital works in a powerful way and is embedded in many aspects of our lives but for me somebody also can be much more informed on specific platforms, on specific media, on specific types of messaging and types of campaign design.' [Andrea Montiel de Shuman](#)






Do these terms translate in our multilingual context?

Considering the four key terms of digital transformation, digital maturity, digital literacy and digital skills, our interviewees were able to confirm that they felt they translated into Dutch, Norwegian, French, Bulgarian, Spanish, German and Swedish.

Problems were noted by our interviewees when trying to translate into indigenous languages where the culture inside those definitions is going to vary in a different cultural context.

Jessa talks about this issue from a Canadian perspective, *'The problem that I see around this is in indigenous languages like Ojibwa and Inuktitut and so on, and Cree where these words don't necessarily exist or they exist like in Ojibwa, or like 'aanzinaagotoon' which means change appearance or transform appearance in Ojibwa but that's rooted to human communities not to digital, and so there's a real displacement there. You can't just take that word 'transformation' to change appearance and have the same meaning. There's not interest in any indigenous communities to even come up with language that talks in that way so that's where the human side of it, when you talk about transformation, it's transformation for whom? And who are we leaving behind when we use this type of language?'*

Milena reflects on her view that the issue is more about the difference between the global north and south - *'The divider line which would be the global south and the global north ... I think that probably the difficulties would come from 2 things: how well integrated are the technologies in the society, which probably is a digital south issue, in many cases; and the other aspect is how strong are the traditions of the various information sectors in general.'*

Themes and analysis

1. The pandemic effect

Since January 2020 the GLAM sector has, in effect, been thrown into the digital deep end. Organisations reacted, jumped or were forced to shift to digital working at a speed of change that would have been unthinkable before.

Zak Mensah describes this really well - *'Effectively we've forced people to go digital, so we threw everyone online and mid-March was a crash course for people about learning how to use technology and I think whilst it's great in the short term to see people using it I do think there's a real challenge medium to long term about people having fatigue from using lots of these tools.'*

Across GLAMs we have seen lots of republishing and repackaging of existing digital content, the creation of some new content and a shift to putting on live events such as online storytelling in libraries, ask an archivist sessions on WhatsApp and live curator exhibition walkthroughs online.

'You give people a crisis and my God, doesn't digital stuff happen fast when it needs to.'

Virginia Gow

In many ways the first half of 2020 has been a kind of renaissance of digital with GLAM professionals having to step up, shift their thinking and find digital ways to try and maintain an offer to their audiences whilst remaining physically shut. Nikita talks about what has happened at the Munch Museum in Oslo - *'We definitely accelerated processes that needed to happen sooner or later anyway... we now have live guided tours now which are streamed which are quite successful actually, live talks, live events, more experimental formats, we have developed a fully functional multimedia department for producing film, audio and other content ... Covid is really forcing institutions to act and change.'*

Inevitably this brought many challenges around the capacity of staff to work online and highlighted what for many organisations were already serious gaps in the digital skills and confidence of their teams. It also drew stark attention to the lack of access to hardware and stable broadband for some people.

'It was such a double-edged sword because we were like - Oh my God, we've been wanting and advocating for this for 10 years, like it's Christmas! - but it just landed on everybody at exactly the same time ... everyone is swamped.'

Virginia Gow



This is acknowledged in the many reports and surveys carried out in the first few months after lockdown, confirming what we know about the levels of digital confidence and skills in many cultural organisations.

A key global report from UNESCO, [Museums around the world in the face of Covid-19](#)²⁵, says *'The implementation of a more balanced digital policy requires an overall reflection, focusing on the digitisation of collections, an up-to-date inventory of collections, minimum IT infrastructure, sufficiently stable Internet access and adequate staff skills.'*

The [NEMO survey on museums and Covid-19](#)²⁶ asks *'stakeholders to increase their digital efforts in the future, following this period of extreme measures with unprecedented digital activity. Budgets and strategies should respond to these findings, take advantage of current efforts and allow for investments in digital offers, services and infrastructures in the future.'*

In the UK the [Art Fund survey](#)²⁷ on the challenges facing museums and galleries following Covid-19 says, *'Digital opportunities are immense and the vast majority (86%) of organisations have increased their online presence; but digital resources and expertise are patchy, and many museums are left behind.'*

'Due to Covid the institutions are forced to change very fast, maybe too fast, and there are so many challenges related to that, so now all of a sudden you need to recruit people but maybe you don't have the internal knowhow on how to do it or you don't actually know what you need, or how to recruit, what to produce, what media you want to engage your visitors in so it seems that probably a lot of organisations are panicking and just 'doing digital' without having built a proper foundation in their organisation.'

Nikita Mathias

The question now is how to go from reaction to strategy? A lot of content has gone online but much has lacked a strategic framework or targeted, user-driven planning. There are [high profile examples](#)²⁸ of some online content (in particular from larger museums and performing arts organisations) that have attracted big audiences but some content, as before Covid, is having little impact with audiences.

²⁵ https://unesdoc.unesco.org/notice?id=p::usmarcdef_0000373530

²⁶ <https://www.ne-mo.org/advocacy/our-advocacy-work/museums-during-covid-19.html>

²⁷ <https://www.artfund.org/blog/2020/05/28/covid19-impact-research-report>

²⁸ <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/art-design/2020/03/virtual-galleries-art-museums-tours-online>



In his article [Culture in Lockdown. PART 2: The 7 Pillars of Audience-focus](#)²⁹ Andrew McIntyre, co-founder of the international consultancy Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, offers a framework for what he calls the ‘*case for urgent, radical experiments in audience-focus.*’ He says, ‘*We’re not there yet, not by a long way. The sector has been on the journey from Product-focus through Marketing-focus towards Audience-focus for nearly four decades. It’s been a long, slow, winding road, and many have got waylaid.*’

‘I think that Covid and post-Covid situation is just bringing the focus on something which was an issue which existed before Covid, and this is the need to really understand better what the users are doing in this environment and how to support them and what new value can be offered to the users.’

Milena Dobreva

Summary of what we learnt on the pandemic effect

- There is an opportunity to turn what has happened in the pandemic to the sector’s advantage
- There is a need to learn from, and build on, the experience of being thrown in the digital deep end
- There are big digital skills gaps and a lack of digital infrastructure everywhere and people need help urgently

Links to themes in the sensemaking workshop:

These issues are reflected in *Theme 1: The possibility of change* and *Theme 2: A new perspective on digital* in the report, where the headlines acknowledge the urgency and uncertainty created, alongside the creation of an opportunity for positive digital developments.

These issues and concerns around the missing skills and infrastructure were reflected by many of the sensemaking workshop participants.

²⁹ <https://link.medium.com/AZkvtnVrf8>



2. Innovation doesn't mean new

The speed of change in the digital world is so fast that many commercial businesses can't keep up. This is no different for GLAMs.

John Maeda, in his annual [2020 CX Report](#)³⁰, describes how most businesses (GLAMs or otherwise) are at the point where they have a presence on the internet with a website, social channels and realise that everything is connected. However, some tech companies are now moving past this, to a more complex stage of transformation where they are using big data, going 24/7 with customer responses and working on superfast marketing loops that inform superfast agile product development loops.

John defines this shift as learning to 'speak machine'. Looking to the future, with [Moore's law](#)³¹ of exponential speed still a reality, this next phase of digital transformation is inevitable but it won't be easy, in particular for the majority of GLAMs who simply can't behave like tech companies.

'Consider the implications of 'the other CX': Computational Experiences. They're powered by Moore's Law, they're made by the few who know how to speak machine, and as humanity accelerates towards a "Kardashev 5" scale of digital transformation we should be both excited and terrified.'

[John Maeda CX Report - CX = Customer Experience × Computational Experience 2020](#)

There will always be an ecosystem where some GLAM organisations have the capacity and are able to push at the edges and explore new developments, and others who will pick them up and run with them; but there will also be others who are unable to act as they simply don't have the funding, skills and leadership to do so.

For most GLAMs, digital transformation is also hard not because of technology, but because of the accrued different technologies that have entered their organisations, often landing and expanding internally, and which are hard to get rid of even if better solutions exist. Inside GLAMs there is a substantial legacy of older systems and, as John Maeda puts it, *'Who wants to be the person to rip out all the things that have been working for many years because there's a new better way to do it?'*

This means, for many, the prospect of ever speaking machine or having the capacity to collect and analyse their own (and others') data at scale is impossible. But this doesn't mean that they can't be innovative or transformative in their processes, or what they do with what some might consider to be 'old' digital technologies.

³⁰ <https://cx.report/>

³¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moore%27s_law



Zak illustrates this point - *‘So a good example for me is email, one of the oldest pieces of technology, yet in terms of transformation, a project that could be how you get people to use email effectively. Because actually we’re quite poor at all levels at using email well and that’s probably the simplest technology that we all have and yet probably gives people the biggest amount of grief.’*

For many GLAMs, digital capacity building should be first and foremost about getting the basics right - that would be transformative for many. A lot more could be done to help GLAMs in this area by building on and learning from the work already happening around the world. For examples of this level of support in action see this report’s *‘Current practice: snapshots of selected digital capacity-building initiatives’* section.

‘There is a frame that is against traditional uses of digital which so many organisations are already really far behind on, like digitisation of archives and resources and not only of archives but current content ticketing and just general websites and making them more interactive and discoverable. Those kinds of basic things are not supported by the Digital Strategy Fund here in Canada, there is a trendiness nature to it. If you’re interested in block chain, artificial intelligence, facial recognition, open data, all this stuff that is a lot more difficult to understand, then they’ll fund that but not actually what the vast majority of the sector needs.’

Jessa Agilo

Summary of what we learnt on why innovation doesn’t mean new:

- It would be innovative to get the basics right as many are still left behind
- Learning to ‘speak machine’ has a place but it’s one part of a wider innovation ecosystem and is only possible for a few
- Innovation applies to people, processes and skills, not just technology

Links to themes in the sensemaking workshop:

These issues are reflected in the report on the sensemaking workshops, in the section *Goal 2: Gauge aspiration and capacity* where the headline says that *‘to be successful we will need to develop a new concept of “digital capacity” that includes both technical production capabilities and a full spectrum of soft skills needed to work with diverse teams and audiences, build and lead coalitions, and collaborate with a wide variety of stakeholders — sometimes in risky and uncertain environments.’*

Also in *Goal 3: Find meaning for digital transformation* where the headline says *‘Definitions that incorporate a variety of phenomena — from ambitious, trail-blazing initiatives to pragmatic, small-scale interventions — are more likely to resonate with practitioners’ real-world experience than definitions that are narrow, bureaucratic, or monolithic.’*



3. Digitally literate leadership

The importance of a digitally literate leadership is vital in helping GLAMs to understand what to act on and what to say no to. These decisions should always relate back to an organisation's individual mission, vision and objectives in specific ways and digital should never be something tacked on top of a project or business plan.

Leadership within the GLAM sector needs to shift from the prevalent, current starting point of thinking about technology and how to use it, to thinking instead about how we value digital, how we manage it, how we think and create with it.

Our GLAM leaders need to be more informed, reflective, responsive and active around digital, if we are to build a more digitally fluent workforce and a digitally mature relationship with our audiences.

'Digital is about unlocking growth now. How companies might interpret or act on that definition will vary, but having a clear understanding of what digital means allows business leaders to develop a shared vision of how it can be used to capture value.'

[McKinsey, What 'digital' really means \(2015\)](#)³²

We know that each organisation is at a different stage in its digital development and each is likely to have a different set of priorities. The digitally literate leader needs to be able to interrogate the challenges that digital culture and technologies can bring to their organisation, and begin to map the changes they need to make.

In the sensemaking workshops, participants acknowledged the need to build digital capacity across leadership teams but also noted *'a rising awareness of the importance of soft skills'* such as persuasion, empathy and compassion.

Dr Ceri Gorton, in a key finding from her report ['Building Digital Leadership and Resilience in the UK's Cultural Sector'](#)³³, says, *'The expensive part of digital transformation is investing in people, not technology. It's this investment which enables the development of digital skills and capacity, and provides the time needed to test and shape digital projects.'*

³²

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/technology-media-and-telecommunications/our-insights/what-digital-really-means>

³³

<https://www.cloreleadership.org/cultural-leadership/building-digital-leadership-and-resilience-uks-cultural-sector>

For many leaders, the challenge will be moving from thinking it is all about digital competency (their ability to simply use digital tools) to digital literacy (their ability to reflect on using tools and understand how to review their digital practice in an informed way within the contexts of their own institution, networks, sector and society).

To be ready for what lies ahead, GLAMs need dynamic, creative leadership that is digitally literate and mature, with a profound understanding of audience development and the experience economy. Without this there is danger that key development opportunities will be lost and GLAMs risk losing relevance to a broad audience.

'Blockbusters [video rental company] as we know they had to close but at one stage they could buy Netflix just in that point of time. They didn't think that this is relevant and it would help in any way. It seems that there was an opportunity which could redefine their business but those people who were taking decisions were not thinking that this is going to become so popular, and so it basically killed their existing business which was huge in many places. So I think this is a suitable and interesting example [for GLAMs] to contemplate on.'

Milena Dobрева

Beyond the need for more digitally literate leaders across GLAMs, the role of digitally literate cultural policymakers, who are able to make digital culture policy recommendations, has been shown to be a game changer.

This report highlights three examples where significant digital capacity-building initiatives are happening at scale - in the UK, Flanders and Canada (see pages 30-42). In all three of these examples, there are close links with government policy, support and public funding.

Other digital culture initiatives are starting to appear in other places that call for more government support such as the ['Culture X Tech Next'](#)³⁴ conference in Taiwan, which is run by the state-backed Institute for Information Industry and is part of the ministry's efforts to support the development of more creative digital productions under its flagship programme for the *'Application of Cultural Content in Technology and Innovation'*. The programme takes a progressive position that states its belief that *'[the] underlying core value of the intersection of culture and technology should be using a human-centric perspective to leverage technology as a medium to promote prosperous cultural developments.'*

³⁴ https://www.moc.gov.tw/en/information_196_104287.html

In June 2020 the [Hong Kong Foundation](https://www.ourhkfoundation.org.hk/en/aboutus)³⁵ published their study [Innovating Creative Cultures—Arts Tech](https://www.ourhkfoundation.org.hk/en/report/34/arts-innovation/arts-innovation-policy-research-series)³⁶, which is Hong Kong’s first policy recommendation paper that calls to action creative and technology professionals to work together.

It is clear that there are significant opportunities for new policy making in this area in Europe, which Europeana is well placed to act on.

‘Probably the most important thing you need; you need that support from the top to make it happen.’

Nikita Mathias

For many countries, digital culture policy is not yet a priority but that does not mean that GLAMs cannot operate successfully as digitally literate organisations. Leadership can come from anywhere, from different places within an organisational team or from partnership with someone outside it. There are many dynamic people working inside GLAMs now who are very digitally literate and are playing a key leadership role in helping GLAMs to develop their thinking by acting as ‘agents of change’.

Summary of what we learnt about digitally literate leadership:

- To be ready for what lies ahead, digitally literate leadership is vital at all levels
- Digitally literate leadership is more about digital confidence and understanding than digital skills
- Soft skills matter
- Clear policy making and backing by funders can be a game changer

Links to themes in the sensemaking workshop:

The importance of good leadership at all levels (including soft skills), came up many times throughout all of the sensemaking workshops, as did the importance of coherent policy making.

³⁵ <https://www.ourhkfoundation.org.hk/en/aboutus>

³⁶ <https://www.ourhkfoundation.org.hk/en/report/34/arts-innovation/arts-innovation-policy-research-series>



4. Agents of change

'If you only see one solution to a problem, then you don't really understand the problem.'
John Maeda, CX Report

The importance of agents of change building digital capacity cannot be underestimated.

The interviewees spoken to for this report are themselves agents of change within their own spheres. An agent of change can be a person from any role in an organisation, regardless of organisational structure, who can display their own good digital leadership.

GLAMs often have to rely on a person or small group to be agents of change in tackling digital skills, mindsets and systems – whether that's from below, from management or from boards. For those agents of change to succeed, they need to articulate the challenges, the benefits and the way forward. They often need to act to show what can be possible. People who are good 'connectors' or 'translators' between colleagues and teams, either because of their formal role or their ability, make particularly skilled change agents.

Nina Simon, founder of the [OfByForAll](https://www.ofbyforall.org/)³⁷ movement, in her [Keynote at the 2019 National Trust Convestiva](#)³⁸ spoke about the need to 'make space' - to provide cover and support so others can take risks. This requires those in leadership or management to be the 'space maker', supporting individuals in their team not just to be an agent of change but also to ensure they, in turn, do the same for others. Nina says, *'Don't measure based on what you do but on how you empower and make space for the staff who follow up.'*

Culture24 understands very well the power of agents of change and the value of experimentation, which is evidenced in its collaborative action research programme [Let's Get Real](#)³⁹ (LGR) which has worked with 600+ organisations and 1000+ project participants on eight action research projects over nine years, producing eight conferences and six reports with over 34,000 downloads.

LGR has taught us that it isn't organisations that struggle to adapt to digital change, it's the people within them. Real innovation lies in changing people's working rhythms and building their confidence. Experimentation can be a safe and contained way to conceive, plan, track and analyse a new idea where you can create and iterate within a culture that is okay with learning from failure. It can be as much about evolution rather than revolution, enabling you to work more intelligently with what you already have.

³⁷ <https://www.ofbyforall.org/>

³⁸ <https://vimeo.com/354415100>

³⁹ <https://weareculture24.org.uk/lets-get-real/>



In another key finding of her report [‘Building Digital Leadership and Resilience in the UK’s Cultural Sector’](#)⁴⁰, Dr Ceri Gorton states, ‘Ways of working that make best use of digital technology are informed by several factors: learning from failure, understanding the importance of user needs, experience and insights, and delivering tangible results from new experiments.’

It is not just individuals that can be agents of change, groups of people working together on cultural projects through initiatives such as Labs can champion and lead change.

‘Generally speaking, most Labs are born out of the need to transform an aspect of, or introduce a new element to, an existing GLAM institution. If this is the case, embracing an innovation mindset in the Lab’s vision and values is pertinent. To do this, setting conditions for experimentation, failure and risk-taking, are key.’

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to how organisational transformation proceeds or how success is measured. Some Labs are focused on organisational transformation and others on service and product innovation. Both forms of transformation are equally valid and will be determined at the vision, values and getting started stages of setting up a Lab.’

Extract from [‘Open a GLAM Lab’ ebook](#)⁴¹

There are also some organisations that are championing change in different ways, focusing more specifically on social and civic agendas and looking outside of the GLAM sector to carry out future scoping - working to imagine ‘what next?’

A few interesting examples of projects that overlap with the traditional GLAM world are the [Future Heritage Lab](#)⁴² and [MuseumCamp](#)⁴³ projects by the Waag in Amsterdam. Also, [Dark Matter Labs](#)⁴⁴ which is a strategic discovery, design and development lab working across the world on ways to transition society in response to technological revolution and climate breakdown.

⁴⁰

<https://www.cloreleadership.org/cultural-leadership/building-digital-leadership-and-resilience-uks-cultural-sector>

⁴¹ https://glam-labs.s3.amazonaws.com/media/dd/documents/Open_a_GLAM_Lab-10-screen.9c4c9c7.pdf

⁴² <https://waag.org/en/lab/future-heritage-lab>

⁴³ <https://waag.org/en/project/museumcamp>

⁴⁴ <https://darkmatterlabs.org/>



Summary of what we learnt about agents of change:

- Agents of change are a powerful way to kickstart change and sustain it inside an organisation
- Key change tactics are: making space, small scale experimentation, nurturing confidence, agile iteration, taking manageable risks, connecting and translating
- It is not organisations that struggle to change, it is people

Links to themes in the sensemaking workshop:

These issues are reflected in *Theme 10: Space for innovation and experiment* in the report on the sensemaking workshops which cites the need to create a resilient and successful cultural sector, not one that stagnates and falls back into the past, but one that can create space for innovation and experiments, to learn from each other's failures and successes, and allow for playful and creative engagement with the big ideas that will define the future.



Extract from **‘Understanding the digital skills & literacies of UK museum people’**
One by One [Phase Two Report](https://one-by-one.uk/2019/05/21/phase-2-findings/)⁴⁵

Creating conditions for change

Phase Two found that museum people need support in recognising and then creating and enabling the conditions needed for organisational change to happen and thrive.

Through all of the Literacy Labs, but particularly at the Edinburgh event, participants highlighted the fact that any successful development and deployment of digital skills and literacy for museum people could not happen without various organisational conditions in place.

There was discussion about the importance of having proper resources, processes and technical infrastructure, but by far and away the largest focus of discussion was the importance of effective and supportive leadership in museums to create the right internal culture for positive digital skills and literacy building; for example, the significance and value of giving people the mandate to pursue their digital development. There was also discussion around giving people the space to have an open and honest conversation about the challenges of embracing digital practice, including being able to let go of their ‘digital baggage’.

The importance of change agents was also highlighted, with a view that people in any role across an organisation, regardless of formal hierarchies, could display good digital leadership.

Museums often have to rely on a person or small group to be agents of change in tackling digital skills, mindsets and systems – whether that’s from below, from management or from Boards. For those agents of change to succeed, they need to articulate the challenges, the benefits and the way forward.

People who are good ‘connectors’ or ‘translators’ between teams, either because of their formal role or their ability, were identified as particularly useful change agents.

⁴⁵ <https://one-by-one.uk/2019/05/21/phase-2-findings/>



5. Digital divides

The digital world is characterised by many extremes; perhaps the most significant is the divide between those with access and those without. 3.5 billion people — almost half the world — remain unable to access the web or the benefits we take for granted. Sir Tim Berners-Lee calls for action to close this digital divide. In a spoken essay for the [BBC's Rethink series](#)⁴⁶ he says, *'Digital inequalities correlate with the familiar axis of wealth, race and gender... the digital divide is both a symptom and a cause of inequality at large.'*

The digital divide is an issue for the public and society globally but it also exists within GLAMs and matters to the people working inside them. This divide has been highlighted for GLAMs and their staff in recent months by Covid-19 and the challenge to live and work online during a pandemic often without the right infrastructure, technology or broadband.

There is clear disparity inside GLAMs as organisations, with many still at the beginning of their digital journey. [Research by Collections Trust](#)⁴⁷ has shown that 40% of museums in the UK did not even have access to their online collections during lockdown.

The importance of addressing the problem of the digital divide is reflected in the views of GLAM professionals who took part in the sensemaking workshops and also in the UNESCO [Museums around the World in the Face of Covid-19](#)⁴⁸ study which states that *'the digital divide is now more evident than ever.'*

'Supporting users ... to evaluate what you can trust and what you cannot trust are becoming extremely important.'

Milena Dobрева

The digital divide is not just about access to the internet or technologies, it is also about the discrepancies between the levels of digital understanding in society.

The thinktank [Doteveryone](#)⁴⁹ defines digital understanding in their 2018 report [People Power and Technology](#)⁵⁰, *'Digital understanding equips people to adapt to, question and shape the changes that technology and the internet are bringing to our world.'*

⁴⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p08ht9tf>

⁴⁷ <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/blog/remotely-possible-access-to-collections-data-during-lockdown/>

⁴⁸

https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373530?fbclid=IwAR0JGX8DmJZUMIWPK7mMF8FDx4_x8FDJIYEOyOYO6jH63mBTjtQhhP_yN1w

⁴⁹ <https://www.doteveryone.org.uk/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.doteveryone.org.uk/report/digital-understanding/>



The report draws attention to where there are currently low levels of public understanding around digital technologies saying, *'It is a challenge to those who create the products and services that people rely on to make understandability the building block of everyone's digital experience. And it is a challenge to government to create and enforce standards of transparency and accountability for digital products and services. These actions must be supported with the public education needed to help close the understanding gap.'*

Summary of what we learnt about the digital divides:

- The digital divide exists between GLAMs and the people working in them as well as across society
- The digital divide is about digital understanding as well as access
- We need to work together, with other GLAMs and across other sectors, to find meaningful ways to bridge the divides

Links to themes in the sensemaking workshop:

These issues are reflected in *Theme 6: Overcoming the digital divides* in the report on the sensemaking workshops, where participants recognised the following three digital divides:

- a social and technological divide between people who have access to and feel welcomed by digital cultural heritage and those who don't
- an inter-organisational divide between GLAMs that are digitised and connected and those who are not
- an intra-organisational divide between colleagues who are digitally savvy and literate and those who are not - the divide between people who are willing to experiment and those who don't

To varying degrees, participants feel that as a sector, we need to bridge all three divides.



6. Tackling fear and negativity

For many people digital is still the unknown or other. When they are asked or expected to embrace using it at work there is often trepidation.

This can manifest itself in a very unhelpful fear-based narrative around digital that needs to be understood. As Abhay Adhikari says, *'[Digital] quickly becomes a thing that has been done to someone, you have to go through this process. We are carrying out a digital maturity audit in our organisation, so it becomes a fear-based narrative ... very often the position is "do this or you will be left behind".'*

Key to tackling this is our ability to empathise and understand what people's fears are around technology and digital, and to find ways to help build confidence by looking at what digital means in the context of someone's personal life and how they feel about it.

'Towards Christmas every year I tell people that our teams will give them advice on what technologies to buy for Christmas, to make sure they make the right choices because if they've got really expensive pieces of technology at home that don't work for them they're only going to be more scared when they come to work. And so I try and advise people on how to get the right laptop, the right mobile phone, because once they're comfortable with those things it's easier to import that across to their work environment.'

Zak Mensah

We need to acknowledge as a sector that sometimes people's fears and anxieties around digital are well founded, as there are negative aspects as to how digital plays out in our lives. It is part of the digital literacy and maturity of GLAMs to understand the kinds of support and care people need. Andrea expresses concerns about this and raises some important questions, *'Some digital organisations might not be paying enough attention to the emotional needs right now. And there are some really critical psychological and emotional needs. So building something about digital detox, on how to step away from your digital tools. For me that's so important, how to un-digitise yourselves.'*

It's important for us all to understand the impact of the constant assault on our senses that digital information can bring, coming at us from all sides, all of the time, if we allow it to. This quote from a [blog post by futurist Scott Smith](#)⁵¹ from [Changeist](#)⁵² expresses some of the issues - *'Your goal is not to imbibe all the information available and give yourself a data hangover, it's to develop and improve your ability to taste the important (and relevant) notes. This ability to scan at arm's length takes on new importance when the news itself becomes difficult to digest.'*

⁵¹ <https://medium.com/practical-futuring/managing-abyss-gaze-in-a-time-of-difficult-futures-3836b464182e>

⁵² <https://www.changeist.com/>

The current pandemic has also brought its own particular challenges for individuals who are having to work remotely from home, whilst experiencing increased pressures from work.

Abhay reflects on these and the challenges of working in isolation - *'Every culture professional I know has had to deliver almost 200% of their workload now working in isolation and working through Zoom meetings and at the same time facing job security threats. So that is one of the changes that happened overnight and it's also a challenge in terms of how do you get your colleagues who have to do such critical work that requires collaboration, thinking, conversations - how do we expect them to do that in isolation and through such a disconnected medium?'*

Fear and negativity is only one aspect of our challenge here. Successful digital capacity building always comes back to the people and the personal. Andrea expresses this clearly when she says *'There is a good chunk of the field that thinks that innovation has to do with new technology and new platforms. So there is a difference in understanding and I see more progressive work, more effective work, more sustainable work in those projects led by people who understand that technology is not about technology, it's about people and it's about humanity and we ought to understand humanity and how to include people within our projects to actually be meaningful.'*

Summary of what we have learnt about tackling fear and negativity:

- Digital can be fearful for some people, often for good reasons
- Taking time to unplug and detox from digital is important for everyone
- Digital literacy, compassion and empathy are needed to understand and tackle the issues and impact that digital has on GLAMs and their staff

Links to themes in the sensemaking workshop:

These issues are reflected in *Theme 9: Individual growth and learning* in the report on the sensemaking workshops and our collective needs to build our capacity not only in terms of knowledge and skills but also in terms of attitudes and behaviours.



7. Social change

'Every aspect of our life as human beings has now been politicised, right from art and culture to the food we eat and to the language we speak and cultural institutions are storehouses of all of these aspects of our life and they are rich in context. So I think they really need to start thinking of themselves as centres for social innovation first rather than galleries, libraries, archives and museums.'

Abhay Adhikari

Digital has been a huge driver for change in society, turning most industries inside out, changing the way we pursue our interests, the people we connect with and the way we do business. It has been the driving force of this disruption; it is the sharp end as its very nature challenges organisations to be less hierarchical and more open, agile and outward looking. It is the bellwether of a wider disruption, an indicator of wider trends and changes in behaviours.

Many of the most pressing social issues we face as an increasingly networked and connected society don't exist in a vacuum. They are part of a complex, multi-causal ecosystem that has digital culture woven into its fabric. Being able to understand the nuances of this digital culture is a key aspect of digital literacy for anyone.

Increasingly digital platforms are facilitators for the debate, activism and amplification of profound societal issues such as Black Lives Matter and environmental campaigning. These issues are all being played out online in a way that is very difficult to ignore. Whilst Covid-19 has been a catalyst to draw out all of these issues, we need to remember that they existed before and will not go away when the pandemic ends.

Links to themes in the sensemaking workshop:

These issues are reflected in three of the themes in the report on the sensemaking workshops:

- *Theme 1: The possibility of change* on the long-simmering developments within the realm of social justice, health and wellbeing, the environment, and economic development
 - *Theme 3: Social impact and relevance* on the role GLAMs have to play in themes such as social justice, climate action and diversity
 - *Theme 4: Audiences and diversity* about urgently needing to take a significant step forward in understanding and working in partnership with all members of society and facing our own biases, exclusive attitudes and practices
-



In these socially divided, fraught times where technology is at the heart of so much of our human interaction, there is growing recognition of the importance of human connection and relationships for individual and societal wellbeing.

'So why aren't we asking about digital accessibility, digital equity, digital empowerment, digital ecology, digital humanity? Why are we asking about digital transformation, maturity, skills and literacy when we have these big thought dialogues and big funding streams? Words like accessibility, equity, empowerment, ecology, humanity, connection, all of these things are actually very meaningful to most arts and culture leaders and disempowered, disenfranchised equity-seeking groups. And GLAMs in particular, libraries, archives, museums, are about the history of equity and inclusion, access, empowerment and learning. If we can shift the dialogue and the conversation towards this I think that better positions GLAMs in the arts sector as thought leaders around the kind of conversations that we're interested and instilled and inspired to have but also what the economy and the digital leaders need to hear.'

Jessa Agilo

As GLAMs we cannot ignore the politics of digital power and the ethics of the digital tech giants. These are issues that are crucial to the future of digital democracy within our society and acknowledging and understanding these are vital for genuinely digitally literate leaders.

Michael Peter Edson in his talk '[The Web We Want](#)'⁵³ to the Museum Computer Network conference in 2019 makes a powerful call to action to the GLAM sector to work together to 'weave a web of love of trust' and not 'burnish the credibility of the dot coms with our edifice.'

The Imperial War Museum in the UK is the first (and perhaps only?) [British cultural organisation to have joined](#)⁵⁴ the '[Stop Hate for Profit](#)'⁵⁵ campaign, an international movement to boycott Facebook and Instagram advertising to highlight the platforms' roles in spreading hate.

Technology is not neutral and neither are GLAMs. New cultural activist groups are forming, such as [Museums Are Not Neutral](#)⁵⁶, [Museum Detox](#)⁵⁷ and [LGBT+ History Month](#)⁵⁸. These groups are made up of agents of change who are challenging the GLAM sector from within, questioning their colonial roots and the predominant single viewpoint of white, straight, western and male.

⁵³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Psf-1C3ocDA>

⁵⁴

<https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/imperial-war-museums-joins-facebook-advertising-boycott>

⁵⁵ <https://www.stophateforprofit.org/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.museumsarenotneutral.com/>

⁵⁷ <https://www.museumdetox.org/>

⁵⁸ <https://lgbtplushistorymonth.co.uk/>



Andrea describes this as an awakening across the sector, *‘Awakening in the sense that more and more GLAM organisations are recognising and are daring to take a look in the mirror and see how their own making is and how their own practices are.’*

Through Covid-19, these groups have gathered momentum and voice. The USA-based [Museum Workers Relief Fund](#)⁵⁹ has raised over \$56,000 through mutual aid to offer to colleagues impacted by the pandemic and to advocate for a *‘transformation of museum culture that will center dignity, justice, and humanity.’*

‘There is this wave now recognising how technology plays a role in social justice and how this point is an unavoidable conversation that museums have to have I cannot possibly separate the issues of racial and social justice from the next steps of the GLAM sector because it was such a jarring situation for many people of colour, particularly for women of colour working in tech anywhere in the world.’

Andrea Montiel de Shuman

These changes raise a lot of important questions for GLAMs:

- How do GLAMs behave in the digital social space - what is their voice and purpose?
- What are the ethics and politics of the digital space - do GLAMs understand these?
- How do GLAMs equip their workforce and their communities to operate in these spaces?
- What is the role of contemporary collecting in this environment?
- How can GLAMs document societal change?

All eight of our interviewees are thinking about and actively working on these challenges, as are many of those who took part in the sensemaking workshops. Participants in the sensemaking workshops were also clear that they felt there was a role for Europeana to be *‘proactive regarding inclusion, diversity, and equity issues and social impact’* and that we *‘should have more courage to have more open-minded conversations.’*

‘People have choices and so do the institutions, so if we deliberately choose not to help people and audiences help each other and not to help them to be their agents of strategic and societal change, whatever they might make that to be, then they’re going to go elsewhere.’

Virginia Gow

⁵⁹ <https://www.gofundme.com/f/museum-workers-speak-relief-fund>



Summary of what we learnt about social change:

- Digital culture and platforms are facilitators in the debate, activism and amplification of profound societal issues and an understanding of what this means digitally is needed for GLAMs to take action
- There are already agents of change at work that can be learnt from and supported
- Neither GLAMs nor technology are neutral

Links to themes in the sensemaking workshop:

Theme 5: Our core values and culture in the report on the sensemaking workshops draws attention to important questions about what may be an assumed set of core values and shared goals within the digital GLAM sector. The report talks about how we can strengthen our community by having an open and ongoing conversation about our core values and culture and by inviting diverse voices to challenge our values and culture.



Current practice: snapshots of selected digital capacity-building initiatives

In recent years a wide range of support initiatives, services and communities of practice have developed around the world to build digital capacity in the GLAM sector. From grassroots practitioner communities like the long-established [Museums Computer Group](#)⁶⁰ (MCG) in the UK and [Museum Computer Network](#)⁶¹ (MCN) in the US to national, policy-driven, funded programmes like Canada's [Digital Strategy Fund](#)⁶² (DSF) and a wealth of collaborative, multi-partner projects at varying scales, there is a lot we can all learn.

In this section of the report we share a snapshot of several such initiatives to build a picture of the fast-developing ecosystem. This is not an exhaustive list but gives a flavour of the differing responses to the challenges of building digital capacity in and with GLAMs.

National and regional initiatives

Our 'quick scan' didn't unearth many digital transformation or capacity-building programmes operating at a national or regional scale, either focused on GLAMs or the cultural sector more widely. Below, we take a comprehensive look at what is happening in the UK, Flanders and Canada. It is significant to note that all of them are happening in a context of government policy making links between culture and digital.

The details of the initiatives in the UK have been prepared by Culture24 with support from other stakeholders. We are able to write about these as we are partners in many of them, work closely with others and contributed to the policy making (our CEO was one of the external experts seconded to work on the Culture is Digital project throughout 2017).

Details of the initiatives in Flanders and Canada were supplied directly by those involved and are written in their own words.

Three initiatives from the UK

2018's [Culture is Digital](#)⁶³ policy paper from the [Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport](#)⁶⁴ (DCMS) was framed as '*using technology to drive audience engagement, boosting the digital capability of cultural organisations and unleashing the creative potential of technology.*'

⁶⁰ <https://www.museumscomputergroup.org.uk/>

⁶¹ <https://mcn.edu/>

⁶² <https://canadacouncil.ca/funding/strategic-funds/digital-strategy-fund>

⁶³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-is-digital>

⁶⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-digital-culture-media-sport>



The paper made [12 policy commitments](#)⁶⁵ which it framed as an action plan. As the Secretary of State for Culture at the time said in his foreword to the follow-up [June 2019 Progress Report](#)⁶⁶, *'When DCMS published the initial report, it found evidence of a culture sector facing a number of barriers to greater digital adoption, such as skills, literacy, fragmentation or funding; but also a sector with the energy and drive to generate new solutions to these barriers and tackle them collaboratively.'*

Several of those policy commitments in particular have led to national programmes with transferable, relevant learning and practice for Europeana and their GLAM community.

1. Digital Skills for Heritage⁶⁷ (DSfH) is a UK-wide initiative designed to raise digital skills and confidence across the whole UK heritage sector. It is run by the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#)⁶⁸ (NLHF), the largest dedicated funder of heritage in the UK, distributing National Lottery grants and providing leadership and support across the heritage sector. DSfH was launched in [February 2020](#)⁶⁹. It consists of several strands of targeted support, aimed at meeting the needs of heritage organisations of every type and at every scale.

NLHF's initiative was designed pre-pandemic and launched in the midst of great uncertainty and upheaval across the heritage sector. The strands of support remained largely unchanged in their focus but delivery has been online (rather than many planned face-to-face workshops) and an emphasis was placed on the speedy publication of [digital resources and webinars](#)⁷⁰ that might otherwise have come online later in the process.

Digital Skills for Heritage's main activity strands are:

- a) [Training and support for heritage organisations](#) - two projects aiming to greatly increase the amount of free advice and support available to heritage organisations that already use digital:

[The Digital Heritage Lab](#)⁷¹, a free programme for small and medium heritage organisations seeking to develop their digital capabilities. It is managed by the Arts Marketing Association, in partnership with Arts Fundraising & Philanthropy, One Further and the Collections Trust. The Digital Heritage Lab consists of four strands:

⁶⁵

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-is-digital/culture-is-digital#summary-of-policy-commitments>

⁶⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-is-digital/culture-is-digital-june-2019-progress-report>

⁶⁷ <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/article/digital-skills-heritage>

⁶⁸ <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/>

⁶⁹ <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/blogs/digital-skills-heritage-launches-today>

⁷⁰ <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/publications/digital-skills-heritage-digital-resources>

⁷¹ <https://www.a-m-a.co.uk/digital-heritage-lab/>



- The Lab: a 9-month bespoke online digital skills academy. It will provide digital mentoring support to 60 UK-based small to medium-sized heritage organisations from September 2020 until June 2021. The Lab is [open for applications](#)⁷²
- Online workshops
- Training events
- Digital bootcamps

[Heritage Digital](#) - a digital skills programme led by The Heritage Alliance and supported by Media Trust, Charity Digital and Naomi Korn Associates. Heritage Digital will offer training, masterclasses, guides and peer networking opportunities, including conferences. It will support heritage organisations across marketing, engaging audiences, intellectual property, data protection and online business tools and processes. All activities are free. Running until July 2021, Heritage Digital will support over 700 heritage organisations.

- b) [Leading the Sector](#)⁷³ - support to ensure that decision makers across the sector are confident about using digital to deliver on their organisational missions. Up to two cohorts will take part in an innovative, structured learning programme to develop their digitally literate leadership. The first Leading the Sector course began in May 2020, delivered by Culture24. It switched from planned in-person to online delivery and is working with 16 leaders from a wide range of medium and large UK heritage organisations.
- c) [The Digital Confidence Fund](#): this strand of support recognises, in NLHF's words, that *'Technology can help organisations punch above their weight, providing low cost ways to connect to communities and bring heritage to more people. We know, however, that many organisations are only just beginning to get to grips with how technology can help them.'* NLHF has made £250,000 investment and one-to-one mentoring available to 20 such organisations. To be eligible, they must be active in one of their 13 Areas of Focus set out in their [Strategic Funding Framework](#)⁷⁴.

Finally, and informing planning across all of the strands above, NLHF launched a new benchmarking survey, [Digital Attitudes and Skills \(DASH\)](#)⁷⁵ which ran from 27 April until 10 July 2020. There was strong uptake on the survey - 527 organisations signed up and 4,304 individuals completed the survey. Seven organisations collected over 100 individual responses.⁷⁶ Needs evidenced through DASH, even before the survey closed and full analysis began, these have been informing provision and planning already.

⁷² <https://www.a-m-a.co.uk/digital-heritage-lab/the-lab-application-form/>

⁷³ <https://weareculture24.org.uk/leading-the-sector/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/about/strategic-funding-framework-2019-2024>

⁷⁵ <https://www.timmuslimited.co.uk/dashsurvey/>

⁷⁶ With thanks to NLHF and Dr Tabetha Newman at Timmus Limited (www.timmuslimited.co.uk) for sharing uptake stats with us, as soon as the survey closed.



This article, [‘What we have learned so far’](#)⁷⁷ from mid-May, gives a glimpse of the depth of understanding DASH will bring NLHF and the wider heritage sector. A report on this first DASH survey is due to be published later in 2020.

[The Digital Skills for Heritage initiative was formed in response to the policy commitment 3.2.8 from the Culture is Digital report:](#)

In order to build the digital capability of the sectors it supports, the Heritage Lottery Fund will:

- *Fund a £1m campaign which will run over two years, to attract high-quality projects to build the sector’s digital capacity, starting in 19/20 with a grant budget of £500k p.a.*
- *Make digital a key feature throughout the Heritage Lottery Fund’s Business Transformation programme, with a particular focus on upskilling staff*

2. The Digital Culture Network⁷⁸ (DCN) is an English initiative led by [Arts Council England](#)⁷⁹ (ACE), the national development body for creativity and culture, distributing government and lottery funding.

The DCN is just one of several ways ACE supports digital capacity building across the cultural sector in England, including funding Culture24 as a [‘Sector Support Organisation’](#)⁸⁰ with a focus on [digital skills-building in museums](#)⁸¹.

The DCN is an interesting example of specialist tech and digital advice being provided in a responsive way, driven by demand. The DCN consists of nine [‘Tech Champions’](#)⁸² each with a specialist area of expertise and each based in a different region of England. The Tech Champions are all highly experienced and have largely commercial backgrounds.

Regardless of where in England a cultural organisation is based, they can access one-on-one advice and/or digital resources from the Tech Champions. Their specialist areas are: data analytics; websites; digital marketing & strategy; social media; box office and CRM; email newsletters; search engine optimisation & search engine marketing; ecommerce & merchandising and photo & video content.

In its first year (June 2019 - June 2020) the Digital Culture Network worked on over 1000 cases coming from 700 organisations or individuals across all artforms. They’ve supported 660 attendees at in-person workshops and events and 1024 attendees at webinars.

⁷⁷ <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/stories/digital-attitudes-and-skills-heritage-what-we-have-learned-so-far>

⁷⁸ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-digital-culture/digital-culture-network>

⁷⁹ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>

⁸⁰ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/how-we-invest-public-money/sector-support-organisations>

⁸¹ <https://weareculture24.org.uk/sector-support-organisation/>

⁸² <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/digital-culture-network/tech-champions>



The Digital Culture Network initiative was formed in response to the policy commitment 3.2.7 from the Culture is Digital report:

Arts Council England will set up a Digital Culture Network, investing £1.1m over two years to create a network of expertise and sharing of best practice across each region in England in order to increase its sectors' digital skills and capability. The Network will:

- *Produce and deliver packages of support to increase the digital maturity of organisations and improve digital skills within organisations*
- *Look to partner with technology organisations to deliver training regionally reflecting key regional trends and needs*
- *Facilitate partnerships and collaboration between its funded organisations and the tech sector and others*

3. The Digital Culture Compass (DCC)⁸³ was commissioned by Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It is an online toolkit to support arts, culture and heritage organisations (note: including and beyond GLAMs) to integrate digital technology into their work.

It has two elements: a [Charter](#)⁸⁴ that outlines digital best practices and a [Tracker](#)⁸⁵, or digital maturity index, that allows organisations to assess their approach to digital technology and develop plans for future work. The DCC was launched in February 2020, again just as the pandemic was taking hold in the UK.

The Digital Culture Compass was developed by a partnership led by [The Space](#)⁸⁶ with [Culture24](#), [The Audience Agency](#)⁸⁷, [Golant Innovation](#)⁸⁸, the [University of Leicester](#)⁸⁹ and [Creative Coop](#)⁹⁰.

One of the most striking things about the toolkit is the breadth of collaboration involved in its creation. Three of the project partners are sector support organisations within ACE's national portfolio, and the University of Leicester was involved to bring the principles and learning from One by One into the mix. The Compass was developed following [a research and consultation process](#)⁹¹ that included workshops in all four UK nations, attended by people from more than 80 different arts, cultural and heritage organisations with various levels of digital confidence, expertise and experience.

⁸³ <https://digitalculturecompass.org.uk/>

⁸⁴ <https://digitalculturecompass.org.uk/charter>

⁸⁵ <https://digitalculturecompass.org.uk/using-the-tracker>

⁸⁶ <http://www.thespace.org/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/>

⁸⁸ <https://golantinnovation.com/>

⁸⁹ <https://le.ac.uk/museum-studies>

⁹⁰ <https://creative.coop/>

⁹¹ <https://digitalculturecompass.org.uk/about>



It is early days in the lifetime of this toolkit and only time will tell if it is adopted widely across the cultural sector. The Tracker, or digital maturity index element of the DCC, is an extensive and in-depth framework that could be used by GLAMs in a variety of ways. For cultural professionals with low digital literacy or confidence it can be daunting to use without facilitation.

Currently there is no formal programme of facilitation or support for DCC but several sector support organisations are weaving it into their ongoing and existing support programmes. Museum Development London has shaped an [online seminar](#)⁹² for museum professionals around its use, The Audience Agency weaves the Tracker into [digital maturity workshops](#)⁹³ with arts organisations and Culture24's [Digital Pathways resource](#)⁹⁴ helps small museums find their way into the DCC.

Work is ongoing over the summer of 2020, undertaken by the original DCC project team, to develop a light touch, quick and simple version of the DCC - an alternative way into the toolkit for those people and organisations with low digital confidence. This will also be developed in consultation with the target users.

[The Digital Culture Compass initiative was formed in response to the policy commitment 3.2.5 and 3.2.6 from the Culture is Digital report:](#)

- *Arts Council England, working with the Heritage Lottery Fund and partners, will create and pilot the use of a Digital Maturity Index for the cultural sector, to enable organisations to understand and benchmark their own digital capability and set plans in place to make improvements*
- *Arts Council England, working with the Heritage Lottery Fund and partners, will work together to create a Digital Culture Code; a set of guidelines and principles which cultural organisations should sign up to in order to demonstrate a commitment to developing their own digital maturity and the maturity of the wider cultural sector*

⁹² https://youtu.be/H_Dqwaia72E

⁹³ <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/events/digital-for-organisational-maturity>

⁹⁴

<https://digipathways.co.uk/pathways/why-and-how-should-small-museums-use-the-digital-culture-compass/>



We now look at initiatives in Flanders and Canada, written in their own words:

Four initiatives from Flanders

by Hans van der Linden, Policy Advisor, Flemish Government. Dept. of Culture, Youth & Media

Self-assessment tool digital maturity⁹⁵

Project Description - The self-assessment tool focuses on the holistic concept that is the core of digital transformation. The tool provides different (five) aspects of digital maturity and comes up with a specific set of questions that are modified according to the specific context these institutions are working in (cultural heritage organisations, arts organisations, cultural centres, socio-cultural organisations). The different chapters explore organisational strategy, interaction with target groups, digital content and services, expertise and digital processes. The tool points to areas to improve, so a recurrent usage of the tool will enable institutions to see their progress, and might even benchmark them against 'similar' organisations.

Why this project is significant - The topic of digital transformation is still vague somehow. This project is important because it defines the areas in which institutions should pay attention related to the topic. Related to cultural heritage, this points out that there is more to it than managing digital content and that it goes beyond data managers but digital transformation involves several non-technical skills and people too. Besides setting this framework the tool helps institutions to assess their own situations and improve their maturity. The tool can link each element to specific cases or recommendations and be a valuable platform that helps to increase the overall digital maturity of the cultural sector.

Digital leadership in the cultural sector⁹⁶

Project Description - The impact and speed of digitisation requires a specific strategy and leadership qualities. The course 'Digital leadership in the cultural sector', organised by [Cultuurconnect](https://cultuurconnect.be/)⁹⁷, focuses on the desired (or even necessary) competences and expertise to incorporate digital leadership in a rapidly changing society. It provides the foundation to tackle the digital transformation yourself and to work on a digital strategy.

This training is specifically aimed at the broad cultural sector (not only cultural heritage institutions), leads to mutual knowledge exchange and focuses on personal coaching. Each participant (selected by applying a set of criteria) will work on a personal task that involves his/her specific working situation and needs to come up with a plan for their own organisation. The course consists of masterclasses (to get inspired), a bootcamp (to apply the insights to one's own position) and a learning platform (for community building and exchanging ideas).

Why this project is significant? - A crucial element to stimulate digital transformation is related to expertise and knowledge. Digital transformation is not only about technical issues but should

⁹⁵ <https://www.digitalematuriteit.be/>

⁹⁶ <https://digitaleleiders.be/>

⁹⁷ <https://www.cultuurconnect.be/>



be about applying a digital strategy onto an organisation, relating to several processes and functions. This asks for specific skills in the management of an organisation. This course is based on the job profile of a chief digital officer, a person that decides at the top level on issues related to digital matters. In time this focus should become part of the overall strategic thinking but currently there is a need to stress the digital aspect in strategic cultural thinking. The diversity of participants (based in different cultural sectors) is also an advantage.

Residences digital culture⁹⁸

Project description - Within a larger network of organisations that offer residencies, the Flemish government has an agreement with three institutions that work specifically on the intersection between art, culture, science and technology. Artists, (digital) makers, game developers or researchers in the Flemish culture or media sector can apply for a residency allowance at Ars Electronica Futurelab (Linz), Medialab Prado (Madrid) and Experimental Media and Performing Arts Centre (New York).

Why this project is significant? It actively stimulates digital creation and experiments. Residents are selected via applications that are screened by both the Flemish policy level and the residency institution itself to ensure the perfect match and the maximum outcome. These measures are an effort to work interdisciplinarily, and to create a specific context that stimulates new forms of digital creation. This is also an aim pursued with their event [Media Culture Fast Forward](#)⁹⁹, an inspiration and networking festival about the future of media and culture, which works as a meeting place that encourages experiment and innovation.

Towards a digital cultural ecosystem¹⁰⁰

Project description - In a quest to stimulate digital transformation of the cultural sector, an overall digital strategy is lacking. A shared vision is necessary to determine a strategy that can serve as a compass to the many initiatives towards a shared aim. Having set this, it will prevent the need to deal with the same questions (related to ethics, privacy, innovation...) over and over again. The goal is to implement this network vision in terms of governance, an infrastructure and data approach where interdependencies and shared services and processes are key and a roadmap can be implemented.

Why this project is significant? This project will provide an approach to organise the cultural sector in terms of setting up efficient dataflows, setting up cooperative shared services, take into account economies of scale, implement user-oriented solutions, connections with ICT-components in other policy domains. This will optimise processes, increase efficiency and get all stakeholders on board by means of a shared governance. It will lead to an organised approach on digital infrastructure where an overall vision and a strategic supervision / governance are in place to allow for the right innovation.

⁹⁸ <https://www.vlaanderen.be/cjm/nl/cultuur/digitale-cultuur/residenties-digitale-cultuur>

⁹⁹ <https://mediafastforward.be/en/>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.vlaanderen.be/cjm/nl/cultuur/digitale-cultuur/visie-en-beleid>



Two initiatives from Canada

1. Digital Strategy Fund

by Lise Ann Johnson, Director of Strategic Granting initiatives, Canada Council

Digital Strategy Fund¹⁰¹

Project description - The Digital Strategy Fund supports strategic initiatives that will help Canadian artists, groups and arts organisations understand the digital world, engage with it, and respond to the cultural and social changes it produces. The Canada Council encourages initiatives that share the values and principles of the digital world, including:

- a focus on collaboration, partnership, and networking
- open-mindedness, willingness to share knowledge, results, ideas, and lessons learned
- experimentation, risk-taking, and iterative development

Between 2017 and 2021, the Canada Council will invest \$88.5M through this Fund.

Background to the fund - The creation of the Fund was informed by research conducted in 2015 and 2016 by the Canada Council to better understand how new technologies were impacting the arts sector. The [research](#)¹⁰² included both a national/international scan of the major digital disruptions and corresponding policy interventions, as well as a survey of Canada's arts sector.

The report concluded that there were very few ambitious digital strategies devoted to the arts sector, and recommended that Council:

- focuses its support on transformation of the arts sector
- focuses on the problem and not the technology
- encourages organisational transformation
- encourages pilots, demonstrations and sharing of results
- improves and responds through iteration and flexibility
- is prepared to 'consolidate around a solution'

Why this project is significant?

- There are very few federal policy initiatives designed to support the digital transformation of the arts sector
- Fund has increased digital literacy in the Canadian arts community
- Fund has enabled arts organisations to partner within and outside the sector
- Every funded project has on average 9 local, national or international partners
- Fund has seeded prototypes and projects that tackle discoverability, data intelligence, data mutualisation, digital rights/remuneration, issues of equitable access, new business models, etc
- Significant financial investment

¹⁰¹ <https://canadacouncil.ca/funding/strategic-funds/digital-strategy-fund>

¹⁰² <https://canadacouncil.ca/research/research-library/2017/02/the-arts-in-a-digital-world-literature-review>



2. The Virtual Museum of Canada

by Megan Richardson, Director, Virtual Museum of Canada

Project description - Managed by the [Canadian Museum of History](https://vmc.historymuseum.ca/)¹⁰³, the [Virtual Museum of Canada](http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/) (VMC)¹⁰⁴ is a federally-funded investment programme that helps Canadian museums and heritage organisations develop bilingual (French/English) online projects with interpreted content and an engaging user experience. There is an annual call for proposals with three investment streams. The Small stream provides \$15,000 to create a templated virtual exhibit. The Medium (\$50,000 to \$150,000) and Large streams (\$150,000 to \$250,000) support the creation of virtual exhibits, virtual tours, web-based games, educational resources and more, where organisations work with a web developer. VMC staff support organisations during the application and development processes.

Why this project is significant? The Virtual Museum of Canada is the largest funding programme in Canada dedicated to online projects by the museum and heritage community. The programme helps build digital capacity in the field and gives Canadians unique access to diverse stories and experiences. Benefits to organisations include preserving Canadian history, heritage and culture, highlighting new research, creating dynamic user experiences, connecting with audiences, improving skills, and building a network. Users can access rich material, derive inspiration and enjoyment, learn new things, develop a skill, shift an attitude or behaviour, and plan an onsite visit. Each year, approximately twenty VMC-funded projects launch online.

Partnership initiatives

Our ‘quick scan’ has identified a number of collaborative, multi-partner GLAM projects with different aspects of digital capacity building as part of their remit. As with the national and regional initiatives, this isn’t an exhaustive list but gives a flavour of the different responses to the challenges of building digital capacity.

The ways in which these projects are shaped offer insights into how digital capacity building priorities might be worked into future initiatives:

- [GIFT](https://gifting.digital/)¹⁰⁵ - a collaborative research project funded by the EU’s Horizon 2020 research programme. The project brought together internationally-renowned artists, designers, museum professionals and researchers to help museums create experiences that combine the physical and digital, offering personal encounters with cultural heritage.

¹⁰³ <https://vmc.historymuseum.ca/>

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/>

¹⁰⁵ <https://gifting.digital/>



- [Meaning Making](#)¹⁰⁶ - an interactive digital storytelling course hosted by Deutsches Museum and led by Andrea Geipel and Abhay Adhikari. This programme helps develop practical ideas for developing your online cultural offering to educate, entertain and inform your communities.
- [Smart Places](#)¹⁰⁷ - funded by Creative Europe this project has more than 55 different activities with a distinctive digital link, all aiming to address diverse segments within the existing and prospective audiences of each institution.
- [Library Carpentry](#)¹⁰⁸ - digital skills building with a particular focus on libraries, focused on building software and data skills within library and information-related communities.
- [Digital Arts Service Alliance](#)¹⁰⁹ ([DigitalASO / OSANumériques](#)) - funded by Canada's Digital Strategy Fund this is a cross-sectoral effort with a five-year mandate to empower the digital transformation of Canadian arts services through digital literacy research, training, alliance- and platform-building.
- [GLAM Labs](#)¹¹⁰ - an international GLAM labs community was born in 2018 at a global 'Library Labs' in the UK. The community has grown to 250 people, from more than 60 institutions, in over 30 countries. They also run a Slack channel for members.

'Labs are small and agile units and experimental by nature ... to roll out institution wide experiments, Labs need to build internal trust and support by acknowledging the experience of other teams, staff members and managers and share credit. This is an effective strategy to win the needed trust and support in an organisation. The Lab-style way of working promotes collaboration, knowledge sharing and draws staff out of isolation.'

Extract from ['Open a GLAM Lab' ebook](#)¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶

<https://digital.deutsches-museum.de/blog/registration-for-season-2-of-the-meaning-making-programme-is-now-open/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://smartplaces.eu/about/>

¹⁰⁸ <https://librarycarpentry.org/>

¹⁰⁹ <https://artspond.com/actions/digitalaso/>

¹¹⁰ <https://glamlabs.io/>

¹¹¹ https://glam-labs.s3.amazonaws.com/media/dd/documents/Open_a_GLAM_Lab-10-screen.9c4c9c7.pdf

Below we take a deeper look at the work of the partnership initiatives of the DEN Academie (Netherlands) and the One by One project (UK) which were supplied directly by those involved and are in their own words.

DEN Academie, Netherlands - three flagship programmes

by Maaïke Verberk, Managing Director DEN

Digital leadership: digital strategy and innovation¹¹²

A 3-day programme for directors and senior managers in the cultural sector who have digital innovation as their priority and ambition. This programme attracts directors and senior managers that have made a substantial investment in digitisation. Building on the fundamentals of these intensive efforts to digitise collections and to formulate answers to related management and preservation questions, they now find that the next stage prompts new questions regarding the value of cultural content and exploring the user perspective on digital cultural content.

These strategic questions are the focus of the three-day management programme Digital Strategy & Innovation. The programme is developed to enable the participants to jointly explore, discuss and, where possible, find actionable solutions guided by certified trainers and inspired by leading professionals from inside and outside the sector.

Towards digital transformation in cultural organisations¹¹³

A 1-day entry level management programme for directors, managers and senior staff of small and medium-sized cultural organisations who lead the digital transformation of their organisation. This programme focuses on novel perspectives of digital management, (re)use of digital content, engaging with new (digital) audiences and new technological developments. This programme is developed to enable the participants to cooperate, jointly explore and discuss the themes from their own experience. Theoretical perspectives and state of the art insights are provided by selected specialists and the programme is moderated by certificated trainers.

Digital transformation in the Boardroom

A 'custom-made' in-company programme for members of boards of cultural organisations who need to enhance their knowledge of digital transformation. This programme offers state of the art insights on trends and developments in digital transformation and gives insight into where the organisation stands in this transformation.

The programme offers board members the opportunity to reflect on the strategic questions in their organisation and to jointly explore perspectives and identify risks. Guided by certificated trainers, this programme aims to empower boards of cultural organisations to effectively harness the power of digital transformation for their organisation.

¹¹² <https://www.den.nl/den-academie/op-weg-naar-digitale-transformatie-in-cultureel-erfgoedorganisaties>

¹¹³ <https://www.den.nl/den-academie/op-weg-naar-digitale-transformatie-in-cultureel-erfgoedorganisaties>



One by One - building the digital literacies of UK museums (2017-2020)
by Professor Ross Parry, University of Leicester

One by One¹¹⁴

Project description

The lack of digital literacy in UK museums has gained urgency over the past decade, as it has become increasingly linked with a museum's capacity to fulfil its institutional ambition and meet its audiences' expectations. Addressing this challenge, the initial 'One by One' [ObO] project set out to build the digital confidence of the museum workforce.

Through establishing a multi-partnership consortium of cultural organisations, policy makers, academics, professional bodies, support agencies and communities of practice, 'One by One' worked to help museums of any size better define, improve, measure and embed the digital literacy of their staff and volunteers in all roles and at all levels.

Why this project is significant?

Impacting both policy and practice, ObO has: directly informed the development of the UK government's new national toolkit to support arts, culture and heritage organisations to integrate digital technology into their work; enriched practitioner understanding by developing a sector-wide digital literacy framework and resource set; and has built a new international community of key stakeholder organisations working to improve museum digital literacy and to lead this intellectual agenda.

Its original research insights have informed the creation of ObO's (and now the sector's) new 'digital literacy framework' that helps any museum, nationally and internationally, reflect on: what digital is; where digital is; why digital matters to an individual; and how an organisation can approach its development; as well as who is key to taking the collaborative, anticipatory, resilient and mindful approach essential to leading digital change in an organisation.

¹¹⁴ <https://one-by-one.uk/whats-it-about/>



Communities of practice

There are a number of established online communities such as the Museum Computer Network, [Museweb](https://www.museweb.net/)¹¹⁵ and the Museums Computer Group (MCG) that exist to support digital peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. These communities often use Twitter to share knowledge using the #MuseTech hashtag and also meet up informally (face-to-face and via Zoom) as informal [Drinking about Museums](https://www.wear museums.com/)¹¹⁶ groups using the #DrinkingAboutMuseums hashtag.

Other communities such as the 'Deling Forum' (sharing forum in Norwegian) use a Facebook group to allow its network of Norwegian cultural institutions to talk about digital and exchange information on digital activities.

'We need collaborations, for example, I'm a programming chair of Museum Computer Network and within our organisation we support other organisations as well and we collaborate in bringing tools for digital professionals so that's one of the things that organisations, non-profits, who are looking at these larger institutions that lack digital capacity, that's where they can help. They can help building tools, they can help putting networks together, there are a lot of silos in large organisations, so bring in those silos and make sure that we are all exchanging resources.'

Andrea Montiel de Shuman

Below we take a deeper look, through their own words, at the global We are Museums online community (which uses the Mighty Networks platform) and the next phase of the One by One project that is reaching out to work with professional networks in the USA.

We are Museums (Mighty Networks online community)

by Diane Drubay, Founder, We Are Museums

[We Are Museums](https://www.wear museums.com/)¹¹⁷

Project description

'Empowering museums worldwide to serve their social and cultural responsibilities with globally relevant peer-reviewed transformation processes and community-engagement programmes.' On March 25th, 2020, We Are Museums found its physicality online and launched the We Are Museums Online Community. Gathering museum professionals who participated at one We Are Museums event or are 'friends of friends', the community of We Are Museums creates this sense of belonging so precious in a post-traumatic world, growing its scope of actions and amplifying its voice and impact.

¹¹⁵ <https://www.museweb.net/>

¹¹⁶ <https://bit.ly/3eJI07g>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.wear museums.com/>



The online platform gathered today comprises more than 600 members coming from more than 40 countries including representations from most European, North American and South American countries and museum professionals from Morocco, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, Turkey, South Africa, China, Philippines, Malaysia, Chile, Brazil, India.

Why this project is significant?

The value of the We Are Museums Online Community lies in its capacity to listen and adapt to convey the right formats, content and partners to join forces and solve the key challenges of the museum industry. Relying on the collective intelligence of the community thanks to continuous discussion and deep listening, we identify key challenges and questions of the museum industry and set programmes of research, dialogues, online meetups or actions accordingly. This helps us to create an online environment conducive to life and transformation where understanding, support, communion, collaboration and co-creation are key.

This sense of togetherness and its full potential appears when communication between people is continuous and when we, as a whole, become resilient to change.

In order to embed our actions and projects into a global agenda and stay relevant, We Are Museums dedicates its full capacity to 7 programmes deserving a special acceleration of the industry inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

‘One by One [UK-US]: structuring museums to deliver new digital experiences’ (2020)
by Professor Ross Parry, University of Leicester

[One by One \[UK-US\]](https://one-by-one.uk/whats-it-about/)¹¹⁸

Project description

Given that digital continues to disrupt and transform the parameters of visitor participation and experience, how should museums (internationally) respond organisationally to deal with this change?

Confronting the question, One by One [UK-US] is a multi-partner, interdisciplinary, action research project (led by the University of Leicester and Smithsonian Institution), aiming to develop a new, sector-wide transatlantic partnership around digital leadership and skills, helping museums to build the organisational conditions to support new forms of visitor experience and participation at a time of social change. In an unprecedented collaboration, the project brings together the American Alliance of Museums with the UK’s Museum Association, as well as the Museum Computer Network (US) and the Museums Computer Group (UK).

¹¹⁸ <https://one-by-one.uk/whats-it-about/>





Why this project is significant?

Ultimately, One by One [UK-US] aims to make impact by: increasing the capability of museums to structure their leadership, processes and practices in response to new forms of digitally-enabled participation and new opportunities for understanding visitor experience; increasing the awareness of policy makers and funders (in the UK and US) on how (and why) to support digital maturity, digital leadership and digital skills development within the museum sector; and increasing the opportunities for the technology sector to be both informed by, and to be able to contribute to, changes in museum digital capability around visitor experience and participation.



Framing

When reading and considering this report's recommendations, we ask that they be understood and enacted in **contextual, holistic** and **purposeful** ways.

These three terms are a framing drawn from the multipartner [One by One](https://one-by-one.uk/)¹¹⁹ project and are part of the project's definition of digital maturity as *'An individual's or an organisation's ability to use, manage, create and understand digital, in a way that is contextual (fit for their unique setting and needs), holistic (involving vision, leadership, process, culture and people) and purposeful (always aligned to the institution's social mission).'*

By using these to frame how we think about the recommendations in the report, we can accommodate the multiple complicated and layered perspectives that exist across the GLAM sector internationally, which have been acknowledged throughout this research.

Contextual

Everyone is at a different point, seeking to serve society in different ways and, within this, there is a huge discrepancy between GLAMs' levels of digital understanding and maturity. Some people are still at the beginning, some are more digitally mature. Individuals might be a tech geek future-gazer working with machine learning, a librarian needing time and space to learn the new catalogue system or a retail manager needing to improve finance functions. GLAMs can be anything from a volunteer-run village museum to a national archive and many, many things in between.

There is no one size fits all solution. Europeana, GLAMs and individuals need to tailor these recommendations to fit their unique settings and needs.

Holistic

[We're all in this together](#) and need to tackle the challenges in a collaborative, connected way. Digital capacity building is most effective when it happens in a people-centred way, looking holistically at everyone's needs - GLAM volunteers, staff and leaders, as well as the communities and audiences they serve. We've framed the recommendations around five perspectives - personal, organisational, network, sector and society - to give a clear sense of the multi-layered world in which we all exist. Those perspectives are porous, they overlap and we shift between them all the time.

Europeana, GLAMs and individuals need to approach these recommendations holistically, involving and considering their vision, leadership, processes, culture and people.

¹¹⁹ <https://one-by-one.uk/>



Purposeful

We must not forget why we're doing this. Fundamentally, GLAMs need to build digital capacity and understanding in order to be more resilient and thrive. Beyond that, digital transformation needs to be driven by organisational mission and purpose and to encompass wider societal issues such as digital empowerment, digital accessibility and digital justice.

Europeana, GLAMs and individuals need to approach these recommendations in a purposeful way that is aligned to their own social mission.

Recommendations

Each of this report's twenty recommendations needs to be understood and enacted in **contextual, holistic** and **purposeful** ways.

They are arranged into five different perspectives:

- Personal
- Organisational
- Network
- Sector
- Society

This notion of multiple perspectives, often all at play at any one time, is also drawn from the One by One project and is helpful here to illustrate the interconnected nature of our sector.

Whilst focusing on building **personal** skills and confidence, those are within the perspective of an **organisation**. This in turn is influenced and supported by **networks**, be they informal, smaller groupings within GLAMs or areas of practice, or larger, formal networks such as Europeana or the Museum Computer Network (MCN). Those networks sit within and support the **sector** which in turn must always be considered in the wider **societal** context.



Personal

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| 1. | Be open to learning - everyone needs space to recognise, understand and develop the digital skills and literacies they need. This mindset means reaching out and asking for advice, trying new things, learning from your mistakes and taking time to reflect. |
| 2. | Be an agent of change - wherever you are situated in your organisation you can build digital skills and capacity and kickstart change. |
| 3. | Be a digitally literate leader - recognise the issues and build your own digital literacy to a point where you can create conditions for change, value skills development and understand the benefits of digital maturity. |

Organisational

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| 4. | Have digitally literate leadership - support and enable your leadership team to be more digitally informed, reflective, responsive and active. |
| 5. | Invest time and money in digital skills - enable everyone in your organisation to gain appropriate and relevant digital skills and the confidence and opportunities to apply and share them. |
| 6. | Support 'soft' skills - empathy, compassion, persuasion, change management, collaboration and other 'non-digital' skills go hand-in-hand with digital skills. |
| 7. | Create space at every level - give skills and literacy development space to breathe, even if that means doing fewer other things. Prioritise it organisationally. |
| 8. | Nurture a culture of experimentation - create the right internal conditions, giving people the mandate to try out new ideas, iterating in an agile, data-informed way. |

Network

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| 9. | Build a shared understanding of digital terminology - the language around 'digital' can be off-putting, and confusion around terms hinders progress. |
| 10 | Stop reinventing the wheel - share more, collaborate more and learn from each other's mistakes and successes. Adopt and adapt existing best practice in different contexts. |



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| 11. | Create space to learn from others - support communities of practice to share skills and connect with peers - bring them together virtually and in person and amplify their voices. |
| 12 | Revise our digital KPIs, collectively - we all need to better understand what success, engagement and impact mean in order to build capacity more effectively. |

Sector

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| 13. | Make more of existing digital investments - make digital skills building explicit and conditional in all funded projects, planning it into workflows and insisting upon clear digital capacity-building outcomes. |
| 14. | Create targeted learning opportunities - multi-layered programmes of funded work that support the building of digital capacity, skills and literacies. |
| 15. | Prioritise digital policy development and investment - value digital capacity-building skills and infrastructure in policy and strategy at local, regional and national levels and support those policies with investment. |
| 16. | Fund GLAMs in more digitally literate ways - revise funding priorities and structures to enable the sector to improve and sustain existing digital systems and to develop activities in iterative, user-centred ways. Don't value and chase shiny new technology at the expense of ensuring organisations get the basics right. |

Society

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| 17. | Learn from our pandemic experience - we mustn't let this moment of profound change go to waste. |
| 18. | Improve access - understand and enact GLAMs' responsibilities in tackling the technical and social barriers that make up the digital divide. |
| 19. | Build society's digital understanding and confidence - collaborate within and beyond GLAMs to help to develop people's digital skills and literacies. |
| 20. | Champion social justice - understand the role of digital in profound societal issues and what that means for GLAMS, then take action. |



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Credits

This report was researched and written by:

Lead: Jane Finnis, CEO, Culture24

Collaborator: Anra Kennedy, Partnerships Director, Culture24

Proofing, sense checking and admin support: Judith Burns, Kate McNab, Rosie Clarke and Richard Moss

Culture24 is an independent charity that brings arts and heritage organisations closer to audiences. Our vision is for a thriving and relevant cultural sector able to connect meaningfully with audiences of today. Our mission is to support arts & heritage organisations to have the confidence, imagination and skills to make this happen.

<https://weareculture24.org.uk/>

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