

**Researching podcasting in museums: Can new broadcasting
models of publication make art more accessible?**

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by

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Abstract

Researching podcasting in museums: Can new broadcasting models of publication make art more accessible?

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During times of continuing growth of digital resources for teaching, learning and research, the key objective of this study is to evaluate the genuine suitability of online publishing tools – podcasting in particular – as a means to make art more accessible.

The first part of the thesis addresses the nature of the changes which affect museums today: the rapid digitisation of culture, changes in the way artists produce, museums present and audiences consume art, and finally the challenges and opportunities which arise for museums within a Web 2.0 environment. The analysis of these key contexts in which museums operate today, will build the theoretical basis of the thesis.

The second part of the thesis subjected the theories developed in the first part to empirical study. It is structured around three case studies (CS). CS1 investigates why museums have started to do podcasts. Data was generated through a series of interviews with museum professionals. CS 2 investigates user-behaviour. An online survey commissioned by the Ars Electronica Center and conducted by the author sits at the heart of this enquiry into user-behaviour. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as methodology, CS 3 investigates the possible impact upon the relationship between museums and audiences.

The main outcomes of this thesis are: a typology of museum podcasts, an insight into user-behaviour and a methodology for assessing the impact of podcasting on the relationship between museums and their audiences. Taken together the data generated brings into focus the real opportunities of podcasting, as a suitable medium for making the museum experience more accessible, engaging and immediate.

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¹ Ross Parry and Lena Maculan, *Piloting the use of 'Learning Objects' and 'Instructional Designers' in the development of Web-assisted learning. An evaluation report.* Fund for new teaching initiatives, University of Leicester, Department of Museum Studies. www.le.ac.uk/ms/rdp5/fnti_parry_2006.doc (as of 2.2.2007).

² The Museum: A World Forum (2006) www.le.ac.uk/ms/profdev/programme20-4-06.pdf (as of 2.2.2007).

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³ Lena Maculan, *Museums and podcasting – What are the challenges?* UK Museums on the Web Conference (6.7.2006) <http://www.museumscomputergroup.org.uk/meetings/2-2006-abs.shtml> (2.1.2008).

⁴ Lena Maculan, *A methodological model for analyzing museum podcasts* Beyond Distance Research Alliance, Learning Futures Conference, University of Leicester (9.1.2007) http://www2.le.ac.uk/projects/impala/presentations/impala_lfc0n_workshop (2.1.2008).

⁵ Lena Maculan, *The museum as broadcasting station? Marketing using new technologies* Museums and Heritage Show, Earls Court Conference Centre, London (9.5.2007) http://www.museumsandheritage.com/index.php?location_id=9&show_archive=1&item=7&item_offset=11 (2.1.2008).

⁶ Lena Maculan, *Das Museum als Rundfunkstation?* MAI Tagung (10.-11.5.2007), ZKM Center for Art and Media <http://www.mai-tagung.de/maitagung+2007/programm.htm> (2.1.2008).

⁷ Lena Maculan, 'Ein Modell zur Analyse der Auswirkungen von Podcasting auf die Beziehung zwischen Museum und Besuchern' in *Vom Betrachter zum Gestalter. Neue Medien in Museen – Strategien, Beispiele und Perspektiven für die Bildung* ed. Michael Mangold, Peter Weibel und Julie Woletz (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2007) 103-115.

⁸ Lena Maculan, "Why Should Museums Podcast? How does podcasting fit into other museum communication and what are the success factors?" e-learning group for museums, archives and libraries, Tate Britain (9.10.2007) http://www.elearninggroup.org.uk/training_podcasting_Oct07.php (as of 24.10.2007).

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⁹ Sebastian Breßler. *Podcasting 2006 – Status quo und Entwicklungsperspektiven* (Berlin: House of Research, 2006).

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ABBREVIATIONS

AEC Ars Electronica Center

AV Audiovisual

CS Case Study

CDA Critical Discourse Analysis

DHM German Historical Museum

ICT Information and communication technology

MoMA Museum of Modern Art (New York)

NG National Gallery (London)

KHM Kunsthistorisches Museum (Vienna)

ZKM Zentrum für Medienkunst (Karlsruhe)

NHM National History Museum (London)

NML National Museums Liverpool

INTRODUCTION

This research is concerned with notions of change and how museums have or have not responded to them. The driving force behind this thesis, and its key objective is to shed light onto the real opportunities of using digital media – podcasting¹⁰ in particular – as a tool to present and interpret material culture in museums for the purpose of making the experience of art more engaging, participatory and accessible.¹¹

¹⁰ Podcasting refers to a Web feed of audio or video files that any user can subscribe to, so that they are automatically updated and downloaded as they become available. For a more thorough definition see the paragraph under the sub-heading “Definition” in the Introduction of Chapter 4.

¹¹ Within the museological discourse, user-participation, engagement and concepts of interactivity are still chiefly associated with the clicking of buttons and boxes, with the possibility of enhancing dialogue between museum and audience by allowing users to send emails through websites, or by offering online discussion forums and related online tools and services, which allow users to participate in the production of content on museum websites. This thesis moves beyond this very literal and technical understanding of how the Web enhances user-participation and engagement. User participation as understood in this thesis has not got much to do with users writing and uploading content. Nor is it related to the idea that online museums can foster two-way communication between museum and audiences and among audiences themselves. Rather, it has to do with providing users with the tools that help them make sense of what they encounter in museum exhibitions. More specifically, the thesis argues that podcasting is one of the many possible tools that can be used in the context of museum learning. (And learning, education and knowledge is considered as one of the prerequisites, necessary for encouraging users to become more participatory and engaged in the museum experience.) The thesis, for instance, shows how podcasting can support users in preparing or following up their museum visit. This it is argued will help users to develop skills to construct meaning from objects they see in exhibitions and in a second step, because they are more informed, people will become more engaged in culture. This understanding of user-participation is based on the idea that a more informed user will automatically make more sense of the museums’ offerings, which is supported by the research of Falk and Dierking. These key theorists in the field of museum learning argue that a visitor who feels comfortable in the galleries, who can easily orientate him/herself around the spaces, and has some sort of idea what to expect in the galleries, will be more likely to understand the exhibition’s narrative and as a consequence be able to take in more information, and make more meaning out of this information. The idea is that a more informed museum visitor, is also likely to become more interested, hence engaged in all sorts of cultural experiences, be they in a museum or not. Based on literature reviews and data collected in case study 2 it is argued, that podcasting can foster interests in various subjects. It is not argued that podcasting of museum x will create subjects that become regular visitors of museum x. But what is suggested is that people who listen to a podcast of museum x, might visit an exhibition related to the subject they encountered in the podcast whether in museum x or elsewhere; or they might read a book on this newly discovered subject, visit a theatre or concert. Summing up, the key argument is that a well-done video or audio programme (that may be provided as podcast, webcast, embedded

Every day more and more information from and about museums is uploaded to the World Wide Web. Yet it seems that the massive amount of digitised cultural content produces an *illusion of access*: objects in museum collections are interpreted and contextualised in exhibitions. Many museums across the globe offer further layers of interpretation in a variety of media, such as audio guides, publications and educational events. In contrast, online museum collections tend to provide very little contextual information of the objects presented online.

In order to narrow down the subject into manageable proportions this study is concerned primarily with art museums. Secondly, the area of research was narrowed through putting into focus British museums as well as those from the German speaking counties of the European Union. As will become clearer as the thesis unfolds, museums in Britain are very much on the leading edge of developments when it comes to digitizing museum collections and making them accessible through the Web. However, only discussing examples from museum in the UK would exclude the possibility of making important references to examples from museums elsewhere. Hence, it seemed most appropriate to select further examples from museums from a comparable cultural and economic environment. Austrian and German museums seemed most appropriate for two key reasons: podcasting, which is at the heart of this study, has been taken up at many key museums in those two countries. Out of initial research, in the summer of 2005, it emerged that collecting data from museum professionals engaged in podcasting in museums in the UK, Germany and Austria promised to turn out interesting results. Hence, I decided to keep the focus on those three countries. However, since podcasting was still so new when data for this research was collected, it was also necessary to investigate some developments in museums of other geographic regions, such as the US. For this reason, some interviews, most notably with staff of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art were conducted as well. Last but not least, German is my mother tongue and researching audiovisual programmes in Czech,

Quicktime, etc.) can foster interest in new subjects, which in turn inspire people to develop interest in a given subject and cultivate it through participating and engaging in cultural institutions, such as museums.

Polish or indeed in many other European languages would have required resources that were simply not available.

Accessibility to collections usually meant making collections available to view online, adopting interoperable online metadata standards (Dublin Core Metadata Initiative) and respecting accessibility guidelines (World Wide Web Consortium).¹² This thesis argues that after more than a decade of hypermedia, and especially in view of the rapid developments on the Web – commonly referred to as Web 2.0 – one needs to take a much more differentiated approach to issues of accessibility. As will be argued in Chapter 1 low levels of interpretation and lack of a theoretical, historical and critical framework, very often make it difficult for the user to engage with online museum objects in meaningful ways, which in turn, puts the whole project of digitizing collections, for the purpose of increasing accessibility to culture, into question. It is this aspect of accessibility – intellectual accessibility – which this thesis is concerned with.

The key question of this research is: how can art museums use podcasting in order to contribute to their principal missions of making art accessible and enjoyable? The first part of this thesis asks whether connectivity to the Web has made culture more accessible to people. Moreover, it theorizes the problem through setting up the important context in which digitisation of cultural heritage is taking place so as to clearly define the problem that is being researched. The second part examines one technology of the second digital wave – podcasting – as one of the many possible means that could be used to make art a more engaging, immediate and accessible experience.¹³ This theme has been divided into three research questions, which will be the subject of the three case studies: (1) what is podcasting and in what ways can it be applied in the museum to

¹² Dublin Core Metadata Initiative <http://dublincore.org/> (as of 30.5.2008) and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) <http://www.w3.org/> (as of 30.5.2008).

¹³ With the second digital wave, or more commonly called the Web 2.0, a whole range of new online services became available: social networking sites such as My Space and Facebook, Wikis such as the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, weblogs, tagging and podcasting all aim to facilitate the building of communities, and fostering the creativity, collaboration and sharing of text and AV content between users. Podcasting is also part of this second generation of the Web. Section 3.2 in Chapter 3 will explain this further.

present and interpret art? (2) What can museum visitors do with podcasts and in what ways might it enhance their experience of art? (3) What is the possible impact of podcasting upon the relationship between museums and audiences?

The theoretical basis of the research

The first part of the thesis addresses the nature of the changes which affect museums today: the rapid digitisation of culture and its accessibility online, changes in the way artists produce, museums present and audiences consume works of art, and finally the challenges and opportunities which arise for museums within a Web 2.0 environment. The analysis of these key contexts will build the theoretical basis of the thesis, and set the stage for the second, the empirical part of the thesis on podcasting.

The aims and objectives of Chapter 1 are to analyse the question whether online connectivity leads to enhanced accessibility of art. What will come out of Chapter 1 is that there is currently a vast amount of cultural content on the Web. However, the data collected for this research shows that because this content is in many cases not appropriately contextualised, the database model of a website does not necessarily make art more accessible for audiences beyond that of experts. The thesis argues that giving people free access to collections is a step into the right direction of making culture accessible, but the engaging, participatory and accessible museum is not guaranteed by the provision of rich cultural content databases. Moreover, the chapter reveals that online media in general, and new broadcasting models of publication in particular, should be drivers for the production of new types of content rather than as mere channels of distributing existing content. Furthermore, the chapter concludes that the museum should play an active role in moderating and interpreting content, so as to support audiences to become active participants in the experience of culture.

Chapter 2 focuses on the museological context. It addresses key questions regarding notions of authenticity and originality. It assesses the question whether

an online experience of art might be authentic and evaluates whether online museums threaten the primacy of the original artefact. The thesis concludes that notions of the authentic and the original are subject to social, cultural and historical change. The way artists produce artworks and the way audiences consume them has changed, which had an impact on what an authentic experience of original art is. Furthermore, it is argued that one has to take a differentiated approach towards online presentations of art. Whereas some works lend themselves very well for the medium of the Web, others do not. Providing authentic experiences online is just as much about understanding the potentials and limitations of the medium of the Web, as it is about comprehending the nature of a work of art. The crucial point is to make critical and individual decisions about the appropriateness of the Web as a medium to interpret and present works of art, whereby taking the nature of the physical and the theoretical qualities of the work of art into account. Through looking at an example of digital art, the chapter concludes that in the Media Age authentic experiences of original art are becoming disengaged from the physical space of the museum and may be experienced through various forms: It may be in the museum, but it may also be online on anything from personal computer to mobile phone.

Chapter 3 defines the nature of the technological changes that are currently taking place and that are commonly referred to as Web 2.0. The chapter is structured into three sections: The first looks at the key features of the second digital wave, and how some of the new services associated with the Web 2.0 have been employed on museum websites. The second takes a historical approach, looking at how museums have made use of the Web since the mid 1990s. It is about identifying key types or paradigms of museum websites. The key outcome of these three sections is that some of the key ideas behind museum websites, like ‘targeting specific audiences,’ customizing, localizing and personalizing the Web experience and even notions of constructivism and ‘user-generated content,’ have already been at the heart of museum websites, long before these terms even existed as such.

Secondly, what will come out of this analysis is that the notion of a ‘platform of participation’ is not necessarily restricted to notions of user-generated content.

The author proposes that additionally, one can understand encouraging user-participation in museums also in terms of fostering a more informed audience. A truly accessible museum is one, which provides users with the ‘intellectual tools,’ which help them to make more sense of what is exhibited. This chapter is thus about demystifying the museum and making processes of interpretation, which are behind display strategies, more transparent. Fostering a more engaged and participatory audience, hence, has to do with notions of empowerment and transparency.

What does this mean for the research question of this thesis? Most obviously, it raises the question if and how new broadcasting models of publications and podcasting in particular may be used to foster this type of user participation. Consequently, one of the questions Part 2 addresses is: can podcasting make the museum experience more transparent and foster an empowered audience? Case Study 1 tries to find an answer to this question.

Chapter 3 suggests that the Web 2.0 has encouraged museums to distribute their content on the various social networking sites. It might be too early to assess the real impact of such sites on audience development. Yet, beginning to learn more about how users behave and what their interests are, is important if museums want to use new broadcasting media for audience development. Because of a lack of empirical data on how people use audiovisual programmes produced by museums, the author conducted a survey on podcasting at the Ars Electronica Center. This study will be at the centre of Case Study 2.

The final section of Chapter 3 is about defining the consequences of the changes identified in Section 1 and 2. It analyzes the move towards the ‘channel model’ of a website, the notion of the ‘museum as producer’ and the shift from the object-centred to the story-based museum website.¹⁴ The data collected for this research proposes that one of the consequences of Web 2.0, namely the way museums present content online, is that they are increasingly modelling formats around those of the mass media, especially TV, Radio and film and that there is a

¹⁴ The concepts of the ‘object-centred’ and the ‘story-based’ museum Websites will be explained at length in Section 3.7.1 in Chapter 3.

real opportunity for museums to reach new audiences through dispersing their audiovisual (AV) content on various social networking sites, such as the videsharing website YouTube¹⁵ or the photosharing site Flickr.¹⁶ What will be made explicit is that with Tate Online, for instance, and particularly with the launch of 'Tate Shots,' Tate has moved well beyond the recording of public programmes and events and has started to produce their own documentary style programmes on contemporary art that are comparable to those usually aired by broadcasting stations such as Arte or 3 Sat in Germany, Austria and Switzerland or the BBC in the UK. Similarly to broadcasting stations, Tate has started to release programmes according to a well thought through time-based strategy, recognizing that certain types of programmes might be more appropriate for users than others at a certain point in time. AV content that is related to big exhibitions, such as the Turner Prize, is not uploaded all at once anymore.¹⁷ Rather, such content is released in several steps, taking into account the marketing strategy of that particular event.

Through analysing the shift from the object-based towards the story-based museum website, the thesis suggests, that key behind those two approaches, are different assumptions about the audience. The latter positions the user as an active participant, explorer, and/or learner. Probably most importantly, it positions the user as someone who might or might not be interested in visiting the museum, acknowledging that an authentic experience of the museum might be experienced online as well as onsite. In the context of the question of how to make the museum experience more engaging, immediate and accessible through the use of new broadcasting models of publication, the following question arises: What is the real impact of podcasting on the relationship between museums and audiences? Trying to find an answer to this question will be the objective of Case Study 3.

¹⁵ YouTube www.youtube.com (23.11.2007).

¹⁶ Flickr www.flickr.com (23.11.2007).

¹⁷ The Turner Prize is an award for contemporary artists held at Tate Britain that has provoked debate since its inception in 1984. <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/turnerprize/history/default.htm> (2.1.2008).

The empirical part of the research

The second part of the thesis (Chapter 4) evaluates the feasibility of podcasting in museums. The chapter is structured around three case studies (CS). They are based on empirical research conducted over a two-year period (January 2005 to January 2007). Three different methodologies are used for each of the case studies: CS1 investigates why museums have started to use podcasting. The objects of analysis are museum professionals who engage in podcasting in the museum for which they work, and data was generated through a series of qualitative, semi-structured interviews. CS2 investigates user-behaviour in relation to podcasting in museums. A substantial online survey commissioned by the Ars Electronica Center in Linz, Austria and conducted by the author is at the heart of this enquiry. CS3 analyses the impact of podcasting on the relationship between museums and audiences. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the methodology (the details of which are discussed in Chapter 4), this CASE STUDY investigates the possible impact of podcasting upon the relationship between museums and audiences.

METHOD AND METHODOLOGIES

Largely due to the novelty of podcasting, there aren't yet any established methodologies that one can use to research this medium. Hence, one of the initial key challenges of this thesis was to find the most adequate research tools that will bring light into the area under investigation. Social research, which is to a great deal concerned with analysing the nature and the consequences of social changes, offers an appropriate framework of finding the appropriate questions to ask, which is crucial for analysing the nature and possible impacts of new media technologies in the museum sector.

The methodology for this research is based on theories and practice of empirical social science.¹⁸ The study is qualitative and its aim is to research and to reveal the multifacetedness of this still very young medium of podcasting in museums. Qualitative research aims to contextualize social phenomena, hence, based on the accepted procedures of studies in empirical social research, this study started by gathering relevant theories and identifying the key debates within the field of study under examination. Based on an extensive literature review and conversations with museum professionals and other experts in the field a number of research questions were formulated and case studies were selected.¹⁹

¹⁸ Empirical social science is about the systematic gathering and analysis/interpretation of social phenomena. Its goal is the production of new knowledge. Other than in sociology, empirical social science research is used in social anthropology, social psychology and economics, and is gaining in significance in the disciplines of language and literature studies as well as in historical research. Its methodologies are key for within the field of market research as well as in political opinion polls. Peter Atteslander, *Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung*. 10. neu bearbeitete und erweiterte Auflage (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), p.5.

¹⁹ One of the crucial characteristics of qualitative research methods is that they do not define the categories in which a phenomenon is being researched and documented. These research methods describe the phenomena under examination through generating data, rather than in pre-defined categories. Qualitative methods work in a circular mode, meaning that processes of interpretation of data lead to the generation of further data to be analysed. Jörg R. Bergmann, 'Qualitative Methoden der Medienforschung' in *Qualitative Methoden der Medienforschung* ed. Ruth Ayaß and Jörg Bergmann (Hamburg: Rohwolt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2006), pp.13-42 (p.19).

From these first data, not only the fine tuned research question emerged, but also the fact that in order to answer the research question it is necessary to shed light on podcasting from three different angles: the perspective of the museum, from the user and finally the possible impact of podcasting on the relationship between museum and visitor. Only studying the perspective of the museum or the visitor would not allow shedding light on the multifacetedness of the medium of podcasting. It is only through looking at podcasting from these three different angles, that it is possible to draw a picture of the true potential of podcasting in museums as a tool to make art more accessible. In order to examine podcasting from those three angles, it was decided that three case studies were necessary (one analysing the perspective of the museum, one analysing the perspective of the user and one analysing the possible impact of the relationship between museums and audiences) is also necessary to employ different research methodologies (which will be explained in more detail below).

How were the case studies and the methodologies selected? In order to find out about why people in museums started podcasting one needs to ask those people who produce podcasts. Because podcasting, at the time of the fieldwork was still so new, a survey would not have brought enough relevant data, hence it was decided to conduct interviews with museum professionals instead. In order to find out how people use podcasting, one again needs to ask those people who use this medium. One option would have been to conduct interviews. The problem with this is the question of how to find people who use this new medium. After discussions with representatives from the Ars Electronica Center, which commissioned this study, it was therefore decided that the most relevant results would turn out if a survey would be sent to all people who have subscribed to the AEC's newsletter. As will become clear as the thesis unfolds, many museums want to use podcasting so as to develop a new relationship with their audiences. Hence, analysing the possible impact of podcasting on the relationship between museums and audiences is one of crucial points of this research. However, because of the newness of the medium there aren't any methods and tools of how to analyse this question. The big challenge was to find a tool, which would allow one to study podcasting from this perspective. Critical discourse analysis, as will be explained in more detail later, was one of the tools, which was tested whether

it could be employed and after a few trial runs, it was decided that this was a highly relevant research tool.

The study is explorative, hence, it aims to discover and generate knowledge. As opposed to quantitative research, qualitative study does not aim to test hypotheses. Rather, the aim is to contribute to the development of theories, through making new proposals based on empirical data.²⁰ In this respect, this study on podcasting aims to shed light into the potential of podcasting as a medium, which can be used to make art more accessible. Doing so it aims to contribute to debates about how digital media can enhance communication in museums.

The study is explorative, not representative and does not argue to have looked at every single podcast ever done by a museum. Having said that, in the year when the fieldwork was conducted, there were not many museums doing podcasts and for this reason, this study has probably looked at most podcasts produced by art museums, which were produced in either English, German or French. The question of this study, though, is not to draw a comprehensive picture of every single art museum podcast. Rather, the aim is to draw a picture of the possibilities of podcasting as a means to make art more accessible. For this reason, the first step was to identify the key questions that arise in this respect (and this was done in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, mainly through literature reviews and some interviews). What came out of these chapters is that in order to get a clear picture of podcasting in museums it needs to be analysed from three different angles, therefore three case studies are necessary in order to evaluate podcasting: from the perspective of why museums are doing podcasts. From the perspective of whether people are using it and if how, and finally whether it is possible to identify an impact of podcasting on the relationship between museums and audiences. The analysis of these three perspectives also requires two different stances to interpretation of data: The overall stance to interpretation taken in CS 1 and CS 2 represents the researcher's interpretation of participants experiences. In other words, CS 1 and CS 2 collected data through interviewing participants and

²⁰ Jörg R. Bergmann, p.19.

thorough an online survey, in order to interpret and contextualise their experiences. CS 3 on the other hand is an analysis of text using CDA as methodology. Here the researcher collects data through asking questions to the text, rather than to people having consumed the text under examination. The overall stance to interpretation taken, then, is that this case study represents the researcher's interpretation of a text's impact on the relationship between producer and consumer of the text.

As common in empirical social research, and for the reasons mentioned above, this study includes a combination of research techniques: Interviews, an online survey and Critical Discourse Analysis. These different methodologies will be discussed in the following three subheadings.

Interviews

Initial theoretical research and conversations with museum professionals and other experts in the field aimed at getting a clearer picture of the area of study under investigation and to fine tune the research questions. These were largely conducted at conferences but also included discussions with people involved in museums and new media projects encountered elsewhere.²¹ Interviews conducted for articles published in Parnass and the Kulturmanagement Network, were also used to gain a better knowledge of the area of research, even if they did not formally become part of this thesis.²²

The objects of analysis in CS 1 are museum professionals who have different kinds of involvements in the production of podcasts in museums. For this case study a series of qualitative semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of

²¹ I mean acquaintances and friends of mine who work in museums and cultural institutions.

²² Lena Maculan, 'Museen und multimediale Internetplattformen' Kulturmanagement network: http://www.kulturmanagement.net/beitraege/prm/39/v_d/ni_298/cs_11/index.html (as of 30.5.2008). Lena Maculan, 'Museums Websites und intellektuelle Zugänglichkeit' Kulturmanagement network: http://www.kulturmanagement.net/beitraege/prm/39/v_d/ni_107/cs_11/index.html (as of 30.5.2008). Lena Maculan, 'Digitale Revolution: Fragen an die Museumskommunikation. Interview mit Gerfried Stocker, Direktor des Ars Electronica Centrums' Parnass (Vienna: Parnass Verlag, March 2006). Lena Maculan, 'Podcasting – Museen als Rundfunk Stationen?' Parnass (Vienna: Parnass Verlag, November 2006).

new media in museums were conducted. The interview is one of the most used methodologies in the social sciences and as will be shown particularly in Chapter 4, it has proved to be a very useful tool to shed light on the question why museums are engaging in podcasting and in developing a typology of museum podcasts. As has been stated before, the medium of podcasting is very young and at the time when the fieldwork conducted (2006), there were not many people who engaged in podcasting in museums. Because of this, a survey amongst museums would not have turned out any interesting results. The medium of podcasting was not widely used enough, at the time. For this reason (and indeed the same reason, why the House of research has decided to make interviews rather than a survey) it was decided that speaking to museum professionals directly, people who were engaging in podcasting, would turn out more relevant data than a survey.

CS 1 draws upon a series of qualitative, semi-structured interviews with museum professionals, which were conducted between the summer of 2006 and January 2007. With the exception of the interviews with Christian Dirks and Eva Wesemann, which were conducted at their offices in the Jewish Museum Berlin and Antenna Audio Berlin, most interviews were conducted by the author by telephone, recorded digitally and transcribed. Additional conversations not referenced in the research were also held either in person, over the phone and by email. These often took place at seminars and conferences such as the Department of Museum Studies Research Week 2005 and 2006, the UK Museum and the Web 2005 and 2006, the Summer School in New Media 2005 and 2006 (all University of Leicester), EVA Berlin 2006, Museums and the Internet 2007 (MAI-Tagung) at the Center of Media Arts in Karlsruhe, the Museums and Heritage Show in London 2007 and the Podcasting Day of the e-learning group for museums, libraries and archives taking place at Tate Britain in 2007.

Interviews were conducted with fourteen museum professionals. Taken together this amounts to about 10,000 words of transcribed interviews:

Austria:

1. Alex Khaelssberg, press officer at BA-CA Kunstforum
2. Claudia Schallert, a freelancer who has made a podcast for the Ethnographic Museum Schloss Kittsee
3. Inge Scholz-Strasser, director of the Freud Museum
4. Wolfgang Schreiner, press and marketing officer at the Museum of Modern Art;

Germany:

5. Christian Dirks, historian at the Jewish Museum Berlin
6. Petra Nietzky, from Ways of Wondering a multimedia company that produces cultural podcasts
7. Eva Wesemann, artistic director of Antenna Audio Germany;

UK:

8. Toby Travis, Web developer at the Victoria and Albert Museum London
9. Dave Anderson, curator and Web developer at Towneley Hall
10. Kelli Dipple, who is in charge of the webcasting at Tate Gallery
11. Jon Pratty, editor of the 24Hourmuseum;

US:

12. Peter Samis, Associate Curator of Education and Programme Manager for Interactive Educational Technologies at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and his colleague
13. Stephanie Pau;
14. Sara Bodinson, educator at the Museum of Modern Art New York.

According to standard practice in social science research, these transcripts were grouped in different types of questions that were posed to the interviewees.²³ The transcripts were segmented into chunks based on the identification of points in the dialogue where a shift of focus occurred. These chunks were subsequently

²³ Stefan Aufenanger, 'Interview' in *Qualitative Methoden der Medienforschung* ed. by Ruth Ayaß und Jörg Bergmann (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2006) pp.97-113 (p.101).

put into groups, based on the topic they addressed (such as ‘why are museums interested in making a podcast?’ or ‘who is the target audience?’).²⁴ People from different professional backgrounds were asked slightly different questions, according to their different positions in the museum or their involvement in producing the podcasts. To illustrate what this means more clearly: The interview with Eva Wesemann, artistic director of the market leader in audio programmes for exhibitions, a woman who is to a great deal involved in the conception and production of cultural podcasts and who has a deep insight into what is happening in this area, lasted much longer compared with the interview with Inge Scholz-Strasser, director of the Freud Museum. The latter has produced one very interesting podcast for the Freud Museum. But it was a one-off project and at the time when the interview was taking place, she had no intention of carrying on with making podcasts. Her ambition to use podcasting is very different to Wesemann’s, and for this reason, the interviews generated different quantities and qualities of data. According to Aufenanger, verbal data of qualitative interviews have the purpose of illustrating these different subject areas that were treated in the interviews, rather than to lay bare the process of interpretation.²⁵ In order to do so transcripts of interviews are found in the Appendix.

There are two reasons why the above-named and not others were interviewed: First, since podcasting was so new at the time of the fieldwork for this study, there were not many people that had something to say, which could help answer the research question. In this sense, the study was limited by the limited amount of people who were actually engaging in podcasting at the time of the study. Secondly, the aim of this study is to present the large spectrum of possibilities for podcasting as a medium to communicate art. Hence, the interviewees were selected on the basis that together they represent a large spectrum of very different kinds of museums, from small local authority museum (e.g. Towneley Hall), over regional museums (e.g. Ethnographic Museum Schloss Kittsee, Freud Museum) or Kunsthalle (e.g. BACA Kunstforum) and national museums (e.g. Museum für Moderne Kunst Vienna, Jewish Museum Berlin) to large

²⁴ In order to see what types of questions were asked, please see Appendix 1 with the transcripts of the interviews.

²⁵ Stefan Aufenanger.

international ‘superstar’ museums (e.g. Victoria and Albert Museum, Tate Gallery, Museum of Modern Art New York and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art). Interviewees also include a freelancer (Claudia Schallert), a small commercial company specialising in cultural podcasts (Ways of Wondering) as well as the market leader in the production of audio programmes for museums (Antenna Audio). The idea behind this was to get a broad range of different approaches to museum podcasting.

Online survey

The AEC commissioned the author to conduct a study on podcasting including interviews and an online survey.²⁶ This survey was carried out in the summer and autumn of 2006 with an online questionnaire, which consisted of twenty questions. The objects of analysis in CS 2 are people who use / do not use podcasts, particularly those of the AEC, a key international institution for digital arts and media culture. This case study investigates how people use podcasts offered at the AEC. 130 people participated in the survey. 116 of the 130 questionnaires were completed in full, and these were analysed using SPSS software.²⁷ The AEC provided 3,000 e-mail addresses of people who have subscribed to their newsletter. There are two reasons why the exact number of how many people have received the questionnaire may not be determined exactly. The questionnaire was sent to 3000 email addresses. However, there is no way of finding out how many spam filters managed to block the email with the survey. Based upon the number of failure messages received it is estimated that approx. 700 people have received the questionnaire.

The questions for the survey developed out of the context of the research question, in regards, on related surveys of podcasting²⁸ and out of a thorough

²⁶ To see the questionnaire please go to Appendix 2.

²⁷ Some returned questionnaires were dismissed on the basis that they were not completed (e.g. only one answer was completed) or when there was enough evidence that the respondent did not answer questions properly, because they were contradictory. SPSS Inc. is a leading worldwide provider of predictive analytics software and solutions. <http://www.spss.com> (11.2.2007).

²⁸ Sebastian Breßler, ‘Podcasting 2006 – Status quo und Entwicklungsperspektiven’. Manuela Neuraüter, Jaap Favier and Iris Cremers. *The European Podcast Consumer* (2.3.2006).

theoretical study of how to ask questions in a survey.²⁹ The questionnaire included 20 questions, out of which 8 had the option to either tick one of the pre-defined answers, or to choose the answer “Other” and add brief comments. The questionnaire was set up using the online service www.my3q.com. This is software, which allows the setting up of an online survey and the management of the returned questionnaires. The completed questionnaires were exported into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet file and subsequently imported into SPSS software. The data was analysed with SPSS software.

The study presented here is explorative. In line with the House of Research, which conducted one of the first major podcasting studies in Germany, it is argued here that it is too early to carry out a representative study, because podcasting is not yet established enough. The House of Research has therefore made an online survey to collect data, rather than conducted telephone interviews, for their study executed in 2006.³⁰ This seems right considering the study ‘The European Podcast consumer,’ which has found that 2% of 10,000 interviewees in five European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK) were listening to podcasts.³¹ Research conducted by the German public broadcasting stations ZDF and ARD also supports these very low usage figures. Their study of podcasting usage in Germany revealed that in the year 2006, podcasting is largely unknown to Germans. Merely 6% of people who are regularly online, have used podcasting.³²

²⁹ Stefan Aufenanger, ‘Interview’ in *Qualitative Methoden der Medienforschung* ed. by Ruth Ayaß und Jörg Bergmann (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2006). Hans Wagner, ‘Beobachtung, Interpretation, Theorie’ in *Qualitative Methoden der Medienforschung* ed. by Ruth Ayaß und Jörg Bergmann (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2006). Jörg R. Bergmann, ‘Qualitative Methoden der Medienforschung’ in *Qualitative Methoden der Medienforschung* ed. by Ruth Ayaß und Jörg Bergmann (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2006). Peter Atteslander, *Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung*. 10. neu bearbeitete und erweiterte Auflage (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003). Rainer Schnell, Paul B. Hill and Elke Esser, *Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung*. 7., völlig überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage (Munich and Vienna: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005). Bryman, Alan. *Social Research Methods*. 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³⁰ Sebastian Breßler interviewed by Deutschland Radio, 27.1.2007.

³¹ Manuela Neuraüter, Jaap Favier and Iris Cremers. *The European Podcast Consumer* (2.3.2006).

³² Ekkehardt Oehmichen and Christian Schröter, “Internet im Medienalltag: verzögerte Aneignung des Angebots. Ergebnisse der Online Nutzer Typologie in der ARD/ZDF Studie.“ *Media Perspektiven* 8/2006, p.443.

As argued by Sebastian Breßler, the key purpose of the House of Research's study was to collect some data so that one can at least find out something about these podcasters, how they use it and in what ways they subscribe to such programmes.³³ The study conducted for the Ars Electronica Center has very similar objectives, in so far as it also aims to gather data, which provide a very first insight into user behaviour, which could then in a second step lead to a more thorough study of podcasting in museums.

Why doing an online survey? Any museum which provides podcasts could count how many times their programmes were downloaded, which could give an indication of whether their podcasts are successful. Yet, there is a key methodological problem with this. Users can subscribe to dozens of podcasts and they get downloaded automatically when new content becomes available. However, what the download figures do not reveal is, whether the downloader has actually listened to the content or not. Therefore, as Charleen Li, who conducted a major podcasting survey for Forrester Research, argues, "counting podcasting downloads is a dubious way to measure usage."³⁴ Hence, the success of podcasts cannot be measured by gathering download figures alone. To assess user satisfaction and to evaluate user expectations needs and interests more data has to be generated. Consequently, as debated with representatives from the Ars Electronica Center and the University of Leicester, surveys and interviews were identified as crucial methods in order to get a greater understanding of how people use podcasting.

³³ Sebastian Breßler interviewed by Deutschland Radio, 27.1.2007.

³⁴ Charlene Li's Blog, 'Forrester podcasting report – just 1 % use podcasts', <http://blogs.forrester.com/charleneli/podcasting/index.html> (5.4.2006).

Critical Discourse Analysis³⁵

During the last decades museums have undergone many different sorts of changes. One of those changes is how they communicate with their audiences. This can be observed in many different areas of museum practice. At the bottom of it is the aim to find ways to make objects in museum collections intellectually more accessible, their displays more engaging and the entire museum experience more relevant to a broader spectrum of visitors.

Critics have often been too quick with applauding those museums, which have placed a great deal of emphasis on the use of ICTs. What can be observed is that some museums have set up chat rooms, forums, blogs etc. but this does not necessarily mean a more interactive and accessible museum experience. The power of the technology does not reside in the technology alone. ICTs should not only be a new tool, that transfers the traditional, “unassailable voice”³⁶ of the museum onto a new medium, it must equally be an agent for a different manner of *how* museums address their audience. Looking at how museums use language is therefore an important aspect, when studying new publishing and broadcasting models of museum communication. Within this context, the author aims to treat texts as elements of social events with causal effects. I.e. meaning that saying (or writing) something is equal to doing, or enacting something.

In this respect it is therefore necessary to address questions of how the language used in podcasts, reflect a number of different discourses on accessibility. Hence, making the links between language and discourse transparent. In other words, through treating texts as elements of social events, the analysis will reveal how

³⁵ In this study the term discourse is understood in terms of Fairclough’s use of the term, for whom it ‘signals the particular view of language in use as an element of social life which is closely interconnected with other elements. Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse. Textual analysis for social research*. (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.3. Another useful definition of the term that influenced its understanding in the context of this text, is provided by Gee, who argues that ‘people build identities and activities not just through language but by using language together with other ‘stuff’ that isn’t language. If you want to get recognized as a street-gang member of a certain sort you have to speak in the ‘right’ way, but you also have to act and dress in the ‘right’ way, as well.’ James Paul Gee, *An introduction to Discourse analysis Theory and Method*. 2nd Edition. (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2005), p.21.

³⁶ Peter Walsh, ‘The unassailable voice’, in *Archives and Museums Informatics* 11 (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997) pp.77-85.

meaning about something, in a certain passage of text is produced through language, and how this is related to discourses on accessibility. This approach assumes that meaning is not only made through explicit statements in texts but also implicitly through specific uses of language (e.g. using formal language vs. informal, certain ways of addressing or connecting with audiences, etc.). Although discourse analysis is not offering a set of methodologies, recipes or tools to investigate the issues named here, but it clearly offers a number of what Gee calls 'thinking devices' which provide guidance to asking those kind of questions which will help to make the issues of this research transparent.³⁷

The motivation for asking the sort of questions this study shall ask, is the belief that 'what' as well as 'how' museums communicate certain texts, have social and political consequences and effects, and that it is important to be aware of these when engaging in discussions about new models of museum communication. Key behind this is also the question of how 'new' these 'new models' of communication really are. Are we talking about 'new' paradigms of museum communication, which actually levels out existing inequalities? Or are we witnessing a continuation of 'traditional museum communication', where the museum is the knower/distributor and the audience the not-knower/receiver of knowledge produced (by the museum), yet this is neatly hidden behind the guise of 'new' technologies?

CS 3 analyses an excerpt of a podcast from the SFMOMA in order to assess the possible impact of podcasting on the relationship between museums and audiences. In order to be able to make this analysis in reference to the issues and questions raised in the paragraphs above, CDA has proved to be a very useful methodology. The details, of this analytical tool, will be explained in the following. However, before that it needs to be explained why this specific podcast was selected for examination.

During the time of this research, the SFMOMA's podcasts have received a lot of attention from professionals within the museum sector. Many museum

³⁷ James Paul Gee, *An introduction to Discourse analysis Theory and Method*. 2nd Edition. (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2005), p.9.

professionals encountered at the 2006 UK Museum and the web- and the EVA Berlin conferences, as well as people interviewed for this research, have mentioned the SFMOMA's podcasts as one of the best museum podcasts they know. Some have even said to be inspired by their programmes to such an extent that they are aiming towards achieving the "SFMOMA-kind-of-quality-podcast" for their own institution. Beyond positive feedback from colleagues in other museums, the ArtCasts, as the SFMOMA's monthly programme is known, have also received the 2006 Muse Award in Two-Way Communication (Bronze) from the American Association of Museums.³⁸

However, the overall very positive responses from the sector represented a strong contrast to the largely negative responses this research found through interviewing four people. The feedback from only four people might mean nothing at all; nevertheless, those people's reactions encouraged the author to take another, more thorough look at the content and the structure of the podcast. What the study wanted to find out was, what it is that museum people liked so much about this podcast, and secondly why the same text was so badly received by the interviewees.

The methodology used for analysing this podcast derives from Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse analysis.³⁹ It is not a straightforward application of his model, because the level of detail would be inappropriate for the specific purpose here. As stated above, one of the aims of this case study is to develop a methodology, which could be used by museum professionals to analyse similar types of podcasts. One of the issues that came out of presenting this model at the Learning Future conference was, that the methodological model would have to be simple otherwise people without a background in linguistics would not be able to adapt it for their own purposes. For this reason, only those elements of Fairclough's model, which were essential to answer the question of this case study, will be considered. That is of course not to say that those elements, which have not been considered are irrelevant.

³⁸ SFMOMA: http://www.sfmoma.org/education/edu_podcasts.html (as of 3.1.2007).

³⁹ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*. Second Edition. (Harrow, London: Pearson Education, 2001)

What it suggests, though, is that the level of detail Fairclough's model allows to go into, would make the process extremely labour intensive. This, as mentioned above would make the methodology inappropriate for museum professionals, who aim to evaluate whether their podcast reflects change or continuity in museum practice. Taking this into consideration, Fairclough's model has been used as guidance for asking questions of a text, rather than as a strict 'how to' guide. In accordance with Fairclough's model, the analysis below will be conducted in three stages. It will 'describe', 'interpret' and 'explain' the text and do this, also in accordance with what Fairclough terms as, the three levels of text.

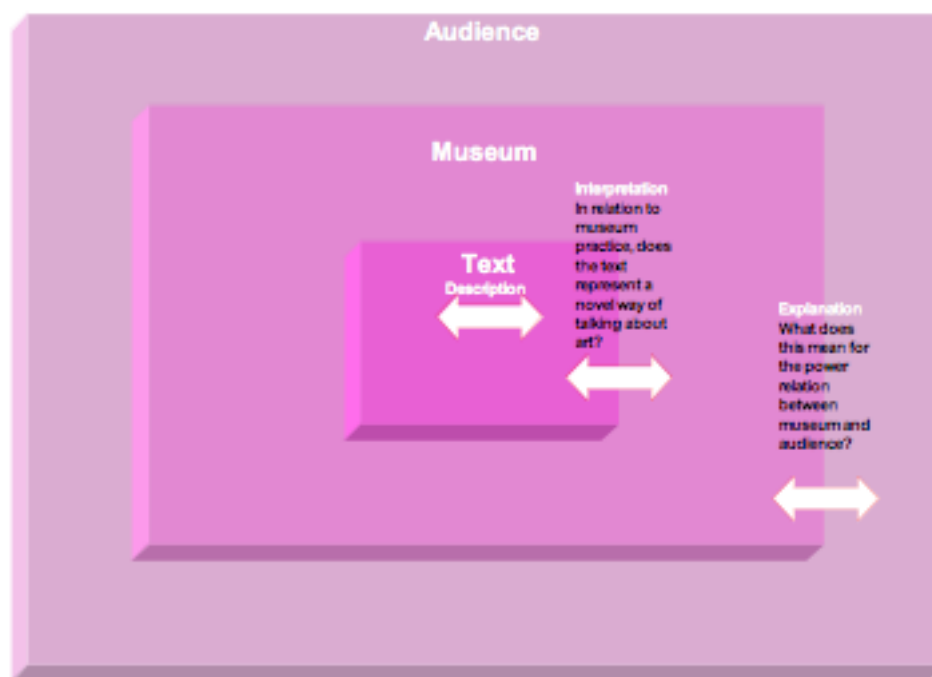


Figure 1 The three stages of analysis, as adapted from Fairclough

Description

In the first stage of analysis, the analyst is concerned with the internal structure of the text, or its formal properties, e.g.: the grammatical features and vocabulary. For the description stage, Fairclough suggests looking at three types of values of a text's vocabulary and grammatical features: experiential, expressive and relational values. Moreover, he suggests looking at what metaphors and interactional conventions are being used, how sentences are linked together, and what larger-scale structures the texts have.

The questions of the case study are a) to find out whether the excerpt quoted in section 2.1, represents change or continuity in museum practice, as regards the way the author of the text communicates with the audience and b) whether the excerpt represents change or continuity in terms of the museum audience relationship. Hence, ultimately this case study is about analysing social relationships, or their construction in and through text. The objective of the description stage, then, is to identify those properties of the text, which say something about the way the author constructs subject positions and relationships. In order to do so, the study will in addition to Fairclough also draw upon Louis Ravelli's 'Museum Texts.'⁴⁰ The reason for this is that as regards the larger strategy of analysing this podcast, Fairclough provides a very relevant analytical model. Yet, when it comes to the details, especially those which are specific to museums, then Ravelli becomes very relevant too. What this case study tries to do, therefore, is to draw from both authors in order to develop an analytical model suitable for assessing museum podcasts.

Interpretation

In the interpretation stage, the analyst is concerned with the relationship of the text to its social practice (here: museum practice). Broadly speaking, all types of texts in museums are written according to some sort of established standards or conventions. For instance, a label describing an object: the curator writing this piece of text is doing it according to a set of established standards, of how museums describe objects. Moreover, these conventions have a certain purpose as well as a target audience in mind. These standards, however, are the product of power relations in institutions as well as the power relations between the institution and the society within which they exists. It is these underlying conventions of museum practice, the conditions in which a text is produced and consumed that this section is concerned with.

At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that exhibitions, events, written or spoken texts in museums are not simply the product of the structure of the

⁴⁰ Louis J. Ravelli, *Museum Texts* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006).

museum. All these expressions are mediated by different kinds of social agents, be it a curator, an educator or a security guard. Therefore, the analysis in the interpretation stage is always oscillating between the relationship of the text and social practice as well as its relationship with its social agent, who actually articulates the text. But how can one analyse how people produce and interpret certain pieces of text? It is, of course, impossible to gain access to people's heads. Fairclough says that what the analyst can gain access to is people's cognitive processes. Hence, it is the cognitive processes of producing and consuming texts that the interpretation stage is concerned with; and Fairclough provides a set of questions that can be asked of a text to analyse how producers and interpreters arrive at establishing the situational and the intertextual contexts.

Drawing upon them, the interpretation stage will reveal how the text is part of webs of other texts. The objective of the interpretation stage is therefore not the identification of 'the hidden meaning' of the text, or the authors 'true' intentions. Rather, what the interpretation is aiming at is to find out how a specific situational context shapes the text itself. This process will uncover, for instance, the assumptions on which the text is based; that is, assumptions made by the speaker who the audience is, and how it might best be addressed. This in turn will reveal something about the relationship of the text to museum practice, and this will ultimately answer the question of this section, namely, whether the text represents continuity or change in traditional museum practice.

Explanation

The objective of the interpretation stage was to analyse the text in relation to museum practice. Or in other words, to analyse the traces of other discourses that are found in the text. "The objective of the stage of explanation," in Fairclough's terms "is to portray a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them."⁴¹

⁴¹ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, p.135.

The stage of explanation, as regards the case study, means to see discourse as part of the practice of re-negotiating the relations of power between museum and audience. Fairclough argues that “explanation is a matter of seeing a discourse as part of processes of social struggle, within a matrix of relations of power.” He further explains that one “can think of explanation as having two dimensions, depending on whether the emphasis is upon process or structure – upon processes of struggle or upon relations of power.”⁴² Moreover, the explanation stage “can show what power relationships determine discourses; these relationships are themselves the outcome of struggles, and are established (and, ideally, naturalized) by those with power. This puts the emphasis on the social determination of discourse, and on the past – on results of past struggles.”⁴³

As regards the case study, the focus of analysis is on the institutional processes, which the podcast belongs to, which can be located as within the context of museums’ struggles for audiences’ support. More specifically it’s a curator’s struggle to convince an audience to come and see the show he has set up. As will be shown in Section 3 the curator articulates a relationship of solidarity as well as of authority with his audience. Seen from this perspective the explanation stage will reveal how the podcast has an impact on social relationships, between the institution, which he represents and the audience he talks to. More details of the procedure will be explained as the text unfolds.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.136.

Projected outcomes

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 aim to make issues of intellectual access of online museum collections explicit. Based on this it filters out the key questions which arise in the context of the main research question, namely, how new broadcasting models of publication may help museum to move beyond the Illusion of Access. These opening chapters propose that there is a great potential to use online media as means to make art more accessible, but it also argues that whether this may be achieved is entirely a question of how the technology is being used. Rather than summing up with a set of theories, the theoretical part of the thesis concludes with three research questions to be addressed in the second part: (1) Can podcasting make art more accessible and foster an empowered audience? (2) How are people using podcasts, and what type of programmes would they be interested in receiving from museums? (3) What is the real impact of podcasting on the relationship of museums and their audiences?

The second part of the thesis subjects the analysis made in Part 1 to empirical study. It researches the potential of podcasting in museums in order to investigate the possibility of this technology to make art more accessible. One of the main outcomes of this second part is a typology of museum podcasts. This overview of different types of podcasts gives an insight into the many different uses of this medium within the context of museums. Secondly, the study on user-behaviour will provide data on how people are using podcasts and what kind of programmes they might expect to get from museums. Finally, the outcome of the third case study is an analytical tool, with which one can assess the possible impact of podcasting on the relationship between museums and their audiences.

Drawing all loose threads together, the study will conclude by answering the question: Why should museums podcast and what are the success factors? Taken together the data generated in this thesis brings into focus the real opportunities of podcasting in museums, as a suitable medium for making art a more engaging, participatory and accessible experience.

CHAPTER 1

Has the Web made art more accessible?

1.1 Introduction

Digitizing collections has been a concern of many museums around the world, since the mid 1990s.⁴⁴ Some of the databases, which were the products of digitisation projects, are freely accessible to the public online, some with restrictions, some not at all. This chapter aims to set out an important frame of reference for digitisation activity in museums in Austria, Germany and the UK. More importantly, though, the objective of this chapter is to analyse the question whether online connectivity leads to enhanced accessibility of culture. Therefore, rather than writing a comprehensive overview of all major digitisation projects in the countries named above, and rather than focusing the discussion on a comparison of which country's museums have got more content online than others, the following very brief review of museum websites is more interested in the question, whether extensive digital content really does provide higher levels

⁴⁴ In the UK, the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) funded over 150 Web resources for cultural collections in the UK. They are listed on <http://www.enrichuk.org>. A list of digitisation projects in Austria can be found on <http://www.digital-heritage.at> and for Germany on <http://www.kulturerbe-digital.de>. On a European level, MICHAEL is a multi-national project, funded by the European Commissions eTen programme, developing a portal, which aims at the integration and alignment of many national initiatives in the digital cultural heritage sector. <http://www.michael-culture.org>. The Digital Libraries Initiative is a flagship project of the European commission, which aims at giving online access to cultural collections (libraries, archives and museums) from all EU member states http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/digital_libraries/index_en.htm. In the US, the Art Museum Image Consortium (AMICO, from 1997-2005) – an organization of cultural institutions in America – which collaborated so as to enable educational use of museum multimedia, was one of the very early and key promoters of digitisation projects www.amico.org. The National Library of Australia lists more than fifty digitisation projects of memory institutions; among them are also some of Australia's key museums such as the National Gallery of New South Wales, National Gallery of Australia and that of Victoria. <http://www.nla.gov.au/libraries/digitisation/projects.html>. The National Digital Archives Programme is an example of a key digitisation project in Asia <http://www.ndap.org.tw>. (all Websites in this footnote: as of 10.1.2008).

of access to culture. To answer it twenty-nine museum websites were selected for examination.

Large national and international ‘superstar’ museums:

Website reviewed	Museum / Organisation	Country
www.albertina.at	Albertina	Austria
	Belvedere	Austria
www.khm.at	Kunsthistorisches Museum	Austria
www.mak.at	Museum für Angewandte Kunst	Austria
	National Gallery London	UK
www.pinakothek.de/pinakothek-der-moderne	Pinakothek der Moderne	Germany
www.makingthemodernworld.org.uk	Science Museum	UK
www.nationalgallery.org.uk	Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden	Germany
www.smb.spk-berlin.de	Staatliche Museen Berlin	Germany
www.tate.org.uk	Tate Gallery	UK
www.vam.ac.uk	Victoria and Albert Museum	UK

Smaller museums:

Website reviewed	Museum / Organisation	Country
www.azw.at	Architekturzentrum	Austria
http://www.culture.gouv.fr	Kunsthau Bregenz	Austria
www.kunstmuseum-wolfsburg.de	Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg	Austria
www.leopoldmuseum.org	Leopold Museum	Austria
www.liechtensteinmuseum.at	Liechtenstein Museum	Austria
	MuMOK	Austria
www.museumfuerangewandtekunst.frankfurt.de	Museum für Angewandte Kunst Frankfurt	Germany
www.mkg-hamburg.de	Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg	Germany
www.mmk-frankfurt.de	Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt	Germany
www.royalacademy.org.uk	Royal Academy	UK
www.museumdermoderne.at/	Rupertinum	Austria
http://sammlung-essl.at	Sammlung Essl	Austria
www.sprengel-museum.de	Sprengel Museum	Germany

Other digitisation projects of museums:

Website	Project / Museum	Country
www.mediathek.at	Austrian Mediathek (Technisches Museum)	Austria
www.cornucopia.org.uk	Cornucopia	UK
www.digital-heritage.at	Digital Heritage in Austria	Austria
www.culture.gouv.fr	La Joconde (Musée des France)	France
www.nationalgallery.org.uk	National Inventory of European Painting 1200 – 1900 (National Gallery London)	UK

The websites reviewed in the following were selected on the basis that altogether they should represent anything from large public institutions to small private or local authority museums in Austria, Germany and the UK. The body of websites should include those which show a long history of an engagement in digital technologies as well as those who have only got involved in this area more recently. The websites reviewed are largely art museums, however, if a point can only be made through looking at a different type of museum then that should not be excluded. The *Making the modern world* website is a good example for that. It is not an art museum, but it exemplifies best the idea of the story-driven museum website. That's why it was selected as an example, even though the focus of this study is art museums.

Through answering the question of this chapter, the research aims to contribute to the debate about the purpose, meaning and significance of online museums. It is particularly interested in raising the question whether an engaging and accessible experience of museums is related to the quantity of digital objects presented online. It seems obvious that if a museum does not have much online content, it cannot offer very much to its audience; but what if one has rich digital content collections? Does this ensure an engaging and accessible experience of culture? Through answering these questions, this chapter aims to develop the first key idea that sit at the very basis of this thesis, namely that making culture accessible through online media is not so much a question of quantity but one of the quality of content and communication styles.

1.2 Digital access to objects in museums

In the UK the New Opportunities Fund supported the Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery to digitise the collection and to make it accessible via the Art and Architecture website.⁴⁵ It includes the complete collection of 7,000 works, among them drawings, paintings, prints, and photographs. The National Gallery in London has an online digital catalogue covering their permanent collection as well as long-term loans.⁴⁶ Moreover, the National Gallery is undertaking a collaborative project with Glasgow University, Birkbeck College, the University of London, and museum professionals throughout the country. This project - The National Inventory of European Painting 1200 – 1900 - aims towards the digitisation of a consistent and up-to-date survey of European paintings from 1200 – 1900 in public ownership in the UK. Eventually these records will be accessible through an online database.⁴⁷

The Royal Academy (RA) worked on digitizing their entire collection; a preliminary version of this database was online already in 2005, and in addition to the database, the RA is preparing learning packages around the subjects of the collection.⁴⁸ The collection of the Tate Gallery comprises more than 65,000 works of which over 30,000 belong to the Turner bequest. All of it is accessible through their online database, with most entries having an illustration. Although this is still far from having the entire collection online, the Victoria and Albert Museum's (V&A) web-based catalogue of works includes more than 20,000 object entries. With their extensive metadata, images, sound and video files, the V&A's and the Tate's online collections are probably two of the most extensive online art collections in the UK. Taken together the museums named either have already or are in the process of providing online access to hundreds of thousands of works in their care.

⁴⁵ Courtauld Institute of Art London <http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/collections/online.html>; Art and Architecture <http://www.artandarchitecture.org.uk/> (as of 22.4.2005).

⁴⁶ National Gallery London <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/collection/default.htm> (as of 22.4.2005).

⁴⁷ National Gallery London <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/collection/inventory.htm> (as of 28.4.2005).

⁴⁸ The Royal Academy London <http://www.royalacademy.org.uk/?lid=29> (as of 22.3.2008).

It needs to be pointed out, though, that in addition to these individual databases for museums, there are projects, which aim to network the collections of different institutions and join them together in one database in order to ensure a single access point to the collections. Cornucopia is an example of such a project.⁴⁹ It is a database of collections held in cultural heritage institutions, which initially was developed in response to the 1997 DCMS report *Treasures in Trust*. The aim of Cornucopia is to provide access via the Internet to information about the richness and diversity of the collections in cultural heritage institutions. The database was initially piloted in 1999 using information from the 50 designated museum collections. This pilot study was evaluated, and then developed into a fully searchable online database.

The information held in Cornucopia is derived from several sources, including the Digest of Museum Statistics (DOMUS) maintained by the former Museums & Galleries Commission, the MLA Registration database, and information from mapping projects conducted in collaboration with the MLA Regional Agencies. The database now holds detailed information about some 6000 collections in almost 2000 institutions.⁵⁰

Other than the database model of a website, another paradigm of a museum website has emerged. This is the museum website, which is much more story-driven. *Making the Modern World* of the Science Museum in London is a site which illustrates this point. In an abstract explaining the site, it says: “*Making the Modern World* brings you powerful stories about science and invention from the eighteenth century to today. It explains the development and the global spread of modern industrial society and its effects on all our lives. The site expands upon the permanent landmark gallery at the Science Museum, using the Web and dynamic multimedia techniques to go far beyond what a static exhibition can do.”⁵¹ This text shows how a museum website aims to really move beyond the mere publication of collection information. But in what way does this website

⁴⁹ Cornucopia <http://www.cornucopia.org.uk/> (as of 24.11.2006).

⁵⁰ Cornucopia [http://www.mla.gov.uk/webdav/harmonise?Page/@id=73&Document/@id=18407&Section\[@stateId_eq_left_hand_root\]/@id=4332](http://www.mla.gov.uk/webdav/harmonise?Page/@id=73&Document/@id=18407&Section[@stateId_eq_left_hand_root]/@id=4332) (as of 24.11.2006).

⁵¹ *Making the Modern World* <http://www.making-the-modern-world.org/about/> (as of 24.11.2006).

hold its promise? In what way can we really see a move away from the database model in presenting museum collections online?

As one can see on Figure 3 below, visitors can find a search engine if they want to search for a specific object.

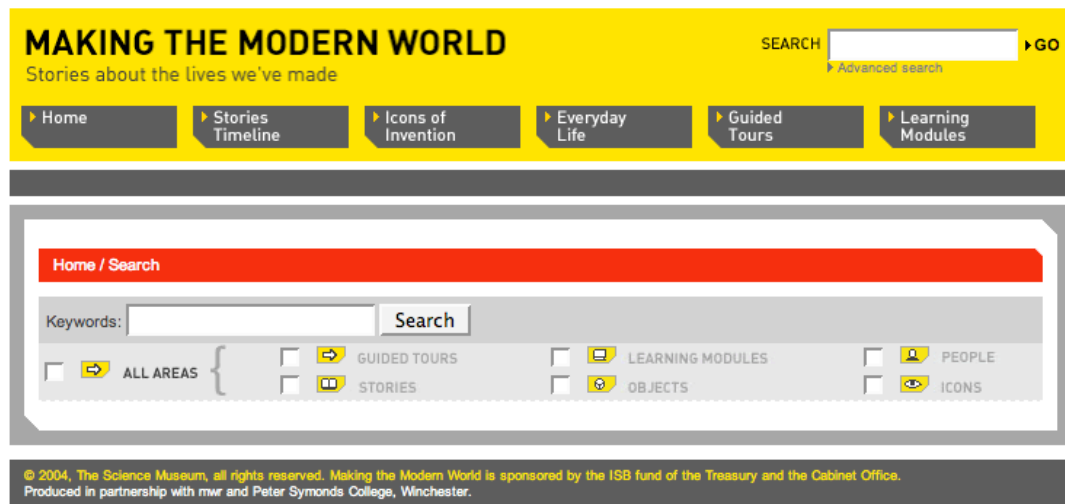


Figure 2 Searching the Making the Modern World website⁵²

More importantly, though, users can work their way through a timeline, subject groups, guided tours or learning modules, as illustrated in Figure 4. Guided Tours, for instance, “offers the chance to follow stories and paths linked across time. For example, they trace the part played by women in science and technology and the role of specific technologies as tools for the employment and integration of successive immigrant communities.”⁵³



Figure 3 Screenshot of Making the Modern World website⁵⁴

⁵² Making the Modern World: <http://www.makingthemodernworld.org.uk/search/> (as of 3.11.2007).

⁵³ Making the Modern World: http://www.makingthemodernworld.org.uk/guided_tours/ (as of 3.11.2007).

⁵⁴ Making the Modern World: <http://www.makingthemodernworld.org.uk/> (as of 3.11.2007).

The data collected for this research revealed that there were none of the flagship art museums in Austria or Germany, which could compete with any of the digitisation initiatives taken in the UK. The Albertina, which houses the largest collection of graphic arts worldwide, offers on its website – besides the usual information on exhibitions past, present and forthcoming, public programmes, opening hours, the history of the museum – only a brief description of their collection rather than a searchable database.⁵⁵ Similar situations are found at many other (private or public, large or small) museums and art galleries in Austria, among them for example the Architekturzentrum Wien⁵⁶, Kunsthaus Bregenz,⁵⁷ Rupertinum,⁵⁸ Liechtenstein Museum⁵⁹ and the Sammlung Essl.⁶⁰

The Leopold Museum has a very limited database where one can browse through the artists represented in the collection. The catalogue entries, though only offer minimal description of the works and in most cases there are no images of the works.⁶¹ The Museum für Angewandte Kunst (MAK) has a database, yet it is more of a general database of Austrian designers and includes objects that are not in the museum's collection. What is frustrating about this is that very often one sees an object, yet there are no indications as to where one could see this work. The Museum of Modern Art (MUMOK) does not have a database, but offers a slideshow through the works of the collection that are currently on exhibit as well as a selection of key works from the collection not on display.⁶²

The 'Digital Heritage in Austria' website lists the key digitisation initiatives undertaken in Austria. As of November 2006, 51 projects are listed.⁶³ "The majority of the projects registered under the Austrian Initiative for Digital Cultural Heritage makes their content available online. The digitised contents of

⁵⁵ Albertina Vienna http://www.albertina.at/cms/front_content.php?idcat=8 (as of 29.4.2005).

⁵⁶ Architektur Zentrum Vienna http://www.azw.at/page.php?node_id=6 (as of 29.4.2005).

⁵⁷ Kunsthaus Bregenz <http://www.kunsthaus-bregenz.at/html/welcome00.htm> (30.4.2005).

⁵⁸ Museum der Moderne Salzburg <http://www.museumdermoderne.at/> (as of 30.4.2005).

⁵⁹ Liechtenstein Museum Vienna <http://www.liechtensteinmuseum.at/> (as of 30.4.2005).

⁶⁰ Sammlung Essel Klosterneuburg <http://sammlung-essl.at/> (as of 30.4.2005).

⁶¹ Leopold Museum Vienna <http://www.leopoldmuseum.org/html/provaktuell.php> (as of 29.4.2005).

⁶² Museum für Moderne Kunst Vienna <http://www.mumok.at/index.php?cid=145> (as of 30.4.2005).

⁶³ Digital Heritage in Austria <http://www.digital-heritage.at/digitisation/list.php?id=all> (as of 24.11.2006).

30 projects are available either through searchable databases, through various different indexes, or simply by browsing available contents. However, a considerable number of projects (11) is not available online, but can only be used on site and under certain restrictions (for example, use is by appointment only, or restricted to certain user groups).⁶⁴

The Kunsthistorisches Museum (KHM), the museum of fine arts and the former Austrian royal collection claims to have 2,000 objects online while they have 800 works on display in the physical galleries. As of 2005 this museum's collection is not presented in a searchable database but one can browse through a selection of the collection either by period or artists name. However, the KHM announced that it is currently digitizing their entire collection within the eCulture⁶⁵ section of the eFit Austria initiative and that they are in the process of setting up a virtual museum of approximately 38,000 objects.⁶⁶ Within the eFit Austria initiative, two other national museums in Austria are digitizing their stock. The Albertina⁶⁷ aims to digitize its entire collection of architecture and photography and the key areas of the graphic art collection and the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere⁶⁸ is on the way to digitize its core collections.

The Austrian Mediathek⁶⁹ is one of the few museums which has published an online collection database. However, out of the 10,000 digitized audio recordings only a selection of 250 clips is online. The Mediathek would indeed be interested in opening up the archive to the global community. Yet, the reason "why (they) cannot do this, is that the copyright situation does not allow that."⁷⁰ The

⁶⁴ Andrea Mulrenin on behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture. Coordinating digitisation in Europe. Progress Report of the National Representatives Group: coordination mechanisms for digitisation policies and programmes 2005 <http://www.minervaeurope.org/publications/globalreport/globalrep2005.htm> (as of 24.11.2006).

⁶⁵ eCulture intends to explore, preserve and access Austria's cultural and scientific heritage with modern information technologies http://www.efit.at/english/titel.asp?Scope_of_eFit_Austria (as of 30.4.2005).

⁶⁶ Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna <http://www.khm.at/home2068.html> (as of 30.4.2005); http://www.efit.at/eculture/projekt.asp?Projektname=Kunsthistorisches_Museum_Wien (as of 30.4.2005).

⁶⁷ eFit Austria <http://www.efit.at/eculture/projekt.asp?Projektname=Albertina> (as of 30.4.2005).

⁶⁸ eFit Austria http://www.efit.at/eculture/projekt.asp?Projektname=Oesterreichische_Galerie_Belvedere (as of 30.4.2005).

⁶⁹ Austrian Mediathek <http://www.mediathek.at> (30.7.2006).

⁷⁰ Robert Pfundner in interview with author, July 2006.

Mediathek further explained that “as seen from the perspective of the user, it is looking as if the situation is going to get worse. One can observe that older documents, which should normally be soon freed of copyright are somehow getting protected again.”⁷¹

Moreover, these extensions of copyrights are supported by the European Union. This is good news for the owners of the rights. “However, if you are engaged in the communication of culture, and if you try to use sources in a pedagogical context, to cover a certain thematic area, then copyrights are making things very difficult or even impossible.” That is even if one is using the sources for non-commercial purposes. “As a public research institution we have to deal with rights very carefully.”⁷²

On German museum websites, one can find almost just as many content-poor websites as in Austria. Among the large number of key museums which do not have searchable databases are the Pinakothek der Moderne,⁷³ the Sprengel Museum,⁷⁴ Museum fuer Angewandte Kunst Frankfurt am Main,⁷⁵ Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg,⁷⁶ Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg,⁷⁷ Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden,⁷⁸ Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt⁷⁹ and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.⁸⁰

Most of these museum websites have a selection of works on their site, often with images and standard catalogue descriptions as well as an introductory text describing the nature, history and policy of the collection. The Staatliche Museen Kassel are one of the few museums which have an online searchable database of

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Pinakothek der Moderne Munich <http://www.pinakothek.de/pinakothek-der-moderne/> (30.4.2005).

⁷⁴ Sprengel Museum Hannover <http://www.sprengel-museum.de/v1/deutsch/smhframes.html> (30.4.2005).

⁷⁵ Museum für Angewandte Kunst Frankfurt http://www.museumfuerangewandtekunst.frankfurt.de/index_2.html (as of 30.4.2005).

⁷⁶ Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg <http://www.mkg-hamburg.de/> (as of 30.4.2005).

⁷⁷ Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg <http://www.kunstmuseum-wolfsburg.de/home.php> (as of 30.4.2005).

⁷⁸ Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden <http://www.skd-dresden.de/de/museen.html> (as of 30.4.2005).

⁷⁹ Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt <http://www.mmk-frankfurt.de/> (as of 30.4.2005).

⁸⁰ Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz <http://www.smb.spk-berlin.de/> (as of 30.4.2005).

their collection, yet it only covers their holdings of architectural drawings from the seventeenth to the twentieth century and not all the various collections of the various state museums of Kassel.⁸¹

To put these digitisation efforts into a perspective, it is probably useful to briefly mention the “Catalogue des collections des musées de France (Base Joconde).” None of the European countries has a digitisation project as grand and extensive as this one which is currently certainly the most comprehensive one as regards collections of the arts.⁸² It covers documents from the fine arts, decorative arts, and archaeology, ethnology, history and science collections of France’s National museums.⁸³

Base Joconde was created by the ‘Direction des musées de France’ (Ministère de la Culture) in collaboration with the ‘Musées de France’ and as of 2006 included records of 194,250 objects. 52,000 of these are documented with an image. In order to discover the richness of the collections *Base Joconde* offers browsing as well as searching facilities.⁸⁴ Although the entire stock of France’s national collection is much larger than what is on the database, this digitisation project certainly makes the trend explicit, the trend towards the centralisation of information on museum records, and the willingness to make this information accessible free of charge for everyone to see on the Web. This is certainly a step towards making the rich collections of museums more accessible for the public

⁸¹ Staatliche Museen Kassel <http://212.202.106.6/dfg/museumkassel/home.jsp> (as of 30.4.2005).

⁸² Other online museum databases of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication include the Musées Nationaux Récupération (MNR), which documents approximately 2,000 works of art that have been repatriated from Germany after the Second World War. The ‘Catalogue collectif des bibliothèques des musées nationaux’ brings together bibliographic references of the twenty-three libraries of national museums in France, where 212,800 references are documented. The ‘Centre de Documentation de la direction des musées de France’ is a second database for bibliographic references, though it focuses on museological subjects such as museology, museography, collections, administration, conservation and restoration, as well as legal and general professional issues relating to museums and cultural policy. Museofile is another database of museum’s collections which allows the user to search for works of art either by town, Department, name of museum, themes or names and it will list all the museum collection in France where the particular search name has come up. It will list all the details of the individual institutions where the works can be seen plus a link to the Joconde database.

⁸³ Joconde. Catalogue des collections des musées de France <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/apropos/preface.htm> (as of 22.4.2005).

⁸⁴ Joconde. Catalogue des collections des musées de France <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/decouvrir/nouveaute2005.htm> (as of 22.4.2005).

for enjoyment and learning. But the question remains whether such databases or indeed any of the museum websites named above – regardless of the richness of content– allow users to engage with that content in a way that is meaningful to them. *Base Joconde* is a good example to illustrate this question further.

Base Joconde has no facility where one could engage with the rich digital material. If one would want to do anything beyond looking at the works in the database, one would have to download the images and reload them in a different programme. Therefore teachers, for instance, could not use the collection in teaching if they do not have the skills (and the time) to create their own educational material. Moreover, there is no guidance and no encouragement to use the rich content offered on this site. Also, the site seems to be addressing the general public rather than any specific target group. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, the modular structure of digital media on the Web allows using and reusing the same material in various forms. From here it follows that content can be tailored specifically for different target groups, i.e. children, students, teachers, ethnic groups, a factor that does not appear to have been considered at all when developing the *Base Joconde*.

Despite all of this, the strength of the French Ministry's portal is that it collects a group of databases and draws together a great wealth of digital cultural content from diverse disciplines and sources. *Base Joconde* assembles the databases of several French museums and in addition the other digital cultural content databases on the French ministry's website allow the exploration of related digital content. Even if these databases are not interconnected, they bring together in a small number of databases almost the entire digital cultural content of national museums in France, and therefore offer the user a very streamlined and clear overview of this digital cultural material. As said above, this indeed makes cultural content accessible on a scale not seen before.

Nevertheless *Base Joconde* is an example of a database, which does not go beyond traditional ways of documenting, presenting and interpreting museum objects. Without wanting to undermine in any way the importance of such databases, or indeed of any other effort to digitize collections as mentioned

above, this discussion has aimed to show that realising truly accessible online museums not only means to digitize objects and upload them to the Web, but rather (and this will become even more explicit as the thesis unfolds) accessibility to culture is also about enhancing intellectual access. As the discussion of the websites above has shown, databases such as *Base Joconde* are certainly of great use for an art history student or any other researcher in related disciplines, because this specific type of user either knows the key words they need to type in, in order to find what they are looking for, or, because they roughly know what to expect when browsing through the historical periods, styles etc. However, for someone without this knowledge and education the situation is very different. The lack of a critical and/or historical context or indeed any form of curation or guidance as to what one could do with all of these digital objects is what fundamentally differentiates *Base Joconde* from those kinds of websites, such as Ingenious or Making the Modern World, which offer a much more engaging experience based upon a narrative rather than a collection of objects and their technical descriptions.

1.3 The Illusion of Access

This part of the thesis aims to show that even if there are museums which have produced great projects, in a sense that they really do improve accessibility to culture, there are many others, which seem to eagerly upload digital files, without making clear how a meaningful interaction with that content is possible. Or, to put it in the words of Jennifer Trant,

“museums have focused a great deal of attention on standards for collecting information, and documenting collections, without thinking about how to best distribute it, and how to make it relevant to those who use it.”⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Jennifer Trant, ‘When all you’ve got is ‘the real thing’: Museums and Authenticity in a networked world’ *Archives and Museum Informatics* 12,1 (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998) pp.107-125, (p.121).

Correspondingly, Roberta Buiani posits that those pages on museums' websites which are devoted to collections are "equivalent of an assemblage of data, which show no evidence of their common provenance from a certain collection or as a works peculiar to a particular museum." She argues that whilst museums' homepages often "tend to recreate its original atmosphere by means of graphical and visual devices, in the page dedicated to its collections the environment disappears." Moreover, she maintains that

"It's as if a sort of neutral space were established, where any kind of work could be displayed, without having to worry about the strategies that would be used in a real museum environment (light, the position as related as the other works etc.)."⁸⁶

This is exactly the focus of this thesis, namely that providing access to art via online media is not so much a question of quantity but one of quality. Moreover, this thesis is based on the belief that online media in general, and (as will become much clearer in Chapter 4) new broadcasting models of publication in particular, should be drivers for the production of new types of content rather than as a mere channels of distributing existing content. This argument is also in line with the claim of the Natural History Museum in London which says that

"for the museum sector as a whole, the focus should not be about simply digitising existing content, but about using the new media to create new types of content. The new media will then become a way for British museums to continue evolving and to remain world-leading institutions."⁸⁷

Gerfried Stocker, director of the Ars Electronica Center in Linz argues along similar lines when he says that "in any case, it is clear that communities do not

⁸⁶ Roberta Buiani, 'Virtual Museums and the Web: a dilemma of incompatibility?' Paper presented at a Graduate Symposium University of California (Irvine: 10-12.4.2003). <http://www.humanities.uci.edu/visualstudies/everyday/papers/Buiani.pdf> (as of 12.4.2007).

⁸⁷ Natural History Museum London in *Understanding the Future: Museums and the 21st Century – Responses to Consultation* http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Publications/archive_2005/understanding_museums_21century_responses.htm (as of 26.11.2006).

simply develop through offering them networks.” Commissioned by the city of Linz, the Ars Electronica Futurelab launched the Wikimap Linz.⁸⁸ This is an interactive map of the city, where anyone can upload images, text, sound and video files. Hence this project offers the opportunity for anyone to participate, provided that one is familiar with the technology.

“However, for the success of the development and sustainability of this online community, it is crucial that the museum actively participates through moderating content. Ultimately, it is in the museum’s interest to exploit the opportunities that come with new media technologies, to pursue the museum’s mission as an educational institution.”⁸⁹

It is here, where the traditional role of the museum as moderator between experts and broad audiences becomes really important. Also similar is the experience of the National Museums of Science and Industry. The NMSI has, together with ChannelFour and Culture Online, developed an online project called ‘Origination.’ “The project seeks contributions from members of the public about immigration (whether they are immigrants or existing residents), by asking them to create Web pages about their experiences.” To illustrate their experiences, users were invited to use images from the NMSI’s collections as well as their own objects. One of the things the NMSI found was that

“people are often nervous about coming forward, and that [the NMSI] cannot expect the use of new technology in itself to attract socially excluded audiences. Instead, [they] have used links and networks with communities to approach people proactively, and have provided workshops so that ordinary members of the public can feel confident about using the new technologies to make their contribution.”⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Wikimap Linz <http://wikimap.hotspotlinz.at> (3.12.2006).

⁸⁹ Gerfried Stocker in interview with author, January 2006.

⁹⁰ National Museum of Science and Industry in *Understanding the Future*.

What the above discussions suggest is that many museums have not yet found good solutions of how to make digital cultural content relevant to peoples' lives and that digital objects are often not appropriately contextualised. Moreover, the literature reviewed and the interview conducted with Gerfried Stocker proposed that museums should play an active role in moderating and interpreting culture online. It is through this active involvement that museums may realise their role as educational institution.

1.4 Conclusion: Does the Web make art more accessible?

The discussions of this chapter have attempted to show that even if Austria and Germany are well behind the UK, for instance, in terms of digitizing their museums' collections and in providing digital access to them, there are many digitisation projects under way which reflect the awareness of the importance of digital media as tool to enhance access to art. Through looking at *Base Joconde*, a French website which is very rich in digital content, it was aimed to highlight that the database model of a website does not necessarily make art more accessible. Having seen how much digital content *La Joconde* offers, and how little interactivity is exploited on this site, one can conclude that large digital cultural content websites do not necessarily make the cultural experience more engaging, participatory and intellectually accessible.

What emerges from this sort of discussion, therefore, is that museum websites which are modelled around a database, even if they are great for expert users, do not reflect the many developments that museums have gone through over the last thirty years, which aimed at making the museum more engaging, immediate and relevant to mass audiences. In comparison with museums' efforts to make the onsite experience more accessible for audiences, online presences of museums such as the examples named above, most often lack the necessary type of contextualisation, interpretation and pedagogic framework. Therefore, they often are little more than static repositories of digital files.

Online museums are not only about providing extensive digital content, but also about how one approaches the audience, how the museum presents itself in the virtual world. Of course, giving people free access to collections is a step into the right direction of making art accessible, but the user-driven, engaging, participatory and accessible museum is not guaranteed by the provision of rich cultural content databases.

In other words: connectivity to the Web does not necessarily lead to increased levels of accessibility of art. Rather, what one can observe is that even if there are many exceptions, there are also a great number of online museums which have an extensive amount of digital content, yet what is being produced is an *illusion of access*.

Looking at the examples mentioned above, one can argue that there is no doubt that every day more information from and about museums, archives and libraries is uploaded to the World Wide Web. Yet, even if some museums recognise “that new technology is not an answer in itself to extending access,”⁹¹ there are a substantial number of examples of museum websites whose massive amount of digitized cultural content produces an *illusion of access*; and it is this illusion that is a central theme of this research.

⁹¹ In *Understanding the Future: Museums and the 21st Century – Responses to Consultation*, the Natural History Museum London, for example, argues that ‘Projects to provide electronic access should be tailored to the needs of the user and provide a ‘whole system’ approach.’ In response to the same consultation MDA argues that it ‘believes that it is essential for the application of ICT by museums to be user-driven rather than technology-driven. In recent years, we have seen a significant number of pilot projects to evaluate new or emergent technologies. We believe that it is time to take the lessons learned through this process and apply them to the creation of stable and sustainable services that are based on established technologies and standards.’

CHAPTER 2

Authenticity and Originality in the Media Age

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 concluded that connectivity potentially supports enhanced accessibility, but it is not enough just by itself. It argued that true accessibility to art is not about putting millions of digital files on the Web; rather it is about focusing on the quality of the online experience. The key objective of this chapter is to expand upon these ideas through looking at two concepts that are at the very heart of the museum experience: authenticity and originality.

Arguing that accessibility of art is linked to quality rather than to quantity requires elucidation of what is meant with *quality*. Are we talking about quality, in terms of the significance of a work of art, or the quality of its online presentation, regardless of the work's meaning and importance? We are talking about the latter. But, as will be argued in the following, we must not forget about the former either. Moreover, Chapter 1 argued that museum websites often tend to lack substantial contextualization, that new broadcasting models of publication should trigger new type of content, rather than merely serve as distribution channels and that the museum should play an active role in moderating content. Drawing upon a literature review as well as on examples from museums online, this chapter takes these conclusions further with additional theory and examples. It thus aims to explore the question of what it takes to provide meaningful, evocative and engaging experiences of art through the medium of the Web.

Hence, this chapter first investigates what an authentic experience of art means in the Media Age. Taking a historical perspective, this section illustrates that what it

takes to have an authentic experience of art, is subject to historical and cultural change. Secondly, this chapter addresses the question of what an original art object is and whether the Web threatens the primacy of original art.

If a science museum exhibits an original dinosaur's tooth or a reproduction thereof, is not such a big deal. The key question is, whether the object manages to bring the intended message across. It is not a question whether or not the tooth has actually come from a dinosaur's mouth. Hence, it is not a question of originality. If one is dealing with art museums the situation is different in so far, as the identity of art museums is based upon the idea that what they exhibit is original and unique. The experience of art in museums is authentic only, if the art one sees there is original.

In the Digital Age the problem arises that the digital original is not different, not even distinguishable from the digital original. Moreover, never mind whether the artwork exists in digital form only or not, the way artists produce, museums present and audiences consume art has changed over time. For this reason, the thesis argues, the perception of what is original and what is authentic is subject to historical change. In order to move away from a discourse of anxiety and threat and in order to get a deep understanding of the opportunities of new broadcasting models of publications in art museums, it is therefore necessary to consider carefully, those issues of authenticity and originality, notions on which the identity of art museums is based.

A key idea upon which this thesis rests, is that the fact that all kinds of museum objects – whether a piece executed in the most traditional media, or a work of digital art – can be presented on the Web, has changed the 'function' or the work's 'purpose' in the museum. A painting presented online, for instance, can develop new roles in addition to its traditional role of providing an experience for an onsite audience. It can become an element in an online game just as it can become the subject of an audio or video programme delivered, for example, as podcast and as such, it may provide an authentic experience of original content. Through looking at examples of digital art, and through applying the ideas of Quatremère de Quincy, Ruskin, Keene and others, it is argued that in the Digital

Age an authentic museum experience is becoming disengaged or independent of the experience of three-dimensional objects and may well be provided through online media.⁹²

2.2 Art and authenticity

In the early days of the Web and with the emergence of digital technology for art production and distribution it was often believed that web-based art was able to circumvent or even break up the triangle of the artist studio, the commercial gallery and the museum. It was often believed that alternative and non-hierarchical spaces would develop on the Web, where artists could produce and show their works without the burden of engaging with dealers and curators.

For the artist Vuk Cosic, for instance, the World Wide Web meant that artists finally “had a system where [they] were absolutely not dependent on the state, curators...”⁹³ Today, however, opinions are split about the democratising potential of art, due to its presentation in the non-hierarchical, un-curated and uncensored space of the Web. Even pioneers of digital web-based art, such as Alexej Shulgin and Douglas Davis question the advantages for artists to be able to act completely independently and outside of the established art world.⁹⁴

Shulgin, for example, welcomes the fact that the Web created an international group of people who share common ideas and interests; yet, he is also aware of the problems arising out of the lack of working within a critical context. On the Web, “people get lost, because they don’t know how to deal with the data they are getting.” They do not know whether what they see is art or not, because what

⁹² Quatremère de Quincy, *Ueber den nachtheiligen Einfluss der Versetzung der Monumente aus Italien auf Kuenste und Wissenschaften* (1796), (Stendal: Winckelmann-Gesellschaft, 1998). Suzanne Keene, *Digital Collections: Museums in the Information Age* (Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 1998). John Ruskin. *The works of John Ruskin* ed. by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn vol 34. The Storm-cloud of the nineteenth century; Arrows of the chace; Ruskiniana (London: George Allen, 1908).

⁹³ Sarah Cook, Beryl Graham and Sarah Martin (Eds.), *Curating New Media. Third BALTIC International Seminar 10-12 May 2001* (Gateshead: Baltic, 2002), p.37.

⁹⁴ Alexej Shulgin in an interview with Tilman Baumgärtl: <http://www.kunstradio.at/FUTURE/RTF/INSTALLATIONS/SHULGIN/interview.html> (as of 10.10.2004).

they see is outside the referential system that museums or other types of art spaces, offer.

Shulgin believes that in the early stages of web-based art, the art world institutions were not necessary for displaying it, however, now he feels “that we really need somebody to take care of distribution. (...) if everybody is online, if anybody makes webpages, it will become overwhelming. Who would search for grains of gold in all this shit?”⁹⁵ Thomas Banovich, who was one of the first gallery owners in New York to show New Media Art, made a similar observation: “When I started [1994-95], you could find everyone and every site because there were so few of them and everybody was actively looking and reaching out for works because there was little else interesting there. But in a very short period the Web became commercialised, the whole way of treating the Web changed, and the works were lost in the sea of commerce.”⁹⁶

What this suggests is that some sort of curation of web-based art seems to be very useful if the goal is to build upon the ever-stronger acceptance of digital media as providers of authentic experiences of the arts and culture. At the same time, there are also critics who question the recent involvement of museums in web-based art, because it supposedly places it into a context that is alien to its purpose. Sarah Cook, for instance, argues that, curating web-based art will ultimately “kill” it. According to her, web-based art’s intrinsic quality is that it fosters communication between artists and a larger community of practitioners. She argues that this dialogue is changing through online forums hosted by museums, as these bring net art into the museum’s larger educational mandate to contextualize the art on view. Hence, it does not only change the perception of it but also its creation.⁹⁷ Howard Besser argues on similar lines but is more concerned about the museum as institution of authority, arguing that

“when the patron no longer has to visit the gallery or museum in order to see a particular image, the authority of the institution will

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Sarah Cook, Graham Beryl and Sarah Martin, p.37.

⁹⁷ Sarah Cook, “Has curating killed net art?” http://absoluteone.ljudmila.org/sarah_cook1.php (as of 20.11.2004).

likely begin to erode. And when members or the general public have (from their own home) access to a wealth of digitized images and scholarly information, many will begin to make their own links and juxtapositions among these images. This may further erode the authority of the curator as the leading figure who places the images within a context. A possible result may be an erosion of high culture in general, with the curator's role becoming somewhat akin to that of a film critic.”⁹⁸

However, Besser is not sure whether the increased availability of digital culture will have a positive or negative impact upon the public.

“If we are constantly bombarded with images and can see any image we want instantaneously, the distinction could blur between ‘good’ (artistic) images and ‘bad’ ones. Or, the increased exposure could help the general public develop a more cultivated eye and lead to increased connoisseurship.”⁹⁹

One of the things that come out of the above is that the increased accessibility of culture on the Web has indeed had an impact upon notions of the museum as a provider of authentic experiences. It is interesting to note here that questions of what it takes to have a truly authentic experience of a work of art have occupied museologists for a very long time. Through placing the arguments of Besser and Cook into a historical context, the following aims to show that concepts of authenticity and originality are subject to historical change.

Quatremère de Quincy, the leading art theorist and museologist at the time of French Revolution, had similar worries about displaying works of art in museums, as Sarah Cook has, with the integration of web-based art in art museums today. Quatremère expressed in seven letters his opposition to the

⁹⁸ Howard Besser, “The changing role of photographic collections with the advent of digitisation” in *The Wired Museum* Ed. Cathrine Jones-Garmil (Washington: American Association of Museums, 1997) pp.115-127 (p.121).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.122.

removal of works of art from Italy by the French Army.¹⁰⁰ In his belief, works of art, and the artist's intentions, can only be understood when the work is seen within its original context and within its legitimate patrimony. The French government's plan was to make Paris the centre of the art world and the Louvre the grandest museum with the greatest works of art. On the one hand this plan should have served the purpose of fostering national feelings and pride among the French, and on the other hand, it was a display of power and superiority over other European countries.

However, the art works of the Louvre should also have an educational role in terms of inspiring French artists to produce great works. Quatremère criticised the French government's plan to exhibit the looted works from Italy in the Louvre because this de-contextualization would not allow artists to study the real intentions of the artist that led to the production of the work, but only the technical merits of the works.¹⁰¹ Hence, an aesthetic experience of, for instance, an altar piece, could only be possible in the church for which the painting was originally intended.

About one hundred years later, John Ruskin's writings already show a very different approach to authenticity. In the first companion catalogue of the National Gallery, he wrote that

“of course the Florentine School must always be studied in Florence, the Dutch in Holland, and the Roman in Rome; but to obtain a clear *knowledge* of their relations to each other, and compare with the best advantage the characters in which they severally excel, the thoughtful scholars of any foreign country ought now to become pilgrims to the Dome - (such as it is) - of Trafalgar Sq.”¹⁰² (My emphasis).

¹⁰⁰ Quatremère de Quincy, *Ueber den nachtheiligen Einfluss der Versetzung der Monumente aus Italien auf Kuenste und Wissenschaften* (1796), (Stendal: Winckelmann-Gesellschaft, 1998), p.67.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² John Ruskin. *The works of John Ruskin* ed. by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn vol 34. *The Storm-cloud of the nineteenth century; Arrows of the chace; Ruskiniana* (London: George Allen, 1908), p.451.

Most notably, there is a shift in terms of how Quatremère and Ruskin see the experience of art works. Whereas for Quatremère the experience is related to the transcendental, for Ruskin it is related to knowledge. In contrast to Quatremère, Ruskin welcomed the juxtaposition of masters of different schools within the museum space. Whereas for Quatremère the authentic experience was related to a connection with the work via feelings that could only be experienced if the work was seen in the proper context, Ruskin's approach was much closer to our pedagogic one today, an approach to display art which addresses the intellect, rather than the senses.

Ruskin thought that museums should be there so that people can learn from the objects – a view that is more or less still valid today. He believed that works of art in galleries should be properly labelled and interpretive text should be provided so that the visitor can learn from the objects on display. In a letter dated march 29, 1880, Ruskin complains about the lack of useful descriptions and labels for the objects in the British Museum's collection. Even though according to him, the British Museum at the time represented the "best ordered and pleasantest institution in all England, and the grandest concentration of the means of human knowledge in the world," he explains how the lack of a "properly arranged manual" leaves the museum's visitor as wise after he has visited the collection as he was before he entered it.¹⁰³

The key point is that what is considered an authentic experience of works of art changes over time. Whereas Quatremère believed that the museum is an inappropriate setting to have an authentic experience of art works because it merely allows learning about technical achievements of painters, Ruskin thought that the learning of different styles and schools was the key purpose of displaying collections. Sarah Cook's criticism is in line with that of Quatremère because she believes that putting web-based art in museums is inappropriate. It can also be seen as in opposition with the scientific and educational approach taken by Ruskin.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.248.

One of the problems with writing about digital media is that this industry is still so young in comparison within the museum and that we neither have enough experience nor the necessary distance to it. This seems to be the reason why a lot of the discussions about digital media are still on a very theoretical level. What Sarah Cook's criticism does not take into account is that what is considered to be an authentic experience is only determined by what society decides it is. She is holding on to a definition of an authentic art experience, without recognizing that the conditions in which art is produced and consumed today have radically changed, conditions which in turn have changed the perception of the authentic.

When visitors go to the National Gallery (NG) to see a Renaissance Altarpiece they are most likely to consider it as authentic, due to the fact that the NG's experts have identified the work as such. The value of the experience is not likely to be questioned because the work is displayed in a gallery rather than a church. On the contrary, because the painting is in a museum it is more likely to be considered as "great Art". Whereas for Keene, one "part of the value of museums to society lies in their ability to confer a seal of authenticity on the objects in their collections,"¹⁰⁴ for Quatremère, the museum was a de-authenticating agent; because, through exposing it out of the original context the work of art was reduced to an alienated object for scholarly study, a de-spiritualised object of the sciences of history and art.

Looking at Quatremère is interesting because he makes us realise how much we are accustomed to seeing works of art out of their original context. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it must have been a shock for Quatremère to see all these Italian paintings in Paris, whereas we may grow up finding it completely normal to travel to the Louvre to see the paintings from all over Europe. Today almost every art museum has collections that include masters from other countries than its own; in fact the reputation of a museum is often based on the amount of international art it holds. As Klaus Mueller argues: "exhibitions have always been taken out of their authentic context, and displayed

¹⁰⁴ Suzanne Keene, *Digital Collections: Museums in the Information Age* (Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 1998).

them in a new interpretative frame. In that sense, museums have always been creating virtual environments all along”. But just as Quatremère was shocked to see the displaced works, we are shocked today to see images on the computer and to accept them as providers of authentic experiences. The next generation, however, will already grow up with this and will probably feel more at ease with experiencing art through digital media.

With the rise of Performance Art, Happenings and related movements in the 1960s, curators were challenged to find ways of presenting works, which are very often not manifested in tangible objects, but in statements, actions or performances.¹⁰⁵ The Media Age again challenges curators to deal with immaterial art. Being faced with change of this kind is therefore not new to the sector. Curators have already been there, and they have proved that their profession can respond to many changes, whether social, economic, cultural or demographic. It seems that at the heart of the current challenges is the acceptance that what it takes to have an authentic experience of a work of art is subject to change.

Therefore, a key idea (indeed, an idea upon which this thesis is based) is that the fact that all kinds of museum objects – whether a piece executed in the most traditional media, or a work of digital art – can be presented on the Web, has changed the ‘function’ or the work’s ‘purpose’ in the museum. A painting presented online, for instance, can develop new roles in addition to its traditional role of providing an experience for an onsite audience. It can become an element in an online game just as it can become the subject of an audio or video programme delivered, for example, as podcast. And, indeed, it will be the example of podcasting that will be our test for these new formations, later in Chapter 4.

In either case, the object has the potential to provide an educational experience and as such, the object really has the power to provide truly authentic experiences to online audiences. In order to make this point more explicit it helps

¹⁰⁵ Lena Maculan, *Digital Art as Driver for change in Museum Practice*. Masters Dissertation submitted to the Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, December 2004.

to look at an example. In the illustrations below, one can see a work by Gilbert & George and one by Doris Salcedo, as presented on Tate Online. These two presentations include small images and some text. Even if that might be interesting in certain contexts for certain people, it is suggested here that this is an example of an online presentation of art, which does not allow an authentic experience of Art.

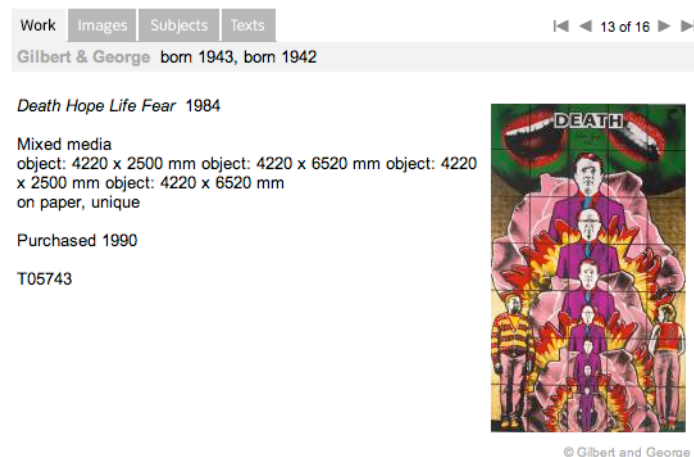


Figure 4 Gilbert & George, *Death Hope Life Fear* as presented on Tate Online¹⁰⁶

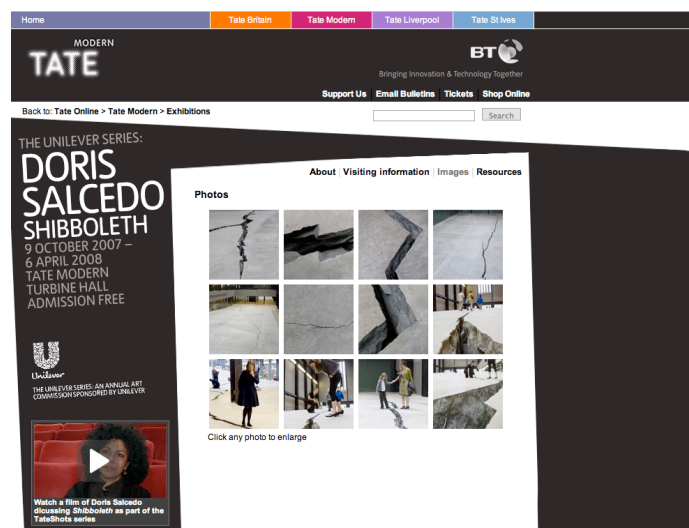


Figure 5 Images of *Shibboleth* by Doris Salcedo on Tate Online¹⁰⁷

With the following though, it is proposed that it is just a question of how one presents and contextualizes the object in question, so that the online experience

¹⁰⁶ Tate Online

<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=19000&searchid=27786&tabview=work> (as of 3.11.2007).

¹⁰⁷ Tate Online <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/dorissalcedo/photos.shtm> (as of 3.11.2007).

of the work may be authentic. Below, one can see a screenshot of Tate Online's series of podcasts called Tate Shots, videos that show interviews with artists and curators about their work and exhibitions at Tate.¹⁰⁸

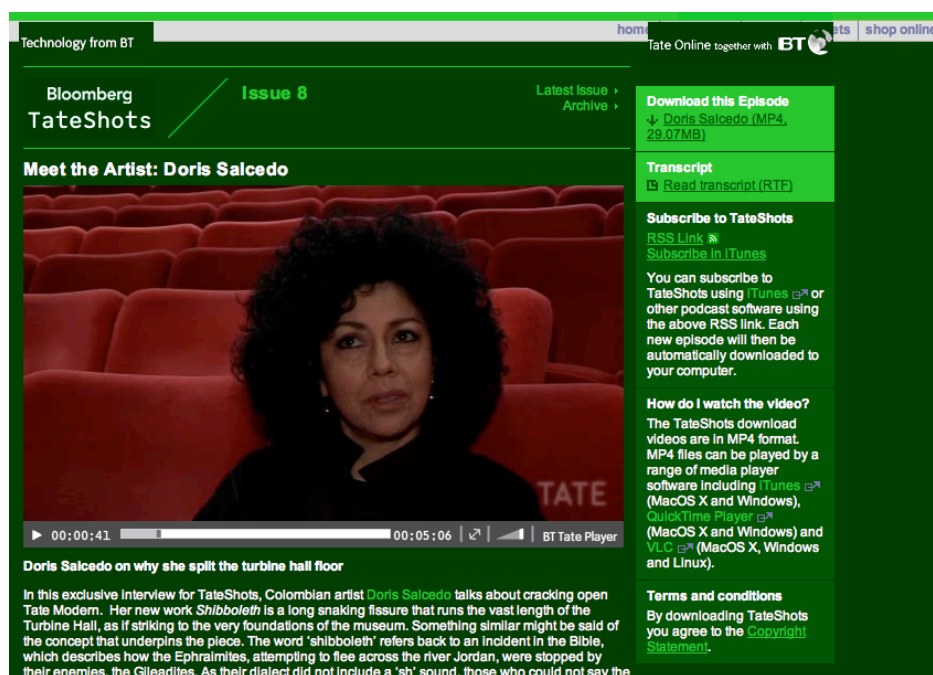


Figure 6 Doris Salcedo talking about *Shibboleth* in Tate Shots¹⁰⁹

Even though the work *Shibboleth* is not actually in this video, the work was the reason why this video was made, and watching it might well help people to understand the artist's intention with the work much better. It is not suggested that an artist's explanation may replace the experience of the actual work of art. But what is suggested is that whilst some works of art, particularly those that are digitally born, i.e. only exist in digital form, lend themselves very well for a presentation on a website, others do not: *Shibboleth* is a good example of the latter case, because of its large size and its site-specificity. Nevertheless, the video produced by Tate shows, how the limitations of the Web may be overcome and how this medium might well be used by museums to allow their visitors authentic experiences. What this example reminds us is that museums are not

¹⁰⁸ More about the series of podcasts *Tate Shots* will be discussed and analysed in the second part of the research.

¹⁰⁹ Tate Online <http://www.tate.org.uk/tateshots/episode.jsp?item=12198> (as of 3.11.2007).

only about the collection and presentation of objects. Museums are also about interpreting material culture and communicating it; and what the Tate shows us with this example is that in this particular case, with this particular work in question, the medium of the Web is probably not the most appropriate way of viewing the work. The digital medium would simply not do the work justice. However, the Web is the appropriate medium in which to interpret it and communicate it to a wider audience.

In order to illustrate this argument, one has to look very closely at the content of the video. The artist explains the references of the work by saying that “*Shibboleth* is a piece that refers to dangers at crossing borders or to being rejected in the moment of crossing borders. So I am making a piece about people who have been exposed to extreme experience of racial hatred and subjected to inhuman conditions in the first world.” Referencing the philosopher Theodor Adorno, who suggested “we should all see the world from the perspective of the victim, like Jewish people that were killed with their head down in the Middle Ages” she argues that with *Shibboleth*, she “wanted to get that perspective. Is the world upside down? What it is like to see the world from down there.”

Salcedo further explains what she is trying to achieve with the work, namely “to introduce into the Turbine Hall another perspective, and the idea is that we all look down and maybe try to encounter the experience of these people that I have been referring to somewhere herein within this deep division that has been generated in the Turbine Hall.”

She also places her intentions into a wider perspective and explains the work’s relation to issues of immigration and racism in Europe.

“The presence of the immigrant is seen as jeopardising the culture of Europe. Europe has been seen as a homogenous society, a democratic society that has learned, through centuries of development, has learned to resolve the issues through dialogue. And if that is the case then where do we place these outbreaks of racial hatred? So I think that society is not so homogenous and is not so democratic and there are

some people that are experiencing that. So wherever the world the earth opened... in the first world there is mesh keeping people out or inside as you want to see it, anyway keeping people away so it's a piece that is both in the epicentre of catastrophe and at the same time it is outside catastrophe."

A video like this may not allow an authentic experience of 'Shibboleth,' since it is not even shown in the video. However, looking at the content of the interview it shows that it certainly contains the key points, which lie at the bottom of work. And for someone not familiar with her work, this brief round up of the artist's motivations and intentions might be crucial for understanding what this work is about. There are a number of images of Shibboleth on Tate Online and there is a video that shows a camera moving above the large scar in the Turbine Hall and visitors looking at it. With these a user can certainly gain an impression of what the piece looks like and, together with the video, people might get a good idea of what the work means.

One could now argue that the visual arts are about visual experiences and that a truly authentic experience only works via a visual encounter with a work of art. If one would rigidly subscribe to this approach, then one would have to conclude that a video with an artist talking about the work does not allow the viewer an authentic experience. Based on the discussion before, one could make the assumption that Quatremère de Quincy would probably agree with this.

However, one could also say that someone who has no idea who the artist is, where she is coming from and what she is trying to achieve with her work, might also not have an authentic experience of the piece, even when walking around Tate's Turbine Hall. The work might not touch the viewer, because s/he is not able to relate to the artistic intentions by merely looking at the work. The work might impress the viewer because it is big and unusual. But it might not engage the viewer in the kind of critical thinking that the artist hopes to foster. Looking at the work online and listening to the interview, on the other hand, might well engage and disturb people in a manner wished by the artist, and make them think about what Salcedo aims to achieve.

For Salcedo “every work of art is political because every work of art is breaking new ground and it’s in a way against the status quo so every work of art and the nature of art is political.” If one argues that art is purely visual, then one could say that an authentic experience would only be possible when seeing the work in the flesh. However, if one accepts that some art might be more visual while other works are more conceptual or politically motivated, then one could also say that the latter might well allow an authentic experience of the work through gaining an understanding of the artistic intentions. In reference to the discussion of Quatremère and Ruskin’s approaches to notions of authenticity, one could argue that such an understanding of authenticity is related to knowledge, rather than to the sensual qualities of the artwork. In other words, an authentic experience is possible through knowing what the work is about, rather than seeing and experiencing it onsite, in the flesh.

If art is to make people think, to disturb them and to challenge their viewpoints, then it seems to be crucial to give people the opportunity to see the work in an extended contextual framework. Looking at the work alone might be one approach, but looking alone might not achieve what the artist aims to do. Salcedo wants to make people think; she is not a craftsman making objects to decorate a room. Her work is manifested in physical form, yet the shape of the work is not an end in itself; rather, her work is like a catalyst triggering off mental processes. Interpretation, whether done by the artist him/herself, by a subject-specialist or by anyone who has something interesting to say, is crucial to allow people an engaging and accessible experience of cultural expressions. Museums are not only about collecting and presenting objects. One of their key purposes is to interpret arts and culture and to communicate it. And this example has aimed to show how digital media can be very powerful tools for museums to further their mission as institutions for society, which not only present but also interpret and communicate art. Looking at the notion of the authentic from this perspective, allows one to argue that an authentic experience of art might well be possible online.

Now, comparing the abovementioned video with other presentations of art online allows drawing an important conclusion. Whereas low-resolution images of works of art – as has been illustrated above, with the examples of works by Gilbert & George and photos of Shibboleth – might be useful in many ways, they do not by themselves allow an authentic experience of art. But, what happens when the work is not only about its visual qualities? What happens if the work's purpose goes beyond what one can see on its surface? Some people might find it easier than others to uncover the artistic intentions by mere looking at the work. However, there are a great many others which do not. And it seems fair to say that interpretation and contextualization is key to having an authentic experience of art. Interpretation and contextualization can happen in the gallery as well as in other media. It can be done in catalogues, for instance. But it can also be done in the medium of video and a video might be distributed online. From here it follows that one can indeed have an authentic experience of art online.

Through looking at the two examples above, and through applying the ideas of Quatremère, Müller, Keene and others, it is argued here that an authentic museum experience is becoming disengaged or independent of the experience of three-dimensional objects and may well be provided through online media. Moreover, the real challenge for online museums is to explore the many possibilities, which arise, once a three-dimensional museum object has become a *Media Object*. In other words, once the painting, sculpture or work in whatever medium has been freed from its restrictions of being merely enjoyable by onsite visitors, the challenge is to create new roles for those objects – roles, which allow the museum to provide authentic experiences for users. In the second part of this thesis, this conclusion will be put to the test. It will ask in what ways museums have used new broadcasting models of publication so as to provide authentic experiences to users. It will present a whole range of possible applications of audio and video formats as means to furthering the museums mission as institution, which interprets and communicates art. Previously, however, another crucial point needs to be addressed: the relationship of art and originality in the Media Age.

2.3 Art and Originality

Contemporary art museums in Europe increasingly exhibit Media Art, so at the moment it looks as if this art form will in the long run establish itself, just as other media did before. Some museums express their commitment to Media Art explicitly, while with others the shift can be observed more implicitly.

The renaming of the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television into the National Media Museum, is an example of the former.¹¹⁰ So is the statement of the Center for Media Arts (ZKM) in Karlsruhe (Germany) in a press release dated July 2006, in which it announced that in the future the museum will include time-based art, such as film and music, in their permanent collection displays. The ZKM declared that “from July 21st music will be treated in the ZKM|Medienmuseum on equal rank as any other media exhibited there.”¹¹¹ Peter Weibel, director of the ZKM, explained that the ZKM has from its beginning focused on Media Arts, which makes the move to include time based art in the permanent collection particularly appropriate.¹¹² As regards film, the ZKM goes even further. It does not only treat film and music equally as other media, it also got involved in film productions. Thus the museum has moved beyond the acquisition and presentation of art and has in fact become a producer. Or as Weibel puts it, “film and art find themselves in a new phase. The museum migrates into film production.”¹¹³ This development, Weibel explains, is firstly a response to current changes, especially as regards the development of the exhibition sector into a mass phenomenon. The questions about the relationship of the museum and masses, of art and masses may be treated most plainly in the mass medium of film, maybe even in the mass medium of television. As a second context, Weibel believes that the commercial cinema hardly offers anything anymore for many adults. And finally, he argues that this initiative comes out of the inner logic of the development of the arts, from the static object to moving

¹¹⁰ National Media Museum <http://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/> (as of 30.5.2008).

¹¹¹ Peter Weibel. ‘Das Museum der zeitbasierten Künste. Musik und Museum – Film und Museum. Musik und Filmräume im ZKM|Medienmuseum’ *Presseinformation* (Juli 2006) http://container.zkm.de/presse/PM_Film.pdf (as of 4.8.2006).

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

image, from museum as place for the space-based arts, to a space for time-based works.¹¹⁴

Media arts' closeness to mass culture and popular entertainment, made it – at the beginning – difficult for the museum to open up their spaces for this type of art. Now, as the example of the ZKM shows, it seems that museums are embracing not only Media Art ever closer but also the mass media, just because of its association with mass culture. Moreover, now that most aspects of daily life in the Western World are in one way or another affected by digital media, museums and audiences feel much more familiar and comfortable with works they see on computer screens. This is probably also, because more than any other form of contemporary art, Media Art and the mass media do not *represent* but *present* contemporary culture. Therefore, it seems that compared to traditional art media as painting and sculpture, Media Art as well as art communicated through digital media has the power to break with the traditional perception of the museum as repository of 'high art', which in turn could make the museum a driving force in the democratisation of culture – understood as enhancing the intellectual accessibility of art.

Central to the analysis of authenticity was a question of space. In which space and in which surrounding may an experience of a work of art be authentic? It was asked whether it is possible to have an authentic experience of art online and it was concluded that depending on the type of work, it might be possible to have an authentic experience online as well as onsite. But it also had to do with the quality of online presentation and a differentiation was made between a low-resolution reproduction of a work or an extended interpretation in audio or video format.

Building on this, the following will analyse the question of uniqueness. Historically museums have created their identity around the unique, authentic and original artefact. This raises the question whether the immaterial, reproducible, digital artwork comes into conflict with established concepts of

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

originality – the very basis upon which the identity of museums rests? Does the Web threaten the primacy of unique, original art? Moreover, this section is going to expand on the thoughts presented before through looking at immaterial art. Whereas the section on authenticity was drawing upon examples of works that are manifested in physical, three-dimensional and tangible form, this section is now moving to intangible, digital objects. This will bring into focus another aspect of the question of how digital media can be used by museums to make art more accessible.

The reproduction of an immaterial digital art object involves the duplication of data rather than reproduction of physical material. The quality of the digital original is therefore equal to, or indistinguishable from its reproduction – which may indeed challenge some notions of originality and authenticity held by the museum and visitor alike. And yet, as will be argued, this does not necessarily threaten the foundations of the museum. In contrast, the following will show that the immaterial quality, the reproducibility and migrateability of Digital Arts also brings some new opportunities for museums. What this means in more detail will be analysed with the example of the work ‘Antarctica Dispatches’ (2004) by Simon Faithfull. Taken together, the discussion of authenticity in the previous section and the following on originality aim to make some of the many opportunities that come with online digital technologies for museums to interpret, communicate and to distribute works of art so as to make culture more accessible and to move beyond the *illusion of access* as defined in Chapter 1.

In 2004 Faithfull was selected for the ‘Artists and Writers in Antarctica’ scheme, jointly run by the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) and Arts Council of England’s International Artists Fellowships Programme. He was commissioned to travel to Antarctica on the ship ‘Ernest Shackleton’ with BAS scientists on board, where he made drawings on a Palm-Pilot.¹¹⁵ In the artist’s own words,

“the pixilated drawings might depict any number of things: a detail of the ship, a weather balloon disappearing, an abandoned whaling

¹¹⁵ Antarctica Dispatches
http://www.antarctica.ac.uk/News_and_Information/Press_Pressreleases (as of 30.11.2004).

station, Shackleton's grave, a colony of penguins, a wandering Albatross or a drifting iceberg. The project will convey the extreme mechanics of the journey, the tedium of isolation and the awful beauty of a journey into the void. Ultimately the work will look at what it is that fascinates us still about this beautiful emptiness.”¹¹⁶

During his travels, people were able to follow his work in a variety of ways. On a daily basis, visitors to the Centre of Contemporary Art Glasgow could see how the Centre is accumulating an installation of etched panels of the drawings. At the same time individual subscribers could have the daily drawings sent to them per email on their computers, or they could visit the London Institute of Contemporary Art, the Southampton City Art Gallery or Artsway in Hampshire, where the drawings were also exhibited.

In this sense the digital medium's reproducibility seems to make the concept of authenticity irrelevant, as people can see authentic original works, as much on their own computer, as they can in a gallery. One could therefore argue that such an art form does not need the gallery for its presentation, as people can access it through the artist's website, yet it has advantages for both the audience and the museum: the original authentic art work can be seen at several locations simultaneously. Hence, the flexibility of Digital Art allows the public to decide as to where they want to follow this work in progress. For the museum this flexibility means that, through an involvement in such projects, museums can show their commitment to a truly contemporary art practice, and that even smaller local museums can receive an increased amount of attention.

A work of art like Faithfull's project does not fit the established system of how museum objects are meant to be consumed by the visitor. It is not displayed behind some sort of security device to be contemplated onsite. In fact, the work's full potential is exploited only when experienced on a digital device, which may or may not be located in the museum. Consequently, the authentic experience of the original is disengaged from the physical space of the museum. In general, but

¹¹⁶ Simon Faithfull <http://www.simonfaithfull.org/antarctica/info.html> (as of 1.12.2004).

also in regards to this example, works that are easily accessible in terms of their intellectual content do not fit the museums traditional system, where the ‘true’ meaning of the work is generally not understood without the interpretation of art historians. Keeping the art work’s meaning a mystery lies at the heart of the power relationship between the museum and the visitor, in which the museum has the authority to determine the meaning of art objects, and the visitor is the unknowing receiver of the museum’s wisdom.¹¹⁷ Faithfull’s work also breaks with this notion of the museum as the sole authority to display original works of art.

There is another aspect to the question of how the acceptance of digital, reproducible art affects museums. This question is whether Digital Arts will have an impact on the perception of traditional art objects; i.e. change the way we perceive non-digital art in the age of digital reproduction. As regards the long-term impact of the digital art object in the museum, it is probably too early today to say how it will change the perception of the original, authentic and unique work of art. However, for at least two reasons, it looks as if reproductions of works of art will not diminish but increase the interest in original works.

Analysing the impact of mechanical reproduction on the reception of art, Walter Benjamin thought that the aura of art works would be destroyed, which he welcomed in view of the democratising effect this could have on the arts.¹¹⁸ Today one can say that what really happened is the opposite of Benjamin’s prediction. Reproductions of all kinds of works of art history has, of course, made them known to an audience to which these works were not accessible before. To a certain extent, this has democratised the access to art, but it has not – as Benjamin predicted – destroyed the aura of those works. On the contrary, the more we find reproductions of, for example, the Mona Lisa, on posters, T-shirts, tea cups and all sorts of other objects, the more these reproductions contributed to keeping, and indeed enforcing, the aura of that painting. The Mona Lisa has become such an icon attracting so many visitors from around the world that

¹¹⁷ Anne Fahy, “New Technologies for museum communication” in *Museum Media Message* ed. by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 82-96 (p.82).

¹¹⁸ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” in *Illuminations* ed. by Hannah Arendt (London: Fontana Press, 1992) pp. 211-244.

attendants at the Louvre recently went on a partial strike, demanding a bonus for the stress of marshalling tens of thousand visitors past that painting.¹¹⁹

The argument that reproductions foster the longing for the original has been supported by Sandy Nairne, as director of National Programmes at the Tate Gallery, saying that ‘spending time with the virtual version of works of art increases people’s desires to see the real thing.’¹²⁰

David Boyle, who has analysed notions of authenticity in all aspects of life, argues along a similar vein when he concludes that “the effect of an increasingly virtual world, where nothing is quite what it seems has led to a growing clamour for what is genuine and human.”¹²¹ While he is not saying that there is a coherent “reality movement” going on, he still believes that people are increasingly rejecting spin and manipulation, and demand things that are ‘real’.¹²² If he is right, then the digital revolution would by no means threaten the purpose of museums, as regards their role of exhibiting, collecting and preserving original objects. In fact, what Boyle says suggests that the contrary would be the more likely scenario, namely, that people will increasingly value opportunities to see authentic, original and unique works.

2.4 Conclusion: Disengaging notions of authenticity and originality from three-dimensional spaces and tangible objects

Chapter 1 focused on the question whether museums’ websites make art more accessible to audiences. It was concluded that despite some notable exceptions, many online museums produce an *illusion of access* rather than bringing art closer to the public. Building upon this, the present chapter has zoomed into the museological context, particularly as regards notions of authenticity and

¹¹⁹ The New York Times, ‘Louvre workers on strike’ (15.2.2007)
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/15/world/europe/15paris.html?ex=1329195600&en=e3122c5982dec40b&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss> (as of 5.3.2007).

¹²⁰ Sandy Nairne quoted in Klaus Müller, ‘Going Global: Reaching out for the online visitor’, in *Museum News* (Sept/Oct 2002), pp.46-53 (p.50).

¹²¹ David Boyle, *Authenticity: Brands, Fakes, Spin and the Lust for Real Life* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), p.150.

¹²² *Ibid.*

originality. The key point of this chapter was to highlight that there are changes in the triangular relationship between objects, museums and audiences.

Based on the discussion above (drawn from an extensive literature review, interviews with key curatorial staff and debates with academics at some key conferences on museums¹²³), there is evidence, which suggests that objects in museums, whether executed in traditional or digital media, can be seen as *Media objects*. It was argued that the way artists produce, and the public consumes, works of art has changed and that this has also changed the notion of what an authentic experience of a work of art is.

With the analysis of Simon Faithfull's project this discussion has aimed to demonstrate that digital media do not threaten the primacy of the original. Rather, it has been argued that if one accepts that one can have an authentic experience of art via digital media, then the immateriality, reproducibility and migratability of media objects allow museums to respond to contemporary communication behaviours, where the access to authentic and original content is offered through various channels and in multiple formats.

Together these two strands of our argument have thus far attempted to show that in the Media Age, an authentic experience of original art may be experienced in the museum as well as on various different devices, from personal computers to mobile phones. From these discussions, we are left with the idea that *Media Objects* have radically changed the experience of museums. Museums of the Media Age may be experienced onsite as well as online.

Before our narrative goes on to unpack this statement further, there is one more question that ought to be addressed. Developments of online technologies and services are moving at a very rapid speed. The impact of these developments is affecting different sectors in various ways. In any case, and in order to stay

¹²³ UK Museums and the Web Conference 2006 <http://www.museumscomputergroup.org.uk/meetings/2-2006.shtml>, Spring School in New Media 2005 and 2006 <http://www.le.ac.uk/ms/contactus/rossparry.html>, EVA Berlin 2006 http://www.gfai.de/pinboard/eva/d_main_bln2006.html and MAI Tagung 2006 and 2007 <http://www.mai-tagung.de/> (as of 10.1.2008).

focused it is necessary to specify more clearly what technologies and what developments are being meant here. The next chapter aims to do that. Whereas this chapter explored the museological context, the following chapter will investigate the technological framework in preparation for the second part of this thesis. That second part will then draw these two contexts – the technological and the museological – very closely together.

CHAPTER 3

The rise of audiovisual content in museum websites

3.1 Introduction

Just as Chapter 1 set up the theoretical, and Chapter 2 looked at the museological contexts, the aim of this chapter is to define the technological context in which museums operate today. The discussion is structured around three key themes: the first looks at the key features of the second digital wave. The second assesses how museums have made use of the Web since the mid 1990s, identifying key types or paradigms of museum websites. Moreover, these two sections concern the nature of change that occurred since the rise of the Web 2.0. The third key theme examines the consequence of those changes. It analyzes the move towards the ‘channel model’ of a website, the notion of the ‘museum as producer’ and the shift from the object-centred to the story-based museum website.

In more detail, the first section will identify the key features of Web 2.0 and discuss the key debates surrounding this subject. What will come out of this chapter is that the Web is changing from a collection of static Web pages, towards a platform of participation and collaboration. Moreover, the discussion will reveal that within the current developments online, a new user type is emerging: a user, who no longer merely goes on the Web to passively seek information, but one who is actively engaged in generating content as well as in structuring and organising it. The key objective of this first section is to identify the key developments and debates in the context of Web 2.0.

In order to keep the focus of this research around the question of how digital media can enhance accessibility of art, a number of developments on museum websites, which are related to the Web 2.0, must be excluded. Blogging,¹²⁴ social bookmarking and tagging¹²⁵, for instance, will not be discussed here, even if such services have sometimes more, sometimes less strongly changed the face and the focus of museum websites. Blogging was most notably included in the Walker Art Centre and the National Museums of Liverpool, and tagging at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, which introduced this service to facilitate searching the collection. “Sometimes museums describe objects in language that is highly specialist,” the Powerhouse museum argues, and explains that “user added keywords are useful in bridging the ‘semantic gap’ between the language of the museum and that of the user.” Figure 8 shows a fragment of a tag cloud from the Powerhouse Museum. Here one can see terms which are linked to objects in that museum’s collection.



Figure 7 Fragment of a tag cloud¹²⁶

In the context of the use of tagging for making museum collections more accessible to non-specialists, one should also mention the research project called

¹²⁴ A Weblog or blog is published as a website and can contain text, images, audio- and video files, and hyperlinks. Anyone with access to the Web may set up and maintain one’s own blog and invite other users to contribute to it. Blogging describes the activity of making contributions to a blog.

¹²⁵ Tagging an object means to label objects on websites with a keyword or term associated with it. A tag cloud is a visual depiction of tags generated by users. It is (usually an alphabetical) list of tags, which are hyperlinks to a collection of objects that are associated with that keyword. The larger the tag appears in the cloud, the more digital objects are connected with it.

¹²⁶ <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/browsekeywords.php> (as of 10.1.2008).

Steve.Museum.¹²⁷ However, to go into these subjects in more detail would go beyond the scope of this research and they are therefore excluded here.

Whereas this first section is going to examine the technological developments from a broad perspective, the second section will consider the specific context of the museum. Taking a historical approach it will review a number of key types of museum websites and analyse the key ideas behind them. This section will reveal the assumptions underlying the key ideas behind museum websites. Moreover, what will emerge from this chapter is that things like customizing, localizing, personalizing the Web experience and even issues surrounding user-generated content have been at the heart of museums' online strategies all along. As will be shown, some of the key ideas behind the Web 2.0 were already explored by museum professionals long before terms such as 'user-generated content' even existed. What has changed is not so much the idea that online museums should be more user-driven but the tools with which one can realise these goals.

The third section will assess the consequences of the changes that were identified in section 1 and 2. It will argue that some of the museums, which are on the leading edge of developments, are using various channels to distribute audiovisual productions. Moreover, what will be argued is that there is a real opportunity to reach new audiences through placing content on social networking platforms, yet, whether this is successful or not, largely depends on the quality of content. It will be suggested that if content is disconnected from the context of a museum's website, it needs to reflect that separation. Looking at the Tate Gallery's audiovisual programmes, the author will unpack the notion of the 'museum as producer.' To conclude the chapter, it will be argued that the key consequence of the changes described in this chapter is the move from the object-centred to the story-based museum website. Research results will reveal that in terms of enhancing intellectual access to art, the story-based website is much more successful than the database model. Yet, the key outcome of this chapter is a query. As regards the focus of this research, the central question emerging from the discussion of the impact of the Web 2.0, the key types and

¹²⁷ Steve.Museum <http://www.steve.museum/> (2.2.2007).

ideas of museum websites, and the move towards the channel model is whether or not new broadcasting models of publications make the museum experience more engaging, participatory and accessible. Trying to find an answer to this question is the subject of the second, the empirical part, of this research.

3.2 Definition: Web 2.0

There are many different definitions of the term Web 2.0. One of the key issues, as Dion Hinchcliff, chief editor of the *Web 2.0 Journal* points out, is that “Web 2.0 is not a technology, it’s a way of architecting software and businesses.”¹²⁸ Similarly, Johannes Kleske observed that it is a new perception of the Web rather than any new products, which is pivotal behind the new boom. Another key change observed by Kleske is that more and more ideas develop which are only realisable on the Web, whereas previously the Web’s development was dominated by the translation of real world principles which were transported by internet (e.g. post – e-mail). Within this shift, he further notes that the human beings and their social networks are getting into the focus.¹²⁹

In an article aiming to clarify what is meant by ‘Web 2.0’ Tim O’Reilly argues, that “like many important concepts, Web 2.0 doesn’t have a hard boundary, but rather, a gravitational core.” Rather than giving a fixed definition, O’Reilly describes Web 2.0 as a “set of principles and practices,” and the first of these principles is the idea of the “Web as platform.”¹³⁰ Similar to what O’Reilly calls a platform of participation, Stone writes of “a new generation of websites [which] harvest the participation, creativity and collaboration of their users,” and lists sites such as MySpace, Flickr, YouTube and Facebook.com as examples

¹²⁸ Dion Hinchcliff’s Web 2.0 Blog ‘The State of Web 2.0’
http://web2.wsj2.com/the_state_of_web_20.htm (as of 4.4.2006).

¹²⁹ Johannes Kleske, *Wissensarbeit mit Social Software. Konzeption und Entwicklung eines Systems für die kollaborative Wissensarbeit in der Forschung basierend auf Social Software*. Diplomarbeit. Fachhochschule Darmstadt. FB Media. Media Systems Design. January 2006, p.32.

¹³⁰ Tim O’Reilly, ‘What is Web 2.0. Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software’ Oreillynet (30. September 2005) <http://oreillynet.com/lpt/a/6228> (as of 6. April 2006).

representing the Web 2.0 movement.¹³¹ Johannes Kleske speaks in similar terms, when he argued that the Web is changing from a collection of static websites, to dynamically generated surfaces, which offer its users access to data. These surfaces create platforms, which are orientated towards the participation of the user.¹³² Janko Röttgers also uses the word “platforms” when he lists sites such as *Flickr*, *MySpace*, *YouTube* and *Delicious* as examples of Web 2.0. However, he also adds another key point when he argues that “Web 2.0 is not only about content, because, when people upload images to Flickr, for example, they also create a structure and an order of these images through the use of ‘tags’ and they create communities.”¹³³

For Christian Büttikofer, these type of communities, stand “for the Web of amateurs,” which in turn are based on bottom-up democratic principles.¹³⁴ Similarly, Hinchcliff describes as “perhaps the key ingredient [of Web 2.0], the inversion of control of information, processes, and software wholesale over to the users of the Web.” In his view, this is due to the fact that “users now generate the majority of content and they also provide the attention that drives almost everything online financially (particularly advertising).”¹³⁵

“Web 2.0 represents the unyielding shift towards putting the power to publish, communicate, socialize, and engage, using an almost-dizzying array of methods, in online two-way discourse and interchange. The Web is the medium, but it's powered by people.”¹³⁶

The emphasis on the user, rather than the technology also features strongly in the analysis of Martin Recke and Thomas Jüngling, who argue that, the difference between the ‘old’ Web and Web 2.0 is the type of user. Whereas the former is a

¹³¹ Brad Stone, ‘Talk Transcript: Tracking Technology’ in *Newsweek* (28.3.2006) <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12013797/site/newsweek/> (as of 6.4.2006).

¹³² Kleske, p.32.

¹³³ Janko Röttgers, ‘Diaabend mit Freunden. Teilen ist angesagt im Web der zweiten Generation – egal ob es um die Bildersammlung oder Ausgeh-Tipps geht.’ In *Frankfurter Rundschau* (31.3.2006). Accessed through Lexis-Nexis (4.4.2006).

¹³⁴ Christian Büttikofer, ‘Streit ums Internet der Amateure’ in *Tages-Anzeiger* (20.3.2006), p.49. Accessed through Lexis-Nexis (4.4.2006).

¹³⁵ Dion Hinchcliff’s Web 2.0 Blog ‘The State of Web 2.0’.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

passive consumer of content, the latter actively changes and uploads content on the Web. This new User-Type informs other users about sites he finds interesting, and is constantly aware of not only changes on his most favourite websites but also of who has published parts of his weblog.¹³⁷ Similarly, Kleske argues that through the establishment of online services, which allows quick and easy online publication, the user has moved into the focus of the Web.¹³⁸ Moreover, within the context of the change from Information to Knowledge Society, comes a better understanding of social networks, and new services support the user to develop and maintain these networks. “The Web changes from Web of information to the Web of humans.”¹³⁹ The services based on these principles and techniques, so as to network the user are called *Social Software* (original emphasis).¹⁴⁰ The focus on the active user, is also emphasised by Levy and Stone, who argue that

“less than a decade ago, when we were first getting used to the idea of an Internet, people described the act of going online as venturing into some foreign realm called cyberspace. But that metaphor no longer applies. *MySpace*, *Flickr* and all the other newcomers aren't places to go, but things to do, ways to express yourself, means to connect with others and extend your own horizons.”¹⁴¹

3.3 Key types of museum websites

The following sections will take a historical approach and assess typologies of museum websites that have developed since the mid 1990s. Getting to the real bottom of the core purposes of museums' online strategies is necessary to understand how the ‘New Museology,’ cultural, socio-political and demographic changes have had an impact upon digital programmes offered by museums.

¹³⁷ Thomas Jüngling und Martin Recke, ‘Was ist so neu am neuen Web?: Aktuelle Internet-Angebote sind untereinander stark vernetzt. Jeder kann die Inhalte auf den Seiten verändern; Was ist so neu am neuen Web?’ *Welt am Sonntag* (19.3.2006), p.37.

¹³⁸ Kleske, p.31.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Steven Levy and Brad Stone, ‘The New Wisdom of the Web’ in *Newsweek* (3. April 2006): <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12015774/site/newsweek/> (as of 4.4.2006).

What will come out of this review is that the re-conceptualization of the museum audience relationship, which sits in the heart of the 'New Museology,' has been one of the key aims of developers and critics of online museums throughout. However, as Chapter 1 has shown, online museums make culture more accessible only to those who are privileged in having the necessary skills and education, to make sense of museum websites, which are modelled around a database. For non-professionals online museums largely remain repositories of digital files, very often ignoring the context, the needs, abilities and interests of the user. As concluded in Chapter 1 this raises the question as to whether online digital media, in actuality have the power to make art more accessible on a broad scale. Further, it raises the question as to whether new broadcasting models of communication might offer new opportunities to make art in museums more accessible.

In the late 1990s a small number of different paradigms of museum websites have developed and the discussion of what the prime purpose of museums' online presences are continues to this day. Writing in 1997 McKenzie, differentiates between the *Learning Museum* and the *Marketing Museum*; the former offers "substantial online learning resources, which invite many repeat visits and enable substantial investigations and exploration."¹⁴² The *Marketing Museum*, on the other hand, McKenzie defines as "websites, which are mainly intended as vehicles to increase the number of visitors to the original physical museum by making more people aware of museum's collections and special events. Such sites may also have museum shop sales as a major goal."¹⁴³ Eight years on, Bazley argued on very similar lines, when he said that a museum website can fundamentally do two things: "first, it can provide a learning experience; and second, it can tell us what we find in the museum."¹⁴⁴

In 1999 Avenier writes that museum websites can have a variety of purposes. "They can disseminate information and news about museums and their activities;

¹⁴² Roy McKenzie, 'Building a Virtual Museum Community' <http://www.fno.org/museum/museweb.html> (as of 30.4.2005).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Martin Bazley at the Spring School in New Media, University of Leicester, 19-20. April 2005.

they can allow access to databases and image banks on museum collections; and they can put on display virtual exhibitions using new thematic approaches. In other words, these advances range over three main areas: communication, in the habitual sense of the term; research; and instruction.”¹⁴⁵ These functions of websites seem to be very much in line with the commonly accepted purposes of museums. Whilst some museum websites have merely transferred content they offer onsite to their website, others have focused more on developing projects specifically for the Web. This debate, whether online museums should focus on original content or on presenting information relating to the collection and events in the onsite museum already started in the 1990s and continues to this day.

Some scholars like Peter Walsh (1997) have criticised that early art museum websites have standardized themselves “around a formula that essentially duplicates a collection of familiar museum products: the floor plan, the exhibition catalogue, the label, the Acoustiguide, the docent tour, and the audio-visual presentation.” In his view, the “medium should be used for what it can do that other media cannot do: it should not merely duplicate what has traditionally, and probably more effectively, been done in print.”¹⁴⁶ Similarly, Bowen argued in 2000 that “a museum with an online presence needs to build up its virtual visitor community just as it is desirable to encourage return visits by real visitors;” and in order to ensure this, he recommends that museums should “not try to re-create the ‘traditional’ museum experience. The Web is a different medium with its own strengths and weaknesses, which should be exploited to enhance the virtual visitor experience.”¹⁴⁷ Half a decade later, Tim Burnett, of the former National Museum for Photography, Film and Television in Bradford (today the National Media Museum), also argued that “museum websites should not aim to replicate the physical museum. Museum websites are so much more than what physical museums are about.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Philippe Avenier, ‘Putting the public first: the French experience’ *Museum International* 204 (Paris: UNESCO, 1999), pp.31-34 (p.31).

¹⁴⁶ Peter Walsh, pp.77-85.

¹⁴⁷ Jonathan Bowen, ‘The virtual museum’, *Museum International* 205 (Paris:UNESCO, 2000), pp.4-7 (p.4).

¹⁴⁸ Tim Burnett at the Spring School in New Media, Leicester University, 19-20. April 2005.

This debate not only relates to the type or the quality of content, but also to how the content is interfaced. In this regard, Trant argues that “transposing physical navigation into conceptual space, risks introducing errors in interpretation, as well as failure to communicate clearly.” In contrast to that, Roderick Davies believes that it is “appropriate to give the user of media programmes the opportunity to behave conceptually in the same way that he/she would behave in the real museum environment and provide him/her with an experience which is synonymous with it.”¹⁴⁹ Arguing that “the correct use of a metaphor for the structure and interface of interactive media can improve its usability,” Davies explained that the website of Birmingham Museums and Art Galleries used the metaphor of the museum building. The user is therefore able to “metaphorically navigate by the spaces within the museum and is provided with a mental map for physical navigation.”¹⁵⁰

Similar to the paradigms of McKenzie, in 1998 Lynn Teather analysed the three paradigms Maria Piacente identified. The latter differentiates between three types of museum Web pages, the ‘electronic brochure,’ ‘the museum in the virtual world,’ and ‘the true interactives.’¹⁵¹ Whereas the first is “essentially an advertising sheet format, like the brochure or handout used at sites or to get visitors come to sites.” The second refers to Web pages where the “real-life museum is recreated online”, or “projected onto the Web by means of maps, floor plans, images online collections or exhibits both real and virtual.” The ‘true interactives’ refer to pages that “may have some relation to real museum but they also add or reinvent the museum and even invite the audience to do so.” Approximately a decade later, Parry also differentiates three types of museum websites: he distinguishes ‘complimentary (promotional),’ ‘complementary (alternative channel)’ websites and the ‘stand alone (online only museum).’¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Roderick Davies, ‘Overcoming Barriers to Visiting: Raising Awareness Of, and Providing Orientation and Navigation To, A Museum and its Collections Through New Technologies’ in *Museum Management and Curatorship* 19,3 (2001) pp.283-295 (p.285).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Lynne Teather, ‘A museum is a museum is a museum... Or is it? Exploring Museology and the Web’ http://www.archimuse.com/mw98/papers/teather/teather_paper.html (as of 30.4.2005).

¹⁵² Ross Parry in a lecture given at the University of Leicester, 3. February 2006.

The complimentary site refers to what Piacente termed ‘electronic brochure.’ “Their key purpose is brand recognition and loyalty, sometimes e-commerce, but usually (principally) to persuade users to come to onsite exhibitions.” Parry observed that whilst “many museum sites continue in this mode,” most museums, “even if they have evolved into other modes, preserve this promotional element to their online provision.” As noted by Parry, the promotional elements of sites have also evolved greatly since the mid 1990s. In more recent times “it is common for museum websites to be continually updated, with interactive calendars and headlines trailing up-coming events or news stories.

Complementary websites, according to Parry’s typology, “are those which offer genuinely alternative channels and experiences to, as it were, the onsite channel.” The difference to Piacente’s ‘Learning Museum’ is that there are different assumptions behind it. Early museum websites were based on the belief that there are two types of museum experiences, one on the site of the museum itself and one online. These were two separate experiences, whereas the onsite was regarded as the true and authentic experience, the latter was considered as the virtual experience. Complementary sites, on the other hand “work from the assumption that a museum experience can happen online as well as onsite, and that a modern museum is a multi-channel institution reaching out (and allowing visitors to reach in) in maybe more than one space.” Finally, the ‘online only’ museums are those, which “have no physical venue or counterpart, but rather their only presence is on the Web.”

What comes out of the above is that there are different types of museum websites, and that each type is based upon a different set of assumptions. These assumptions, on the one hand, refer to what museum professionals see as the key rationale behind their Web presence (e.g. marketing or learning), but, on the other hand, they also reveal assumptions made about who the audience might be (e.g. general public or learners with specific interests), and how they might use the website. The pivotal outcome, though, is that the user and the meeting of his or her needs have always been at the centre of online strategies of museums.

As will become much clearer in the following sections, central ideas behind museum websites, like targeting content to specific audiences, providing a customizable and personalized Web experience and even ‘user-generated content’ was already practiced by museums in 1997 - long before this term even existed! Yet, with many exceptions, online museums today, as argued in Chapter 1, very often fail to make art more accessible to broad audiences. Therefore, before entering the second part of this thesis (which is concerned with how new broadcasting models can improve access to art) one needs to bring into focus, contextualize and sometimes also question the objectives, which have been behind online museums.

3.4 Key ideas behind museum websites

Even in the early days of the Web museum professionals realised that there was a potential for using digital media to move beyond traditional museum practice. Juxtaposing works from different collections in museums was only possible within the context of temporary exhibitions and was also dependent on getting loans from other institutions, which might or might not see such an exhibition as benefiting their own museum.

Schweibenz argues that within the context of the virtual museum one can transcend the abilities of the traditional museum in presenting information. “Displaying digital representations of works of art next to comparative works by the same artist, artists who have influenced him or her, or works of the same style or period that are exhibited in museums at various geographic locations or that are otherwise not normally accessible together”, would just be one example of how the virtual museum could transcend traditional museum presentation techniques. For Schweibenz the importance lies not merely in the linking of objects “but to give visitors the opportunity to focus on their special interests by pursuing them in an interactive dialog with the museum.” This he considers as an important step in the development from the traditional museum to the museum of

the future, which he in reference to Hooper-Greenhill¹⁵³ defines as audience-driven museum rather than collection-driven-museum.¹⁵⁴

Dietz *et. al.* argue along similar lines when they say that “prior to online exhibits, the curator had exclusive control over juxtaposition and contextualization. But virtual museums allow both other museum staff and the general public to perform their own juxtapositions and contextualization. One of the main challenges for the next generation of virtual museums is to find a common platform for the great variety of virtual exhibits produced by a wide range of creators, from museums, allied organizations as well as individuals.”¹⁵⁵ For McKeown as well, “transposing the museum into the digital domain (...) facilitates a whole new approach to interpretation such as offering alternative views.”¹⁵⁶ This shows that museum professionals right from the beginnings of the Web, believed in its potential to transform the museum into a more visitor driven institution. However, during times of continuing development of museums’ websites, “it is still not clear,” as Roberta Buiani writes in 2003, “whether the existence of the virtual museum will produce a final transformation of the museum as we know it, or, on the contrary, it will use Internet tools in a way that serve its traditional goals.”¹⁵⁷

Nevertheless, there is evidence which suggests that some online museums are moving towards the development of services and tools which have the potential to transform museum practice – a museum practice which places the user rather than the collection at the centre. One of the things one can observe is that developers of museum websites recognized the potential to *foster user participation* and to use the Web as a way to *cater to specific target audiences*

¹⁵³ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. *Museum education: past, present and future*. Towards the Museum of the Future. New European Perspectives. Ed. Roger Miles and Lauro Zavala. (London/New York: Routledge, 1994) pp. 133-146, (p.134).

¹⁵⁴ Werner Schweibenz, ‘Das virtuelle Museum. Überlegungen zum Begriff und Wesen des Museums im Internet’ *Conference Proceedings of the MAI-Tagung* (Museums and the Internet, 2001) www.mai-tagung.de/Maitagung+2001/schweibenz.pdf (12.2.2005).

¹⁵⁵ Dietz *et.al.* *Virtual Museum (of Canada): The Next Generation*, published by the Canadian Heritage Network (CHIN) http://www.chin.gc.ca/English/Members/Rethinking_Group/ (as of 20.4.2005).

¹⁵⁶ Roy McKeown, ‘Accessing the virtual museum: bringing museum information into cyberspace’ in *The New Review of Information Networking* (2003) pp.40-52 (p.42).

¹⁵⁷ Roberta Buiani, ‘Virtual museums and the Web: a dilemma of compatibility?’.

rather than an undifferentiated mass audience. Furthermore, through improved content management systems museums experimented with tools which allowed their users to *personalize content* in order to support a more meaningful interaction with online cultural content. They also saw the Web as a driver for the *development of a new relationship with their audiences*: through online discussion forums, for instance, museums aimed to get in closer contact with their audiences as well as foster communication between their users. Today there is also evidence which illustrates that museum websites also increasingly reflect a much more integrated approach to content production, i.e. an approach to the Web which doesn't see the online and the onsite as two separate entities, but as two spheres which potentially enhance the impact on each other. In order to unfold a theory of 'intellectual accessibility' of online museum content, the following section is going to unpack those five key ideas, just mentioned, which lay at the bottom of many museum websites further.

3.4.1 Fostering user-participation

Already in 1997 researchers in museums and New Media, such as Peter Walsh, recognized the Web's potential to change the communication between the museum and its audience from a monologue into a dialogue.¹⁵⁸ Many museologists shared this position. For McKenzie, the virtual museum, and in particular what she calls the *Learning Museum*, has the potential to open up the museum to multiple voices and negotiate meanings of museum objects where students in classrooms become the curators of virtual museums.¹⁵⁹ Dietz *et. al.*, also support this view, when they argue that the role of the public is changing in a sense that "the interactive capability of digital networks makes it possible for many people to tell their own stories through museums. As well as drawing on resources for their own purposes, they interpret them and contribute to them."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Peter Walsh, p.83.

¹⁵⁹ McKenzie quoted in Teather, 'A museum is a museum is a museum'.

¹⁶⁰ Dietz *et. al.*

However, even if museologists often talk about the potential benefits of using web-based technologies to enhance interaction between museum and audience, museums have not yet made much use of such technologies. Bowen *et. al.* argued in 2003, that so far “online forums are not well integrated in the sphere of museums. Curators have therefore not capitalized on widening their mandate and engaging visitors as well as museum professionals themselves in effective online interaction.”¹⁶¹ Dietz *et.al.* also state that so far “the virtual museum as a platform for communication and exchange remains neglected in terms of actual implementation.” John Pratty, editor of the 24 Hour Museum, seemed to support this, when he said that the virtual museum today is still largely orientated towards information provision rather than exploited for its potential in two-way communication.¹⁶²

One of the very early examples of Web usage for communicating with students was an experiment by Walsh of the Davis Museum and Cultural Centre. As early as 1997, Walsh recognized the potential of the Web to create social networks and to use these to make the information flow in museums much more two-way. He created an online network of students, scholars and curators, so that people were able to discuss the meaning of an object, which was supposed to go on display in the Davis Museum. Walsh’ project aimed to test the use of “the interactive potentials of the Web to change the one-way flow of information from art museum to visitor to a two-way flow which also moves from visitor to museum”.¹⁶³ The object in question was presented on the Web with additional information and possible interpretations. Web-based discussions between the people in Walsh’s network resulted in a collection of reflections of their thoughts on the meaning of this piece; and eventually, they were shaping the strategy of how the object was displayed and interpreted in the museum.

Walsh’s project demonstrated how the possibilities offered by new media technology might be exploited to facilitate and promote civic dialogue in the planning of museum displays and how museums can operate within networks of

¹⁶¹ Jonathan Bowen *et. al.*, ‘Online Museum Discussion Forums. What do we have? What do we need?’ (2003) <http://www.archimuse.com/mw2003/papers/bowen/bowen.html> (as of 20.4.2005).

¹⁶² John Pratty at the Spring School in New Media, University of Leicester 19.-20. April 2005.

¹⁶³ Peter Walsh, p.78.

information and knowledge exchange. This approach is very much in line with Fahy's argument that "enhanced museum communication networks between museums, universities and other research organisations will be of benefit to all groups and to the generation of new knowledge."¹⁶⁴

Another early example of how museums employed web-based technologies to enhance the two-way flow of communication between museum and audience was launched by the German Historical Museum Berlin (DHM). Arnulf Scriba, curator at the DHM, who is also in charge of the museum's website, has been responsible for the launch of *Collective Memory*. On this site users are encouraged to publish their personal stories of experiences in the Second World War.

In comparison with Walsh, Scriba though, has a very different approach to the Web. He argues that the prime goal of a museum website is to make objects and information on these accessible to a broad audience. In his view, key to the website is that it allows the museum to communicate information about German History, to the public. And even if he argues that, projects like the *Collective Memory* can be seen as a motor fostering a more intensive and more interactive relationship between museum and audience, he believes that a museum website is primarily a source of information and a marketing tool. "I do not believe that our museum website can work as a kind of platform of debate." Moreover, Scriba points out that it is really important to differentiate between what is happening in the museum and on the website. "Even if we value online projects, the exhibitions in the museum are a completely different business and are totally unrelated to and independent of what is happening online."¹⁶⁵

What comes out of the above is that these projects are based on two entirely different assumptions. For Walsh, the network was a means to foster communication with audiences, so as to bring about real change in museum practice. The Web here is regarded as a tool which can help bring about real change. For Scriba, on the other side, 'Collective Memory' is an online project

¹⁶⁴ Anne Fahy, p. 89.

¹⁶⁵ Interviewed by author, March 2006.

which exists as completely independent from the daily work of curators in the museum itself.

There are also two different assumptions made about the audience. For Walsh, the network offered a way to allow interested people to make a real impact upon the display strategies of a certain object. Users, therefore, are valued as real people. Scriba, in contrast, virtualizes the user and does not grant him to make a real impact on the museum.

Whereas British museums realise very innovative online projects, the Austrian and German museums seem to be more hesitant. The National Museums Liverpool recognized that “ICT projects and the rapid development of new technologies offer many new opportunities for museums to open up their collections and get visitors involved on different levels.” Therefore, they argue that they “need to look for creative partnerships, particularly linked with digital programmes, for example, the BBC have ambitious plans to work with museums, libraries in the future.”¹⁶⁶

In contrast to this very open attitude towards new ways of using digital media within the museum, Peter Stuibler from the Vienna Museum expressed a much more careful approach to online projects, arguing that they are very time consuming and thus too expensive. In their museum they therefore focus on projects, which foster dialogue with audiences on onsite activities. Their education department runs, for instance, programmes where they invite people to talk about exhibitions, certain subjects or objects.¹⁶⁷ This is not to say, however, that Stuibler does not see the Web as an agent for developing new relationships with audiences. It is just that he believes that it is the possibility users have to email museum professionals with enquiries, which can then “be dealt with quite

¹⁶⁶ The National Museums Liverpool in *Understanding the Future: Museums and the 21st Century – Responses to Consultation*
http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Publications/archive_2005/understanding_museums_21century_responses.htm (as of 26.11.2006).

¹⁶⁷ Peter Stuibler in Interview with author, June 2006.

quickly” by the relevant staff, where Stuiber sees the critical changes which have taken place in the museum audience relationship, since the onset of the Web.¹⁶⁸

Since the onset of the Web 2.0 one can find a number of examples of museums’ projects, which have explored the many different ways of how to allow users to participate in the generation of content for museum websites. To assess the scope and the real impact of ‘user-generated content’ in online museums could be worth an entire thesis itself. Due to the limited space here, just a few notable examples should be named: The V&A’s ‘Every Object Tells A Story,’ people are invited to produce short videos of an object of their choice. This video is then sent to the V&A’s editors and distributed to users as podcast.¹⁶⁹ The Ars Electronica’s ‘WikiMap Linz’ invites users to write pieces, or to upload to the Wiki, brief audio and video files featuring their experiences of the Town of Linz.¹⁷⁰ Both these projects depend upon the creativity of their users. It is their stories, and the way they choose to present and edit them, which makes or breaks the success of those projects. Similarly the ‘Moving here’ project by the National Archives. It invites users to write their experience of settling and living in the UK, hence the project is driven by the contributions of users.¹⁷¹

A very different approach to user-generated content is explored in the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.¹⁷² Here users are tagging objects in the collection. Hence, users are contributing to the way the content is structured on the website, through attaching terms to the objects they find appropriate. In comparison to ‘Every Object’ and ‘WikiMap,’ users are not writing their personal stories, but they are invited to participate in a process, which is normally driven by curators, namely to give meaning to objects, through labelling them. This not only aims to make content on a website easier to access for people who are not familiar with taxonomies, it also tells the museum something about their audiences. Museums could potentially learn to better understand their audiences, learn about how they make meaning, interpret and

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Every Object Tells a Story http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/1303_every_object (as of 2.1.2008).

¹⁷⁰ WikiMap Linz <http://wikimap.hotspotlinz.at/de/index.php> (as of 2.6.2007).

¹⁷¹ Moving here <http://www.movinghere.org.uk/> (as of 2.6.2007).

¹⁷² Powerhouse Museum Sydney <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com> (as of 2.6.2007).

make links between various objects. So that museums can become more visitor orientated, “museums need to know more not just about what people want to know, but why they want to know it.”¹⁷³ This is far removed from the anonymous, anarchic space the Web was at the beginning and it seems that one of the consequences of the Web 2.0 on museum websites is, that even museums, like commercial websites, are moving towards controlling and observing user-behaviour much more closely. Whether this is good or bad would again be a subject for a much larger research paper, and there is no space to go into this more thoroughly here. However, what should have come out of the above is that the Web 2.0 places online museums in front of new challenges. And it seems that what it all comes down to is the question: how can museums in a Web 2.0 environment foster user participation and engagement in the museum experience?

Museums are considered as the authority in their respective discipline and visitors trust the authenticity of their objects and value their publication of research on objects in their collections. As a Mori survey has shown “eight in ten of those who have ever used the Web say they have used it to search for specific information, and it is websites of more established organisations such as museums, libraries and archives which are more likely to be trusted by people. This is particularly in comparison to more commercial websites such as utility companies, travel agencies and internet-only retail companies.”¹⁷⁴ This shows that Web users trust online museums and it raises a big question: how sustainable is this high level of trust users have in museums, libraries and archives, if memory institutions start getting involved in the publication of unedited content by non-expert users?

A study on the reliability of Wikipedia conducted by the magazine *Nature* revealed that there are some factual errors, omissions and misleading statements in both, *Wikipedia* and *Britannica*.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, museums often learn that some of the objects in their collections turn out to be fakes after they have been

¹⁷³ Jennifer Trant, ‘When all you’ve got is ‘the real thing’.

¹⁷⁴ Mori survey commissioned by the Common Information Environment. ‘Trust in online resources’ (10.2.2005) <http://www.mori.com/polls/2004/cie.shtml> (as of 30.4.2006).

¹⁷⁵ BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/4840340.stm> (24.3.2006), (as of 3.7.2006).

displayed for decades as originals. Museum experts are human beings, who also make errors. Yet so far, museums have relied upon the judgment of experts to interpret objects in their care. Now, with the possibility to present collections online, thereby providing the possibility to open up processes of interpretation of material culture on a scale previously unknown, the question arises, whether museums would benefit from the knowledge of the wider online community or not. The tools to start a debate and to include contributions of users and to make processes of interpretation more transparent are here now, yet, at the same time, like in the case of the study by Nature magazine, mentioned above, which investigated the reliability of entries in *Wikipedia*, the question comes up, how the museum can ensure the quality and the reliability of content produced by non-expert users.

It is proposed that one should take a more differentiated approach to defining user participation. On one hand, this could mean that users are literally getting involved in content production. Examples of this have already been mentioned above. Through drawing upon a number of important examples of museum websites and literature in the area of study, the author proposes that the concept of fostering user participation is not restricted to activities, which explicitly invite the user to create content. Rather, while there may be some projects where this sort of interaction has proved to be successful, there is also space for other projects where the content production is driven by the museum. However, the way this content is chosen and edited aims to motivate the user to get a more involved, a more immediate and a more intellectually accessible museum experience.

User participation understood in this way has therefore not got anything to do with users writing and uploading content. Nor is it related to the idea that online museums can foster two-way communication between museum and audiences and among audiences themselves. Rather, it has to do with user-empowerment. It is based on the idea that a more informed user will automatically make more sense of the museums' offerings, which is supported by the research of Falk and Dierking, who argue that a visitor who feels comfortable in the galleries, who can easily orientate him/herself around the spaces, and has some sort of idea

what to expect in the galleries, will be more likely to understand the exhibition's narrative and as a consequence be able to take in more information, and make more meaning out of this information.¹⁷⁶

Roderick Davis argues that “one of the main barriers to visiting experienced by infrequent and non-visitors in particular, has to do with a lack of knowledge and awareness of those institutions and collections.”¹⁷⁷ Davies emphasises that “knowledge of, and information about, an institution is an important pre-requisite for visiting.” This he says is “particularly true for first-time visitors and has implications with respect to reaching new audiences.”¹⁷⁸ Falk and Dierking's research on learning and particularly in relation to learning in the museum also supports this, as it has revealed that learning and meaning-making is facilitated when visitors' expectations are fulfilled and when visitors come into the museum with some prior knowledge. Advertisers already use this type of anticipatory information to hype the release of consumer products or movies.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, Falk and Dierking argue that “people do not perceive information comparatively.” With this they mean that experienced visitors take up and remember much more information, in comparison to inexperienced visitors. “This,” they argue, “has nothing to do with intelligence and everything to do with experience and learning.”¹⁸⁰

Projects such as ‘Every Object’ and ‘WikiMap’ reflect a very literal translation or a technical approach to the concept of the Web as ‘platform of participation.’ While this might well be very successful, Falk and Dierking's research suggests that the use of online media for audience development and fostering a more involved and participatory audience must not be restricted to such a literal approach to user participation. Fostering a more participatory audience might also mean providing users with the intellectual ‘tools’ which help them to make more sense of what is exhibited. It's about demystifying the museum and making processes of interpretation which are behind display strategies more transparent.

¹⁷⁶ John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, *Learning from Museums. Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning* (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 2000), p. 115-118.

¹⁷⁷ Roderick Davies, ‘Overcoming barriers’, p.283.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Fostering a more engaged and participatory audience, therefore, has to do with empowerment and transparency.

As will become much clearer in the second part of this research, fostering a more informed, involved and participatory audience also has to do with adopting new communication styles and responding to user behaviours. As will be argued below, since the mid 1990s – that is, since the beginning of the commercial availability of the Web – museum professionals have tried to pursue strategies which placed visitors, his or her point of views, interests and needs at the heart of the online museum experience. Within a Web 2.0 environment, and especially with the change from the Web as information resource to medium of mass communication and the proliferation of AV content, museums seem to have a real opportunity to expand on these existing ideas of the user-driven museum. However, what this research shows is that the user-driven online museum does not necessarily need to be user-driven in terms of content production. Rather, this research makes explicit that museums should build upon the trust people have in their expertise and produce content that helps visitors to get more involved in culture.

3.4.2 Catering to specific target audiences

According to Hooper-Greenhill, one of the four key changes in museum practice is that “museum visitors are no longer thought of as an abstract mythical body the general public, but are seen to be made up of many individuals, who have characteristics, agendas and desires that can be researched.”¹⁸¹ Researchers in museums and New Media have reflected this recognition. Dietz *et. al.*, for instance, argued that the next generation of virtual museums should not address broad audiences but fine-grain groups. “Historically, museums have only addressed broad audiences. While occasionally museums have addressed programmes to a particular audience (primarily a particular age group or ethnic group), these activities have been addressed to very broad audiences and

¹⁸¹ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, ‘Changing Values in the Art Museum: rethinking communication and learning’ in *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 6,1, (2000) pp.9-31 (p.29).

constitute a small portion of a museum activity. But new technological developments will allow the museum to address fine grain groups with a level of discourse that is appropriate for that group.”¹⁸² In a first step of development one could observe this on websites which offered different sections, which addressed specific target groups: The 24 hour museum’s ‘Zone of kids’, as well as sections ‘for museums’, ‘for teachers’ and ‘for volunteers’. The Geffrey Museum similarly has ‘kids’, ‘teachers’ and ‘parents’ zones.¹⁸³ The V&A has a section for ‘Schools and Students’ as well as sections relating to particular ethnic groups, i.e. the ‘South Asian Programme’, the ‘Chinese Programme’ and the ‘Black Heritage Programme’. Moreover, many museum home pages have links to their shops, thus attracting online shoppers, or links to their press office for journalists.

Each of these different virtual spaces allows bringing the same subject, be it an exhibition or an educational project, tailored to a specific target audience. As Dietz *et. al.* put it:

“this would mean that the same basic curatorial and exhibit information might be presented quite differently to particular audiences such as: specific linguistic minorities, specific ethnic groups, middle school students, people without an art history background, etc.”

Another way of tailoring virtual spaces is to provide educational material for specific target groups. With their free online resources the Petrie website offers the ‘Digital Egypt for universities’ which is aimed at university learning and teaching, and introduces all periods and themes of Egypt from the prehistoric to Islamic times, with 3D reconstructions of selected sites represented in the Petrie Museum. Even though it says that it is done for universities, by implication these resources could be applied within any context of life-long learning. ‘Textiles in the Petrie Museum’ is aimed at 14-16 year old students studying Textiles (English GCSE) and designed to support individual study. ‘Egypt in Africa – pack for school visits’ is a resource designed for teachers of 7-11 year olds (Key

¹⁸² Dietz et al. p.30.

¹⁸³ Geffrey Museum <http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/kidszone/> (as of 2.5.2005).

Stage 2 of the English National Curriculum) in order to be used in conjunction with a booked museum visit. Finally the ‘DIY’ option offers resources for teachers who wish to put together their own teaching material using the Petrie museum’s material.¹⁸⁴

Related to the idea of providing digital content for specific target groups is the idea to allow users a more personalized online experience. For instance, the Petrie Museum’s website offers a feature which allows users to personalize content and to involve audiences’ voices within the museum. Their site has a section called ‘Personal Highlights’ where any user can save and then put on display a selection of works from the database and comment on it.

This feature allows people not only to juxtapose works according to their view, or to redefine the meaning of the object selected, but also allows them to voice their opinion. Similar to this is the Virtual Museum of Canada’s (VMC) ‘My personal museum’. Users can search the collection, save objects and write texts next to them. Features of this kind were often related to an empowerment of the visitor, who becomes a curator. These kinds of features were also associated with the notion of the visitor-driven museum as opposed to the curator-driven museum.

The VMC and Petrie Museum’s examples are quite old in relation to the fast moving IT world. Tools which support the personalization of Web content have moved on quite a bit since then. However, it is important to keep these sorts of examples in mind so as to illustrate more clearly where issues around personalization originated and to make it clearer how they have moved on since.

As observed by Parry and Arbach, “a paradigm of increased *personalization*, *localization* and constructivism characterised by a greater awareness of and responsiveness to the experiences, preferences and context of the distance

¹⁸⁴ Petrie Museum <http://www.petrie.ucl.ac.uk/index2.html> (as of 2.5.2005).

learner” is emerging. (Original emphasis) ¹⁸⁵ It is very likely that tools for and consequently concepts around issues of personalization will develop in the future, but as far as this research is concerned, it understands the key idea behind personalization of Web content, in reference to Parry and Arbach as well as Sylvia Filippini-Fatoni. The latter argues that “differentiated access to information and services according to the users’ profile, make facilities more relevant and useful for users.”¹⁸⁶ This also corresponds to the sentiments of Fiona Cameron, who argues that the second generation of online collections and their “trend towards tailored and adaptive responses to different user situations,” represents, “a transition to a framework where the user can create new organisations of information and contribute to the development of the knowledge environment.”¹⁸⁷

In a paper delivered in 2003, Filippini-Fatoni lists a number of reasons why personalization can improve the user experience. Filippini-Fatoni argues that it can be a “useful tool in the selection and filtering of information, facilitating navigation and increasing the speed of access as well as the likelihood that a user’s search is successful.” Moreover, it “can help museums respond to various and different needs,” “help to recreate the *human element* that listens to the visitor with understanding by offering an individual touch,” and that it “could also be a useful tool in the creation and development of *online communities* for museums.” But there are also advantages for the museum: through “providing tailored content to people with specific interests, museums can identify homogenous communities of users with the same concerns and needs.”¹⁸⁸

Although they do not provide evidence for this, Bowen *et. al.* argue that “by providing targeted information to users with different profiles and interests, personalized systems are much more likely to satisfy the visitor, who, as a

¹⁸⁵ Ross Parry and Nadia Arbach, ‘The Localized Learner: Acknowledging Distance and Situatedness in On-Line Museum Learning’ in *Museum and the Web 2005* <http://www.archimuse.com/mw2005/papers/parry/parry.html> (as of 20.5.2007).

¹⁸⁶ Silvia Filippini-Fantoni ‘Personalization through IT in museums. Does it really work? The case of the Marble Museum Website’ *Ecole du Louvre, ICHIM* (Paris, 2003) http://www.archimuse.com/publishing/ichim_03.html (as of 20.5.2005).

¹⁸⁷ Fiona Cameron, ‘World of Museums. Wired collections – the next generation’ in *Museum Management and Curatorship* 19,3 (2001) pp.309-315 (p. 310).

¹⁸⁸ Silvia Filippini-Fatoni.

consequence, is stimulated to come back and reuse the system or to encourage other people to try it as well.” And this is why they argue that personalization is also a fundamental *marketing* tool for the development of visitor fidelity, as well as new audiences.”¹⁸⁹ Currently, one of the most established and prevalent of these personalizing technologies on the Web is RSS.¹⁹⁰

The kind of tailoring of Web content for specific target groups to which Dietz *et al.* refer is related to online new media pre-Web 2.0, yet they do present a good starting point for thinking about why and how museums should think about curating digital content according to the various needs and interests of different user groups. Nevertheless, in terms of the ‘old’ Web, catering to diverse audiences usually meant that certain pages of a website would be targeted towards specific user groups, such as sections for kids, other sections for teachers or the press, etc. In a Web 2.0 environment, and specifically with RSS, new ways of tailoring content as well as allowing users to personalize the online experience come up.

Today RSS feeds are mainly used to subscribe to news websites, weblogs and podcasts. Ola and Niclas argue that news aggregators “are especially popular in the weblogging community as a means of simplifying the task of keeping track

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ RSS is short for *Really Simple Syndication* or *Rich Site Summary*. To put it in very simple terms, RSS is a file format that allows easy sharing of Web content. Traditional websites are written in HTML code, which is translated by the browser into human readable language. XML, in comparison is a meta-language, which, is not intended to be read by the end-user, as is the case with HTML. Websites contain content, which is saved as HTML files. Feeds save these contents in standardised XML files. The key point with RSS is that the XML files cannot only be read by the browser, but they can also be received and reworked by other programmes. Because of this, the user can receive and read the content of a website within a different programme application rather than the original Website. In other words, RSS is a file format for syndicating content of websites. Syndicating Web content means that one can make content on one website accessible on another. While acknowledging that RSS has found many different applications in a range of fields, this technology is particularly relevant for news websites and other information which is frequently updated. In general, the RSS format provides Web content or summaries of Web content together with links to the full versions of the content, and other meta-data. This information is delivered as an XML file called an RSS feed, webfeed, RSS stream, or RSS channel. Newsfeeds can either be accessed by subscription and retrieved within HTML pages or with special programmes called newsreaders. Newsreaders can be web-based, desktop applications, web-browsers or email-clients. Newsfeeds can be accessed on a variety of hardware such as Computers, PDAs, or iPods.

of updates to a large number of interesting Web logs.”¹⁹¹ Kleske argues that the final breakthrough of RSS came with the onset of the blogging boom in 2002.¹⁹² However, it is interesting to note that while many other authors propose that the increasing popularity of RSS is due to the increasing use of weblog technology, research from Nielsen/NetRatings found that only 11% of blog readers are actually using RSS for content consumption.¹⁹³

Another study also shows that even if the use of RSS is increasing, it is still not widespread. “The latest Forrester Research study claims that only 2 percent of all online households in America are using RSS.”¹⁹⁴ It is interesting to note as well that, in comparison to these 2% of Americans, it is 34.4% of the Chinese Internet Population who use RSS.¹⁹⁵ Even if only 2,689 people were polled, it shows that there are regional differences in terms of the use of this technology.

Tim O’Reilly argues that “RSS is the most significant advance in the fundamental architecture of the Web since early hackers realised that CGI could be used to create database-backed websites.”¹⁹⁶ Others, such as Brad Stone, argue that it does not change the net much. In his view, “RSS is a useful tool to stream the updates from your favourite sites directly to you. But the net is still an active medium for attention-starved individuals. We like to click around, visit instead of be visited.”¹⁹⁷

In 2004 Darlene Fichter argued that it saves time and is convenient because information gets to the user immediately. Moreover, it allows the user to be in

¹⁹¹ Anderson, Ola and Niclas Larsson, ‘RSS – The Future of internal communication?’ (Mai 2005), p.15, <http://www.vxu.se/msi/forskn/exarb/2005/05054.pdf> (as of 25.3.2006).

¹⁹² Kleske, p.42.

¹⁹³ MarketingStudies.net Blog: http://rssdiary.marketingstudies.net/content/only_11_of_blog_readers_use_rss_according_to_niel_sennetratings.php?src=e33 (as of 25.3.2006).

¹⁹⁴ MarketingStudies.net Blog: http://rssdiary.marketingstudies.net/content/only_2_percent_use_rss.php?src=e33 (as of 25.3.2006).

¹⁹⁵ MarketingStudies.net Blog: http://rssdiary.marketingstudies.net/content/cat_rss_statistics.php (as of 25.3.2006).

¹⁹⁶ Tim O’Reilly, ‘What is Web 2.0. Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software’ *Oreillynet* (30.9.2005) <http://oreillynet.com/lpt/a/6228> (as of 6.4.2006). CGI (common gateway interface) is a protocol, which is used to interface an external application software with a Web server.

¹⁹⁷ Brad Stone.

control of what he/she subscribes to, it gives the content a structured format, and it notifies the user when new information is available.¹⁹⁸ It is interesting to point out that, even in the fast changing world of IT, all of these arguments are still valid two years later. Ola and Niclas (2005) argue that “By using RSS, information on the Web becomes easier to find and Web developers can spread their information easier to special interest groups.”¹⁹⁹ Kleske (2006) adds to this that the biggest advantage of aggregators is the possibility to centrally observe, a large number of continuously changing websites.²⁰⁰

RSS is one of the key Web 2.0 technologies because it allows the easy distribution of Web content and provides the user with an easy to use tool that saves time, because RSS feeds can be subscribed to by users, who receive notification of website updates in their newsreaders. This feature saves the user time, as he can visit the sites subscribed to within one single interface. It is also convenient as updates are immediately visible to the user as they come available. Moreover, RSS feeds support the personalization of Web content, because it puts the user in control of what he decides to subscribe to or not, without having to hand out personal details such as email addresses, as is the case with the traditional email newsletter and related services.

Ola and Niclas mention as one of the disadvantages of RSS, that often “users do not have the knowledge how they shall use the RSS-reader and therefore the full potential of RSS is not used.” This seems to be confirmed by a Nielsen/NetRatings research (2005), which revealed that “the majority of respondents to the survey were less familiar with RSS feeds. Among the other respondents, 23 percent understood RSS but did not use it, while 66 percent either did not understand the technology or had never heard of it.”²⁰¹ Another possible disadvantage they see is that “when RSS becomes more spread the number of available feeds increases and the easiness to subscribe can cause

¹⁹⁸ Andersson and Larsson, p. 17-18.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁰⁰ Kleske, p.42.

²⁰¹ MarketingStudies.net Blog:

http://rssdiary.marketingstudies.net/content/only_11_of_blog_readers_use_rss_according_to_niel_sennetratings.php?src=e33 (as of 25.3.2006).

problems. Users can subscribe to too many feeds and the result is that the user overloads her/himself with information.”²⁰²

Tate Online’s RSS Feeds

Figure 9 shows the RSS feeds offered by Tate Online in 2007. Users can subscribe to three categories of feeds, according to their interests. In the first category users are informed about news at a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Secondly, users can choose to subscribe to different type of activities such as e.g. exhibitions or symposia & events. The third category is addressed to target groups, such as families or teachers.


One can only imagine how many news items Tate Online produces in a month’s time. Taking into account how overloaded with unsolicited bulk messages and commercial newsletters most peoples’ email accounts are, it becomes clear how useful it is to order news content in this way. It allows users to select only those items, which are of interest to them.

Web Feeds

Web feeds provide a way for websites to indicate that they have been updated. Users subscribe to feeds and are notified when new content is added to a web site.

Tate’s Web Feeds

Time:

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Today at Tate |  This month at Tate Modern |
|  This week at Tate |  This month at Tate Liverpool |
|  This month at Tate Britain |  This month at Tate St Ives |

Activity:

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Exhibitions |  Symposia & seminars |
|  Talks & discussions |  Film |
|  Courses & workshops |  Music & performance |

Audience:

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Families |  Free events |
|  Young Tate |  Events with a hearing loop |
|  Tate Teachers |  Events with BSL interpretation |
|  Upcoming events webcasts |  Events with visual description |
|  Recently archived webcasts |  Press releases |

Figure 8 Tate’s RSS Feeds²⁰³

²⁰² Andersson and Larsson, p.19.

²⁰³ Tate Online <http://www.tate.org.uk/rss/> (as of 10.11.2007).

3.5 Re-conceptualizing the museum – audience relationship

Looking at the different types of museum websites, whether the Marketing Museum, aiming to make people come into the museum, or the Learning Museum, aiming to allow users an online learning experience; whether a museum website is modelled around architectural spaces of the corresponding museum or whether it is taking a thematic approach; whether complimentary site, which have a strong promotional element or complementary site, which offer genuinely alternative channels and experiences to the onsite museum; all of these different types are based on different set of assumptions of what the purpose of a museum website is and who the imaginary audience may be. And what it all seems to come down to is that museums are engaging in online projects in order to serve their audiences in the way they consider best.

While some museums have been more successful with implementing the user-centered online museum than others, one can say that the user, the visitor or the potential visitor has always been at the heart of concepts of online museums. One can therefore say that there were online museums which from the start aimed to realise some of the goals of ‘New Museology.’ In this respect one should not forget what Hooper-Greenhill argued, namely that “the biggest challenge facing museums at present time is the re-conceptualisation of the museum/audience relationship. After almost a century of rather remote relationships between museums and the public, museums today are seeking ways to embrace their visitors more closely.”²⁰⁴ This seems to be exactly what is at the centre of a successful museum website.

The same conclusions might be made when looking at the key ideas that drive museum websites. Fostering user participation is not something that came along with Web 2.0. As the above section has shown, people in the late 1990s already

²⁰⁴ Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.1.

saw the Web as a means to integrate the user into processes of museum practice that are usually left to experts. Even though it was argued that museums have not really exploited the possibilities of integrating the user into meaning making processes on a large scale, the idea was there right from the beginning. Now, within the context of the Web 2.0, museums are experimenting with new ways of integrating the user in the museum. ‘WikiMap Linz’ and ‘Every Object Tells a Story’ were two examples named. Again, it is only the technologies used and the technological tools to realise such projects, which are new, not the call to integrate users more closely into the museum. An important question that was identified in this context had to do with trust and reliability. In other words, how sustainable is people’s trust in museum’s online resources, if users are getting involved in content production? The research argued that while this is an important question it is impossible to evaluate it further at this point. We are only beginning to see what is made possible with technologies such as Wikis and blogs.

However, what this research suggests is that one has to take a more differentiated approach to the idea of ‘fostering user participation’ in the museum. This must not be restricted to projects around the ideas of ‘user-generated content.’ Rather, it was proposed that research on how people make meaning of exhibitions in museums, suggests that a more informed visitor will have a much more valuable experience. Therefore, it is suggested that audiovisual media might help to provide visitors with the intellectual tools that allows them a more engaging, participatory and accessible experience of the museum.

What also becomes clear, therefore, is that there are some regional differences in terms of what people working in museums see as the key rationale behind museum websites. Museums in the German speaking countries of the EU still focus more on using the Web as a way to publish collection information or as marketing tool, whereas in the Anglo-Saxon world the emphasis has clearly

shifted from collection-, or object-centred presentation towards a more story-based approach.²⁰⁵

Inge Scholz-Strasser, director of the Freud Museum in Vienna, for instance, believes that the prime purpose of their website is to inform users about how to get to the museum, what they are able to see there and what the historical and scientific background of their activities are.²⁰⁶ The key purpose of the website for Peter Stuiber, press officer at the Vienna Historical Museum, is to provide basic information for those users, which do not yet know the museum. Secondly, “users who are familiar with the museum already, may inform themselves about exhibitions in planning, or they can use other services, such as information for teachers, the research offerings of the museum etc.”²⁰⁷ Arnulf Scriba, curator at the German Historical Museum Berlin, sees the primary purpose of museum websites in the delivery of information and particularly points to the importance of websites as marketing tools. He does not believe in the idea that “websites can function as social spaces or as medium of communication between museum and audience,” and he also doesn’t think that “a museum website can work as a platform of debate.”²⁰⁸ Robert Pfundner, historian at the Austrian Mediathek, believes that the core purpose of digitizing their stock is more about long-term conservation of the data rather than anything else.²⁰⁹ The key purpose of providing online access of the Mediathek, Pfundner argues, is not only to increase visitors to their onsite venue, but more importantly “to reach those who need us and our audiovisual Material, which they can easily use here in our

²⁰⁵ This became apparent not only through reviewing, compare and contrasting websites of museums, but also, and most clearly in interviews conducted with museum professionals including Andreas Bienert (State Museums Berlin), Christian Dirks (Jewish Museum Berlin), Alex Khaelss Khaelssberg (BA-CA Kunstforum Vienna), Robert Pfundner (Mediathek Vienna), Jon Pratty (24 Hour Museum Brighton) Peter Samis (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), Inge Scholz-Strasser (Freud Museum Vienna), Arnulf Scriba (German Historical Museum Berlin), Gerfried Stocker (Ars Electronica Center Linz), Toby Travis (Victoria and Albert Museum London), Wolfgang Schreiner (Museum of Modern Art Vienna). Informal conversations with other museum staff at conferences such as the UK Museum and the Web, EVA Berlin and MAI-Tagung underscored the opinions gathered during research interviews.

²⁰⁶ Inge Scholz-Strasser in interview with author, June 2006.

²⁰⁷ Peter Stuiber in interview with author, June 2006.

²⁰⁸ Arnulf Scriba in interview with author, March 2006.

²⁰⁹ Robert Pfundner in interview with author, June 2006.

archive in Vienna.”²¹⁰ The above shows that, despite some notable examples, the paradigm of the “Marketing Museum” is in many ways still valid today.

Sections 3.3 to 3.5 looked at the main types of museum websites and the key ideas that drive them. They looked at the nature of changes that museum websites have gone through over time with particular focus on developments of the Web 2.0. Section 3.6 examines some of the consequences of the Web 2.0 in the way museums present and distribute content online. It will analyse three important changes that can be observed on some of the museum websites, which are clearly at the cutting edge of developments. First, this has to do with how museums distribute content and how they have begun to use video and photo sharing platforms to increase their visibility on the Web and to service to new types of audiences. Secondly, the present study will assess the notion of the museum, as producer and finally, it will analyse the shift from the object-centred to the story-based website.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

3.6 Towards the ‘channel model’

Previously ²¹¹	Emerging
A museum’s collection is presented on the museums’ respective website	Museums use various channels of distribution e.g. <i>YouTube</i> , <i>Flickr</i> , <i>iTunes</i>
Objects on a museum’s website correspond to objects in the respective museum’s collection	‘The museum as Producer’ Museums go far beyond the presentation of the collection, and produce new types programmes for those new types of distribution channels.

Figure 9 Towards the ‘channel model of a website’

Another important development that one can observe in more recent times, and particularly with the rise of social networking sites, is that museums are beginning to use a variety of different online platforms to distribute content. Until very recently, as indicated in Figure 8, the usual approach to seeking objects online from, e.g. the National Gallery London, was to ‘go’ to the website of the National Gallery. When one wanted to learn about the Tate’s collection one ‘went’ on Tate Online. With the rise of social networking sites, such as *YouTube* and *Flickr*, this logic is changing.

The Tate Gallery, for instance, published a number of videos in conjunction with their Gilbert & George exhibition at Tate Modern. One could access some of those videos on Tate Online, another in form of a podcast through iTunes, and again others were made available through YouTube.

²¹¹ With ‘previously’ the approximately ten years after the earliest museum websites in the mid 1990s are meant. With ‘emerging’ those museum websites are meant, which developed since then and which incorporated services that are related to the Web 2.0.

Tate Online Tate Britain Tate Modern Tate Liverpool Tate St Ives

GILBERT & GEORGE MAJOR EXHIBITION 15 FEBRUARY – 7 MAY 2007

home support us forums tickets shop online

Technology from BT

Search

Tate Online together with BT

**ABOUT VISITING INFORMATION BOOK TICKETS EVENTS & EDUCATION
ROOM GUIDE FILMS CATALOGUE SHOP FURTHER RESOURCES**

Tate Modern

- Visiting Information
- About
- Explore Tate Modern
- Collection Displays
- Exhibitions
- Future Exhibitions
- Past Exhibitions
- Events & Education
- Eating & Drinking
- The Building
- Corporate Events

Tate Collection

Tate Learning

Tate Research

Film 1: Gilbert & George introduce their exhibition.
Film 2: Gilbert & George explain how they keep track of their source material, indexing everything.
Film 3: Gilbert & George never show their sketches publicly, but here, the artists offer a private view.
Film 4: Gilbert & George discuss their use of computers to design their pictures.

[Film 1 transcript](#) | [Film 2 transcript](#) | [Film 3 transcript](#) | [Film 4 transcript](#) [Film Credits](#)

Figure 10 Gilbert and George video on Tate Online²¹²

iTunes

LIBRARY

Podcasts

Podcast	Time	Release Date	Artist	Album	Category
TATE ETC.	2:05	5/1/07	Tate	TATE ETC.	Visual Arts
Tate Events	31:07	4/5/07	Tate	Tate Events	Visual Arts
Tate Shots	4:30/07	4/30/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	Visual Arts
Issue 1: Performance: Highlights of Martin Creed's gig at Tate Modern	5:07	2/27/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 1: In the Studio: Gilbert & George discuss their new 'Bomb Pictures'	4:45	2/27/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 1: New Work: Mark Wallinger explores the art of protest	4:28	2/27/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 1: Vox Pops: Views from Tate visitors	1:39	2/27/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 1: Story of a Masterpiece: Story of a Masterpiece: The Kiss	4:33	2/27/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 1: Current Exhibition: Paul Farley on Tate Liverpool's 'Centre of the Creative Universe'	5:20	2/27/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 2: Work in Focus: Dan Graham on the paintings of John Martin	3:31	3/29/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 2: Performance: A 'solid-light' film by Anthony McCall	1:52	3/29/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 2: Current Exhibition: Amrita Sher-Gil, one of India's most significant artists	4:39	3/29/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 2: Meet the Artist: Thomas Hirschhorn on what it means to be an artist	2:41	3/29/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 2: Current Exhibition: Cartoonist Martin Rowson on Hogarth's London	6:01	3/29/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 2: Performance: Matt Mullican performs while under hypnosis	4:52	3/29/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 3: Performance: The art of everyday behaviour	4:33	4/30/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 3: Work in Focus: Toby Litt chooses a work by Francis Bacon	3:33	4/30/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 3: Meet the Artist: Francis Alÿs on artists as clowns	4:23	4/30/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 3: Performance: Fireworks by Yangjiang Group	4:40	4/30/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 3: Current Exhibition: Contemporary Art from China	3:50	4/30/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
Issue 3: In the Studio: Martin Parr on photographing Britain	3:30	4/30/07	Tate Shots	Tate Shots	
TdZ - Audiomagazin	10:55	12/1/06	Matthias Schmidt	TdZ - Audiomagazin	Performing Arts
Telegraph Insider Gallery Guide	16:32	1/31/07	The Daily Telegraph	Telegraph Insider ...	Arts
Telegraph Podcast	19:54	5/4/07	The Daily Telegraph	Telegraph Podcast	News
Ten O'Clock News	6:17	2/8/07	BBC 1	Ten O'Clock News	News & Politics
The Andy Warhol Museum podcasts	12:13	12/3/06	Youth Publications team	The Andy Warhol ...	Arts & Entertainment
The Art Gallery of Knoxville	10:32	2/1/06	Bernard Brunon	The Art Gallery of ...	Arts
The Arts Of Honolulu	10:32	2/1/06	Jason Tag	The Arts Of Honolulu	Arts & Entertainment
The British Museum - Middle East Now	31:35	9/22/06	British Museum	The British Museum - ...	Visual Arts
The National Gallery of Canada Podcast	2:11	6/8/06	National Gallery of Canada	The National Gallery ...	Visual Arts
The National Gallery Podcast	7:21	5/1/07	The National Gallery	The National Gallery	Arts
The History Network	12:36	4/20/07	The History Network	The History Network	Education
The John Hansard Gallery Podcast	13:20	4/27/07	The John Hansard Gallery	The John Hansard ...	Visual Arts
The Metropolitan Museum of Art Special Exhibition Podcast	12:54	2/16/07	The Metropolitan Museum of Art, ...	The Metropolitan ...	Visual Arts
The National Gallery of Canada Podcast	2:11	6/8/06	National Gallery of Canada	The National Gallery ...	Visual Arts
The National Gallery Podcast	7:21	5/1/07	The National Gallery	The National Gallery	Arts
The Newark Museum - Objects Of Desire: 500 Years of Jewelry	0:57	8/30/06	Ulysses Dietz	The Newark Museum ...	Podcasting
The Observer Film Weekly on Guardian Unlimited	1:12:42	2/23/07	Guardian Unlimited	The Observer Film ...	The Observer Film ...
The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York	9:47	12/11/06	Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum	The Solomon R. G. ...	Arts
TheKnowledge	36:20	5/2/07	Times Online	TheKnowledge	arts
Towneley Hall Podcast	19:56	5/8/06	Towneley Hall Museum	Towneley Hall Pod.	Education
Van Gogh and Britain Podcraator	2:37	7/8/06	National Galleries of Scotland	Van Gogh and Brit.	Podcasting

Nothing Selected

Unsubscribe Settings

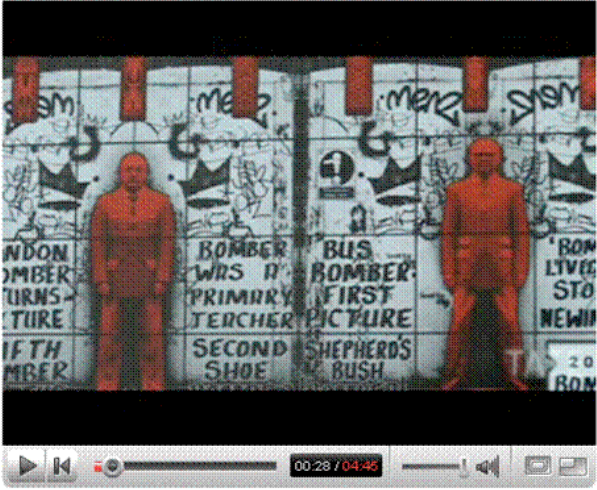
Report a Concern Podcast Directory Refresh

1320 items, 11 days, 12.28 GB

Figure 11 Gilbert and George podcast on iTunes

²¹² Tate Online <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/gilbertandgeorge/> (as of 4. May 2007).

Gilbert & George on 'Six Bomb Pictures'



The video player shows two figures in red suits standing in front of a wall covered in graffiti. The graffiti includes phrases like 'BOMBER', 'BUS', 'BOMBER', 'STO', 'NEW', 'BOM', 'BOMBER', 'WRS', 'PRIMRY', 'TERCHER', 'PICTURE', 'SECOND', 'SHOE', 'SHEPHERD'S', 'BUSH', '20', 'BOM'. The video player interface includes a progress bar at 00:28 / 04:46, a volume icon, and a play button.

Added March 05, 2007
 From [tateshots](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#)
 Provided By: [tateshots](#)
 DIRECTOR
 British artists Gilbert & George invi... [\(more\)](#)
 Category [People & Blogs](#)
 Tags [art](#) [gallery](#) [exhibition](#) [artist](#) [\(more\)](#)
 URL <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiugVmy78SQ>
 Embed `<object width="425" height="350"><param name="`

[Related](#) [More from this user](#) [Playlists](#)

Showing 1-4 of 4 [See All Videos](#)

[Spectacular fireworks display at Tate Liverpool](#)
 04:40
 From: [tateshots](#)
 Views: 5

[Gilbert & George on 'Six Bomb Pictures'](#)
 04:45
 From: [tateshots](#)
 Views: 1000
 << **Now Playing**

[Mark Wallinger on State Britain, 2007](#)
 04:27
 From: [tateshots](#)
 Views: 239

Rate this video:
 ★★★★★
 4 ratings

[Save to Favorites](#) [Share Video](#) [Flag as Inappropriate](#)
[Add to Groups](#) [Post Video](#)

Views: 1,000 Comments: 4 Favorited: 10 times
 Honors: 0 Links: 5 Responses: 1

Figure 12 Gilbert and George video on YouTube²¹³

To place the Tate's video on *YouTube* in a broader context one has to look at the history of Tate Online. In the year 2000 the Tate Modern and Tate Online launched a series of webcasts that were closely linked to public events, largely conferences, talks and symposia. Initially the material was generated by the Tate Modern's Interpretation and Education departments. Within eighteen months the content expanded to include Tate Britain's modern and contemporary public events. The programme was focused on modern and contemporary art, but has delivered programmes in conjunction with the education departments at both the Tate Modern and Tate Britain.²¹⁴

One of the reasons that the Tate started webcasting was that the museum was interested in providing extended educational interpretation materials in digital format. Kelli Dipple, who is responsible for webcasting at the Tate explains that

²¹³ YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiugVmy78SQ> (as of 4. May 2007).

²¹⁴ Kelli Dipple in interview with author, June 2006.

“in the early days, leading up to the launch of Tate Modern, there was some consultancy and research done, which evidenced the fact that Tate actually didn’t have any digital content at all; and webcasting, which was obviously in a very different context in the year 2000 than it is in 2006, was put forward as a way to start establishing a body of digital content for those purposes.”²¹⁵

In 2001, when the Tate received sponsorship from British Telecom, a new department was created. The department of *Digital Programmes* was created to set up a “high-level strategy and co-ordinating the delivery of the Tate’s public-facing digital content.”²¹⁶ According to Jemima Rellie, the business plan of Tate Online explicitly stated that the website should “function as a sixth site for the Tate, featuring a distinct and identifiable programme, appropriate to the medium.”²¹⁷

This approach places Tate Online on almost an equal level as their offline sites in London, Liverpool and St.Ives. Tate Online is run by its own department, liaises with all the other departments, particularly with Information Systems, Collections and Photography. Furthermore, it runs its own online public programmes, and has its own archive for these programmes. The three key objectives of Tate Online originally were: e-learning, net art and collection. 21% of visitors to Tate Online have stated that their reason for visiting the site was for learning purposes. Therefore, Tate Online has hired an e-learning curator, to develop an e-learning strategy, so that “key educational audiences are both identified and catered for. Importantly, the initiatives are designed to be self-contained, and not to rely on the ability to visit the offline galleries.”²¹⁸

This shows that Tate Online’s objectives, right from the start, evolved around the question of how one can produce new type of content, so as to meet the needs of a user, who is not necessarily a visitor to the onsite venue. As will become

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Jemima Rellie, ‘Tate Online: Towards a third generation of museum Website’ <http://www.ichim.org/ichim03/PDF/080C.pdf> (as of 24.9.2004).

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ Kelli Dipple in interview with author, June 2006.

clearer as the thesis unfolds, this disconnection of online content from the onsite museum is becoming more important in a Web 2.0 environment and especially with the proliferation of AV content. Another aspect that should be pointing out here is that the aim to become involved in webcasting was driven by the wish to increase the Tate's digital content. It was content-driven rather than technology driven. This is an interesting point, because later on Case Study 1 will show that one of the key reasons that museums started to get into podcasting was driven by their aim to stay on or get to the cutting edge of technological developments. As will become much clearer in Case Study 1, podcasts that are driven by the mere wish to be on top of technological developments rarely turn out interesting programmes in comparison to those which are clearly driven by the aim to create innovative digital content.

During the fieldwork of this research *YouTube* was not heavily used by museums, the Brooklyn Museum in New York²¹⁹ and the UK's 24 Hour Museum²²⁰ were two other examples. But none of them had such innovative programmes as the Tate. At the beginning of the fieldwork for this research, podcasting was hardly used by museums. Towards the end of the fieldwork, there were more than hundred-twenty museum podcasts listed in iTunes. Within a very short timespan many museums across the world began with the production of AV content and distributed it as podcast. Since, it is technically very easy to transfer an existing video onto *YouTube*, and because the use of *YouTube* is free of charge, it is highly likely that more and more museums will use such platforms to increase their Internet visibility in the future. However, at this point, it is too early to forecast what the real opportunities are for museums in using platforms such as *YouTube* for audience development.

Nonetheless, one can draw one important conclusion in respect to the context of this research. Museums such as MoMA and Tate are not merely transferring existing content, but produce new types of content, suggesting that content, which is disconnected from the context of the website of the museum, need to reflect the separation. MoMA's video clip of the Doug Aitken exhibition is not a

²¹⁹ Brooklyn Museum New York <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/> (as of 6.6.2007).

²²⁰ 24hourmuseum <http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk> (as of 6.6.2007).

programme for concentrated listening; rather, the 60s clip provides the viewer with a very brief snapshot, giving an idea of the aesthetic of the artists work. This leads to the conclusion that an assumption is made about the imaginary target audience: namely, a user of *YouTube* might have a different expectation of content compared to someone visiting the website of MoMA. Someone who has deliberately chosen to go to MoMA's website has a different expectation of content compared to someone who accidentally came upon the Doug Aitken video in YouTube. And it seems that it is hoped that this person would become interested in finding out more about this exhibition. One of the consequences of the possibility to use a variety of different online platforms to distribute content is that museums are experimenting creatively in producing new types of content. As regards Tate Online one can even go as far as saying that the museum is acting like a TV and film producer. The next section is going to develop this concept further.

3.7 Tate Media: The museum as producer

Some museums use the Web to distribute content, which already exist in digital format. Others produce new type of content specifically for their online audiences. This section is concerned with the latter. The aim of this section is to explain what is meant by the notion of the 'museum as producer' and to illustrate how some museums have developed AV content, which for the museum sector, represents a new type of content. It will be suggested that when looking at the formats of a range of AV content produced by museums, one can observe that there is a new trend emerging: museums' AV clips are following a format, which is new to museums, but not invented by them.

Tate Shots, for instance, is similar to a brief documentary, as seen on TV. The format and structure of the National Gallery's monthly podcasts is similar to news programmes. MoMA's video on YouTube, advertising Doug Aitken's show, references trailers familiar to TV and cinema viewers; the special exhibition podcasts of the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis seem to be based on the format of radio shows.

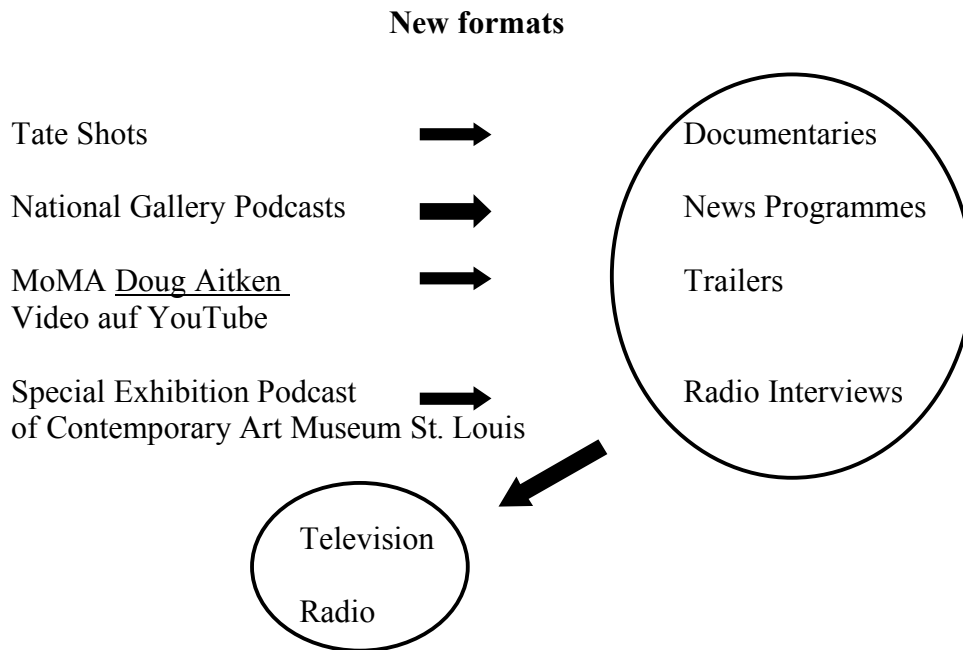


Figure 13 The museum as producer

As regards the Tate, this development has been happening within the context of establishing a new initiative called Tate Media. This is a directive s looking at cross-platform distribution which links the assets, skills, experience and resources of *Digital Programmes*, which is the website Tate Online, the magazine publishing *Tate etc.*, as well as co-productions for television, and looking forward into digital television content and high definition video content.²²¹

With the launch of *Tate Media*, the Tate has expanded its programmes beyond the recording and distribution of public events such as lectures and artists' talks.

“Audio and video content that are produced outside the live broadcast model also increasingly includes performance documentation and large scale participatory events. So we go through projects of producing and editing a short film and making a licence agreement with those artists who are working in those more time-based media.”

²²¹ Kelli Dipple in interview with author, June 2006.

With *Tate Shots*, a series of new video productions was launched. This series of podcasts combines previous initiatives “of the artists’ interviews, the audio and hand held guide concept, the podcast and Tate’s legacy of webcasting.” Dipple explained that with these programmes the Tate is trying to assemble all that experience that the museum has had and focus it into a series of programmes which is also linked into the long-term vision of a wider cross-platform content distribution, linked to the objective of turning Tate Online into a much more audio visually driven channel rather than the kind of newspaper model kind of navigation.²²²

With these initiatives the website Tate Online has become “much more of a channel model,” where one can observe “a collapsing of boundaries between arranged broadcast media, the notion of archive, and distribution as well as education.” This model of a website, “responds to the current context where there is an understanding that a whole range of content can now be delivered to a whole range of audiences in a whole range of platforms.” And optimizing “those opportunities is key to Tate Media’s objectives.”

Another dimension of the channel model is that the Tate is looking much more into a time-based strategy.

“Different programmes are relevant to the audience at different points in the exhibition. So, instead of having all of the content around an exhibition going up at once, just the week before or so, we are now looking into a time-based strategy.”

Initially, Dipple elucidates, “there was concern that by giving away content in that way, so that it can be redistributed without the Tate website as a context that would potentially reduce audience numbers.” However, what she found was exactly the opposite. Based on the very small scale of MP3s and looking at how people are behaving and how they are downloading it, it was revealed that if an MP3 is related to, let’s say an exhibition which is highly promoted at a certain

²²² *Ibid.*

point – e.g. the announcement of the Turner Prize winner – what you find is that you get a huge surge of people accessing files on that artist. But once the exhibition is finished, once the PR has died down, that curiosity will completely subside.

“Even though people could just bluetooth the MP3 from one device to another, people tend to go to the website themselves, because there is a lot of added value content provided around that there. You can go to the website to get images of the performance context; there will be a Bio of the artist, etc. So the peer to peer is promoting itself. Through the peer to peer you get consistent hits continually, no matter whether there is PR or promotion involved. I thought that was a very interesting positive assessment, which I did not really expect.”

With the advent of *Tate Media*, and during the fieldwork for this study, the Tate was in the process of reassessing and repositioning all the AV content which currently exists as webcast, as podcast, as QuickTime, or as other video on their website.

“So, all the AV content is now looked at as a whole. And we are trying to formulate a strategy that does a couple of things: First, production standard and qualities should be raised. Secondly, the content should be better communicated, so that it reaches wider audiences. Also importantly, it aims to streamline the production process for us, because at the moment there are about four or five production models going on at the same time.”²²³

With Tate Online one can see a model of a museum website that is much more driven by AV content. With the launch of the series Tate Shots, Tate has moved well beyond the recording of public programmes and events and has started to produce their own documentary style programmes on contemporary art that are comparable to those usually aired by broadcasting stations such as Arte or 3 Sat

²²³ *Ibid.*

in Germany, Austria and Switzerland or the BBC in the UK. Like broadcasting stations, the Tate has started to release programmes according to a well-thought-through strategy, recognizing that certain types of programmes might be more appropriate for some users than others at a certain point in time.

3.7.1 From object-centred to story-based museum websites

At the beginning of the new millennium one can observe a shift from museum websites being object-centred to those being story-centred. It must be noted, however, that this is of course not valid for all, not even the majority of museum websites, but mainly for those museums, which are at the leading edge of developments. Fiona Cameron differentiates between two approaches: the “stories/themes approach” on the one hand, and the “searching interface” on the other. In her view, “contextualizing objects according to ideas rather than physical or functional taxonomies represents a significant paradigm shift.” She argues that the “searching interface” is of little use to non-specialist users, as the way the data is modelled needs a clear understanding of the information available.”²²⁴

To visualize what is meant by the ‘object-centred’ and the ‘story-based’ website, it is helpful to look at an example. Comparing the presentation of a painting by Rogier van der Weyden on the website of the Kunsthistorisches Museum (KHM) in Vienna and how Tate Online publishes some of their digital objects should help illustrating the point.

²²⁴ Fiona Cameron, ‘World of museums. Wired collections – the next generation’.



Figure 14 Rogier van der Weyden on the website of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna²²⁵



Figure 15 Turner collection on Tate Online²²⁶

On the two screenshots two very different approaches to presenting and interpreting objects online can be seen. The KHM's presentation of the painting references very much the interpretation found in galleries: the object label and a curatorial text. Tate, on the other hand, only provides minimal description of the painting and focuses on the context of the work. A whole range of texts, written

²²⁵ Kunsthistorisches Museum <http://www.khm.at/system2.html?/static/page256.html> (as of 10.1.2008).

²²⁶ Tate Gallery <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/turner/williams.htm> (as of 10.1.2008).

from people with very diverse backgrounds and from different historical periods, can be found. Most significantly these statements are not made by museum staff, but by authors, such as the archbishop of Canterbury and the BBC's Meteorologist Michael Fish. So not only, does the presentation focus on 'the story behind the objects,' the presentation also recognizes the importance of providing text which is not only written by the museums' own staff but from people of various backgrounds.

Related to the idea of a story-based museum experience is that of the 'blended museum,' the museum, which blends the online and onsite exhibition, so as to help the visitor make sense of the objects in a more narrative-based way. The Natural History Museum London (NHM) serves as a good example to illustrate this point further. The NHM argues "museums should encourage a 'virtuous circle' between their physical and virtual spaces. Visitors to the museum should be encouraged to bookmark information to be sent to them via the Internet/mobile for use at a later date. This extends the relationship with the visitor beyond the walls of the museum, building on Museum 'citizenship', and allows the visitor to receive and consume complex information in their own time and in the right environment."²²⁷

In order to realise the 'virtuous circle' the NHM suggests that a variety of platforms, mobile, handhelds, kiosks, etc. could be explored for developing this facility. An initial example at the NHM is their Ecology kiosk, "where visitors can send information on relevant organizations to themselves via email, and the upcoming PDA pilot to mark the centenary of Waterhouse, which will have the capacity to bookmark and send links via email."²²⁸

Other examples, which illustrate the shift from object-centred to story-centred museum websites were developed by the National Museums of Science and Industry (NMSI). In 2004 they launched two websites. Referencing them, the NMSI argued in the consultation 'Understanding the Future' that "its experience with its two award-winning new websites launched in 2004 has shown that the

²²⁷ *Understanding the Future.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

Web is an ideal medium for developing stories that offer multiple perspectives on the objects in our collections. In this medium, the users can choose their own path through the content, have access to images and animations of the objects, and can also contribute their own perspectives. This approach represents continuing innovation in truly interactive learning.”²²⁹

‘Ingenious,’ a Web project by the National Museums of Science and Industry, is far removed from the Marketing Museum paradigm. The main categories on the home page are headed *Read, Debate, See, Create*. These headlines could not be more different to those, for instance, found on the Albertina in Vienna: *Collections, Exhibitions, Events, Visitor Information, Guided Tours*.

Whereas the Albertina’s website’s main categories reference the museum’s departments, the categories of ‘Ingenious’ refer to actions people do online. They sometimes carry out more reflective actions such as reading or seeing, sometimes more active things such as debating and creating. Both websites are based on museum collections, yet they could not be more different in terms of how they position the user.

Ingenious is structured around stories behind objects. Once a user has chosen a subject to explore, and while reading through the pages, the user is given the option of exploring many objects relating to the text. The point is that this type of website is story-driven rather than object-driven. The Albertina’s website is very poor in content. But even if one disregards this, it is very clear that this type of website positions the user differently compared to the Ingenious website.

Ingenious views the user as a learner, or an interested subject who wants to find out about certain historical periods. For this user type, the museum provides many stories to read and images to explore. It is interesting to note that the imaginary user prototype for this website is not necessarily someone who wants to visit the museum onsite. Whereas early museum websites focused upon providing visitor and collection information which should support the visitor in

²²⁹ Natural History Museum London in *Understanding the Future*.

preparing a visit or finding the show, this type of museum websites do not ‘discriminate’ those who do not plan to come to the onsite venue, but still have an interest in what the museum has to offer.

Finally, Ingenious also positions the user as an active participant who is invited to engage in online debates. As of February 2007 there have been four online debates since 2004. That does not seem very much, but this is not the point. The point is that there are museum websites developing which are departing radically from the Marketing Museum website paradigm. Key to this type of museum website is that it positions the user as an active participant, explorer and/or learner. Probably most importantly, it positions the user as someone who might or might not be interested in visiting the museum, acknowledging that an authentic experience of the museum might be experienced online as well as onsite.

‘Didyouknow.info’ developed by the National Museums Liverpool (NML) is another great example which further illustrates this point. Funded by the New Opportunities Fund, NML has created fourteen interactive learning modules on the ‘Did you know’ site, which is accessible via the NML website. “The modules cover a range of subjects from across all of our venues including Portrait Detectives, Nile File, and Sunbeams and Sundials. They are designed to be accessible for a lifelong learning audience, to be interactive and to stimulate interest in learning more. The launch was held at Liverpool Central Library with a subsequent ‘road show’ to community centres and libraries around Merseyside.”²³⁰

Another very different approach to the idea of a story-based online museum is the Brooklyn Museum’s album of photos on Flickr. Figures 17 to 19 are drawn from the Brooklyn’s album on Flickr and show staff installing a Ron Mueck exhibition at that museum. The use of this photo-sharing platform by a museum shows how the Brooklyn utilizes these new distribution channels to create a totally novel content for users to see. Rather than showing the sculptures in their

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

finished installation, the Brooklyn shows the entire process which is normally hidden to visitors. On these pictures people can see how very large sculptures are carried into the galleries. There are no object descriptions comparable to those on the KHM website at all. (see Figure 7) The focus here is on the story around the objects, but not the art historical background as is the case with objects on e.g. the example mentioned above. Rather, this presentation tells about the ‘daily life’ of a museum object, something that the visitor does not normally see.

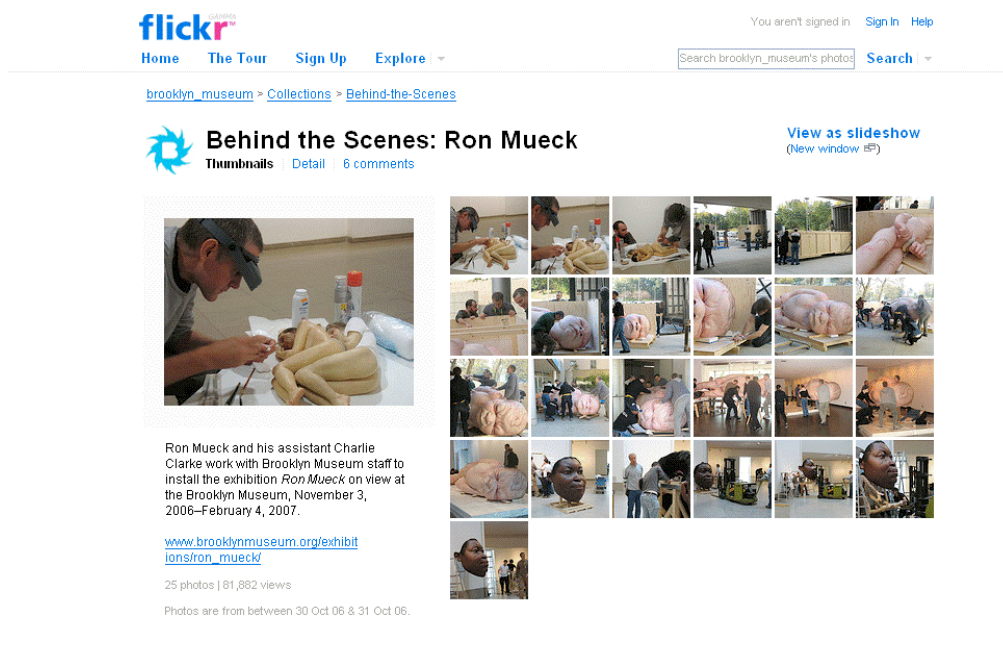


Figure 16 The Brooklyn Museum’s Flickr Album²³¹

²³¹ Flickr http://flickr.com/photos/brooklyn_museum/tags/ronmueck (as of 3.3.2007).



Figure 17 A work by Ron Mueck is being carried into the exhibition ²³²



Figure 18 A work by Ron Mueck is being carried into the exhibition ²³³

²³² *Ibid.*
²³³ *Ibid.*

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the nature of some significant changes that have taken place in the context of the second digital wave of Web developments (so-called Web 2.0) and it has assessed the key paradigms of museum websites and the ideas behind them. Moreover, it has attempted to evaluate the consequences of those changes through analyzing the ‘channel model,’ the notion of the ‘museum as producer’ as well as the move towards much more story-based museum websites.

The first outcome of this discussion has been the proposal that the Web as ‘platform of participation’ is not necessarily restricted to the concept of user-generated content. Rather, it might also be about the museum providing visitors with the necessary intellectual ‘tools,’ which help them to make more sense of works on display, whether online or onsite. This interpretation of ‘user participation’ is related to user-empowerment and transparency, in terms of a demystification of display strategies and processes of interpretation.

All of this has a bearing on our central research question (Can new broadcasting models of publication make art more accessible?). Most obviously, it raises the question if and how new broadcasting models of publications and podcasting in particular may be used to foster this type of user participation. One of the questions that need to be addressed in Part 2 then is: can podcasting make the museum experience more transparent and foster an empowered audience? Case Study 1 will try finding an answer to this question.

It was suggested that the Web 2.0 has encouraged museums to distribute their content on the various social networking sites. It might be too early to assess the real impact of such sites on audience development. Nevertheless, MoMA’s Doug Aitken trailer received more than 90,000 views and even if it is difficult to say, from a scientific point of view, how reliable this figure is, it is a figure, and it does indicate that there might be some real potential in reaching audiences on a scale previously unknown. Yet, learning about how users behave and what their

interests are, is important if museums want to use new broadcasting media for audience development. Because of a lack of empirical data on how people use audiovisual programmes produced by museums, the author has conducted a survey on podcasting at the Ars Electronica Center. This study will be at the centre of Case Study 2.

However, a more important conclusion, which can be drawn from the assessment of different types of museum websites is, that while the second digital wave has brought a number of new tools and services for Web developers, it must be noted that some of the key ideas associated with the Web 2.0, the integration of the user in content production, the tailoring content for specific target groups, customizing, personalizing and localizing content, is not new to people engaged in the development of museum websites. This is something important to remember, because it puts the whole idea of websites, as means to realise the more user-driven museum, into perspective. What is suggested here, is that, yes, Web 2.0 is about a second wave of online tools and services. Yet, museum websites must have new type of content rather than new (technical) tools, if the goal is to foster a more engaging and accessible experience of art.

The chapter revealed that museums are beginning to produce AV content, which references formats of TV, radio and cinema rather than traditional museum publications such as catalogues or audio guides. Moreover, it is not only the format and structure of broadcasting media which museums are beginning to adopt. With their time-based strategy of distributing AV content, Tate is placing itself on the leading edge of developments as regards innovative approaches to museum communication.

Web 2.0 is about providing choice as to how, when and where the user can access content; and yes, museums aiming to reach new audiences need to be aware of new communication behaviours and user expectations, which come along with new tools and services. But more importantly, through looking at the shift from object- towards story-based museum websites, it is proposed that one of the key consequences of current changes is, that museums have discovered one more opportunity to position their users differently: whereas the object-

centred website is associated with users who seek marketing type information, the story-based website positions the user as online learners, explorers or researchers who do not necessarily plan to come to the museum. This latter subject might also get involved in the structuring (through tagging) or contributing content. The shift from object- to story-based website, therefore, has also to do with subject positions and relationships between museum and audience, hence, social relationships. Fostering a more informed audience has to do with empowerment. What the excursion into the historical development of museum websites has shown then, is that even if there are many exceptions and regional differences, issues of empowerment and social relationships have, since the very early days of the Web, been at the heart of museum professionals' concerns. What does this outcome mean for this thesis? In the context of the question of how to make the museum experience more engaging, immediate and accessible through the use of new broadcasting models of publication, the following question arises: what is the real impact of podcasting on the relationship between museums and audiences? Trying to find an answer to this question will be the objective of Case Study 3.

Taken together, the key impact of the Web 2.0 on the way museums present online content is that museum websites are becoming much more driven by AV content and that content production is referencing TV, radio and cinema productions. As to the context of this thesis, the pivotal question which arises out of this conclusion is whether this development might help museums to move beyond the 'illusion of access,' as defined in Chapter 1. In other words: do new broadcasting models of publication make art more accessible? The whole of Chapter 4 is devoted to answering this question.

CHAPTER 4

Evaluating the feasibility of podcasting in museums

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 discussed the technological context of the museum in a Web 2.0 environment. Through looking at a number of tools and services that came with the second digital wave, it assessed how the Web 2.0 has affected online presentations of culture in museums online. The primary aim was to highlight the broad spectrum of technological possibilities for making art accessible with digital media. Chapter 4, now, aims to look at one of these technologies in much more detail and analyse podcasting in great depth. The key question is: is podcasting a viable means to make the museum experience more engaging, immediate and accessible? This question is going to be at the heart of this chapter, which will, with three case studies, shed light on podcasting in museums.

It will analyze podcasting from three different perspectives: first, the objects of study are museum professionals who produce podcasts. Secondly, users of podcasts will be studied. Finally, Case Study 3 will evaluate, what seems to be the most important thing – the possible impact of podcasting upon the relationship between museums and their audiences.

In somewhat more detail, Case Study 1 has two objectives: First, to explore the questions why museums have started to use podcasting and what they hope to achieve with it. Secondly, the aim is to identify a broad spectrum of museum podcasts and define a loose set of categories. Taken together, these two elements

of the case study will shed light into the great variety of uses for podcasting in the various departments of museums. It should help to understand the potentials and limitations of podcasting as medium of communication and help answering one of the research questions identified in Chapter 3: can podcasting make the museum experience more transparent and foster an empowered audience?

Case study 2 is an exploration of user-behaviour as regards podcasting at the Ars Electronica Centre. The objective is to find out whether users are aware that the AEC offers podcasts, whether they use this service, how they use it, what they like about podcasting and what kind of programmes they would be interested in receiving. Moreover, the case study will shed light on demographic data of users.

Case Study 3 is concerned with the question of how podcasting impacts the relationship between museums and audiences. The objective is to look at one podcast in great detail and assess whether a) the content of that podcast represents a truly novel way of communicating with audiences and b) whether this represents a new kind of museum audience relationship.

Research design

The study was conducted using social science qualitative research methods. Three aspects of podcasting in museums were researched using three different methodologies. For more details on the specific details about methods and methodologies, please see p.22.

Timeliness of research on podcasting

There are three American research institutes which have conducted major studies on podcasting between March 2005 and January 2007: Pew Internet & American Life Project, Bridge Ratings and Forrester Research. The first known study on

podcasting was conducted by Pew Internet in 2005.²³⁴ A second study was published by Pew Internet in November 2006.²³⁵ Bridge Ratings carried out a study in July 2005 and has published several updates since.²³⁶ Forrester Research published two studies in March 2006 and one in January 2007. First, “Podcasting hits the Charts” where the author claims that “podcasts have hit the mainstream consciousness but have not yet seen widespread use. One-quarter of online consumers express interest in podcasts, with most interested in time-shifting existing radio and Internet radio channels.”²³⁷ Secondly, Forrester published the ‘European Podcast Consumer.’²³⁸ Finally, the study published in 2007 ‘Making Podcasts Work For Your Brand’ argued that “podcasting has seen mild adoption growth in the past year, but it still hasn’t experienced the popularity explosion blogs have seen.”²³⁹

The key study on podcasting as regards Germany and Austria, was conducted at the House of Research (Berlin), which stated that the current number of podcast consumers can only be estimated very vaguely at anything between 30,000 and 500,000. These low usage figures are also the reason why they argue that it is impossible at the time to make a representative study.²⁴⁰

²³⁴ Pew Internet & American Life Project, ‘Podcasting’ (April 2005):

http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/153/report_display.asp (as of 7.2.2007).

²³⁵ Pew Internet & American Life Project, ‘Podcast Downloading’ (November 2006):

http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/193/report_display.asp (as of 7.2.2007).

²³⁶ ‘Bridge Ratings <http://www.bridgeratings.com/podcasting.htm>’ (as of 7.2.2007)..

²³⁷ Charlene Li’s Blog, ‘Forrester podcasting report – just 1 % use podcasts’, (5.4.2006)

<http://blogs.forrester.com/charleneli/podcasting/index.html> (as of 10.4.2006).

²³⁸ Forrester Research, ‘The European Podcast Consumer’ (March 2006)

<http://www.forrester.com/rb/search/results.jsp?Ntt=podcast&Ntk=MainSearch&Ntx=mode+matchallany&N=0+100010+100011+100012+100013+100020> (as of 7.2.2007).

²³⁹ Forrester Research, ‘Making Podcasts Work For Your Brand’ (January 2007)

<http://www.forrester.com/Research/Document/Excerpt/0,7211,40754,00.html> (as of 7.2.2007).

²⁴⁰ Sebastian Breßler. *Podcasting 2006 – Status quo und Entwicklungsperspektiven* (Berlin: House of Research, 2006), p.90-91.

Definition



Figure 19 What is podcasting? ©Tim Buxton²⁴¹

The term podcast is a neologism of the words iPod and broadcasting. Podcasting, though, is not directly linked to Apple’s iPod or their software iTunes. Podcasting refers to a Web feed of audio or video files that any user can subscribe to, so that they are automatically updated and downloaded as they become available. This automatic download distinguishes podcasts from simple downloads of MP3 or mp4 files or from real-time streaming.

Rumford argues that “there have several analogies [been] made about podcasting. Some have said that podcasting is where Blogging and radio intersect.”²⁴² Podcasting relates to blogging, in as much, as it is based on Web feeds, which anyone can produce and make available through subscription. It also relates to radio, because they are audio based, and often they have a format similar to that of radio. Podcasts can also be video based, in which case it is often called vodcast, where ‘vod’ stands for ‘video on demand,’ a service which has

²⁴¹ Geeksouth <http://www.geeksouth.com/wp-content/uploads/2006/01/Podcasting.jpg> (as of 5.7.2006).

²⁴² Rodney L. Rumford, ‘Podcasting White Paper. What you don’t know about podcasting could hurt your business: How to leverage & benefit from this new media technology’ (June 2005) <http://podblaze.com/podcasting-business-whitepaper.php> (as of 8.4.2006).

become very popular since the launch of the video enabled iPod.²⁴³ The term podcast is often used to refer to either audio and video based Web feeds, and this research will use the term podcast to refer to any audio or video file that can be subscribed to through an aggregator.

Development of podcasting

According to Wired Magazine, the former MTV presenter Adam Curry's show 'The Daily Source Code' was the first ever podcast. Curry's original idea was to start the party by adding video clips to his blog. But he changed his mind after attending Blogger-Con in 2001, where blog guru and RSS author Dave Winer convinced Curry that what people really want is the ability to "take the Internet away with you and listen to it on headphones." In August 2004 Adam Curry used RSS technology to search and download MP3-files and the first ever podcast 'the daily source code' was born. Only a bit more than a year later, in November 2005, iTunes listed 20,000 podcasts.²⁴⁴

Although it was impossible to find out which museum produced the first ever podcasts, it seems fair to say that the Ars Electronica Center in Linz must have been one of the very first to adopt this new medium, since they used podcasting to distribute their conference and talks in 2004. However, in the course of 2005 many more museums around the world but particularly in the US and the UK started to produce podcasts. Among those who released their first podcast in 2005 in the US was the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Eiteljorg Museum and the Hirshhorn Museum, just to name a few. The Australian War Memorial Museum also delivered their first podcast in that year. Most of the other podcasts mentioned in this thesis were released in 2006. And there were considerably more releases in the UK compared to Germany and Austria.

A small study, conducted during the *Digital Fringe*, a programme of activities that took place around the conference *The Museum: A World Forum* (2006),

²⁴³ Kleske, p. 43.

²⁴⁴ Sebastian Breßler. *Podcasting 2006*, p.20.

where about 25 people participated, showed that 31% of the 19 people who responded did not know what a podcast was.

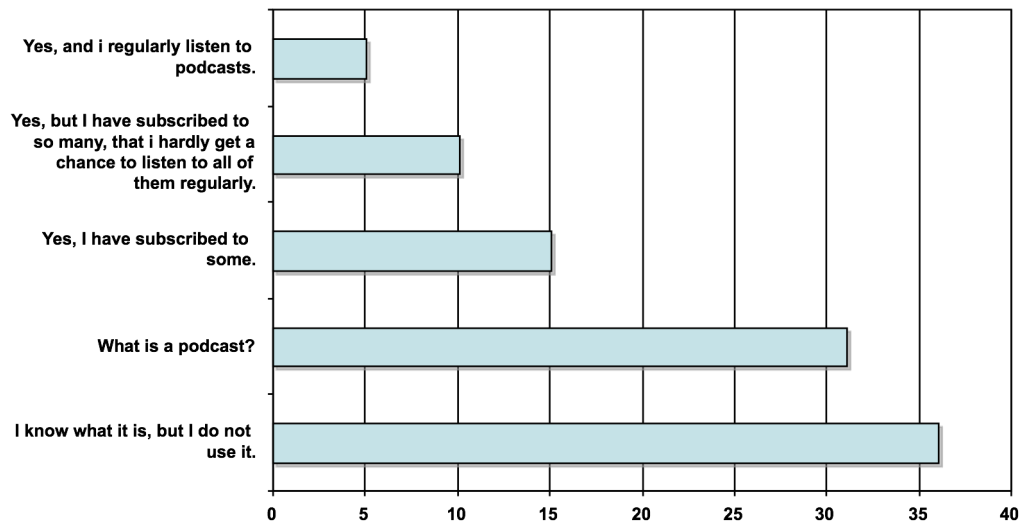


Figure 20 Podcasting survey at Spring School in New Media 2006

A similar observation could be made at EVA 2006 conference in Berlin. During Stefan Bürer's talk on Web 2.0 it became apparent that most of the audience was not familiar with the terms 'wikis', 'blogs', 'RSS' and 'tagging.' As a result, the few responses that came from the audience, expressed a discourse of concern rather than one of opportunities.

Referring to blogs and wikis, one member of the audience argued that "due to lack of time, it is unrealistic that we engage in that type of communication with audiences." Another was wondering whether museums should even encourage users to get involved in talking publicly about objects. In his view, that would compromise the museum's authority to speak about objects in their collections. What this shows is that there still is a great amount of scepticism towards podcasting and related models of publication in museums.

However, at EVA Berlin there were also two very interesting presentations, which suggested that podcasting is also seen as one more opportunity to enhance communication in museums. For instance, Eva Wesemann, artistic director of Antenna Audio Germany, talked about podcasting at the National Museums

Berlin and discussed the many ways of how podcasting can be used to offer museum visitors background information on exhibitions in a lively and engaging manner. Eva Nietzky from Ways of Wondering²⁴⁵ presented a podcast for a public art project in Hamburg.²⁴⁶ Their approach to podcasting expressed a great deal of understanding user's different needs. Moreover, Nietzky's presentation suggested that podcasting can be a medium with which one can enhance the relationship between visitors and museums.

²⁴⁵ Ways of wondering: <http://www.waysofwondering.com/> (as of 10.11.2007).

²⁴⁶ 10° Kunst: <http://www.waysofwondering.com/zehngradkunst/> (as of 10.11.2007).

Case Study 1

Why are museums podcasting and how can it benefit visitors?

5.1 Introduction

This case study explores the questions why museums have started to use podcasting and what they hope to achieve with it. Moreover, the objective is to define a loose set of categories of museum podcasts.

There are many different reasons why museums have started podcasting. What came out of this research is that the key reasons are first, that museums want their communication tools to be at the forefront of technological developments. Secondly, they want to reach new and broader audiences and build sustainable relationships with them. This is related to an increasing awareness that podcasting is most appropriately used not only as a method of delivery, but that it is a kind of catalyst, which fosters the production of totally new type of content. Broadly speaking, this new type of content is characteristic for its informal and conversational style. Moreover, podcasters increasingly see one of the great opportunities with podcasting, is to be able to tailor content for specific target groups. Another aspect of why some museums are engaging in podcasting is that they see in it the chance to integrate the voices of visitors or other relevant individuals who are not necessarily employed by the museum itself.

The object of research of this case study is twofold: in the section entitled “Why podcasting?” museum professionals are studied, or rather their ideas or motivations for engaging in podcasting are investigated. In the subsequent sections, the focus shifts from analysing ideas behind the podcast to the podcasts

themselves. On the one hand, it will look how the ideas, as identified in the “Why podcasting?” section have been turned into practice, on the other hand it will present additional examples to further illustrate the points made.

Why podcasting?

5.2 The cutting edge of technological developments

The Victoria and Albert Museum London (V&A) is one of the large flagship museums which over the years have demonstrated a strong commitment to the use of digital technologies as tools to present and interpret objects in their collections. Considering the V&A’s strong records of using online new media, it was therefore not at all surprising that it became one of the early adopters of podcasting. Talking to Toby Travis, the V&A’s Web developer, who is also in charge of the podcasts, revealed that the first two programmes (‘Ceramic Points of View’ and ‘CultureCasts’) were meant to be experimental and came out of the wish to stay at the forefront of technological developments. Moreover, he said that Gail Durbin, head of V&A Online, “had started listening to podcasts on knitting. She thought it would be a good idea to apply podcasting to the museum; and so she decided to put some money aside to buy the equipment and to start experiment with it.”

At the time when Christian Dirks, historian at the Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB) started to think about podcasting, he was working on the production of new audio guides for the permanent collection. He realised the synergies between the two different kinds of audio programmes and aimed to combine the work on the audio guides as well as the podcasts. Referring to the alternative audio guides for the Museum of Modern Art New York (MoMA), which were produced by a group of students and made available as podcasts, Dirks pointed out, how quickly it can happen that the museum loses control over content production. For this reason he argued that “podcasting is a very important development and that [the

JMB] would like to be involved in it, rather than being overrun by it.”²⁴⁷ He not only emphasised the synergies of production processes, he also pointed out that there are links in terms of the JMB’s new media strategy. The JMB’s permanent collection is rich in multimedia content, “hence, with podcasting [the museum] aim[s] to continue [its] commitment to this focus on new media technologies.”

The BA-CA Kunstforum, the Freud Museum (both in Vienna, Austria) and Towneley Hall (UK) are small institutions in relation to the ones mentioned above. Yet, when it comes to the question of why they have started podcasting, the motivations are not too different from each other. Alex Khaelssberg, press officer at the Kunstforum, argues that their education and communication departments “aim to work with the most advanced technological possibilities; and after a few successful trials runs, [they] have quite quickly decided to do podcasting.” He believes that key behind this idea is to offer “information on demand”, i.e. to let the user decide when to download and listen to content on whatever media they choose.

Similarly, Inge Scholz-Strasser, director of the Freud Museum, argues that because they are a scientific museum with a strong focus on research, they want to make sure that they are using the latest and most advanced communication technologies. She added that due to the relatively small size of their museum, they probably find it easier to react promptly to new developments in Web based ICTs. Such decisions are taken and implemented within a relatively small team, and as regards their podcasts, it was the Press officer, Mr. Nömaier, who approached Scholz-Strasser with the idea of making a podcast, and she supported this idea in conjunction with a public art project. However, in comparison to the other museums mentioned above, the Freud Museum’s podcast was a one-off project and as of summer 2006, they were not planning on producing a new series of programmes.

²⁴⁷ A few months after the discussion with Dirks, one can already see that it is not only students who might run ahead of the museum in producing audio programmes about museums. There are increasingly other providers who offer high quality AV programmes delivered as feeds. Newspapers such as the Sunday Times or the Daily Telegraph offer podcasts, which are not strictly speaking audio guides. Nevertheless, as will be discussed further in the section “What podcasting can offer visitors” podcasts like those from the Sunday Times can become a real competition for museums.

What this shows is that whether large or small museum, whether national or private institution, the aim to stay at or get to the forefront of technological developments, is one of the key motivations for exploring podcasting as a medium of communication. However, there are, of course, also other, more strategic aims and objectives behind it as well. What came out of the interviews conducted for this research is that most important of those strategic goals is to reach new and broader audiences and to establish sustainable relationships with them.

5.3 Reaching new audiences

The Tate started podcasting in part because it is cheaper than webcasting and it also reaches a slightly different audience. “Also it gets around the requirement for audiences to have broadband. Hence, it is more accessible to audiences, which have not got access to broadband.”²⁴⁸ Moreover, there were “many programmes and events going on that the Tate wanted to be able to document, archive and distribute more. But we could not triple the webcast budget. So we started looking into audio recording options, which would enable us to deliver something at a lower cost. And then the podcasting was of course something that we have been exploring as a platform of delivery.”²⁴⁹

Stephanie Pau (SFMOMA) thinks that “with podcasts we can reach audiences which we wouldn’t otherwise be able to reach.” In addition Samis argues, podcasts in comparison with “billboard or a newspaper ads, allows a much more mind care, penetration into peoples’ lives. If you actually engage people in an in-depth consideration of ideas of art, if you give them a quick eyeball, it engages them and asks them to come in.” Similarly for Dirks, it is obvious that one can reach new audiences with this medium.

²⁴⁸ Kelli Dipple interview with author, June 2006

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Some of the museum-professionals interviewed were particularly interested in reaching younger people who are using MP3-Players and spend a lot of time online. Dirks, for instance, argued that “because of our visitor profile (the largest group are the ‘tweens’ between 20-30 years old) podcasting is an appropriate means to communicate with audiences so as to keep them up to date on the developments in the museum, public programmes, exhibitions, etc.”²⁵⁰ The view that podcasts are rather something for the younger generation is also shared by experts interviewed by the House of Research.²⁵¹ Nevertheless there are others, who like Khaelssberg, argue that iPod and MP3-Player users are no longer restricted to the younger generation, but can be found throughout all age groups. Hence, programmes should not only be targeted to young people, but to all kinds of age groups.

A study conducted by the House of Research in Berlin interviewed (standardized interviews) twenty-one radio and broadcasting stations, which offer podcasts. About a quarter of those interviewed stated that their aims were to generate new audiences as well as foster deeper relations with their existing listeners. A bit less than a third of the interviewees also said that in order to promote a trendy and innovative image, a broadcasting station has to offer podcasts.²⁵² These results are largely in line with the data collected among museum professionals. It is interesting therefore, to note that museum professionals and broadcasters do have similar motivations for using this medium.

Nonetheless, museums are not only interested to reach new audiences for the sake of it, but in order to motivate them to come to their exhibitions. There are lots of ways how museums give visitors an incentive to come to the museum. Whereas some have expressed concerns about giving away too much free content, others such as the SFMOMA, not only offer a variety of AV content for free, but on top of that, also give a two dollar discount on the entrance fee, “if they bring the ArtCast on their players into the museum.”²⁵³ It is interesting to

²⁵⁰ Christian Dirks in interview with author, June 2006.

²⁵¹ Sebastian Breßler. *Podcasting 2006*, p.91.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p.34.

²⁵³ Samis said that approximately 130-150 people claimed that discount so far. For their Rembrandt Podcast, Antenna Audio included ‘passwords’ at the end of each episode. If one

note here that whereas museum professionals in the US and UK do not seem to see any problems in giving away content for free, museum professionals in Austrian and German museums are more hesitant to do so, because they fear that if they offer too much content online, people will not come to the museum. However, in order to reach new audiences, museums are doing more than merely offering discounts, as the SFMOMA does. Engaging in new media projects alone does not ensure that new audiences are being reached. Content of programmes needs to appeal to listeners, otherwise they will not subscribe to them.

5.4 Promoting a new image of museums

Khaessberg believes that podcasts can encourage people who have not visited museums before to come in, because “this medium might be able to change established conceptions about museums and exhibitions.” In this respect he thinks that “podcasts will have a very positive impact upon the image of [the] institution” and that they “lend themselves really well to do both: offer regular visitors additional content and to bring exhibitions to the attention of new target groups.”²⁵⁴

In this respect, podcasting is about producing new types of content for new types of audiences. According to Samis “the idea is that podcasting is to service, to expose the creative impulse that is going on inside the museums walls, to people who may or may not know that this is a fascinating place to visit.” In terms of over-all style and formality, some museum podcasts differ strongly from more conventional museum publications. What this means will be analysed thoroughly in Case Study 3.

Podcasts in general tend to be more chatty and conversational compared to the traditional scholarly voice of the museum. The BA-CA Kunstforum believes that podcasting is a medium “which lends itself perfectly to convey moods, feelings

would come to the Antenna desk at the exhibition, with this password, visitors to the Rembrandt exhibition could claim two audio guides for the price of one. Upon asking, Antenna would not provide figures as to how many people have responded to this offer.

²⁵⁴ Khaelssberg in interview with author, June 2006.

and emotions. Moreover, one can add a number of additional information, in order to enhance the visit to the exhibition.” “With the ArtCasts,” Samis argues on similar lines, they “try to stay away from the manner experts and curators tend to talk about art. This is also because we want to reach for a young audience.” Travis also believes that “it’s really important to make podcasts in a format that is not too formal or too official,” because if podcasts sound “too corporate that would be kind of contrary to the culture of podcasting.” To make the podcast in a more conversational, chatty style, quite different to more conventional museum publications, was also one of the aims of Antenna Audio with their Rembrandt podcast produced for the National Museums Berlin.

Wesemann argues that “podcasts tend to have a DIY quality. They tend to be more like self-made radio programmes.” In this respect, she says one can also view podcasting as a driver for the production of easily-comprehensible content for a non-expert audience. However, she also points to the importance of maintaining high production standards, because “museums have a great interest in using this medium intelligently. They want to make sure that podcasting is used so as to further their mission as museums.” Moreover, “the museums’ wish to produce high quality content corresponds with many listeners’ desire for challenging information.”

Comparing programmes of the four museums mentioned above shows that while there is a consensus amongst them that podcasting is also about the production of content which is informal, light-hearted and emotionally charged, the four are taking very different approaches to get there. Comparisons with a range of other programmes, on the other hand, show that these types of informal podcasts can co-exist next to more traditional museum content that is often characteristic for its formality. In other words, there are some museums that offer rather didactic programmes as well as others which take more innovative and experimental approaches (This will be further illustrated later).

Of course, if many museums around the world start experimenting with this medium one would probably guess that their programmes would be quite different from each other. Nevertheless, the point is, and this will become much

clearer in Case Study 3, there are museums, which, on the surface, seem to be very experimental and innovative. Yet, upon a closer look, their true potential in making a real change in museum practice is rather poor. There are also others, who at first glance look very conservative, e.g. the Dulwich Picture Gallery's podcast on the 'Changing face of Childhood' show, where the director of the gallery is introducing the show by analysing a number of paintings. On the surface this podcast seems to reference this rather conventional scholarly tone of the museum, in comparison with the more conversational tone of the SFMOMAs ArtCast for instance. However, as will be shown, in Case Study 3 in order to make a real change in the way museums communicate with their audiences, museums will have to do more rather than merely exchange a scholarly tone of talking about art with a chitchat, conversational communication style; but more about this later.

Now, summing up this section it may be argued that it is the increasing variety of communication media, which fosters a variety of different types of interpretation in museums; not only in terms of using different types of media but also in producing different types of content, so as to service to as many as possible different target groups, within the broad spectrum of museum audiences. Wesemann for instance, argues that the great "variety of media, allows one [for instance,] to offer an In-depth-Tour for experts as well as a Highlight-Tour for tourists."²⁵⁵ This leads to the next important point about podcasting, namely the potential to tailor content for specific target groups.

5.5 Tailoring content for specific target groups

Looking through the list of podcasts of this research (see Figure 20), it seems that the American museums are slightly ahead of the game in terms of offering several different programmes according to the needs of these different groups of people. What is meant with specific target groups are for instance children or teens, experts or lay people or people with visual impairments. All these groups

²⁵⁵ Eva Wesemann in interview with author, June 2006.

of people may be addressed in audiovisual programmes according to their different ages, education or professional background.

At SFMOMA, Samis argues they have “different ways of how [they] address the audience. The Matthew Barney Gallery Exploration, for example, is a very formal audio tour. Then there are other things, which are much less formal, like the kids who have written pieces in response to three artworks in the collection, and they are reading them out in their own voices.” As the author argued in a presentation given at the UK Museums and the Web Conference 2006, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden has three series of podcasts, which can also be seen as addressing different types of audiences.²⁵⁶

First, there is the *Artists Lectures*, second the *Artists Interviews* and finally the *Museum Walkthrough* series. For their Hiroshi Sugimoto’s exhibition, for instance, Michael Fried gave a 60 min lecture, which was shortly after provided as podcast. Then there is a podcast, where Sugimoto talks with the exhibition co-curator about his work, and another one, where another co-curator discusses with Sugimoto, the artist’s vision and the creative processes. Finally, there is an audio tour, where the artist is taking the visitor through the exhibition.

This variety of programmes for one and the same exhibition offers the user some choice. If someone is interested in the subject, but not able to visit the museum in person, he or she might be interested in the sixty minutes lecture of Michael Fried or in the interviews with the artist and the curators. Local users, on the other hand might in addition to that be interested in the audio tour. On another level, these different programmes appeal to different audiences. The hour long formal lecture of a famous art historian, probably appeals more to someone who already has some art historical knowledge or students. The more conversational style of the interviews with the artist as well as the more generalized topics addressed in this second series, probably appeals more to someone who is looking for some decent background information on the show, rather than an in-depth formal lecture. Finally, the audio tour is not necessarily restricted for onsite

²⁵⁶ Lena Maculan, ‘Museums and Podcasting – What are the challenges’.

visitors. It can provide a very useful resource for someone planning a visit, or a journalist preparing an article, or even anyone who is interested to listen to the commentary while looking at the visuals online.

MoMA Audio, is structured around similar thoughts. As of February 2006, it offered four distinctive audio programs: 'Special Exhibitions', 'Modern Voices', 'Modern Kids', and 'Visual Descriptions'. 'Special Exhibitions' provides audio commentary for many special exhibitions on view at the Museum and is available in English only. When listened to it in iTunes, for example, one will get a number of audio files of approximately one and a half minutes length. Merely listening to the files, though, does not make much sense, as the podcast is not enhanced with images. With the Edvard Munch exhibition there is, however, the possibility to download a complete list of all the works in the exhibition as a PDF file, including images, which seems to be necessary to understand what the content of the podcast is all about. Again, as with the example of the Hirshhorn mentioned above, this can also act as a resource for people preparing visits, especially for those leading a group of visitors.

'Modern Voices' follows a similar format and offers commentaries by curators, artists, critics, and conservators who share their perspectives on select artworks in the Museum's collection. It is available in English, Spanish, German, French, Japanese, and Italian. As these works are in the permanent collection, and are not presented in an online exhibition website, or in a PDF file as with the Munch show, one would have to search for an image in the online database. The problem with that is that some works do not show up in the database at all, while others return so many results, that someone who is not familiar with the content, might be put off rather quickly. In the list of episodes as shown in iTunes, one only gets a number and the title of the painting and not the artists name or the date. This makes it even more difficult to find the matching image in the database, as the number only refers to the onsite audio guide and not to the online database.

'Modern Kids' is a programme made for children to explore the onsite galleries, and is available in English only. Rather than narrating authoritative art historical theory, this programme is more about encouraging children to explore the

galleries. On the one hand, the speaker leads the listener through the physical space, by pointing out where to go and in which spot works can be best seen; on the other hand, the speaker describes the works on display and so supports the child to discover some details of the paintings. When describing ‘Three Musicians’ by Picasso, for instance, the speaker leads the eyes of the listener to various details in the painting, in order to help the child to identify the rectilinear shapes as people and instruments. To make it even more engaging, short pieces of music by each of the three instruments depicted in the painting, is played in the background.

When describing the painting ‘Broadway Boogie Woogie’ by Piet Mondrian, the speaker again stays away from explaining art historical theories behind the work. Rather than giving the work a fixed meaning with an interpretation, the speaker introduces the work through saying, “there are so many ways to look at this picture.” Moreover, to make the content more relevant for a child, voices of other children are included too. Possible ways of what the painting represents are not analysed by the speaker herself, but by a number of children, who propose a small set of totally different interpretations. The programme, however, does not reject more formal interpretations completely. After the sequence with the children and with some Boogie Woogie music playing in the background, the speaker reveals, what Mondrian had in mind when making the painting, namely the streets of New York and his favourite music, Boogie Woogie. In any case, the programme’s emphasis is not on explaining art historical background, but on the various ways one can look at the work, as well as on encouraging the child to make its own associations and meanings.

One of the things that come out of the above very clearly is that the idea that it is very easy to produce a podcast is a myth. Yes, of course to be able to make an audio or video file available as podcast only very little technical skills are needed. However, as the MoMA audio programme shows it is certainly not only the technical skills that are needed to make a podcast of high quality. One also has to have very strong communication and audio/video production skills and be able to create a programme that is of the kind of quality visitors should expect from museums.

No sensible person would say that it is so easy to set up an exhibition in a museum, as it merely requires the hanging together of a few works of art. Yes, the hanging of the works can be done relatively easy by a team of qualified people. But it doesn't need to be said that this is not the whole process behind an exhibition. Researching, interpreting, designing, funding and marketing exhibitions, negotiating loans and getting them to the venue are just a few key areas of work which go on behind the scenes before the hanging can get underway. It is of course also these areas which require teams of people with various skills and expertise. No one who has an insight into these processes would argue that setting up an exhibition only has a technical aspect of how to place the works in front of the visitor. However, when it comes to producing audio and video content it seems that there are many people who promote podcasting as something, which can be done in a short time and with very little technical knowledge. When looking at MoMA Audio, Tate Shots or some other very well done museum podcasts, one quickly realises that a high quality programme requires a lot more than technical skills.

Chapter 1 has argued that making museum websites intellectually accessible to audiences is not a question of quantity but one of quality. It has also been argued that objects online need to be interpreted and presented within a contextual framework so that the user can have a meaningful interaction with the online content. Here this thought was extended to podcasting. It was suggested, that content of podcasts, needs to be moderated and edited in such a way that allows the user a meaningful experience.

More importantly for the research question of this section, is that taken together, the programmes of MoMA Audio show a strong commitment to delivering content, which is tailored to specific target groups, or a variety of users, with different levels of education and knowledge, age and abilities. These target groups might be small, but as other research shows, reaching very large audiences should not be the only objective of podcasting. Interviews with experts conducted at the House of Research, showed that experts argue that one has to get rid of the idea that one wants to attract large numbers of listeners. Rather, the

advantage of podcasting is that smaller groups of people can be targeted directly.²⁵⁷

Gerrit van Aaken argues on similar lines, when he says that for the media people of tomorrow, it is not the number of readers, listeners, or viewers, which is important, but their enthusiasm and gratefulness. He further argues that the entire media system is beginning to move away from the idea that only small numbers of large broadcasting stations are responsible for very large numbers of audiences; and he believes that in the future, there will be many small broadcasting stations, which will provide programmes for very small audiences. And he calls this “the real revolution.”²⁵⁸

With this in mind, it seems that museums could be some of those smaller stations serving to smaller audiences. Museums should therefore not shy away from making podcasts fearing that they cannot compete with larger stations. Targeting smaller audiences with specialist programmes is therefore probably a good way to make use of podcasting in museums.

5.6 Integrating the voice of the visitor

One of the issues that came up in the MOMA Kids programme in the section above was that the programme included viewpoints and voices of children. Traditionally, museums are considered as institutions of authority, where experts do the talking and visitors are the ones who listen to them. With podcasting now, museums have also explored ways to do two things: first, to integrate visitor responses on the museums, exhibitions or individual works; and secondly, to allow the presentation of different perspectives on art by people who do not necessarily have a fine art background, in order to build bridges between different art forms.

²⁵⁷ Sebastian Breßler. *Podcasting 2006*, p.93

²⁵⁸ Gerrit van Aaken, *Ich bin der Sender*.

Again, it is the SFMOMA, which has pioneered these two approaches to podcasting. In their monthly 'ArtCasts,' the SFMOMA includes short excerpts of visitor responses, known as VoxPops (lat. Vox Populi), to their shows. Similarly, the V&A's CultureCast is "trying to include visitor responses [in each episode]." To record them Travis goes to events, interviews visitors and then edits the recordings. Alternatively they "invite people in, to give a response to our collections." Dave Anderson also believes that podcasting can offer opportunities to involve the community in the museum, and what they are planning for possibly 2008 are "activities with teenage groups, where [they] are going to trial to hand over the production of podcasts to the teenagers. [Towneley Hall] is going to offer them training on how to do the recording and the production is going to be driven by user groups." Wesemann also points out that one "really important aspect of podcasting is that one has the opportunity to respond to comments from visitors or subscribers. One could, for instance, include content in podcasts, which they have sent in. This leads to a real sustainability of my programme offerings."²⁵⁹

The SFMOMA has a project called 'ArtCast Invitational', which is very close to what Wesemann has just outlined. On their website they invite people to submit AV content and send it to the editors:

"Are you a sound artist, a closet critic, or a casual observer with a keen eye for art and a flair for language? We invite you to make a podcast of your own and submit it to SFMOMA's Artcast invitational.

Entries should be in the MP3 or M4A file format and no more than five minutes in length. Podcasts may range from inspired verbal commentary on works in the collection to sound art made in response to your Museum experience. The shape it takes is entirely up to you."²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Eva Wesemann in interview with author, June 2006.

²⁶⁰ SFMOMA http://www.sfmoma.org/education/edu_podcasts_inv.html (as of 2.2.2007).

As Samis says, though, only very few entries have been submitted “We expected that there would be more interest. Maybe we raised the bar too high, as regards the production values. Maybe it’s just, that people prefer to listen, rather than go through all the troubles of producing something themselves.” Pau adds that she thinks that “people [might] misunderstand what [the ‘ArtCasts Invitational’ are] for. So far we have received mainly technical questions. That’s fine, we are very happy to answer technical questions, but at the same time it would be interesting if we received questions about the content of our exhibitions, or how the museum works etc.”

Samis’ and Pau’s view that users might not be interested in contributing content to museums, is shared by Jon Pratty, editor of the 24 Hourmuseum. He argues that “there are many people among the audience, who come home at the end of the day, and want to be entertained. They don’t want to actively participate. They want to switch on the television and be entertained by people who get lots of money to do so.”

Other than the ‘ArtCast Invitational’ the SFMOMA aims to build relations with the arts community in San Francisco. Samis emphasises that the artists they are interested in integrating are not restricted to the visual arts. “It’s also the music and literary communities. We are interested in building bridge between different voices.” Pau adds that “one of the reasons why we wanted to make a podcast was not only that we wanted to take advantage of this new technology, but more importantly that we thought that this would be a forum for integrating multiple voices. We have so many creative people in our community, artists, musicians, writers, and poets; and we felt that the format of podcasting would allow us to integrate the variety of those voices.” Similarly the BA-CA Kunstforum, whose podcasts always have a rich musical element to them, aims to make links between the fine arts and music. Khaelssberg argues that further to using an audio format to bring the background, and the history of art works, one can “also integrate content of writers, philosophers or other artists in order to present different aspects as well as to see the arts within a broader perspective.”²⁶¹

²⁶¹ Alex Khaelssberg in interview with author, June 2006.

It is probably too early to assess the real impact of podcasting as a way to integrate voices of visitors as well as to build bridges between different art forms. However, what clearly comes out of the above is that museum professionals do see a potential in podcasting to realise museums' agendas on social inclusion. They also increasingly see the Web as a medium of communication rather than a platform for the display of authoritative museum content produced solely by experts in various fields. Moreover, what the above also showed is that museums show a commitment to making links between the 'high' arts and between more popular forms of culture in order to make arts more appealing to wider audiences of different backgrounds.

5.7 Conclusion

Staying on top of technological developments and reaching new audiences were two of the key motivations for museum professionals to produce podcasts. Aiming to break with the formal image of museums, producing new type of content for a variety of different audiences and the belief that this medium lends itself well for the integration of the visitors' voice were other reasons mentioned by museum professionals interviewed for this research.

It is interesting to now go back to some of the conclusions drawn in Chapter 3. There it was argued that the Web 2.0 has brought a number of new tools and services for Web developers, rather than radical new ideas about how the Web might help realising the user-centred museum. It was argued, for instance, that ideas such as the integration of the user in content production, the tailoring content for specific target groups, customizing, personalizing and localizing content, is not new to people engaged in the development of museum websites. With podcasting now, one can argue that new ideas did develop. With many exceptions in the UK, and with fewer in Germany and Austria, museums websites today very often reflect an image of the museum as an institution of authority.

With podcasting one can argue this is changing in some ways, but there are of course exceptions as well. The Metropolitan Museum's website for instance, corresponds very much to the paradigm of the Marketing Museum or the Complimentary Site, as defined in Chapter 2. The site is very rich in content and the collection database is for sure a very useful tool to researchers. Yet, with their sites on special exhibitions, curatorial departments and art history timeline, the site does not at all have this much more story-based approach that was identified with some websites such as Tate Online, Making the Modern World and Ingenious. However, with their podcasts, the Met is going a very different path in comparison with their website. Whereas the former is more traditional, their podcasts as discussed in this chapter, are very much on the cutting edge. They do not only stand out for their professional editing and audio quality, it is the communication style and the content which reflects an institution that really wants to be seen as a young, forward-thinking, inclusive museum.

The Rembrandt podcast on the other hand, is an example where the "museum's voice of institutional authority" has been transferred onto the medium of podcasting. One could argue that the National Museums of Berlin are on the cutting edge of technological developments because they are engaging in podcasting. But, in terms of communication styles and in comparison with podcasts such as those from the Met, for instance, they are certainly not cutting edge at all. On the contrary they are using the medium in a manner that keeps the status quo. As will be analyzed in a lot more detail in Case Study 3, communication style is crucial. The employment of a certain technology or service does not necessarily mean that the provider of such is at the leading edge of developments. As was suggested in Chapter 1, connectivity to the Web does not necessarily lead to enhanced access and interactivity. Technology alone is not enough to make art more accessible and to develop a new image of the museum.

As was discussed in Chapter 3, fostering user participation in the museum was already an aim behind museum websites in the late 1990s. Podcasting is now continuing this thinking and taking it to another level with projects such as 'Every Object tells a Story.' More importantly, though, the typology of museum podcasts, which will be developed in the following section, will show that

podcasting is fostering a range of new ideas of how to create engaging experiences for users online and visitors onsite.

Developing a typology of museum podcasts

Sections 5.1 to 5.8 of this chapter focused the analysis on the people who produce podcasts. This section is concerned with what these and other museums have created. The object of analysis is therefore shifting from the ideas behind the podcasts to the podcasts themselves.

The key outcomes of Section 5 was that museums believe that podcasting can help them to stay at, or get to the cutting edge of technological improvement and that this can have a positive impact on the museum's image as contemporary, forward thinking, and user-orientated institution. It also revealed that podcasting is seen as a means to communicate new type of content to new and broader audiences, and that it is a medium which lends itself well to produce content for a variety of specific target groups. Another outcome of Section 5 was that podcasting is a medium, with which one has the opportunity to integrate visitors' voices and to build bridges with related art forms.

The following section will introduce a number of different museum podcasts from a range of different museums, so as to make the ideas expressed in Section 5 more explicit as well as to identify other types of podcasts not mentioned so far. The key objective of this section is to present an overview of the many possible uses of podcasting in museums. The podcasts reviewed here will be analysed in terms of content, communication style and imaginary audience. Based on this analysis, the research aims to develop a loose set of categories of museum podcasts.

Scholarly research often has to do with typifying, categorizing and naming things and phenomena. Therefore, it may sound strange to say that the key outcome of this section will be a 'loose' set of categories. However, podcasting in museums is still in such an early development and museum professionals are currently

experimenting very creatively with this medium. Therefore, to develop a very fixed typology would be counterproductive for those who want to learn more about what podcasting can do for museums. Rejecting the idea of a typology of podcasts completely, would not help either, because that would leave the many different, yet at times also overlapping approaches to podcasting, in obscurity. It seems then that a 'loose' set of categories is the most appropriate way to shed light into the key possibilities, which arise with podcasting to communicate content of museums in innovative and user-orientated ways.

In a presentation held at a conference "Podcasting – What's it all about?" at Tate Britain and organized by the e-learning group for museums, libraries and archives, the author proposed two approaches of how one could develop a typology of museum podcasts.²⁶² The first approach to developing a typology of podcasts was modelled around questions such as: How can podcasting help further a museums mission? How can I, as a museum staff, use podcasting to enhance the experience of a museum visit? How can podcasting help making the museum experience more engaging, participatory and accessible? With these questions in mind, four key types of podcasts were identified: *Podcasting can support the fostering of a more participatory audience*. In this respect the V&A's podcast 'Every Object tells a Story' was mentioned as an example. Here users are invited to make a short video clip about their favourite object. People could send it to the V&A and a selection was provided as podcast. Secondly, it was proposed that *podcasting can help the preparation of a visit*. Referencing the research of Falk and Dierking,²⁶³ it was argued that podcasts like 'Baselitz' from the Royal Academy London²⁶⁴ or 'Velazquez' produced by the Sunday Times Culture²⁶⁵ provides information on the exhibition, which will help visitors to come to the gallery much better prepared, which in turn according to Falk and Dierking can improve the learning experience. Thirdly, it was argued that the

²⁶² Lena Maculan, "Why Should Museums Podcast?"

²⁶³ John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, *Learning from Museums. Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*.

²⁶⁴ Royal Academy Podcasts <http://www.royalacademy.org.uk/podcasts/> (2.1.2008).

²⁶⁵ Times Online http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/article661869.ece (20.11.2007).

National Museums of Berlin podcast on 'Rembrandt'²⁶⁶ served as a good example of using the medium of *podcasting to provide content, which is not otherwise presented in the show*. In this example, Rembrandt's biography was narrated in thirteen episodes, which were made available in the thirteen consecutive weeks that the exhibition was on. Finally, it was suggested that *podcasting could extend the museum beyond its walls, through providing authentic and original experiences of arts*. Tate Shots²⁶⁷ were named as outstanding example of this type of podcast.

Another way of how one could develop a typology of museum podcasts would be to differentiate them in terms of what they can offer to visitors. Here the typology is build around questions such as: When can I, as a visitor listen to/watch a podcast? Why should I do so? What do I need it for? This latter approach of developing a typology has proved to be much more useful in creating an overview of podcasts. It was suggested that visitors, potential visitors or people who are not planning a visit could use a podcast: during a visit, independent of a visit, as preparation or following up a visit, to follow the course of an exhibition and to listen to public programmes and lectures. In a final category another three types of podcasts were presented. These types, however, are so rare at this point that they were not given any specific category.

Based on further research and the feedback received after the presentation, this draft typology has been revised and will be discussed in the following pages. The typology is divided into three main groups according to when it would be most appropriate to listen/watch the podcast in question: Before or after, during or independent of a visit to the museum. Each of these three main groups is divided into two or more sub-groups.

²⁶⁶ Rembrandt Podcast <http://www.rembrandt.podcastnetz.de/> (20.11.2007).

²⁶⁷ Tate Shots <http://www.tate.org.uk/tateshots/archive.htm> (2.1.2008).

Figure 21 Developing a typology of museum podcasts

Figure 21 Developing a typology of museum podcasts									
Before or after a visit		During a visit				Independent of a visit			
"Special exhibition" podcast	Background info on museum and overview	"Special exhibition" audio guide	Audio guides for specific target groups	"Audio Labels"	Alternative Audio guides	Museum News	Recording public programmes	Fostering user participation and multiple views	Building bridges to other arts
"EXHIB PREVIEW" Dulwich Picture Gallery Dulwich Picture Gallery Sunday Times Velazquez "ADDITIONAL INFO" Metropolitan Museum of Art Van Gogh Walker Hapshtsut National Museums Berlin Rembrandt INTERVIEWS Hirshhorn Museum Meet the artist Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis Contemp Masterworks	Dulwich Picture Gallery Museum Houston History Smithson Ameri Art Intro to museum Tasmanian Museum and Artgallery	CURATORS TOUR Metropolitan Museum of Art MetMuseum of Art Tour National Galleries of Scotland Van Gogh Podcurator Guggenheim Directors Tour ARTISTS TOUR Hirshhorn Museum Sugimoto City Gallery Wellington Piccinini	FOR CHILDREN: Audioguides@mc2 BY STUDENTS FOR STUDENTS: Arizona State Museum Santa Barbara Museum of Art Teens for teens MoMA Modern Kids	Museum Ludwig Köln Kulturbehörde Hamburg MoMA Royal Ontario Museum Visual impairments MoMA Visual descriptions	Hayward Gallery Dan Flavin Indianapolis Museum Art 	V&A CultureCast National Gallery London Art Institute Chicago SFMOMA ArtCasts	Podcast Ars Electronica AE 2006 National Museums of Liverpool Lectures Tate Gallery Tate Events Hirshhorn Museum Sugimoto MoMAthink Modern Dada	V&A Every Object Tate Gallery Raw Canvas Artlookers SFMOMA Vox Pops Schönste Franzosen	Wolverhampton Art Gallery Digi Art SFMOMA Music Smithsonian Concerts Arab Music

5.8 Podcasts for before or after a museum visit

Preparing a visit

The Dulwich Picture Gallery's podcast of the exhibition 'The changing face of childhood' is an excellent example of how brief videos about a selection of works in the show can offer visitors a sound introduction of what they can expect from a visit. In this podcast, Ian Dejardin, the director of the Gallery, introduces a number of paintings and explains their history and significance.



Figure 22 Ian Dejardin standing in front of the 'Balbi Children'

In the first episode he analyses a painting by Antoon Van Dyke depicting three children within a theatrical setting. After having talked about who the children might be, and how one can identify the families' position in society through looking at the dress, posture and setting, he sums up in one simple sentence what the show is about: "The whole exhibition is about children without adults in front

of a landscape.” Taken together this series of podcasts represent a great example of how this medium can be used to allow visitors preparing their visit. It also relates to the way user empowerment and participation was defined in Chapter 3. Referencing the writings of Falk and Dierking as well as that of Roderick Davies, it was argued that someone who already has an idea of what to expect from a visit, would make much more out of what is shown in the exhibition.

There is another aspect, which links this example to what has been argued in Chapter 3 and this has to do with the style of communication in the podcast. Rather than narrating down a list of facts about the paintings, Dejardin is quite honest about not knowing exactly who is depicted in this portrait. Museums tend to speak in an authoritative way, but his voice is very different. He says: “In this case we have three extremely aristocratic children. The painting is usually called the Balbi Children, and the Balbi family *might be* one of the candidates for this trio, but we are not sure. *It could be* the Defranki children. *We just don’t know.*” Interesting is how he says that this might be the Balby family, but equally admits that “We just don’t know” and that it might well be someone else. However, through saying that even if we do not know exactly who is represented, “you can tell a lot from this painting,” he focuses his discussion of the work on what the dress, the posture and the background setting can tell us about the people represented.

There is one more point, which makes this podcast an interesting example for this research. This is a technical aspect, yet it is important. Users can choose, whether to access the videos through the museum’s website or through iTunes. Comparing these two possible ways to access the videos makes an important point explicit. Below are two screenshots, one from iTunes and one from the website where the videos are embedded.

Podcast	Time
▼ Dulwich Picture Gallery Podcasts	GET ALL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Canaletto in England: A Venetian Artist Abroad 1746 – 1755	51:48
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Canaletto in England: The Making of Modern London	5:59
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Episode 3. The Founders and background to the Gallery	3:39
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Episode 4. The painting of Noël Desenfans by James Northcote	2:17
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Episode 5. Fillipino Lippi: self portrait from the Uffizi	3:46
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Episode 6. Frans van Mieris the Elder: self portrait from the Uffizi	4:01
<input type="checkbox"/> Episode 7. The Changing Face of Childhood – British Children's portraits and their influence in ...	GET 1:22
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Episode 8. The Changing Face of Childhood: Angelica Kauffman – Henrietta Laura Pulteney c 1777	4:13
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Episode 9. The Changing Face of Childhood: Francis Cotes — Lewis Cage ('The Young Cricketer') 1768	3:18
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Episode 10. The Changing Face of Childhood: Thomas Lawrence — The children of Lord George Cave...	4:00

Figure 23 Dulwich Picture Gallery's podcasts as listed in iTunes²⁶⁸








	Anthony van Dyck The Balbi Children c 1625-1627 This painting of three young aristocratic boys groomed for adulthood stand in front of architectural marble steps and fluted columns symbolising education, proper behaviour and an understanding of what the future holds for them.
	Anthony van Dyke Maddalena Cattaneo 1623 Set against a back drop of marble steps, towering pilaster and red velvet cushion and gold tassels we are in no doubt that Maddalena comes from a very aristocratic background. She stands stiff and uncomfortable in her clothes not understanding why she is there, but with the picture full of symbolism we can see her destiny in continuing the dynastic line
	Thomas Gainsborough The Painter's Two Daughters c. 1758 Gainsborough freed from restraints imposed by commission, documents a father's loving look at his growing daughters
	Angelica Kauffman Henrietta Laura Pulteney c 1777 Henrietta Pulteney was reared in the manner of Jean Jacques Rousseau who thought girls should have 'ample opportunities for activities, races, and games in the open air and in the garden.' Kauffman shows Henrietta Pulteney outside, free of adults, but also portrays her reminiscent of an Arcadian nymph, a popular style during this period.
	Francis Cotes Lewis Cage ('The Young Cricketer') 1768 Against a dramatic sky Lewis Cage stands before the viewer full of self-confidence, with one hand on his hip and the other on his cricket bat he is mimicking the pose of a military commander. Cotes picture was painted six years after the publication of Rousseau's 'Emile' where he stressed the importance of the outdoor life and games.
	Joshua Reynolds Miss Crewe c. 1775 The painting of Frances Crewe probably remained unfinished owing to the little girl's death before it could be completed. Reynold's was exceptional as a painter of children which can be seen in this portrait of the little girl who stands self-confident smiling down on the viewer in her fancy dress outfit of a strawberry seller.
	Thomas Gainsborough Master John Truman-Villebois and his brother Henry c. 1783 The architecture is very reminiscent of van Dyck in his painting of The Balbi Children (above) but Gainsborough has captured the boys not posing in front of the columns but sitting and playing on the steps. They have freed themselves from adult expectations and are caught in a snap shot of time engrossed in their game of cards.

Figure 24 Screenshot from the Dulwich Picture Gallery website' Videolog²⁶⁹

Whereas in iTunes the videos are totally out of the context, on the website a user would reach the page with the videos after having made the decision to click on the page where videos of the named exhibitions are shown. This means that a

²⁶⁸ Screenshot from iTunes (24.10.2007).

²⁶⁹ Dulwich Picture Gallery's online videos

<http://www.moviespring.com/dulwich/childhood.html> (as of 24.10.2007).

user already knows something about the context of these videos and might be able to intuitively know what they might be about. In iTunes the situation is very different. The context is missing. A subscriber to the podcast might one day receive the episodes of the 'Childhood' show, but from the title of the episodes there is no hint about the fact that there is an exhibition that this programme relates to. Yes, each episode has a title and if one looks closely, one can guess that those which begin with 'The changing face of childhood' might correspond to the same show, but it seems to be much more difficult to guess what the videos in iTunes are about compared to the website. This shows how important it is to label episodes in a way that users can easily take a guess what the audio or video content might be about, otherwise it appears to be highly unlikely that users will listen to the programmes, if they have no context.

As was argued in Chapter 1, making objects in museums accessible on a broad scale, has little to do with uploading millions of digital files; rather it has to do with the quality and the way the content is contextualised in an appropriate way. Here this is made explicit through showing how much easier it is to take a guess what the videos might be about, if they are on the website and if they have short descriptions alongside. Chapter 3 further argued that meeting the challenges of the Web 2.0 has to do with exploiting the many distribution channels the Web offers. And having the videos available on the website of the museum as well as in iTunes seems to be very much in line with this argument. However, merely uploading files onto different platforms is not enough. If iTunes is used as a distribution channel, it seems fair to say that files need to be properly labelled so that people find it easy to make sense of the content that is offered.

At the time when this research was conducted there were few podcasts produced by museums, which would fall in the category of 'Exhibition Preview'. One could of course say, that most of the podcasts by museums are about their exhibitions. However, hardly any museum introduces and overviews their exhibitions in such a convincing manner, as the Dulwich. Nevertheless, in the context of a discussion about how to use podcasting as a way to preview exhibitions, one has to mention a podcast produced by the Sunday Times Culture. In a video podcast the Sunday Time's art critic Valdemar Januszack

previews the Velazquez exhibition at the National Gallery's (NG). The same exhibition was also featured in the NG's own podcast. Comparing them will show that programmes produced by news media, can become a real competition for museum podcasters.



Figure 25 Valdemar Januszack previewing the Velazquez exhibition for the Sunday Times Culture at the National Gallery

The NG's feature on Velazquez is approximately ten minutes long. The Sunday Time's programme is slightly shorter; yet, it is argued that through critical analysis of the content and communication styles of both programmes, reveals that the latter provides a much better overview of the exhibition. In terms of content, the Sunday Times' podcast focuses very much on presenting and talking about the paintings. The NG's focus in comparison is on more general topics and background information.

Antenna Audio produces the NG's podcast. Hence, one should expect some decent production quality. It is therefore all the more surprising, to notice that the moderator is reading out a script rather than talking freely. Januszack in comparison seems to be a lot more at ease as he walks around the gallery and talks about the works on the walls. Whereas the Sunday Times' podcast is a video, the NG's is available either audio only or enhanced with images. The comparison of these two episodes also shows how important the visual element becomes in discussions of art exhibitions. Januszack has the opportunity to talk about some of the details of the paintings, while the camera is moving slowly around them for the viewer to see. The ladies and the curator of the Velazquez exhibition, who speak on the NG's podcast, have to talk in more abstract terms, as they cannot rely on listener's ability to see what is talked about. It almost seems odd, that the NG's curator attempts to refer to details of paintings, which the listener cannot see, as for example here:

“Think of the Waterseller... can you imagine doing that when you are a teenager? If you can produces something like that. It's just beyond belief. And you know, you can get lost between the water condensing on the jug, from the coolness and the fig existing in the glass of water, optically beautifully, beautifully captured. But it isn't ultimately the physical description, all be it brilliant on that picture, but what really grabs you... it is the sense of mood, this gravity, that comes along with this very simple act of selling a glass of water.”²⁷⁰

If someone knows the painting then one might be able to relate to what the curator is saying about it. However, without that prior knowledge, it is difficult to imagine that Carr can contribute to really convincing someone to come and see the show. With the help of the visuals, Januszack's way of talking about the paintings simply makes a lot more sense, as the camera moves around those details the art critic talks about.

²⁷⁰ National Gallery <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/podcast/monthly.htm> (as of 2.1.2008).

There is also another dimension to the two podcasts, which differentiates them from each other. Although Antenna Audio produces it, the gallery drives the content of the programme. Since it is in the interest of the NG to present the show in its best light, is highly unlikely that Antenna Audio, the producers of the podcast, will interview people who are taking a very critical view on the show. It is therefore a lot more convincing when the art critic of the Sunday Times emphasises that the Velazquez exhibition is “*the* exhibition of the year,” in comparison to the reporter who says in the NG’s podcast that it “is the most stunning exhibition!” Hence, there is also a question of trust and reliability. If museums interview their own curators to talk about their own shows, it seems fair to say, that they would have to do more than merely saying to each other how great the show is, and how much effort the gallery has put into the preparations of the show.

Extending an exhibition

With their series of podcasts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art provides their users additional content, interviews and background information on exhibitions. In this respect one could say that the podcast serves to extend the exhibition beyond its physical space. As of February 2007, they had 11 special exhibition podcasts, which took a number of different approaches. For their ‘Vincent Van Gogh – The Drawings’ show, they created a sixteen minute programme where Hollywood actor Kevin Bacon read out a selection of letters written by Van Gogh to his brother Theo. In these letters Van Gogh mentions the drawings, which were the subject of the exhibition, a number of times. In this respect they offered listeners another type of context in which to see the works. For the ‘Hatshepsut – From Queen to Pharaoh,’ exhibition, the Met produced a programme similar to the one mentioned above. The exhibition showed objects excavated by the Museum’s Egyptian Expedition in the 1920s and 1930s are supplemented by loans from other American and European museums, as well as

by select loans from Cairo.²⁷¹ In the podcast the moderator introduced the details about what is on show. She revealed that the Met's Egyptologist Herbert Winlock excavated the key objects in the early 20th century. Winlock wrote down notes as the excavations were ongoing, and an actor read out excerpts out of these writings for the podcast. So, similarly to the Van Gogh programme, the medium of podcasting is used to bring some of the museum's archival holdings out into the public. But more interestingly is the communication style. The Met has chosen actors to speak in their podcasts, rather than curators or other experts on the topic. It appears that the assumption that is being made here is that listeners of podcasts need to be not only informed but also entertained. Not every art historian is also a great communicator, and it is this that the Met has acknowledged and therefore chosen to employ a professional instead.

The Met also shows that it uses the medium of podcasting in a creative and flexible manner. Rather than rigidly following a format that has once been established, the Met appears to have decided that some type of programmes work with some exhibitions or topics rather than for all. For the exhibition of Kara Walker, for instance, the Met offered something that is more relevant for the presentation of a living artist. In this case they produced an interview between the curator of the show and the artist, which provided an introduction and background information of what is shown. There is also one common element that the three examples above share: all three programmes finish with details on where to find the exhibitions, how long they are on view, as well as details on sponsors, organisers and credits. So, clearly they are also used as another form of advertising the show, and their imaginary audience are people who actually have the opportunity to come and visit the show.

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis produced a series of podcasts for their exhibition 'Contemporary Masterworks – St. Louis collects.' This exhibition drew together a number of works from private collections in St. Louis, and aimed to make these privately owned works accessible to the public. On the one hand,

²⁷¹ Metropolitan Museum of Art
http://www.metmuseum.org/special/se_event.asp?OccurrenceId={92C8F718-137B-4AE6-9FAA-C8DA6CCE72CC} (as of 2.2.2007).

the show aims to highlight that St. Louis is “one of the leading cities in supporting art and artists,” on the other the museums public events aim to investigate “the dynamics of collecting—the benefits, challenges and risks involved.”²⁷²

And some of these issues are addressed in the podcasted interviews, where museum staff chatted with the collectors about when and how their art collecting activities started, what they liked about art, whether they pursue certain strategies with their collecting, how they re-arrange their collection around their houses, what their favourite works were etc.

The series included ten interviews and provided a light-hearted, informal programme with background information to the exhibition and its lenders. Since the exhibition was about private collectors as much as about the works themselves, an audio programme like this one seems very appropriate for this particular context. In comparison to writing the collectors’ statements on a wall panel, for instance, the audio dimension allows one to hear the collectors talk themselves, which makes it much easier for the listener to imagine how these collectors might be like as human beings.

Another approach how podcasting can extend exhibitions through providing additional content was explored by the National Museums Berlin in conjunction with the show ‘Rembrandt – Genie auf der Suche.’ This Rembrandt show at the National Museums Berlin (2006) was Berlin’s contribution to the worldwide celebrations of the painter’s 400th birthday. Based on Rembrandt’s biography by Christian Tümpel, the programme consisted of thirteen episodes, which were made available once a week, in each of the thirteen weeks the exhibition ran.²⁷³ Each episode was between four and eight minutes long and shed light on the artist’s life and artistic development. The programme placed some of the artist’s key works in a historical context, talked about Rembrandt’s relationship to

²⁷² Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis http://www.contemporarystl.org/ce_masterworks.php (as of 19.4.2006).

²⁷³ Christian Tümpel, *Rembrandt* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2006).

women, his way to fame and glory as well as his bankruptcy and death.²⁷⁴ In addition to quotes from contemporaries, there were comments from curators who set up the show.

Eva Wesemann, creative director of Antenna Audio in Germany and producer of the first two podcasts of the National Museums Berlin, summed up their key aims and objectives as follows:

“with our first podcast we fundamentally had three goals: First, we wanted to address those who are not regular museum visitors in order to encourage them to visit the show. Secondly, we aimed to provide additional content to the exhibition. [The exhibition addressed the term melancholy throughout the history of art,] the podcast addressed how melancholy is depicted in literature. Finally, the objective of the podcast was to advertise the weekly public programmes, the ‘Salon Noir.’ With the Rembrandt podcast we placed an even stronger emphasis on providing content, which has not been dealt with in the exhibition. Moreover, the podcast should also work completely independent from the exhibition. Therefore, we decided to narrate Rembrandt's life, enriched with lots of quotations from contemporaries and the artist himself.”²⁷⁵

Another way museums have made use of podcasting to allow visitors to get an idea of what to expect from a visit has been explored by the Museum of the African Diaspora and the Museum of Houston. The former offers a computer generated animation that introduces the museum's building and overviews the themes around which the collection is built.²⁷⁶ The Museum of Houston produced a similar introduction to the museum, a twenty-minute programme of the History of the Port of Houston and the museum's collection.²⁷⁷ Both of these

²⁷⁴ Lena Maculan, ‘Podcasting In Berlin - Lena Maculan Interviews Eva Wesemann, Antenna Audio’ in *24hourmuseum* <http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk/nwh/ART42708.html> (as of 2.2.2007).

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Museum of the African Diaspora <http://www.moadsf.org/podcast/moad.xml> (as of 12.2.2007).

²⁷⁷ Museum of Houston <http://museumofhouston.org/podcast/museumofhouston.xml> (as of 12.2.2007).

types of podcasts primarily serve as marketing tools, and are orientated towards a general public, which is interested in receiving an overview of the museum, its collection and brief history.

These two approaches to podcasting is different compared to the ones mentioned before, in as much as they do not exploit one important technical aspect of the medium of podcasting, that is the possibility to offer subscribers new episodes in regular periods of time. Why would one make a subscription to a programme, which only offers a one-off programme? It does not really seem to make sense at all. What it does reveal, however is that one should think critically as to what lends itself for podcasting and what not. It seems that if a museum doesn't plan on building a regular programme, then it should not just provide one single episode as podcast. This could be frustrating for the subscriber who is waiting for new episodes. For those types of content it seems to be more useful to provide them as streams embedded in the website.

The podcasts of the Dulwich Picture Gallery and the Sunday Times Culture have shown how video content provided as download or as podcast can provide an excellent means of offering visitors a 'preview' to an exhibition. Both these podcasts seem to address potential visitors to the onsite museum. In comparison, the Mets, the Contemporary Art Museums St. Louis's and the National Museums Berlin podcasts is much less dependent on a visit, even if the implicit intention of these programmes is to motivate people to come to the museum. In terms of content, the three programmes discussed above share that they provide additional content to that is already presented in the museum. This disconnection of the audio/video production from the actual exhibition also makes them relevant for those unable to visit the museum or for those preparing a visit.

The V&A's Web developer Toby Travis, who also developed his programmes, the 'CultureCasts' for an imaginary audience which doesn't necessarily visit the museums, argues that even though they do not know who their audiences are and where they are located, podcasts should be made so as to appeal to "all kinds of people, whether they live here and come to the museum, or not. Maybe they have been to the museum during a visit to London, maybe not, maybe they will in the

future. In any case, the podcasts should be independent from that, and should be made to be interesting for local and global audience.”

Another thing that the three podcasts share is that their structure and schema reference Radio shows. Yet at the same time, they are also different to Radio. Radio is often produced with an audience in mind, which is engaging in other activities (e.g. driving a car) while listening. The podcasts mentioned above though, are produced in a way that requires the listener to be concentrated. The above-mentioned podcasts probably don't lend themselves too well for listening while engaging in other activities. When looking at a range of museum podcasts of the kind discussed here, the research suggests that, similar to what the analysis of the House of research found, podcasts are a medium for concentrated listening.²⁷⁸

There are however, also differences amongst these podcasts, most importantly differences in terms communication style. Amongst the above examples the Rembrandt podcast is referencing the conventional scholarly tone of the museum the most. A narrator leads through the show and there are occasional quotes from specialists of the museum. The Met's Van Gogh programme is different in style, largely due to the Hollywood actor, who is reading the letters with a great sense of drama. The interviews with Kara Walker or the St. Louis collectors, on the other hand, are very chatty and light-hearted. Moreover, whereas the Rembrandt podcast discusses specific works in the show, the latter addresses rather general topics, which makes this programme even less dependent on a visit to the exhibition.

The programmes discussed here also differ in terms of length. Antenna's 'Rembrandt' is over eighty-nine minutes long in total, which is by far the longest programme amongst those discussed here. However, it was split up into thirteen episodes, each between five and a half and eleven minutes long, which were offered in thirteen consecutive weeks. The Met's episodes are between eight and

²⁷⁸ Sebastian Breßler. *Podcasting 2006*, p.89.

sixteen minutes long, which is slightly longer than the podcasts of the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis.

5.9 Podcasts made for listening during a museum visit

The podcasts discussed in the previous sections are largely intended to be listened before or after a visit, or even if no visit is planned at all. They are not meant to be listened to during the visit. There are however, a great number of podcasts which are made for listening onsite and it is these, which this section is concerned with.

Many museums offer podcasts in the format of audio guides. Some simply convert existing audio guide files into podcast compatible formats; others use the medium more creatively and explore novel ways of using audio formats to interpret exhibitions and engage visitors. In any case, one can observe a great interest in the professional community to use podcasting as audio guides and there are lots of examples, which prove this.

Although being a great supporter of podcasting in museums, Khaelssberg does not see this medium as an alternative to audio guides. The BA-CA Kunstforum has recently launched a new PDA based tour guide and currently they are not thinking about replacing them with podcasts. Nevertheless, Khaelssberg believes that “podcasts could be a viable alternative for audio guides for smaller institutions.”²⁷⁹ When Dave Anderson first started podcasting at Towneley Hall, he converted the existing audio files of their tour guide and provided it as feed. This, he says, was just an experiment and to find out how podcasting really works. At the same time, though, he also sees a potential in using podcasting as a means “to supplement some of the labelling in the museum.” Upon the question whether he believes that podcasting can replace audio production companies for the production of audio guides, he said: “I suppose this depends on the skills of the museum’s staff. But to an extent I think they can do, and quite cheaply so.” The V&A’s Web developer also said that “a lot of people here in the V&A are

²⁷⁹ Khaelssberg in interview with author, June 2006.

interested” in exploring podcasting as audio tours. “A lot of curators want to do that for their exhibitions,” and Travis is sure that “that kind of thing will happen in the future.” At the moment, though, he finds it “more interesting to explore podcasting as a distinct medium and see what you can do with it.” He is particularly “interested in staying within the podcasting culture” and he likes “the DIY aspect of it, the low-fi sound.”

Although Wesemann argues that there are potential benefits for museums in using podcasting as audio guides, she also believes that it will take at least another five years until podcasting could replace the currently used soft and hardware of conventional audio guides. Yet, she clearly sees that there are some benefits for museums as “there would be no need to obtain expensive hardware and the cost for personnel handing out and taking back the devices would also lapse.” Nevertheless, at the moment, Wesemann argues, there are not enough owners of MP3-Players amongst museum visitors, which means that museums would have to provide the conventional audio guide anyway, if they wanted to guarantee a comprehensive audio programme.²⁸⁰ Secondly, there are unresolved problems of compatibility. Currently the iPod software does not allow users to upload audio content through docking stations, as the content would overwrite and erase all the stored files on the owner’s hardware.²⁸¹

Through looking at over one hundred examples, this research has identified four types of podcasts that are addressed at an imaginary audience, which downloads episodes onto a portable device to be taken into the museum. Within these types, though, museums take different approaches. These are analysed below in order to shed light on the various different approaches to producing this type of programme.

The podcasts will be analysed in terms of their communication style, content and imaginary target audience. In terms of style and content the first category of audio guide type podcasts, is probably the one closest to the conventional audio

²⁸⁰ Sebastian Breßler. *Podcasting 2006*, stated that in 2005 23% of households and 66% of the twelve to nineteen year olds owned an iPod or an MP3-Player., p.10.

²⁸¹ The Walker Art Center and the SFMOMA are trying to find ways of using docking stations.

guide format: Curator-led tours or the so-called ‘Director’s tour’ will be analysed in comparison to artist-led guides. The second group will compare and contrast audio guides, which are driven by speech and focused around the object, with more experimental approaches. The third and smallest group will discuss audio guides, which were made with specific target groups in mind, especially children and students, or for people with special needs (e.g. people with visual impairments).

Audio guides

There are several museums, which offer audio guides that are led by their curators or directors. At the Eiteljorg Museum, the curator for contemporary art leads through the exhibition ‘Changing Hands;’ The Museum of the Future at the Ars Electronica Center in Linz produced a similar podcast for their exhibition ‘The Age of Simulation.’ Together with a moderator, Nicoletta Blacher, director of the museum, walks through the exhibition and analyses selected works.²⁸² Comparable tours can also be found at the Dahesh Museum in New York (‘Napoleon on the Nile’ exhibition) or the Davis Museum and Cultural Center (the coordinator of technology, moderates a tour of three pieces of sculpture, which are spread around the site). The following discusses three podcasts of this kind in more detail, in order to make the possibilities that come up with podcasts as audio guides.

The Freud Museum in Vienna kicked off their podcasting in conjunction with a public art project. “Podcasts were appropriate particularly for this exhibition, because it was happening in the public space,” explains Scholz-Strasser, director of the museum. The project consisted of three elements: posters, which were attached to thirteen advertising columns, a brochure and the podcasts.

The posters on the columns included images and citations of Sigmund Freud and reflected upon his life and work in Vienna. There were also quotes from Freud’s contemporaries, pupils and critics. Moreover, the posters explained some of the

²⁸² Cultural Broadcasting Archive http://cba.fro.at/show.php?eintrag_id=4892 (as of 7.2.2007).

key terms of psychoanalysis. The columns selected for this out-door project, were spread around the city of Vienna, yet, the locations chosen, had a particular connection with Freud.

“The brochure provided further information and an overview of the project. The podcasts offered a further layer, with even deeper levels of interpretation, because they related specifically to the thirteen publications that are shown on the advertising columns,” says Scholz-Strasser. The MP3-files were offered as download from the museum’s website as well as through iTunes.

In terms of style this podcast is very close to the conventional audio guide. What is most interesting from the perspective of this research is that this podcast is made in such a way that the listener doesn’t actually need to see the exhibition in order to make sense of what is talked about. The podcast works totally independent from the show. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) podcast is in stark contrast to the approach taken at the Freud Museum.

In conjunction with the exhibition, ‘An Afro European Encounter in Africa’, the Met made a podcast with Fritz Umbach, a professor of World History at the City University in New York. This 45-minute piece strongly references common audio guides, as offered in museums. The speaker does not only talk about the objects, but also leads the visitor through the space and helps to find the objects talked about. Moreover, he gives advice where to stop and when to switch the audio tour on or off. In contrast to the Freud Museum’s podcast, this one then is very much dependent on an onsite visit.

The Guggenheim’s ‘Director’s Tour’ is not available as podcast. However, for a relatively small amount of money it is available at www.audible.com as MP3-download. The file can then easily be added to one’s music library and synchronized with an MP3-Player or iPod. So, even if it is not a podcast, free of charge, i.e. even if the method of delivery is different to podcasting, the idea of offering audio content not only through the onsite hardware, but also download

remains the same, which is one of the reasons why this example is chosen for this case study here.²⁸³

In this half an hour audio guide, Lisa Dennison, director of the Guggenheim, explores some of the masterpieces of the Tannhauser Galleries, which is the only collection of the Guggenheim that is on permanent view. It represents the earliest works in the museum's holdings and includes some of the museum's highlights. In this programme the moderator, briefly explains some of the concepts, such as 'Cubism' or 'Abstract Expressionism,' while Dennison talks about the specific works on view.

Both the moderator's and Dennison's comments rely heavily on art historical jargon, which suggests that their imaginary audience are people who already are familiar with art history to some extent. For instance, the moderator explains cubism and says that "its initial phase was known as analytic cubism, referring to the analysis or the breaking down of form and space. Pablo Picasso and fellow cubist Georges Braque used a limited palette of ochres, browns, greens, greys and blacks to accentuate the flatness of their fragmented subjects." Explaining 'Abstract Expressionism' he says that "the term has come to describe the work of American artists primarily working in New York, beginning in the 1940s. These artists rejected representational imagery and figuration. Instead they explored how a gestural application of paint and a loose brushstroke could convey unconscious thought and subjective emotional content."

Dennison often starts out with describing the paintings before saying something on the works art historical significance. What she also does, though, and this is more interesting in the context of this research, is how she brings in a personal dimension. She says things like "what I love about this painting is...", "this is Edward Manet's 'Before the Mirror' and it is, actually my favourite painting in the Tannhauser gallery."

²⁸³ For a 'Director's Tour' which is delivered as free download see the Philadelphia Museum of Art <http://www.philamuseum.org/visit/25-61.html?page=3> (as of 13.2.2007).

The tour's title is 'Director's tour' so people who buy it do it because they probably want this type of tour, a selection according to what the director thinks is significant. Hence, bringing in this personal touch seems viable. Yet, at times it seems to not make sense at all. Talking about a Rothko painting she says:

"I have a very personal connection to Rothko, because when I came to work at the Guggenheim in 1978, my first day of work, the first project I have ever worked on was the Rothko Retrospective. And it remains one of the most beautiful shows we ever did at the Guggenheim. And I think you can see that from looking at this painting, because of these incredible, frontal, luminous rectangles of colour that seem to hover and vibrate on the surface of the canvas."

Again, her personal stories are appropriate in the context of a 'Director's Tour;' but, her argument that one can see in "these incredible, frontal, luminous rectangles of colour that seem to hover and vibrate around the canvas," that this must have been one of the best shows the Guggenheim ever did, shows how she is overdoing it.

The Guggenheim's 'Director's Tour' has been chosen as example here because it presents something halfway between the Freud and the Met podcast. It is not totally independent of the onsite visit, yet it doesn't as rigidly follow the format of an audio guide as does the Met's example. Taken together the comparison and contrast of the three audio guide type podcasts above show how differently museums approach this medium as a means to enhance an onsite visit.

Artist-led audio guides

In comparison to the curator's and director's tour, the artist's tour is different in as much as the way artists talk about their own work is always different from the manner art historian talk about it. There are some museums, which have explored this type of podcast, notably the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Tacoma Art Museum and the City Gallery in Wellington, New Zealand.

The author's experience as a writer for an art magazine, as well as through working with contemporary artists in commercial galleries has shown that there are many artists who are able to produce very remarkable works, yet are unable to talk about them in an interesting and accessible way. Reading transcripts of interviews with artists often makes this all too clear. But there are also, of course, many artists who can speak really well about their work, and Piccinini is certainly one of them. Therefore, the City Gallery has made a good choice in asking the artist herself rather than a curator to speak on the podcast.

For their Patricia Piccinini show, the City Gallery produced thirteen audio files, each corresponding to an object in the show. In these segments the artist talks about what the objects mean to her and how one might interpret them. The Piccinini podcast is enhanced with images, so for someone interested in her work, but unable to travel to New Zealand to view the exhibit, this programme might be of great interest. Whether a journalist preparing an article, a curator or a student researching on artists, or simply anyone with an interest in her work, potentially finds some useful information in there, whether they have seen the show or not.

Experimental audio guides

In comparison with the 'Director's tour' and the artist-led tour, there are other museums which explore more experimental paths, challenging the idea that an audio guide is necessarily based upon verbal commentary. The Hayward Gallery London, for instance, commissioned the artist collective Greyworld to compose music to be listened by visitors of their Dan Flavin Retrospective. The result of this commission were six pieces of music, each approximately one and a half to five minutes in length, and each relating to specific works in the exhibition. "Each piece infuses the gallery space with sound in a way that compliments Flavin's compositions of electric light defining space".²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Greyworld: http://www.greyworld.org/#flavin_soundscape_i1 (as of 6.2.2007).

This genre of podcast is something in between provision of additional content, as defined earlier under the heading ‘Extending an exhibition’, and audio guides as described above. It is object-specific and it requires being in front of the artwork, as with an audio guide, yet it doesn’t provide verbal interpretation. However, it adds another dimension to the experience of the work.

“Visitors to the gallery were able to download the sound work from the gallery’s website onto their MP3-Players to listen to as they explored the gallery. Apple also donated twenty iPods to allow visitors without access to an MP3-Player to experience the soundscape.”²⁸⁵ The soundscape does not seem to be available through either iTunes or the Hayward website, however, as of February 2007, it was accessible through Greyworld’s website.²⁸⁶ This type of podcasts shows a new approach towards audio guides, in as much as they do not necessarily have to be verbal to enhance a visitor’s experience.

Content for specific target groups

There are several museums, which have explored podcasting as a means to offer audio guides for children and teenagers. Modern Kids by the Museum of Modern Art New York is one great example of how content and communication style is targeted towards a very young audience. This podcast has already been discussed in the section “Why podcasting.”

MoMA has also another podcast, which is targeted at people with visual impairments. With ‘Visual Descriptions’ MoMA “offers extended visual descriptions of works in the Museum’s collection for visitors with visual impairments and those seeking an in-depth looking experience”, and is available in English only. Basically, this podcast series features thorough descriptions of the works on show. The narrator describes the theme depicted, the manner in which it is painted, and the colours, which have been used, in order to help

²⁸⁵ The exhibition ran from January to April 2006. Greyworld:
http://www.greyworld.org/#flavin_soundscape_i1 (as of 6.2.2007).

²⁸⁶ Greyworld http://www.greyworld.org/#flavin_soundscape_i2 (as of 6.2.2007).

people with visual impairments to enjoy the works on display. It seems that this type of podcast is primarily for the onsite visitor. Of course, the online user could also listen to it, yet without having an image, the experience is probably not so interesting. Online users, have the opportunity to search for the object in the collection database, however, it is very unlikely that if one is already partially sighted, that one would find the matching image quickly, if the database turns out some forty-seven results, as is the case with the painting 'Les Demoiselles d'Avignon.' Particularly in this case, it would be helpful if the collections database would allow searching for the audio guide number as listed in iTunes.

What the above shows is that there are currently a range of different approaches to producing audio guide style podcasts. Some are more dependent on a museum visit than others. Since audiences are probably not yet aware of the fact that audio guide can also be a useful resource outside the context of an onsite visits, museums should be more explicit about the many possible uses of such AV content.

Comparing the examples of this section raises a number of questions. One of them is whether it is advisable to enhance the podcast with images, or whether this feature makes the files too heavy for those having slower connection speeds. Or, whether images are irrelevant anyway, for those who do not have portable devices that are able to show images. Just to name one example, of how a museum has dealt with this question is the SFMOMA. Here, the museum provides two types of downloads, one enhanced with images and one without, so that users can decide for themselves which one they prefer.

When looking at the examples above, one finds pieces which are as short as one minute and others that are almost the length of an hour. When producing audio tour type podcasts, it seems that the length of the individual contributions should be considered carefully. How long is the attention span of podcast users? Do users listen to 45 minutes of content if they are not able to visit the exhibition? And even if they do visit, would it be better to break the podcast up in to shorter episodes, so that navigating through them is easier than using the fast forward and backward functions?

The podcast of *Newsweek Magazine*, for example, offers an interesting solution to this question. Here, one can either listen to the complete forty-two minutes show, or one could retrieve and listen to the five individual eight minutes segments. Providing this kind of flexibility seems to be particularly relevant for the museum context, as not every visitor is taking the same path through the show, and not every one wants to listen to the entire tour.

The comparison and contrast of different approaches to using podcasting as audio guides revealed that there are many different ways people can make use of them. Some, e.g. the Met's audio guide, are more dependent on a visit than others, e.g. the Freud Museums. The latter has also shown that podcasting might be particularly appropriate for exhibitions in public space, as visitors do not come to the museum to pick up a guide. In terms of content currently available podcast vary greatly. They range from a simple conversion of the conventional audio guide files to exploring non-verbal approaches and the Soundscape produced for the Dan Flavin Retrospective has been named as an interesting example. Other than having curators or directors speak on their audio guides, some museums have explored ways of integrating the artist's voice into the guide. This is of course, only possible for living artists, however, one could also have an actor read out some archival material, or letters as was the case in the podcast of the Met.

Looking at all these different approaches of using podcasting as a means to enhance the visitors' onsite visit, it seems to be coming down to the following key points: A successful audio guide type podcast is about selecting appropriate content and choosing a speaker with excellent communication skills, be it an artist, a curator or indeed any other person, who knows how to speak in simple terms even about very complex subjects. In terms of content approaches range from the very conventional 'explaining' the works on view to more experimental approaches that aim at inspiring the visitor to experience the works in novel ways (e.g. Hayward Gallery podcast). However, for a successful podcast, it is important that the producer has a profound understanding of how to best communicate the works of art that are the subject of the programme. This in turn requires a great understanding of the works of art in question, as well as an

understanding of the audience and how to address it. Moreover, a successful podcast also shows that the producer appreciates the limitations of the medium, and that programmes are placed within a frame of references that helps the audience to take guesses as to what the programme is about and how they might use it. Hence, labelling podcasts and hyperlinking them is crucial. What this very clearly illustrates is that podcasting as a medium for enhancing a visitor's onsite experiences is not an easy matter. It requires an understanding for the art, the audience, communication styles, and last but not least an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the medium of podcasting itself.

5.10 Podcasts that are independent of a museum visit

Staying in touch with the museum

Other than making programmes about special exhibitions, news on what is currently on show, including interviews in the style mentioned above, are also presented in programmes, which could be termed as *Monthly Newsflash*. Pioneer in this sort of format has been the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA). As of February 2007 programmes based on a very similar format are also offered in the Art Institute of Chicago, de Young Museum (Antenna Audio production) and the Cube Gallery Canada. In European museums this format was most notably adopted by the V&A (but was discontinued), the National Gallery London and the Palais des Beaux-Arts Brussels (both Antenna Audio productions).

This type of programme is roughly about fifteen minutes in length and represents a round-up about what's happening in the museum. Moderators usually lead through the programme, explain what exhibitions are on, who the artists are and curators are interviewed in order to give some additional background information. In order to make this more explicit, it is helpful to look at an example with particular regards as to how this type of programme has come into being. When listening to the SFMOMA's 'ArtCasts' one is tempted to think that

the producers have orientated themselves around news and documentary programmes as offered by Radio- or TV stations. Talking to Samis and Pau, though, revealed that this was not the case. Rather, they explained that the ‘ArtCasts’ came out of a three-stage development. In the first stage they based the format of the programme on that of audio guides. The outcome of the second stage was ‘a more generalized tour’ with audio recordings from artists’ writings. The third was the audio zine, which is known as the ArtCast.” In these stages of development the SFMOMA did not try to copy any existing genre or type of programme. Much rather, this process was one of experimentation and they “followed what [they] felt was successful and what wasn’t.”²⁸⁷ Samis further elucidates that

“It’s always like that; you try something out without knowing what the problems are going to be. You bring your equipment to the gallery and at first you don’t know all the problems that are going to come up. We felt like we are reinventing the wheel of how to make an audio tour. Then we thought that this is not something that we liked. With the Robert Adams we realised that it’s more successful if we disengaged the visual track from the visitor’s itinerary through the show. We were making it more by having users in mind, who are sitting at home on their computers.”²⁸⁸

Pau adds that they “wanted to say something that could enhance the visitor’s experience, even for an audience which is not in front of the artwork. That approach was less didactic and allowed us to provide a more creative perspective about the works on view.” Wesemann also sees the independence of the audio programme and the exhibition as an opportunity rather than a problem.

“It allows us to talk about themes, which are related to the exhibition or the collection; yet offer a totally new perspective, a different kind of approach. This in turn can impact the exhibition and in the best

²⁸⁷ Peter Samis and Stefanie Pau in interview with author, June 2006.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

case leads one to go and see it, even if one didn't actually plan to do so.”²⁸⁹

Even if museums start to make their own audiovisual programmes, this is of course not to suggest that radio and TV will stop reporting on museums. On the contrary, looking at some quality news media in Germany and the UK, one can see that they also offer a number of programmes which are in competition with productions such as the SFMOMA's 'ArtCast.' What this suggests is that if museums do not engage in podcasting themselves, then there will be others who will do so. The ramifications of this are discussed in more detail in the following section. Moreover, what will be shown through the comparing newsflashes produced by museums and those by traditional media is that it is not as easy to produce a high quality programme, as promoters of podcasting tend to do.

Exhibition and museum news in the news media

In Germany, people interested in news on exhibitions and museums have a number of options to get informed via subscribing to podcasts. The leading national News Radio Station 'Deutschland Radio' offers several of their programmes as podcasts, MP3-downloads or live stream. Their weekly programme called 'Museum der Woche' or Museum of the Week, makes short audio documentaries on regional museums around Germany. They are produced in collaboration with the German Museum Association (Deutscher Museumsbund) and include interviews with professionals responsible for those museums.

There are also a number of different other cultural programmes which often report on museums, exhibitions as well as the key players in the cultural world in Germany, such as museum directors and curators, collectors, and politicians. Many of these programmes are offered as podcast and with the possibility of making one's own play lists in content management software such as iTunes, one can easily create programmes around one's own interest.

²⁸⁹ Eva Wesemann in interview with author, June 2006.

In comparison to many of the podcasts produced by museums, the podcasts offered by Deutschland Radio stand out for their professional production quality. As a radio station, they have the necessary production and editorial skills, so it seems fair to say that if museums want to reach audiences of established radio stations, then they would have to at least match their production standards.

Moreover, if museums want to generate audiences for their news podcasts, they also have to take into account that podcasts such as those offered by Deutschland Radio, do not only report on one museum, but on a broad spectrum of national and international exhibitions. Therefore, it seems fair to say, that if museums want to reach for new audiences, they need to be aware of what other content providers are offering.

Other than the news media, there is also competition for museum podcasting coming from within the sector, that is, from audio production companies such as Antenna Audio. Antenna, as Eva Wesemann says, is planning to launch their own podcast series in addition to the programmes they produce for several museums around the world. Asked about what kind of programmes they are planning on launching, Wesemann explains that “in a first step [they] will offer podcasts to [their] clients, the museums, which will report on trends and developments in the area of technology. [Antenna] will provide insider information of the museum scene and introduce remarkable places, people and audio guides.”²⁹⁰ More importantly within the context here, is that in a second step Antenna plans to make a series of podcasts, which “will report on exhibitions and integrate interviews with artists, museum professionals as well as reactions from visitors.” Antenna is also thinking about making biographical documentaries on artists and other historical figures, introductions to art history, programmes for children and young people, travelling programmes and city tours - “the variety of themes and the didactic possibilities are almost unlimited!”²⁹¹ What this shows is that competition for museums to make podcasts in and about museums is not only coming from the news sector. In fact, it is also coming from those, who usually work in the service of museums.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ Lena Maculan. ‘Podcasting in Berlin’.

Listen to lectures in museums

It seems obvious that for museums which offer lectures, symposia and related type of events, podcasting provides another way of allowing a geographically-dispersed audience to participate in the museum's events. In fact, at first it seems to be the most straightforward field of application for this technology, as it does not require anything else than recording the event, creating a feed and loading it up on the Web. It is therefore all the more surprising, to see that not many museums have yet, started offering this type of service.

One of the first institutions to have done so, however, is the Ars Electronica Center in Linz. At their 2005 Festival, they broadcasted selected keynote addresses, discussions and conferences live on the Web. Today these contributions are archived and available for download as video or audio file, as well as, as a RSS feed. This online archive allows users access to the papers delivered at the 'Hybrid Symposium', the 'Prix Forum' and artists' lectures. With this archive the AEC does not only make the content accessible to those who were not able to join the sessions themselves, the archive is also useful for those who might have been there but were unable to go to all of the sessions.

Tate Gallery is one of the pioneers of webcasting and podcasting and their approach has already been discussed at length under the heading 'The museum as producer' in Chapter 3. Other examples of using the medium of podcasting to distribute talks and lectures in museums one can find at the MoMA New York, the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and the Smithsonian Institution. The Walker Art Center provides live webcasts of the museum's programming as well as podcasts. "Initiated in conjunction with the exhibition 'How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in A Global Age', the Walker's webcasting programme features a wide range of public programs, including lectures, readings, and presentations involving artists, scholars, and critics of contemporary art and culture. In addition to presenting live events, the Walker Channel's rich archives include past webcasts, remarks by hundreds of contemporary artists from a variety of disciplines, panel

discussions involving critics and audiences, single-artist lectures addressing important topics of the day, and musical and literary performances by some of the 20th century's leading voices.”²⁹²

Getting involved in content production

The V&A's project called 'Every Object tells a Story' has already been mentioned as an example of a podcast which has as its objective to nurture the participation of visitors of the V&A and its website. It has already been said that for this projects members of the public were invited to produce short video clips about their favourite object and to send them to the editors of V&A Online. Here it just needs to be added that the podcast is only one element of this larger project, which also included social and educational events at the museum.

'Raw Canvas' is an initiative run at the Tate Modern by young adults for young adults. Participants are invited to draw on their personal experience and knowledge when thinking about and interpreting works of art.²⁹³ In this project, members of the 'Raw Canvas' created a sound tour of the Tate Modern's new collection displays. "They wanted to create a different kind of audio tour as a backdrop for looking at 16 selected art works. The tour produced offers a combination of interviews, sound and music as an alternative way of looking to provoke the viewer to investigate other ways to read that artwork.”²⁹⁴

Building bridges to other art forms

The previous sections illustrated how podcasts can serve to provide information on individual objects, exhibitions, news on museums, and guided tours. It has also been shown that podcasting can be used to distribute recorded lectures, symposia or panel discussions, that museum podcast can have similar formats as

²⁹² Walker Art Center: <http://channel.walkerart.org/index.wac> (as of 19.4.2006).

²⁹³ Tate Online: <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/eventseducation/rawcanvas/who.html> (as of 7.2.2007).

²⁹⁴ Tate Online: <http://www.tate.org.uk/learning/youngtate/artlookers/> (as of 7.2.2007).

radio shows, or that they can serve the purpose of introducing the building and the collection for the purpose of marketing. The Freer and Sackler Galleries at the Smithsonian Institution show another field of application for podcasting in order to make events at the museum accessible to the online audience.

As part of their public programmes, the Freer and Sackler Galleries have a concert series, which they also offer as podcasts. Among them are, for example, performances of Ottoman Turkish music from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, played on instruments that are often depicted in Ottoman paintings. Others include a concert of Sufi music from Rajasthan or the concert of tribal music of Taiwan's high central mountains.²⁹⁵ These kind of programmes show that a podcast can also be used to provide another entertaining dimension to the exhibition.

5.11 Conclusion: Can podcasting make art more accessible and foster an empowered audience?

This chapter was divided into two sections. The first one explored the ideas and motivations of museum professionals to make podcasts. The second developed a typology of museum podcasts. Now, the objective is to pull these two strings of research together and draw some conclusions about the true potential of podcasting, to bring about change in museum practice. Can podcasting really live up to the expectations museum professionals have? Can podcasts really bring museums to the forefront of technological developments? Can this medium help to reach young people? Does podcasting really lend itself to address specific target groups? Can podcasting really help building sustainable relationships with audiences?

Not all of these questions will be answered here, as more data will be necessary, which will be presented in the other two case studies later on. However, at this point it is possible to address the question of whether podcasting may help museums to get to the forefront of technological developments. One of the key

²⁹⁵ Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden: <http://hirshhorn.si.edu> (as of 18.4.2006).

questions in this regard seems to be whether the medium of podcasting is appropriately used for the purposes intended. Looking at one type of podcast will make this more explicit.

Appropriate use of the medium

One possible use of podcasting is to distribute recordings of public programmes and lectures. A number of museums were mentioned, which uses this medium for this purpose. However, as was also suggested in the author's presentation "Why should museums podcast," in the long run, podcasting might turn out not to be such a good way of publishing this type of programmes.²⁹⁶

Having subscribed to a number of those types of podcasts over a period of about two years has shown how much content is being downloaded in the background and that this has slowed down iTunes, because recordings of lectures tend to be much longer than the other types of podcasts. They might also be in form of videos, which make the file size even bigger. What this has shown then, is that there are certain types of formats, which lend themselves very well as podcasts, while others might not be so successful. It is great to see that museums are experimenting with lots of different modes of using podcasting, but it might well be that one or the other application will not turn out to be successful.

Comparing the different uses of podcasting in the typology presented in Case Study 1, it is proposed that at this point in time, it is great that museums are delivering some of their lectures and public programmes as podcasts, but as said above, the author believes that this might not be like that in the long run. It is not only the heavy file sizes of these types of programmes; it has also to do with the appropriateness of content for certain type of hardware. As will be shown in Case Study 2, most of the users of podcasts consume them on portable devices such as iPods and MP3-Players. Moreover, people who use iPods tend to use them while they are on the move and often they are engaging in different kinds of activities at the same time of consuming podcasts. What is suggested, is that listening to an

²⁹⁶ Lena Maculan. 'Why Should Museums Podcast?'

hour and a half of a conference in a museum, probably requires the full attention of the listener. From here it is suggested, that the iPod is probably not the most convenient way of consuming such content. One has to be honest that conferences and talks in museums are not light-hearted, chatty shows.

Podcasting is a medium that is associated with a conversational tone and as the example of the SFMOMA has shown (and as will be shown more explicitly in Case Study 3), this medium has fostered a re-thinking about how to communicate art in a much more conversational tone. Whether this is successful or not is not the question here anymore. The point here is that the SFMOMA have chosen to talk in the podcast about an exhibition and to make a light-hearted programme about it. This makes sense because it is possible to talk in many different communication styles about this subject. It is the nature of the subject, which allows the author to make anything from something very scholarly to something conversational. But a professional conference in a museum is a different story. If a medium which is associated with light-heartedness delivers a scholarly conference it might prove too contradictory for some listeners. On the other hand, there is not enough data available at this point to make firm conclusions about whether or not podcasting is an appropriate means to deliver conferences and talks in museums.

However, what is proposed here is that it might be well worth looking at the possibility of presenting ‘highlight’ programmes, rather than providing unedited versions of the entire lecture or conference. This would require someone who has audio and video editing skills, and it might not be possible for those museums which are usually on a rather tight budget. Alternatively, or in addition one could also make short summaries, so rather than editing the original tape, it is suggested to produce an entirely new programme where someone sums up the key points made in a lecture. The complete recording could be provided as well, but merely uploading hours and hours of lectures, without any context and guidance is not likely to attract many people other than highly committed students or researchers. But to think that one can reach new audiences, people that do not normally come to museums, through these sorts of podcasts seems to be an illusion.

Contextualization, labelling and hyper-linking

One of the conclusions of Case Study 1 was that two of the key objectives of making museum podcasts had to do with reaching new audiences and building sustainable relationships with them. Moreover, in Chapter 3, it was argued that museums are using different online platforms to distribute content (YouTube, Flickr, iTunes, etc.). Now, one of the most obvious things that follow is that if the aim is to reach new audiences, one has to make decisions as to what type of content might be suitable for what kind of context. For instance, someone going on a museum website has already decided that s/he wants to receive content that is related to a certain museum, exhibition or what ever it might be. But someone surfing on YouTube might find a video produced by a museum by pure chance. So if one wants to also reach for those people who bump into museum videos by accident, then the way the content is being introduced and edited, as well as the length of the programme must reflect that aim. What is suggested is that a video like the trailer of the Doug Aitken exhibition at MoMA New York is a very appropriate content within the context of YouTube. It's a 60-second video with music, but without verbal commentary, that gives an impression of how one might imagine the work of this artist. It is not a 15-minute programme, where curators talk about the significance of Doug Aitken's work. No, it is a deceptively simple, but in reality a video probably produced with no small amount of sophistication and skill, eye-catching even for someone who is not necessarily interested in museums.

Section 5.9 compared how the videos of the Dulwich Picture Gallery are presented on the website as well as on iTunes. It was suggested that it is more difficult for users to intuitively guess what the content of the videos might be, through simply looking at the descriptions of the files in iTunes. In comparison, the website of the museum provides a context in which it is much clearer that the videos belong or relate to an exhibition in the gallery.

To make the point clearer, imagine this scenario: A subscriber to the Dulwich Picture Gallery's podcast, has not visited the same gallery's website in some

time. This person might not be aware of the new exhibition that has recently opened. This fictive person now receives an episode of a podcast in his iTunes library labelled ‘Episode 7: The Changing Face of Childhood – British Children’s portraits and their influence in...’ Even a look at the description of the podcast (see Figure 25) does not say very much: “Gainsborough freed from restraints imposed by commission, documents a father’s loving look at his growing daughters.” And even if the podcast has managed to get the attention of our fictive person, and even if that person would look at the description of the next episode (“Kauffman shows Henrietta Pulteney outside, free of adults, but also portrays her reminiscent of an Arcadian nymph, a popular style during this period.”), s/he would still have no idea that these two videos are about two works in an exhibition.

The person would have no idea that these videos would provide him/her with a reasonable idea of what to expect from a visit to the gallery. Hence, it appears that proper labelling and hyper linking of content is one of the key success factors, if the aim is to reach new audiences, i.e. audiences, which are not necessarily regular museum visitors. Especially, if such people want to be reached, it seems that it is absolutely crucial to help them as much as possible in finding their way to content they might find interesting.



Figure 26 Podcast Information in iTunes

Not only labelling podcasts properly, also placing them visibly on the websites appears to be an important success factor. Evidence of the importance of having

podcasts visibly on the website has been gathered in a survey conducted by the author at the Ars Electronica Center.²⁹⁷ This survey revealed that 56 out of 116 respondents to the questionnaire had never listened to the AEC podcasts, simply because they did not know that the AEC offers any. Considering that all of the respondents are subscribers to the AEC newsletter, hence, people, which have already shown some interest in the AEC through leaving their email address with this institution, one could argue that the AEC is losing potential listeners to their podcasts, simply because they are not visible to the user.

At the presentation the author further argued that one should not underestimate how few people actually know what the term podcast really means. So maybe it is not even enough to have a link to podcasts on the website. Maybe a different terminology, e.g. Audiovisual programmes, videos by the museum, documentaries on artists, or what ever best describes a certain programme might be an important point to consider, if the goal is to reach new audiences through audiovisual programmes. The key point here is, if one really wants to use podcasting as a way to get to the forefront of technological developments, then one also has to be aware of how the advantages of the technology are exploited the most. And it seems fair to say that if the programmes are not appropriately labelled, hyperlinked and contextualised one can not talk about being at the forefront of developments.

Structuring the podcast

Another point, which became explicit through comparing and contrasting podcasts in this chapter was, that successful programmes not merely used podcasting as a medium of distribution, but as a means to develop new types of content for people interested in art and museums. Hence, a successful podcast is not so much a question of technology but a question of how one delivers content, how one moderates it and how one talks about it. This point will become even more explicit in Case Study 3. However, here one can already argue that if the aim is to get to the forefront to technological developments, it is not enough to

²⁹⁷ This study will be presented in Case Study 2.

merely provide content as podcast but to make programmes that are innovative. And never mind how interesting a subject might be, it seems fair to say that if it is not presented in a structured and organized way, it is difficult to convince someone that podcasting is a medium that helps bringing an institution on top of technological developments. In other words: In order to use the medium of podcasting so as to develop sustainable relationships with audiences, it is key that programmes have a structure, so that listeners find it easy to follow the programme. Not only each episode, but also the programme as a whole should have a structure, so that user expectations are fulfilled.

Todd Cochrane claims “I hate to say it, but people love structure,”²⁹⁸ and what he means by it is that “developing a show format will help you in the delivery of your content, which will allow you to stay organized and develop a professional dialogue. ... I know that some podcasters reading this book will cringe when I say “format,” as it goes against the grain of the free-flowing podcast. But to produce consistent good quality you need a plan. The key is conveying the content of that plan so the material does not sound scripted.”²⁹⁹ Farkas also emphasizes that “an outline helps remove any indecision during the recording of the podcast. If your show is meant to be a spontaneous affair, a script is most certainly not for you. That said, even if your podcast is meant to be spontaneous, packed with seat-of-the-pants observations, an outline is still worth the effort.” He further argues that “if the outline is complete enough, a detailed script may not be necessary. The need for a script depends on the host’s ability to talk on the fly and keep the flow of the show going.”³⁰⁰ However, he proposes to “put together an outline that breaks the show into segments no greater than five minutes long” and that “the outline should be set up in such a way as to help you fill every minute of your podcast with entertaining and/or interesting content.”³⁰¹

Podcasting is not Radio or TV. Much rather it seems to be something where the author can break listening and viewing habits. Why should a podcaster therefore

²⁹⁸ Todd Cochrane, *Podcasting. The Do-it-yourself guide* (Indianapolis: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2005) p.78.

²⁹⁹ Todd Cochrane, p.78.

³⁰⁰ B. G. Farkas, *Secrets of Podcasting. Audio Blogging for the Masses* (Berkeley: Peachpit, 2006) p.93.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.92

spend so much time in planning a show? Why bother about setting out a specific theme or schedule? If a museum is trying to reach a new audience and turn people into regular museum visitors, through providing them podcasts, it seems fair to say that these programmes would have to be very convincing; and in order to be convincing, one has to have a decent plan. Yes, the idea of podcasting is to offer light-hearted programmes in conversational rather than scholarly tone, yet, to be able to convince someone to come into an exhibition, who is not so familiar with museums, it seems fair to say that a clearly set out aims and objectives and a structure to the programme is important, even if all of this should not be upfront, it should not sound scripted, like the monthly podcast of the National Gallery for instance, but it should sound conversational like the Dulwich's programme on the childhood exhibition.

Not only every episode should have a clear structure; also, the programme as a whole, so that people know what to expect when they subscribe to a podcast. Cochrane argues that "I try to stick to the format I have developed for my show for a simple reason. By the third or fourth time you listen to my show, you will know what to expect and approximately when."³⁰² Farkas argues on similar lines when he says that "people who 'tune in' to the podcast have done so because they have read the title and synopsis of the podcast. It is likely that listeners will be disappointed if the podcast strays too far from the announced concepts."³⁰³

Considerations of length and frequency of programmes is another point literature suggests as one of the key success factors. Cochrane argues that it is important to have regularity in terms of how frequent new episodes are offered because "listeners will grow to expect a podcast on the schedule you commit to. We're all human, and life throws curve balls every once in a while. If something comes up, try to put out either a weblog post or a 2-minute 'hey folks, sorry no show today' statement. Your listeners will understand. Random podcasts are okay, but be upfront about your show production plans."³⁰⁴

³⁰² Todd Cochrane, p.78

³⁰³ B. G. Farkas, p.90.

³⁰⁴ Todd Cochrane p.73.

Related to the question of how frequent one should offer new episodes is the question of how long an ideal programme should be. Farkas says it is important to decide on the length for the show, an “initially, shorter is better.” With this he means that for non-professional broadcasters it is easier to keep the quality at a desired level if the show is not too long.³⁰⁵

Similarly Geoghagan, says that the “length of your podcast and how frequently you make a new one available can have a major effect on your podcast’s appeal, especially if you don’t know what you’re getting yourself into.”³⁰⁶ The book *Podcasting Solution* also suggests that “a longer show is not necessarily a better show. Trial and error has shown that between 15 and 30 minutes is about the optimum length for a solid podcast,” and that “a shorter podcast has a higher likelihood of being listened to regularly, as compared to a longer one.”³⁰⁷ The author further suggests that “the best way to get new listeners to subscribe to your show is to not overwhelm them upfront. Sometimes it is true that “less is more.” Give listeners a tight, well-put-together taste and no more.”³⁰⁸ Last but not least, one has to take into account that not every museum has a large body of staff available to produce podcasts. Case Study 1 shed light upon different models of production, and revealed that even large national museums such as the V&A in London does not have any extra staff for the podcasts. So as suggested by *Podcasting Solutions* another aspect of the determination of length has to do with time investment on behalf of the producer. In their own words: “an important part of deciding what your podcast will cover is determining the amount of time you are willing to commit to produce it.”³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ B. G. Farkas, p.91.

³⁰⁶ M. W. Geoghagan and D. Klaas. *Podcasting Solutions. The complete guide to podcasting* (New York: Springer Verlag, 2005) p. 37.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ Todd Cochrane, p. 74.

Case Study 2

A User Survey of Podcasting at the Ars Electronica Center

6.1 Introduction

This case study is an exploration of user-behaviour as regards podcasting at the Ars Electronica Centre (AEC). The objective is to find out whether users are aware that the AEC offers podcasts, whether they use this service, how they use it, what they like about podcasting and what kind of programmes they would be interested in receiving. Moreover, the case study sheds light on demographic data of users.

The AEC in Linz was, as has been stated before, one of the first museums to offer podcasts. So far, the AEC has used this medium to distribute recordings of lectures and public programmes as well as press conferences held in conjunction with their yearly Ars Electronica Festival.

116 people, from 27 countries, who have subscribed to the AEC's newsletter, have responded to the questionnaire, which was sent out to about 700 people.³¹⁰ Listeners of the AEC podcasts are spread on three continents Europe (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Spain, Sweden, UK) the US and Asia.

Out of the 116 respondents, 19 (16.3%) have listened to the AEC's podcasts. 22 (18.9%) never listen to podcasts and 19 (16.3%) have said to know about the

³¹⁰ The exact figure of how many people have received the questionnaire can not be determined with certainty, as it is impossible to find out how many emails sent, were blocked by users' spam filters. For more on methodology please see the relevant section below.

AEC's podcasts, but have not listened to them before. Almost half of the respondents (56 or 48.2 %) said they did not know that the AEC offers podcasts.

		Have you ever listened to the Ars Electronica podcasts?				Total
		No, but I know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	No, I did not know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	No, I never listen to podcasts	Yes	
Nationality	Australia		1			1
	Austria	7	12	12	5	36
	Belgium				1	1
	Canada				1	1
	Czech Rep		1			1
	Denmark		1		2	3
	Finland		2	1		3
	France		2		0	2
	Germany	4	8	4	1	17
	India	1				1
	Ireland			1		1
	Italy		5		2	7
	Latvia	1				1
	Lithuania		1		1	2
	Netherlands		1			1
	Portugal	1	2			3
	Romania		1			1
	Serbia	1				1
	Singapore			1	1	2
	Slovakia		1			1
	Slovenia		2	1		3
	Spain	1	2	2	1	6
	Sweden	1	1		1	3
	Switzerland		3			3
	UK	1	6		3	10
	US	1	4			5
Total		19	56	22	19	116

Figure 27 Geographical distribution of respondents to the survey

6.2 Methodology

For details on methodology, please see section in the chapter on methodologies on page 22.

6.3 Timeliness of the study

Because podcasting is still relatively new, there is currently very little research available, that museums could draw upon in defining their own podcasting strategies. In addition to the studies already mentioned above, which relate to European podcasts there are two other studies relating to podcasting in the United States which one should mention here: One conducted by Forrester Research³¹¹ and the other by Bridge Ratings.³¹² Taken together this body of research provides some interesting data, however, their focus is very broad and therefore a study on how podcasting is used in museums is very timely.

The 2006 Museums and the Web conference had a focus on Web 2.0. Peter Samis and Stephanie Pau talked about their experiences of making podcasts at SFMOMA.³¹³ The contributions from Tana Johnson and Tim Svenonius,³¹⁴ also from SFMOMA, and Ken Dickinson³¹⁵ from the Ontario Science Center Canada, focused on the practical side of how to create a podcast. The V&A's Toby Travis³¹⁶ talked about how podcasting offers opportunities to foster visitor involvement. What this body of literature suggests is that podcasting represents many challenges and opportunities for online content providers. More importantly, though, it suggests that museums are increasingly interested in using podcasting, which further supports the timeliness of this study on podcasting.

Especially since the end of 2005, but even more so since half way through the year 2006, one can observe an increasing interest in podcasting in and about museums. Whether big national, small local authority or private museum,

³¹¹ <http://www.forrester.com/Research/Document/Excerpt/0,7211,38761,00.html> Forrester's study is only available for subscribers; however, Charleen Li published some of the data in her blog. <http://blogs.forrester.com/charleneli/podcasting/index.html> (5.4.2007).

³¹² Bridge Ratings
http://www.bridgeratings.com/Images/The%20Future%20of%20Podcasting%20Slides_files/frame.htm (5.4.2007).

³¹³ Archives and Museum Informatics:
http://www.archimuse.com/mw2006/abstracts/prg_300000786.html (as of 12.2.2007).

³¹⁴ Archives and Museum Informatics:
http://www.archimuse.com/mw2006/abstracts/prg_300000788.html (as of 12.2.2007).

³¹⁵ Archives and Museum Informatics:
<http://www.archimuse.com/mw2006/papers/dickson/dickson.html> (as of 12.2.2007).

³¹⁶ Archives and Museum Informatics:
http://www.archimuse.com/mw2006/abstracts/prg_315000677.html (as of 12.2.2007).

whether Nationalgalerie or Kunsthalle: podcasting in museums is currently under way of establishing itself on a grand scale. A study on podcasting therefore provides prospective museum podcasters with relevant data, and aims to help to further the establishment of podcasting in museums.

The questionnaire will reveal how much users know about podcasting and it will show some important facts about user behaviour. It will reveal what kind of programmes users of museum sites are listening to, and what kind of programmes they would be interested to receive from museums. The survey will produce data, which will help museums to make more informed judgments on some of the many questions that arise when producing a podcast show for a museum.

6.4 Podcasting at the AEC – an online Survey

6.4.1 Who is listening to AE podcasts?

One of the outcomes of Case Study 1 was that there are many museums, which target their podcasts to the 20-40 year olds. Interestingly, a large majority, i.e. 16 out of 19, who have listened to the AEC podcasts belong to that age group. What is also quite interesting to note, is that both the House of Research' study on podcasting, as well as Forrester's study 'the European Podcast Consumer' have revealed that there is a higher proportion of men listening to podcasts than women.³¹⁷ This disparity is also reflected in the data collected here, where there are almost three times as many men who have listened to the AEC podcasts, than women.

		Have you ever listened to the Ars Electronica podcasts?				
		No, but I know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	No, I did not know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	No, I never listen to podcasts	Yes	Total
Your age	20-30	6	14	7	8	35
	31-40	8	23	10	8	49
	41-50		15	2	2	19
	above 50	5	4	2	1	12
	Below 20			1		1
Total		19	56	22	19	116

Figure 28 How old are the subscribers of the AEC's podcasts?

³¹⁷ "Many [70%] of these users are male, and one in three is a student." *The European Podcast Consumer*, p.1-2.

		Gender		
		Female	Male	Total
Have you ever listened to the Ars Electronica a podcasts?	No, but I know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	5	14	19
	No, I did not know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	11	45	56
	No, I never listen to podcasts	8	14	22
	Yes	5	14	19
Total		29	87	116

Figure 29 Are there more men than women listening to AEC's podcasts?

Users of podcasts visit the AEC website a few times a year. It is interesting to note that 39 of 56 who did not know that the AEC offers podcast, also visit the website a few times a year – that is the same amount of times as those who do know and listen to the podcasts. This suggests that podcast users are not necessarily only those who visit the website very often.

Users of podcasts are not necessarily regular visitors of the AEC. 14 out of 19, who said to listen to the podcasts visit the AEC hardly ever, five a few times a year. Another interesting outcome is that 13 of 56 respondents, who visit the AEC a few times a year, did not know that the AEC offers podcasts. This suggests that it might well be worth to advertise the podcasts on brochures of the AEC or to place some information about them on the information desk.

Figure 26 shows the geographic distribution of subscribers. It shows that most subscribers are in Europe (17 of 19), while there is only one each in Canada and Singapore, and two in the rest of the world. According to Kelli Dipple, the webcasting statistics of Tate Online revealed that users from the UK, US, Australia and Canada are always leading in various orders. Users in those countries, are followed by users in Western-, Northern- and Eastern Europe. However, the Tate gets hits “from everywhere in the world: Cuba, South Africa, all over South-East Asia, New Zealand, but they don't tend to be clustered. As regards the UK statistics, we get details of which cities people log on from. You

can see we are linked to academic institutions that relate to the courses they are running and they are directing their students to that content. So suddenly you get thirty students from University of Leicester linking to that same video, so you can see that pattern emerging with the more academic content.”³¹⁸

Since its founding in 1987, the Ars Electronica Festival has received over 19,000 submissions from more than sixty-three countries.³¹⁹ The AEC enjoys an outstanding international reputation. Its festival is unique in its kind and it brings together amateurs and international experts from highly diverse backgrounds but particularly from the arts, media and sciences. Considering this, as well as the very international users of Tate Online, it is surprising to see the very low usage of their podcasts from people outside of Europe.

What Figure 26 also shows is that 56 out of 116 respondents did not know that AEC offers podcasts; however, 50 of them expressed an interest in receiving podcasts from the AEC. The question is whether a more prominent way of advertising the podcasts on the website would generate higher numbers of subscribers. Although the research has no evidence for this, it seems logic that if users are not informed about a website’s podcasts, they will not subscribe to it.

6.4.2 What people appreciate about podcasting

One of the key advantages of podcasting in comparison to live webcasting is that the content is delivered to the user ‘on demand,’ i.e. the user can choose when to listen to the programme. Another key advantage is that the user can download the podcast and play it on a portable device. This means that during listening the user does not need to be connected to the Internet. Amongst the respondents who have said to listen to the AEC podcasts, 15 out of 19 have said that being able to choose when to listen to programmes is what they appreciate about podcasting most. 14 have also said that podcasting stimulates their interests in various subjects and that it helps them to make good use of their time. Almost just as

³¹⁸ Kelli Dipple, interview with author, June 2006.

³¹⁹ Ars Electronica History <http://www.aec.at/en/archives/history.asp> (as of 13.5.2007).

many, i.e. 12 respondents, have said that they appreciate podcasts because it allows them to listen to programmes wherever they like. Hence, independence of time and space are indeed very important to users.

6.4.3 What users are interested in

88 people have responded to the question of what type of podcasts they are interested in receiving from the AEC. Among the 2 people who visit more than once a month one wants only audio tours, the other wants audio tours and recordings of lectures and public programmes as well as in-depth news programmes on museum activities.

Among the 22 people who visit a few times a year, 17 want recordings of lectures and public programmes, 13 want in-depth news programmes on museum activities, 7 brief info on activities and 6 want audio tours.

Of the 47 people who said to hardly ever visit the AEC, most of them i.e. 36 want recordings of lectures and public programmes and 30 of them would like to receive in-depth news on museum activities. 16 want audio tours, 12 want brief information on museum activities. Amongst the six people who suggested other programmes, their proposals were: specifically produced programmes, event video podcast, Ars Festival walkthrough, archives of Prix Ars Electronica, short films, concerts, sound art, poetry, fiction.

There were 17 people who said to never visit the AEC. Amongst them 13 said to be interested in receiving recordings of lectures and public programmes. 9 wanted in-depth news on museum activities, 9 audio tours, 4 brief info on museum activities.

What comes out of this is that visitors or non-visitors to the AEC have more or less the same programme preferences. Except in the group of those, who visit more than once a month, recordings of lectures and public programmes score highest, followed by in-depth news programmes on the museum activities.

Interestingly, those who hardly ever or never visit the AEC are still interested in receiving audio tours.

6.4.4 Would people listen to audio tours?

	Have you ever listened to the Ars Electronica podcasts?				Total
	No, but I know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	No, I did not know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	No, I never listen to podcasts	Yes	
If Ars Electronica offers an audio tour as podcast, would you download it and take it into the exhibition?		4	22		26
No, I never use audio guides	3	5		2	10
No, I prefer conventional audio guides	1	1		1	3
Not sure	8	8		3	19
Yes	7	38		13	58
Total	19	56	22	19	116

Figure 30 If the AEC provided audio tours as podcasts, would users subscribe to them?

58 of 116 would listen to audio tours if the AEC provided those, 19 are not sure. Only 3 of the 13, who said no, said that they would prefer conventional audio tours, whereas the others said never to use audio tours at all.

Only five people amongst the respondents have prior to this study used podcasts as audio tours. 3 of those 5 people said that they would use this service if offered at the AEC. One was not sure, one said no because s/he never uses audio tours. In any case, putting these outcomes and those of Section 5.10 together, one could argue that there is a real potential to continue experimenting with the medium of podcasting to produce audio guides or related programmes that visitors to museums use as additional tool of interpretation.

		If Ars Electronica offers an audio tour as podcast, would you download it and take it into the exhibition?					Total
			No, I never use audio guides	No, I prefer conventional audio guides	Not sure	Yes	
Have you ever downloaded a museum's audio tour and listened to it in an exhibition?		26					26
	If yes, which museum? (Centre Pompidou)		1				1
	If yes, which museum? (Good idea! Up until now I would have answered no - but from now on I will!)					1	1
	If yes, which museum? (MoMA New York)				1		1
	If yes, which museum? (Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga (Portugal))					1	1
	If yes, which museum? (Tate Modern)					1	1
	No		9	3	18	55	85
Total		26	10	3	19	58	116

Figure 31 Have respondents already listened to audio tour podcasts?

6.4.5 Are Podcasts better than webcasts?

The advantages of podcasting over webcasting seem to be straightforward: while listening to podcasts, users must not be connected to the Web. Rather, after downloading an episode onto a portable device, they can listen to it whenever and wherever they choose. Hence, it was not surprising that more than half, i.e.

10 out of 19 listeners say yes, a podcast serves them better than a webcast. Four do not know the difference, three say no, one doesn't know and one has not answered the question.

		Ars Electronica offers webcasts and podcasts. I believe that a podcast serves me better than a webcast.					Total
			I don't know.	No	What is the difference?	Yes	
Have you ever listened to the Ars Electronica podcasts?	No, but i know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts		6	2	2	9	19
	No, I did not know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	4	11	11	8	22	56
	No, I never listen to podcasts	22					22
	Yes	1	1	3	4	10	19
Total		27	18	16	14	41	116

Figure 32 Do users prefer podcasts to webcasts?

6.4.6 What are the most popular listening media?

Amongst those 19, who have listened to the AEC podcasts, most of them, i.e. seven use iPods or laptops (six). Two use PDAs, two use other types of MP3 - Players, one a mobile phone and one a desktop computer.

		Have you ever listened to the Ars Electronica podcasts?			
		No, but i know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	No, I did not know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	No, I never listen to podcasts	Yes
Primarily, I listen to podcasts on...	a desktop computer	8	4	22	1
	a laptop computer	4	14		6
	a mobile phone	2	16		1
	a PDA		2		2
	an iPod	3	17		7
	other type of MP3 player	2	3		2

Figure 33 What listening media are people using?

Among all the 116 respondents, 90 have responded to the question on what listening media they are using. The iPod is the most used listening media (27) followed by the laptop (26) and desktop (23). 7 use other types of MP3 -Players, 5 a mobile phone and 2 PDAs. The 20-30 year olds mainly use iPods (9), laptops (8), and desktops (6). 2 use mobile phones, 3 other type of MP3-Players. The 31-40 year olds mainly use laptops (11), desktops (10) and iPods (9). 3 use other types of MP3 players, 2 use mobile phones and 2 PDAs. The 40-50 year olds mainly use iPods (7), desktops (5) and laptops (3). 1 uses a mobile phone. The above 50 year olds use laptops (4), desktops (2) and iPods (2). 1 uses another type of MP3 player.

6.4.7 How often do people listen to podcasts?

	Have you ever listened to the Ars Electronica podcasts?			
	No, but i know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	No, I did not know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	No, I never listen to podcasts	Yes
I listen to podcasts...				
Months after they become available.		4		1
No specific pattern.	13	30		12
On the same day, or very soon after they become available.	3	16		1
Weeks after they become available.	3	6		5

Figure 34 How important is timeliness to users?

	Question 1- Have you ever listened to the Ars Electronica podcasts?			
	No, but i know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	No, I did not know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts	No, I never listen to podcasts	Yes
Question 7-I listen to podcasts...		4	22	
A few times a week.	6	22		7
Every day.	1	4		3
Once a month.	2	4		1
With no specific pattern.	10	22		8
Total	19	56	22	19

Figure 35 How often do users listen to podcasts?

6.4.8 What are people doing while listening?

Four of the twenty-three people who are consuming podcasts on a desktop computer have said to be on the move, while listening (as this is hardly possible, they might have misunderstood the question). Eight have said to do nothing, just listening. The others have indicated that they are engaging in various sorts of activities, such as cooking, doing housework, eating, working, surfing the Web or studying.

Six of the twenty-six who are using laptops to consume podcasts are on the move while listening. Nine are doing nothing but listening. The others indicate that they are engaging in various activities, but some say that this depends on the type of programme they are listening to. The activities include work, surfing the Web, writing emails, playing online games.

Five are consuming podcasts on a mobile phone, twenty-seven on iPods and six on other types of MP3-Players. Four of the five, twenty-six of the twenty-seven and three of the six people have indicated to be on the move while listening. The

two users who are consuming podcasts on PDAs have also indicated to listen to podcasts while being on the move.

6.5 Conclusion

Most respondents who have said that they listen to the AEC podcasts are between twenty and forty years old. Considering that many museums target their podcasts to younger people, one could argue that the data collected here suggests that they might be right in believing that this age group might be reached with podcasts. The data generated also revealed that there are almost three times as many men consuming podcasts as women. It has already been mentioned that this disparity is reflected in other studies too. In any case it raises the question how one might be able to raise the number of women listeners.

The study at the AEC showed that 56 out of 116 respondents did not know that the AEC offers podcasts. This suggests that a more prominent placement of the podcasts on the website as well as other advertising raise the number of subscribers. Tate Online, it has been argued, has a very international listenership, which is spread throughout the world. Looking at Tate Online also helps to show what is meant to place podcasts more upfront on the website. The Tate has included a link to their podcasts in the menu bar of their homepage, which leads to a very clear overview of their different programmes. The AEC homepage has not got an overview of this kind, says nothing about the podcasts, and the link to podcasts on the sitemap leads to an error page.³²⁰ What is suggested here is that it is very important to show that a museum offers podcasts on a very prominent place on the homepage. Also having a page, showing the different programmes offered seems to be a very important feature, if one aims to reach broad audiences, rather than just a few people who have the necessary skills and time to search a website for podcasts.

³²⁰ Ars Electronica Center
<http://www.aec.at/podcasts><http://www.aec.at/en/festival2006/podcasts/index.asp> (as of 22.7.2007).

Visiting Information
FAQs
Press Office
About Tate
Working at Tate
Copyright
Net Art
Podcasts
Online Events
TATE ETC. Magazine
Tate Publishing
Tate Papers
Tate National
Tate International

Figure 36 Detail of Tate Online's home page³²¹







Current list of available podcasts	
	<p>TateShots</p> <p>TateShots presents a selection of short videos each month, with a focus on modern and contemporary art at Tate. You can watch TateShots online or download the films to watch on your computer or portable device.</p> <p>XML http://feeds.tate.org.uk/tateshots</p> <p>Alternatively, subscribe directly using iTunes</p>
	<p>TATE ETC. Podcast</p> <p>Artists, writers and critics discuss art and more, exclusive to TATE ETC. magazine, as well as the regular Poem of the Month feature with celebrated poets reading their works inspired by art on show in the galleries.</p> <p>XML http://feeds.tate.org.uk/tateetc</p> <p>Alternatively, subscribe directly using iTunes</p>
	<p>Tate Events Podcast</p> <p>Tate hosts a wide-ranging programme of talks, symposia and live events at all four galleries. This podcast presents highlights from this ongoing programme.</p> <p>XML http://feeds.tate.org.uk/tateevents</p> <p>Alternatively, subscribe directly using iTunes</p>
	<p>What Can the Matter Be? Podcast</p> <p>We invited a team from the Materials Library to explore the material nature of art from a scientific and sensory point of view. The result was this audio tour of Tate Modern and accompanying short film showing the team in action.</p> <p>XML http://feeds.tate.org.uk/whatcanthematterbe</p> <p>Alternatively, subscribe directly using iTunes</p>
	<p>Modern Paints Podcast</p> <p>Tate conservators and conservation scientists lead you on a tour around the paint surfaces of ten key works on display at Tate Modern. Download the audio tour and listen as you walk through the galleries.</p> <p>XML http://www.tate.org.uk/learning/learnonline/modernpaints/feed.xml</p> <p>Alternatively, subscribe directly using iTunes</p>
	<p>Raw Canvas Art Lookers Podcast</p> <p>Raw Canvas, Tate Modern's youth initiative, present a different kind of audio tour featuring a combination of interviews, sound and music to provide an alternative means of looking at artworks.</p> <p>XML http://www.tate.org.uk/learning/youngtate/artlookers/feed.xml</p> <p>Alternatively, subscribe directly using iTunes</p>

Figure 37 List of available podcasts on Tate Online³²²

³²¹ Tate Online home page: <http://www.tate.org.uk/> (as of 22.7.2007).

³²² Tate Online <http://www.tate.org.uk/podcasts/> (as of 28.10.2007).

Another interesting outcome is that 13 of 56 respondents, who visit the AEC a few times a year, did not know that the AEC offers podcasts. This suggests that it might well be worth to advertise the podcasts on brochures of the AEC or to place some information about them on the information desk.

Case Study 1 has shown that there are many museums, which offer audio guides as podcasts. During the time this research was conducted, none of the museums interviewed have made evaluations of their podcasts. So, there is no empirical evidence about whether people like audio guides in the form of a podcast. However, the study at the AEC suggests that it is fairly reasonable to say that podcasting audio guides, might be adopted by users. The survey has revealed that half of the respondents would listen to audio guides if the AEC offered any. Only 3 out of 116 said they would prefer conventional audio guides. Interestingly, even those who hardly ever or never visit the AEC are still interested in receiving audio tours.

So it appears that people might be listening to audio guides even if they are not visiting the exhibition. This statement can not be proved. However, it opens up the question whether it might be possible to edit audio guides in such a way such that they become interesting even for people who are not intending to visit the museum. In reference to the podcasts she produced for the National Museums Berlin, Wesemann argues, that “podcasts are not audio guides, they are a “completely independent medium.” However, after paying a fee visitors can download Antenna’s MP3-files produced for the onsite audio guide. This service is offered through www.audible.com and www.libri.de. These Downloads are slightly altered versions from the ones offered onsite: Some of the themes are talked about in a more generalized way, and orientation throughout the exhibition is cut out.³²³ In this way the content is made slightly less dependent on being listened to onsite, even though users could do so if they wished to.

Considering the advantages (particularly for the user) of podcasting over webcasting, it was quite interesting to find out that 9 of 19 who have listened to

³²³ Eva Wesemann in interview with author, June 2006.

podcasts do not believe that this mode of delivery serves them better than webcasting. It is particularly odd, since at another stage of the survey it was revealed that independence of time and space are indeed very important to users. With webcasting users do not have this same independence, because they would always have to be connected to the Web in order to be able to log on to a webcast. From the data collected here it is difficult to say whether timeliness is important to users of podcasts. Most of them have indicated not to have a specific pattern as to how long after a podcast has become available it is still interesting to them. Although there is no evidence for this here, it seems logical that there are certain programmes which are more dependent on timeliness than others. A monthly newflash type programme is probably outdated quite soon after it has been first delivered. A recording of a lecture about an artist's work, for instance, or a video of an interview with an artist might be much less dependent on timeliness. However, it appears that more time needs to pass and more research needs to be done in order to draw more focused conclusions on this question.

It is also interesting to point out that most of the respondents are listening to news, informational and educational podcasts.³²⁴ These figures largely correspond to the findings of the House of Research: According to their survey, the most popular podcasts are news programmes.³²⁵ Another issue that corresponds to the findings of the House of Research has to do with listening media. The Berlin based research institute has found that the iPod and MP3-Player is the most used listening media used by 91% of respondents followed by the computer used by 82%.³²⁶ Yet, there are also differences in the results of the AEC and the House of Research findings. The latter argues that while the public perception is that mobile use of podcasting dominates, their data showed that the proportion of people using them at home (89%) or in the office (31%) is higher compared to people listening to podcasts while being on the move. People who

³²⁴ 64 of 116 (36.9%) listen to news and informational programmes, 38 (21.9%) listen to educational programmes. Only 1 has said to listen to comedy only, whereas 19 (10.9%) listened to comedy amongst other stuff. 10 listen to music only, whereas 40 (23.1%) listen to music amongst other stuff.

³²⁵ Sebastian Breßler. *Podcasting 2006*, p.65-68.

³²⁶ *Ibid.* p.75.

are using podcasts on the move are only in second place. Almost a third of them in their car.³²⁷

³²⁷ *Ibid.* p.76-77.

Case Study 3

What is the real impact of podcasting on the museum – audience relationship?

7.1 Introduction

Case study three will analyse an approximately five minute excerpt from a podcast produced by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA). The introduction will explain the objectives of the analysis in more detail and will describe the methodology and theoretical context. Section 1 will illustrate the background of podcasting at SFMOMA. Section 2 will analyse the podcast in three sections, according to the three stages of analysis proposed by Norman Fairclough's analytical model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The conclusion of Section 2 will address the first research questions, namely, whether the excerpt represents change or continuity in the museum audience relationship. The overall conclusion of this paper will be a discussion on methodology.

Eileen Hooper-Greenhill argues that the changes that are taking place in museum practice are not limited to *how* content is delivered to audiences. Change has also taken place in the manner or *style of communication*.³²⁸ As opposed to the traditional "transmission model of communication" Hooper-Greenhill proposed a "second approach to understanding communication, the cultural approach, [which] focuses more closely on how meaning is made."³²⁹ "This more developed cultural model understands communication as a set of negotiated processes of making meaning as part of the complex and unequal culture of

³²⁸ Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, p.xi.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.20.

everyday life. It accepts that there are many, sometimes conflicting perspectives from which to explain the world.”³³⁰

According to this model, constructions of meanings are based in continuous dialogue. Rather than presenting the visitor a fixed set of meanings, the visitor is encouraged to draw meaning from the objects himself. As has been argued in Chapter 1, museum websites most often produce an illusion of access, because they lack the type of contextualization and interpretation, which is necessary to allow users to have a meaningful experience with the digital cultural content offered. With audiovisual media, distributed over the Web, museums now have another option of producing content that should help users to have an enjoyable, educational and to some extent social experience. But as will be shown particularly through Case Study 3, the use of new broadcasting models of communication does not by itself create those experiences. Much rather, the success of audiovisual media depends upon the style of communication, as described by Hooper-Greenhill.

The aims and objectives of this analysis are twofold. The first and key objective is to evaluate whether this excerpt represents change or continuity, as regards the museum audience relationship. Secondly, the objective is to find out whether the methodology introduced here might be a useful tool to analyse this genre of podcasts in general. With this genre of podcast, the research means programmes, which have a largely informal character, yet a strategic purpose in mind, as well as a strong focus on providing information for the purpose of making the experience of the museum more engaging, immediate and accessible.

7.2 Theoretical context

There are three key theoretical contexts in which this case study is located. It relates to Eileen Hooper-Greenhill’s approach to “treating museums as visual discourses,” but rather than “questioning the relationships between *looking*, knowledge and power,” this study is about the relationship of *text* and power, or

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.22.

the power relationships and the subject positions that are constructed in and through text.³³¹ [My emphasis]

The study is also related to Ravelli's research on 'Museum Texts.'³³² In this book Ravelli has developed a communication framework, which derived from Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics (SFL). It is not about a step by step guide of "how to write texts in museums." Rather, Ravelli takes a more conceptual approach with the aim to raise the reader's awareness of how language 'works' and how it is functional in its context. The aspect of Ravelli's work which is most important to this study here is her exploration of how museums use language to construct identities and build relationships with audiences; or, how "language enables interactional meanings."³³³ Whereas Ravelli focuses on written text in museums, as well as very short portions of text, this study focuses on spoken and broadcasted text.

Finally, this study is most closely related to Norman Fairclough's 'Language and Power,' which gives a picture of language in society and lays open the relationship of language and power and that of language and ideology.³³⁴ It is this approach to CDA which makes him a particularly relevant theorist, in relation to the question of this case study. The reason why Fairclough's approach to CDA is so relevant for this context is because it allows the study of podcasts not only in terms of the text's formal features, nor just in terms of analysing the processes of production and interpretation.

Fairclough's three-stage procedure, also allows the study of the relationship between the text and its relationship to their underlying discourses, as well as the relationship of social practice and society at large. As regards the specific case study here, Fairclough's model allows the analysis of the question of how new or different the text is in relationship to more conventional approaches in museum practice; and secondly, what this means, in terms of continuity or change, for the relationship between museum and audiences.

³³¹ *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, p.15.

³³² Louis J. Ravelli, *Museum Texts*.

³³³ *Ibid.*, p.70.

³³⁴ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*.

7.3 Podcasting at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

The ArtCasts, as the podcasts of the San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) are known, are produced in collaboration with Antenna Audio, the world market leader in the production of audio and multi-media guides for exhibitions. The SFMOMA's stated key objective with the ArtCasts is, to "bring [visitors] closer to the voices and sounds of artists, writers, curators, musicians, and visitors as they respond to exhibitions and artworks on view at SFMOMA."³³⁵

The ArtCasts are not made for listening onsite, although, people, of course, could if they wished so. Rather, the imaginary audience of the ArtCasts are "people sitting at home on their computer."³³⁶ As will be shown below, this disengaging of the podcasts's content from the works onsite, allowed the producers at SFMOMA to experiment with new forms of communicating information about art.

Traditionally, art museums interpret objects in exhibitions, with object labels, wall panels, catalogues and related educational publications and events: lectures, seminars and workshops, for instance. Although, there are, of course, variations in what museum professionals write on wall panels and object labels in exhibitions, there are, however, pretty established conventions and traditions of the kind of content visitors could expect there. In the UK there are guidelines and good practice models for the purpose of developing unified standards for all sorts of texts: e.g. catalogue entries in content management systems, text for wall panel texts and object labels. At the entrance of exhibitions, wall panels usually provide an introduction of the artist(s) or the theme of the show, some historical and/or biographical data, etc. Object labels tend to describe artefacts through naming the artist, title of the work, date of execution, materials, techniques and dimensions of the piece as well as its provenance. Similarly, exhibition

³³⁵ SFMOMA: http://www.sfmoma.org/education/edu_podcasts.html (as of 3.1.2007).

³³⁶ Peter Samis in interview with author, 26.7.2006.

catalogues tend to be based on a quasi standard format. I.e. they usually have images of the works on view, an introduction by a representative of the museum, and historical, biographical, and/or theoretical papers written by curators or other relevant subject experts.

When it comes to the audio and video (AV) content, then the audio guide is the only format that museums have an experience of working with. However, the audio guide format, does not really lend itself as an appropriate model for the production of innovative programmes for podcasts. Consequently, audio programmes, such as the ArtCasts, have no precedent in museum practice. There are no models museums could draw upon. There are no accepted standards, conventions or traditions which producers could use as guidelines when setting up a podcast.

SFMOMA saw this lack of a standard model as an opportunity to explore novel approaches of interpreting objects. More specifically, they were seeking an approach that was less didactic than established ways of talking about art and that allowed them to provide a more creative perspective on works on view. In their own words, “with the ArtCasts we try to stay away from the manner that, experts and curators tend to talk about art. This is also because we want to reach for a young audience.” Moreover, the idea behind the audio zine was “to extend the museum out into the community in order to reach people that not normally come to museums.” In comparison with billboard or newspaper ads, Peter Samis, programme director of the Interactive Educational Technologies department at SFMOMA, believes that podcasts allow a “much more mind care penetration into peoples lives. If you actually engage people in an in-depth consideration of ideas of art, if you give them a quick eyeball, it engages them and asks them to come in.”³³⁷ What this comes down to is that the SFMOMA aims to use podcasting as a means to reach new audiences, by way of providing new and innovative audio programmes. It’s about moving beyond traditional ways of talking about art. It’s also about establishing new relationships between the museum and its audiences.

³³⁷ Interview with author, 26.7.2006.

The following section will cite an approximately five minute excerpt from the December 2006 ArtCast, which is altogether approx. fifteen minutes long. The following section will then analyse that excerpt, through answering six questions. To describe the text, the first three questions, will analyse the style of the podcast and identify the grammatical structures the author uses in order to construct subject positions for himself and the audience, as well as how a relationship with the audience is constituted. The second stage of the analysis will look at the discourses which are drawn upon in the text. This analysis will reveal whether the podcasts represents change or continuity in museum practice. The final stage of analysis is concerned with the relationship of museum and audience. It will reveal the societal and institutional processes that the podcast in question belongs to. This in turn will make explicit, whether the podcast represents change or continuity in terms of the relationship between the institution of the museum and its audiences.

Excerpt from SFMOMA's 'ArtCast' December 2006

[Music]

Moderator: What traces do events leave on their physical surroundings? Can a room be haunted by its past? Now on the fourth floor at the museum you find 'Charged space'. It's an exhibition of two video works which explore these questions. With more on 'Charged Space' exhibit here is Rudolf Frieling Media Arts curator at SFMOMA:

Rudolf Frieling: One of the questions artists face today, or face... have always faced, is how do you deal with histories of the past, embodied in a physical surrounding; specifically stories that deal with the political past, with repression with really laden histories. How can you actually make things visible that are so complex and that are possible also so difficult to show that you don't quite know where to start? One of the things that the Wilson sisters did in this piece called

Stasi City... Stasi stands for Staatssicherheit... so that's secret service...in East Germany. Literally, when the wall came down, this place was the embodiment of the political regime. So this place was stormed. And what you actually see in this video installation at SFMOMA is what's left over.

Imagine you would be in jail... how does it actually feel? How does it feel to be in an interrogation chamber? To see all these doors, to see the recording devices, these old telephones, and to have this feeling that this is really the past. It looks old, its already gone, fortunately its gone, but at the same time it's also something that you feel, well... these regimes, these structures, these architectures of repression are still existing everywhere; and hopefully, you also feel that eventually these ideologies and these regimes have to come down have to fail. So it's a kind of hope. And the motive of hope is also what links it to the second piece in this exhibition by a young Kurdish artist called Fikret Atay. Now new generation... and operating from a completely different part of the world... whereas before, there was East West in terms of Socialist Capitalist, now it's a town in the Kurdish part of Turkey and its East West as opposed between the eastern world, the Islam world and the western world, Christian world, if you want.

So imagine you are a young boy in a Kurdish city and you want to go somewhere you want to go elsewhere possibly and you possibly also want to get away form all these conflicts, you want to have a future and let's say you even want to be an artist. And you think... well... how on earth can I make art in such an environment? How can you still manifest your desire to do something to express yourself?

So here is this young boy that is recorded in one take on top of the hill overlooking the city, which is his hometown, close to the Iraq boarder and he takes what is available what he finds on the site: tin cans, rubbish and he just makes that into some sort of a drum kit and plays his piece. And he plays that very professionally so you think

also he must have had also access to, possibly MTV watching video clips and that's where he wants to go.

So it's not a political statement that he is doing on top of the hill, looking actually towards the West, towards the sunset, but it might be read as something as a political statement against being lost in such a culture that basically doesn't offer any future to the younger generation. At the same time you think the future has already arrived by way of a bleak, urban, globalized architecture you are actually looking at. So it is this complex space that I also thought of as a charged space, complex in terms of the architectural dimensions, the political dimensions but also the cultural implications.

To see the work of the Wilson sisters and Fikret Atay visit 'Charged Space' now on view at the museum through January 21st

[Music]

7.4 Analysing the podcast

7.4.1 Description

The following section will analyse the over-all style of the podcast. Secondly, it will analyse how the author uses grammatical features to construct a relationship with the audience as well as constitutes subject positions for himself and the audience.

Question 1: What kind of style does the podcast represent?

As has been mentioned above, one of the SFMOMA's objectives behind their podcasts is to move beyond conventional ways of talking about art. Traditionally, museums as research and educational institutions have tended to express themselves in a rather scholarly tone. Traditional museum texts tend to be characterized by their formality. For Fairclough, "[f]ormality' is one pervasive and familiar aspect of constraints on access to discourse."³³⁸ He argues that "many people do not acquire even the necessary knowledge and skills to occupy peripheral positions in formal situations, and consequently find formal situations *per se* daunting and frightening." Thus, Fairclough argues, "formality both restricts access and generates awe."³³⁹ Many museums across the Western World, but particularly in the US and the UK, have recognized that if they want to reach new audiences they have to adopt a less formal or scholarly style. It is within this context that the analysis of over-all style and formality becomes one of the big issues that need to be analysed in more detail.

Fairclough's notions on formality are related to Ravelli's writings, in which she argues that the interaction which arises through communication is affected by over-all style. Ravelli distinguishes three key types: "the language of formal occasion or the 'public style'; the language of everyday social interaction, or 'social style', and the language of intimates, or the 'personal style,' each reflecting different degrees of contact between the interactants." The extremes of these styles would be exemplified by heavy, 'written' texts at one end, and chatty, 'conversational' texts at the other.³⁴⁰

This section will examine the podcast (a piece of spoken text) in relation to a press release (a piece of written text) in order to illustrate how the former is aiming to break with the formal style that museums are so closely associated with. Both texts refer to the same exhibition and are reasonably similar in representational terms, i.e. they are about the same kind of content.

³³⁸ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, p.54.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.57.

³⁴⁰ Louis J. Ravelli, p.50.

As regards formality, one of the first things that come to the notice of the analyst when listening to the podcast, is that the presenter is not a native English speaker. Moreover, he does not seem to have used a script and speaks freely. Probably due to these facts, there are many sentences which he does not finish correctly or which have a kind of odd structure. More than anything else, this creates a relaxed and chatty tone, even if that makes it sometimes quite difficult to follow what the author (RF) is trying to say. However, grammatical mistakes, due to RF not speaking in his native language will not be considered in more detail in this analysis. The following will now compare and contrast the different language styles as employed in the press release and the podcast. The press release introduces the exhibition in the following way:

“SFMOMA PRESENTS TWO VIDEO INSTALLATIONS

***Charged Space* Marks Debut Exhibition by New Media Arts
Curator Rudolf Frieling**

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present the exhibition *Charged Space: Jane & Louise Wilson/Fikret Atay* from October 20, 2006, through January 21, 2007. Marking the curatorial debut of SFMOMA’s newly appointed Media Arts curator, Rudolf Frieling, this presentation pairs two video installations that allude to the loaded histories of specific sites—places laden with connotations of terror, political oppression, or cultural imperialism.”

In the podcast, the moderator introduces the sequence of the programme like this:

“What traces do events leave on their physical surroundings? Can a room be haunted by its past? Now on the fourth floor at the museum you find ‘Charged space’. It’s an exhibition of two video works which explore these questions.”

After having said that RF, the Media Arts curator at SFMOMA will talk more about the works, RF says:

“One of the questions artists face today, or face... have always faced, is: how do you deal with histories of the past, embodied in a physical surrounding, specifically stories that deal with the political past, with repression with really laden histories? How can you actually make things visible that are so complex and that are possibly also so difficult to show that you don’t quite know where to start?”

Ravelli argues that the complexity of written language lays in the way it “packs in” information within a clause. “Written language functions as a storage mechanism for information, and in order to be more efficient, content is squeezed in wherever possible. Similar content in spoken language is “strung out” across the clauses.”³⁴¹ Comparing the above excerpts, one can see how the two texts exemplify differences in style, which are created by a number of linguistic features. The press release “packs in” a lot more information into much less space. Yet, the podcast doesn’t seem to be more accessible, simply because it spreads out the information across the clauses. Ravelli points out that “it is more than possible to “talk like a book” or to “write something spoken.” “Hence, media can be used in different ways, to achieve different effects.”³⁴² So, looking at the two different ways of how the exhibitions are introduced, the listener of the podcast knows that there is an exhibition called ‘Charged Space’ at the fourth floor of the museum, and that it includes two video works. Although the press release uses twenty words less, its reader is much better informed. He will be able to say what the title of the show is, how many pieces it consists of, what the theme of the exhibition is, who has curated it and in what relation the curator has with the museum, the names of the artists, and the dates of the show. Yes, Ravelli can be right in arguing that ‘squeezing in’ lots of information within few clauses can be hard to digest for readers/listeners. However, in this particular case, it seems that the moderator and RF are using lots of words without saying

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.54.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

The press release goes on describing each of the two works with one sentence, as well as a paragraph on what the two works share, which suggests why they are being juxtaposed in this exhibition in the way they are. This is followed with a detailed description of each individual work, an interpretation and some biographical information on the artists. Comparing the ways how the press release and the podcast introduce the readers/listeners to the work again show two different Modes.

The press release says:

“Stasi City, 1997, by Jane and Louise Wilson features multi-channel wall-size projections that journey through the abandoned headquarters of the East German secret police—the Staatsicherheit—a few years after the reunification of Germany.”

Correspondingly, in the podcast RF says:

“One of the things that the Wilson sisters did in this piece called Stasi City... Stasi stands for Staatssicherheit. So, that’s secret service in East Germany. Literally, when the wall came down, this place was the embodiment of the political regime. So, this place was stormed. And what you actually see in this video installation at SFMOMA is what’s left over.”

The press release gives some facts such as the title and date of the work and the names of the artists. It provides an idea of what the work might look like (wall-size projections) and what is represented in the video (a journey through the abandoned headquarters of the East German secret police) and finally it says when the scenes depicted were shot (a few years after the reunification of Germany).

RF does not describe the work but jumps right into explaining its meaning. Yet, clearing up the meaning of the title makes him drift away from this, and the sentence is finished half way through. In the press release it is made very clear where and when the video was shot. RF, on the other hand, says that “this place

was stormed” without mentioning that the place he refers to, is the former headquarters of the secret police. Even more important, he uses the phrase “when the wall came down” as a metaphor for the end of the dictatorship in Eastern Germany, but does not say when approximately the video was produced. Was it produced immediately after the headquarters were stormed? Are there still immediate traces of this action visible in the video? Or was it filmed a few years after it was stormed? Has the place changed since it was stormed or has it been left as it looked then? Again, the press release provides much more detail, even only about half as many words are used. But more interestingly, RF interrupts himself, when he explains the meaning of Stasi, as if someone had asked a question. This again simulates dialogue and gives the podcast a conversational tone. In the last sentence, RF addresses the audience directly, (what you actually see in this video...) again adding to the more spoken quality of the text.

The most common ways to write/talk about a work of art is to first say something about a piece’s physical features, i.e. something about the way it looks followed by an analysis what the work might mean. In the following excerpts the authors describe one of the video installations using two very different techniques. Whereas the press release goes into great detail when describing the piece,

“A slow pan that seems to proceed in real time glides through an eerie maze of empty corridors, offices, and interrogation chambers once used by more than 100,000 Stasi agents and informants during the Cold War, while an ambient soundtrack offers disembodied footsteps, the hum of austere fluorescent lightening, and jarring electronic sounds interspersed with silence. A close-up examines outdated surveillance equipment and imposing file cabinets, follows elevators travelling between floors, and observes the opening and closing of secret doors. Obsolete reel-to-reel recording devices, mute telephones, and outmoded monitors seem ready to spring into action at any moment.”

RF does not really describe it at all. What he does instead is to encourage the listener to feel the work, to pretend to be in the situation that is depicted in the work:

“Imagine you would be in jail... how does it actually feel? How does it feel to be in an interrogation chamber? To see all these doors, to see the recording devices, these old telephones, and to have this feeling that this is really the past. It looks old, it’s already gone, fortunately it’s gone...”

When RF comes to analysing the meaning of the work, he does something similar to above. Rather, than attaching a fixed meaning to the work, he tries to motivate the listener to think about what it could mean. He simulates dialogue through using the pronoun *you*.

“...but at the same time, it’s also something that *you* feel, well... these regimes, these structures, these architectures of repression are still existing everywhere; and hopefully, *you* also feel that eventually these ideologies and these regimes have to come down have to fail. So it’s a kind of hope.”

The press release, in comparison, not only goes into much more detail, but it also is much firmer in terms of making a categorical statement about its meaning. Whereas RF simulates conversation, the press release is also an expression of the writer’s authority to give meaning to the work.

“In a nightmarish, suspense-inducing penetration of the Stasi headquarters that, in fact, defines—and simulates for the viewer—the regime’s own Cold War surveillance tactics, Stasi City creates an artistic space that indulges in a mesh of chaotic details only to point to the macro-perspective of doomed political ideologies and unstoppable powers of entropy. The historical ambiguities, bureaucracies, and banalities that lie at the bottom of fundamentalist policies have now been exposed and subverted.”

In terms of over-all style the podcast in relation to the press release is much more conversational and it aims to simulate dialogue. In Ravelli's terms the podcast has a higher level of feedback and it is more active in relation to the press release which is more reflective.

Question 2: How does the speaker use grammatical structures to build a relationship with the audience?

Above it has already been mentioned that RF used the pronoun *you* to address the audience directly, so as to simulate dialogue. In the approximately five minutes of the excerpt, RF uses the word *you* eighteen times. It is the extensive use of this word which makes this grammatical structure stand out and asks for further analysis. The question is: how does RF use this pronoun to build relationships with his audience?

“Imagine *you* would be in jail... how does it actually feel? How does it feel to be in an interrogation chamber? To see all these doors, to see the recording devices, these old telephones...”

By saying “Imagine *you* would be in a jail,” he tries to draw the listener into the work. He doesn't say that in this work one can see an interrogation chamber. Rather, he encourages the listener to imagine him/herself in this scene. He draws the visitor further into the work, when he asks the visitor to *feel* the situation rather than just *look* at it: “How does it feel to be in an interrogation chamber?” And he goes on describing the scene, inviting the audience to imagine seeing “all these doors, to see the recording devices, these old telephones.” In this way, the speaker asks the listener to experience the work not so much from the perspective of a museum visitor, who is trying to come to terms with an object, but from the perspective of the person who might have been in the scene depicted in the work.

RF also constructs a social relationship between himself and the listeners. He addresses the audience not so much as a curator, the knower, the producer of truths, but more as a kind of partner – a partner in the joint effort to draw meaning out of the video installation. He does that again, and in an even more extravagant way, when he talks about the second piece in the show:

“So, imagine *you* are a young boy in a Kurdish city and *you* want to go somewhere, *you* want to go elsewhere *possibly*, *you possibly* also want to get away from all these conflicts, *you* want to have a future and let’s say *you* even want to be an artist. And *you* think... well... how on earth can *I* make art in such an environment? How can *you* still manifest your desire to do something, to express yourself?”

Again through directly addressing the listener, RF draws the visitor into the ideas of the works, rather than just saying the work is about this, that and the other. The words “possibly” as well as the phrase “and let’s say”, also reflects a conversational tone and a subjective quality of the statement. RF merely proposes one possible way of viewing this piece, rather than giving it a single, ultimate, fixed meaning.

In line 4 (“And you think...”) of the above paragraph, he uses the pronoun *you* differently compared to before. Here, he uses it to connect the description of the situation with its interpretation. Furthermore, he disguises the subjective quality of the interpretation by way of asking questions: “how on earth can I make art in such an environment? How can you still manifest your desire to do something, to express yourself?” A similar situation we find in the following paragraph:

“So here is this young boy that is recorded in one take on top of the hill overlooking the city, which is his hometown, close to the Iraq boarder and he takes what is available what he finds on the site, tin cans, rubbish and he just makes that into some sort of a drum kit and plays his piece. and he plays that very professionally so *you* think also he must have had also access to, possibly MTV watching video clips and that’s where he wants to go.”

With this use of the pronoun *you*, the speaker again negotiates a relationship with the audience. Through addressing the listener directly, he constructs a relationship of partnership, trust or solidarity. He could have equally said:

“...he plays that very professionally *so he must have had* access to, possibly MTV watching video clips and that’s where he wants to go.”

Or:

“...he plays that very professionally *so I think he must have had* access to, possibly MTV watching video clips and that’s where he wants to go.”

In the former example, without the pronoun, he would have passed the production of meaning to some sort of higher authority. In the latter, he would have stressed that this is his personal interpretation. But what he opts for is a structure that simulates a relationship of partnership between himself and the audience. So, implicitly he almost forces the listener to think his way. Therefore, using the pronoun *you*, does not necessarily mean a more dialogic or engaging way of communication. What it can also mean is that the author is imposing his interpretation upon the audience.

Question 3: What values do textual features have in terms of subject position of the *producer* and the *audience*?

“So it’s not a political statement that he is doing on top of the hill, looking actually towards the West, towards the sunset, but it might be read as something as a political statement against being lost in such a culture that basically doesn’t offer any future to the younger generation.”

In the first part of the above sentence, he constructs a representation. By saying “so it’s not a political statement,” he makes a judgement, a categorical statement and sets up a relation between the art work and the interpretation. Very broadly speaking, he also sets up a subject position for himself as well as for the audience: RF as the producer of truths and the audience the receivers of it. In the second part of the sentence, though, he switches to probability. By saying “it might be read as something of a political statement” he softens down the strength of his judgement, probably because he is aware that he is just about to say something, which could offend some of the listeners, namely, that such a culture doesn’t offer any future to the younger generation. What this shows is that on the one hand he affirms his authority through making a categorical statement; on the other hand, though, he immediately steps back, and softens the strength of his argument.

In a later paragraph he constructs a meaning relation for the term “future:”

“At the same time, you think, the future has already arrived, by way of a bleak, urban, globalized architecture, you are actually looking at.”

He sets up a relation between the type of architecture he describes, and “the future,” as if the representation of the future of a town, a country or a society could be identified or represented in architecture alone. The meaning relation constituted here is very subjective and would probably not be found in any dictionary. This type of subjective interpretation is very much in contrast to the usually objective tone of museum publications.

7.4.2 Summary

Summing up, the analysis showed that the style of the text is informal; it simulates conversation and is active, rather than reflective. Rather than narrating a number of pre-defined fixed meanings, the curator speaks freely, makes mistakes, and tries to encourage the viewer to feel and experience the work,

rather than merely ‘understand’ it. His statements are at times subjective. At the same time he uses the pronoun *you* to foster a feeling of partnership between himself and the audience, but also, to pass off his interpretation as that of the audience. He switches between the subject positions of the authoritative producer of truths and that of a partner in the production of knowledge. This positions the audience sometimes as the receiver of truths and sometimes as a collaborator or partner in the constitution of meaning. What, now, does this all mean in relation to museum practice? Why does RF speak the way described above? Which underlying discourses shape this text? Does the text represent continuity or change? These questions will be addressed in the following section or the second stage of CDA: the interpretation stage.

7.4.3 Interpretation

Question 4: Does the podcast break with the museum’s voice of institutional authority?

In the case study here, the activity type is a broadcasted statement of a curator about an exhibition he has set up. The situational context, hence, has two elements. First, the situational context is the museum; secondly, because it is a broadcasted statement, the other element of the situational context is the Web. Comparing the excerpt of the podcast with the museums’ press statement on the website, showed how differently the museum expresses itself, in those two different activity types.

In a much generalized way, the press release is about delivering facts about the exhibition in a manner that journalists are familiar with and with the goal of getting them to write about the exhibition (in hopefully positive terms). The press release could have equally been put in an envelope and sent out per post. What is suggested is that the medium of the Web is here merely used as a distribution channel and not as a means to exploit this medium’s potential to experiment with

new types of content. With the podcast, the Web is still of course the method of delivery; however, in comparison, the medium of the Web is used creatively so as to explore novel types of content. Moreover, the structure or schema of the podcast and its textual features reveal that the speaker has a different target audience in mind as well as a different objective.

This situational context, then, shapes the relationship that is being constituted between the speaker and the audience; it shapes the subject position of speaker and the subject positions of the audience. The description stage already shed light on the linguistic tools the speaker has used to engage the listener. It has shown that the spoken text is much more informal in comparison with the press release. Because he does not use a script, he at times interrupts himself in the middle of a sentence, explains something else and continues with something new. At times this manner of talking makes it fairly difficult to follow what he is trying to say. This also proves what Ravelli argues, namely, “a text delivered in the spoken medium is not necessarily more accessible than a written medium text.”³⁴⁸

In any case, the lack of a script contributes to keeping the podcast at an informal level; and formality, as Fairclough argues, is “one pervasive and familiar aspect of constraints to discourse.”³⁴⁹ “This means that discourse and practice generally, in formal situations, are difficult and demanding; they depend on special knowledge and skill which has to be learnt.”³⁵⁰ Many museums are aware of this and have explored all sorts of ways to break with the paradigm of the museum as temple of high art and culture. With the medium of the Web many Museologists saw opportunities to use it in ways that would break with the “museum’s voice of institutional authority.” This voice, as Peter Walsh has put it, enhances the “slightly patronizing, intimidating atmosphere found particularly in larger institutions (...) and tends to make people feel ignorant, and alienates them from the entire experience of museums.”³⁵¹ In 1997 he observed that while some museums have managed to transfer this atmosphere of institutional

³⁴⁸ Louis J. Ravelli, p.53.

³⁴⁹ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, p.54.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.53.

³⁵¹ Peter Walsh, p.78.

authority onto their website, he ultimately believed that “the very nature of the Web, works against [this approach]”.³⁵²

There is no doubt that there are still many examples of museum websites today which work towards re-asserting the museums authoritative voice. The chatty quality of the SFMOMA podcast, on the other hand, presents a stark contrast and it reflects a continuation of the idea that the medium of the Web has the power to produce content for museum audiences in innovative, informal and user-orientated ways. Hence, RF’s informal style breaks with the traditional museum voice, in order to attract and reach people, who would feel alienated by the more didactic approach or the conventional scholarly tone. Moreover, the podcast reflects the idea that making art more accessible is not only a matter of presenting works online, freely available for those who have an internet connection. The podcast reflects ideas that accessibility is also about the development of a new kind of relationship between museum and audiences, about breaking hierarchies and established concepts of art and its presentation in museums and about experimental approaches to interpretation.

But at the same time the relationship of solidarity simulated in the text is a purely imaginary one and it is created solely through linguistic features used by the curator. RF combines relational elements (direct address, you, etc.) which simulate a kind of partnership, with other elements (when he speaks on behalf of the audience, and/or the artists) which assert his authority. This in turn, continues the traditional model of communication between museum and audience. This combination seems to be a contradiction. However, the spontaneous quality of the podcast suggests that these communication strategies are not used intentionally. Rather, they seem to have developed out of the spur of the moment and due to the lack of a script. This in turn shows how easily it can happen that even if one aims to produce a programme, which is meant to be breaking with conventions, can quickly turn against one’s intention and have the opposite than the desired effect.

³⁵² *Ibid.* p.79.

Question 5: Does the podcast reflect a creative approach to learning in museums?

In addition to aiming to break with the museum's institutional voice of authority, the podcast also reflects research on how learning works within the context of the museum. In this respect John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking's research needs to be mentioned. Their research revealed that learning and meaning-making is facilitated when visitors' expectations are fulfilled and when visitors come into the museum with some prior knowledge.³⁵³ Moreover, according to Falk and Dierking, a visitor who feels comfortable in the galleries, who can easily orientate him/herself around the spaces, and has some sort of idea what to expect in the galleries, will be more likely to understand the exhibition's narrative and as a consequence be able to take in more information, and make more meaning out of this information. It is very likely that the author of the podcast never even heard the name of Falk and Dierking. So, it is certainly not suggested that RF makes direct references to constructivist or any other learning theories. What is suggested, though, is that the over-all style and schema of the podcast, is referencing ideas about what museums can do, so as to enhance visitors' experience of the exhibition; in a sense that the podcasts gives listeners a brief, informal introduction of what can be expected in the show.

Question 6: Does the podcast reflect novel ways of interpreting works of art?

RF phrases his interpretations by asking questions. Rather than describing the work according to art historical conventions, RF asks the listener to feel the work. Hence, as argued above, his way of talking is slightly more active than reflective. The assumptions that are being made here is that the audience is not a distant abstract entity of people who need to be lectured to. Rather, this manner of approaching the audience simulates a kind of partnership in which meaning is constructed in dialogue. Again, it is not suggested that RF draws upon any specific discourses on how meaning making works in museums; but what it

³⁵³ John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, p. 115-118.

suggests is that his engaging way of talking, breaks with the “transmission model of communication” and reflects more contemporary ways of producing texts for museums. At the same time, though, as has been shown above, breaking with the “transmission model” does not necessarily lead to more accessible texts. Leaving listeners with loads of words but with little to take away, does probably not encourage listeners to stay tuned in. Rather, it will leave the listener frustrated, that there is so little information.

7.4.4 Summary

The key question of this section is whether the excerpt represents continuity or change in museum practice. In terms of the informal style the podcast certainly represents a break with convention, hence, change in museum practice. The podcast can also be seen as part of the many activities museums have engaged in over the last years, which aim to empower the visitor through facilitating the preparation of a potential visit. In this respect, the podcast contributes to already existing efforts to make exhibitions intellectually accessible and meaningful to visitors. Finally, the podcast explores a constructivist approach to interpretation, rather than one based on the traditional “transmission model of communication”. All these features make the text different to more traditional models of communicating in museums.

But what does this conclusion mean for the relationship between museum and audience now? Does this novel type of content impact the relationship of museum and audience? If so, does it reproduce and continue the traditional power relations, or does it challenge them? These questions will be addressed in the following section, where the social and institutional conditions in which a text exists will be looked at.

7.4.5 Explanation

The interpretation stage showed that the podcast is different to conventional museum publications. It showed that its style as well as the linguistic features used to build relationships with audiences contributes to a novel way of producing content in museums. The present section will look at the broader social context to which this podcast belongs to, or in other words, what this new type of content means, as seen from a broader perspective.

Analysing the podcast in terms of which societal processes it belongs to, requires the consideration of two key issues. First, that the museum traditionally is the holder of power and authority, the producer of knowledge and truths. Audiences tend to be positioned on the receiving end. Secondly, statistics show that regular museum visitors tend to be educated professionals with middle-class background. Non-visitors are less educated, have less-paid jobs, and tend to have a working-class background.³⁵⁴ Taking this into account, one could see the authoritative element in museum leadership as being determined by societal and even class relationships. Within the context of this research, the podcast can be seen as a battleground where these societal relationships are being re-negotiated. Nevertheless, the question arises, why the museum as an institution, is interested in re-negotiating the authoritative and controlling element of museum leadership? Hooper-Greenhill observed that “museums are seeking ways to embrace their visitors more closely.”³⁵⁵ In fact, she argues that “the biggest challenge facing museums at present time is the re-conceptualisation of the museum/audience relationship,”³⁵⁶ and it is within this context that the podcast is being analysed in the following.

³⁵⁴ Catherine Ballé, ‘Democratization and institutional change’ in *Global Culture. Media, Arts, Policy, and Globalization*. Ed. By Diana Crane *et.al.* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 132-145, p.142.

³⁵⁵ *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, p.1.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Question 7: What societal processes does this discourse belong to?

It cannot be denied that the traditional museum audience relationship is being challenged on many different fronts. Government funding for museums across Europe have decreased over the years, which has put museums under pressure to generate their own funds. Amongst the many consequences, museums became much more dependent on their visitors. Visitors not only generate funds for museums through spending money on the entry ticket, in the café and shop; they also prove or disprove the legitimacy of the museum as an institution in the service of the community. This leads to a situation, as Hooper-Greenhill argues, where “art museums must demonstrate their viability and argue their value in new contexts.”³⁵⁷

Thirdly, pressure on museums also comes from cultural policy. In Britain, for instance, cultural policy “has increased its call for arts and cultural organisations to make their activities enjoyed by and relevant to as many people as possible in recent years. The need for cultural organisations and projects to reach out into wider communities and involve a range of people in cultural activities now crops up both in the discourse of cultural policy and on the arts and cultural management agenda.”³⁵⁸

Another important point is that changes in communication are not only related to technology alone; i.e. the changes that are taking place are not limited to the way content is delivered to audiences. Change has also taken place in the manner or style of communication. Hooper-Greenhill, for instance, describes how communication and learning theories on which nineteenth century museums were based are no longer valid. “Today, constructivist learning theory plays together with post-structuralist epistemologies and post-colonial cultural politics to position the visitor/learner as both active and politicised in the construction of their own relevant viewpoints. The post-museum must play the role of partner, colleague, learner (itself), and service provider in order to remain visible as an

³⁵⁷ Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, ‘Changing Values’, p.11.

³⁵⁸ Nobuko Kawashima, ‘Audience development and social inclusion in Britain. Tensions, contradictions and paradoxes and their implications for cultural management.’ in *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 12, 1 (2006) pp.55-72, p.55.

institution.”³⁵⁹ As has been shown in previous sections, the podcast also sits firmly within this context.

7.5 Conclusion

Podcasting has offered SFMOMA a means to continue their exploration of innovative interpretative techniques. The point is that the podcast of this case study can be seen very much within the various different contexts as outlined above. Although there are no traces of any direct references to any of these contexts, one could argue that RF’s contribution to the struggle of a re-negotiation of the museum audience relationship is found in the (intended or unintended) aim to move beyond traditional museum practice in order to develop deeper relations with existing audiences and also to attract new ones. At the same time, RF’s involvement in the podcast shows that there is openness towards providing additional content to the exhibition, so as to render it more accessible for people without a fine art background; it does so by drawing upon constructivist approaches to learning. In this respect the ArtCast is not only in line with discourses on the New Museology, it is also to this museum’s own aims and objectives to make the arts more accessible to broader audiences.

However, looking at the content in more detail, especially through comparing it to the corresponding press release, it could be seen how little information from the exhibition is actually in the podcast. Yes, we have a curator who has installed the show speaking about the works on view. And yes, this might represent a very interesting contribution to the exhibition. But he is not saying very much about how potential visitors might imagine what is in the show. He does not even give the basic information such as who the artists are and where their artistic inspiration comes from. He does not say anything about how one can imagine the works on view. The aim to reach a new audience by way of providing easily

³⁵⁹ *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, p.xi.

understandable information on what is on show does therefore not seem to be achievable with this podcast.

It has already been said that the SFMOMA tries “to stay away from the manner experts and curators tend to talk about art,” not least because they want to reach for a young audience. The most interesting outcome of this section is somewhat ironic. In terms of style, the podcast certainly represents novel type of content within the context of museum practice. The “museums voice of institutional authority” has been replaced by a chitchat type communication style. Yes, on the surface, one can certainly see that this podcasts reflects change in museum practice: The scholarly tone of museum professionals is giving way to light-hearted conversations with curators and Vox Pops from visitors.

This radical change of tone seems to be one reason, why the museum community has received this podcast with such enthusiasm and praise. Radical change? Is this change really so radical? What this analysis has aimed to show is that it is not radical at all. In fact, it does not even represent a small change; the change is only on the surface. It is only to do with the tone or the voice of the museum, not with the content. For this reason, one could also not find in this text a new kind of relationship between museum and audience. The analysis of the relational elements revealed that while some are used to develop new relationships with audiences, others have the effect of re-asserting the traditional power relationship between museum and audience.

The key thing that this analysis has shown, then, is that one has to be very careful in arguing that only because of the use of new technologies, new methods of delivering content, new type of formats of content, and new ways of addressing audiences, one also develops new relations between speaker/author/producer and listener/receiver. Rather, what came out of this analysis is that even if the producer of such content has the best intentions, podcasting can also contribute to the maintenance of the status quo as far as the museum audience relationship is concerned. Podcasting, after all, is just a technology; it’s a method of delivering content. If used wisely it may have an impact on the museum audience relationship. However, the medium alone has not got the power to change

anything. Whether a podcast can contribute towards the building of new relations with museum audiences depends entirely on the quality of the content that is delivered.

How useful is the methodology for analysing podcasts?

The analytical model presented here allows one to see the text in different lights. Most importantly it helps showing the multifacetedness of meanings in a text. Through interviewing a number of museum podcasters, this research has found that many producers believe that it is very easy to produce podcasts, as it is just a matter of attaching a microphone to a computer and to hit the record button. After a little bit of fiddling around with editing software and working out how to upload it to the Web, people often believe the job is done. Sometimes it might be as easy as that, but in a lot of cases it is not, as is more than proved by numerous examples of low-quality museum podcasts. Maybe one should not be too cruel with criticism, as podcasting is still in its infancy, and museums tend to be rather slow in adapting to new ways of doing their work. On the other hand, there are so many examples of news and information podcasts, especially in the areas of politics and culture produced by newspapers. Newspapers just as museums do not have experience in producing AV content; yet, they seem to be much more successful with their programmes. One of the key positives of this methodology is that it allows analysing the content of a podcast from a broader perspective, or its societal context. It is only through this that the analysis reveals, what seems to be the most important aspect, namely, the podcasts possible impact to change the way people interact with each other.

The world market leader in producing audio content for museums produced the podcast analyzed for this case study. How can it be that a team of highly skilled museum specialists working with a group of highly capable audio production professionals still cannot work out how to produce audio content that reflects a truly novel relationship between museum and audiences? It seems that the museum in question assesses its content merely in relation to *their* other publications, rather than publications in general. What seems so straightforward

in a written text, namely that a text needs to have a clear structure (as the press release has), is not as straightforward in the spoken medium. The spoken version, as has been shown, is much more complex than it might seem and the methodology used here makes this explicit.

As regards the negative aspects of the methodology, it must be acknowledged that it is a very time-consuming process. Ideally, one would make this analysis based on a written transcript. Therefore, if there is no previously-written script one would need to transcribe the text, which makes it an even more laborious process. Therefore, for very large portions of text, the methodology is probably inappropriate.

Fairclough's model includes ten questions, which can be asked of a text. In 'Language and Power' he devoted a chapter to a case study, which should further illustrate how his model works. For this case study he adapted the ten questions for the specific context and reduced them to only five questions. An important thing to keep in mind is that Fairclough suggests, or even emphasises to work with his model creatively and to adapt it to one's specific needs.

The way the model was adapted for the purpose of the above case study, developed out of the research question. The first step was to clarify what exactly it is that needs to be analysed. This was formulated as two questions, as stated in the Aims and Objectives section. The second step was to find an appropriate way of phrasing the questions, so that they answer the research questions. The phrasing of the questions, although left quite general, was developing considering the content of the text. The third step was to decide on how many questions to ask in each stage of analysis. Again, this was determined with respect to the content and the research questions, i.e. how many questions do I need to ask to answer the research question?

It seems that it is difficult to adapt the model in a way that a fixed set of questions are defined. What seems more appropriate is to keep the large structure of the model, i.e. the three stages of analysis, but be more creative with the individual questions that are asked of a text, in order to keep the analysis within

manageable proportions as well as to make it relevant for the many different contexts in which it could be applied.

CONCLUSION

Podcasting as a medium to interpret and communicate art

At the beginning of this thesis the idea was proposed that connectivity to the Web does not ensure that museums make art more accessible. It was argued that art in online museums needs to be appropriately contextualised, just as it is in their onsite counterparts, and even though there are a great number of exceptions, especially in the UK, there are many museum websites, which produce an illusion of access.

Looking at two key notions upon which the identity of museums rests, namely that of authenticity and originality, Chapter 2 concluded that in the Digital Age authentic experiences of original art are disengaged from physical spaces and may well be experienced on all sorts of digital devices, such as computers and MP-3 Players. This is an important conclusion, because the identity of art museums rests on the notion that what they show is original and authentic; and if digital media cannot provide authentic experiences, art museums might as well forget about them altogether. What this chapter showed then, is that objects in art collections can have different roles. They can provide experiences for audiences who come into the museum, but they can also become (in digital form) part of an online presentation. If the latter is the case, this chapter argued, we have to make differentiations between low-resolution reproductions of works online and in-depth interpretations of works in e.g. a video. What this discussion has demonstrated is that the video about the work *Shibboleth* has indeed the power to make art more accessible, whilst the low-resolution reproduction of an artwork does not.

Based upon these discussions, Chapter 3 examined the technological context of museums today, especially the challenges and limitations of online presentation of art in a Web 2.0 environment. One of the crucial outcomes was one of the premises that this thesis is build upon, namely that AV media are powerful tools to foster a more engaging and accessible experience of art.

Bringing the debates of all three chapters together, this chapter concluded with investigating and subsequently answering three key questions: (1) can podcasting make art more accessible and foster an empowered audience? (2) How do people use podcasting and what are their expectations? (3) What is the real impact of podcasting on the relationship between museums and audiences?

What it all came down to in the final chapter was the question whether podcasting has the potential to move beyond the illusion of access, as defined in Chapter 1, and whether this medium might help making art more accessible. I.e. can these new type of programmes foster change in museum practice: change in the way museums make their collections and other services accessible to the public; change in the way museums communicate with their audiences; and change in terms of the impact on the relationship between museums and audiences.

Looking at the typology developed in Chapter 4 from this perspective, and taking the research question of this thesis into consideration, one can ask:

Do podcasts foster a more engaging and accessible experience of art?

Through looking at a variety of podcasts, particularly the ‘Changing face of childhood’ of the Dulwich Picture Gallery or ‘Velazquez’ by the Sunday Times Culture and through applying the ideas of Falk and Dierking about learning in museums, this study on podcasting revealed that the medium of podcasting, indeed, does have the potential to make art more accessible.³⁶⁰ The study revealed further examples, which showed that podcasts can indeed make the

³⁶⁰ Falk and Dierking.

experience of art more accessible: The ‘Rembrandt’ podcast of the National Museums Berlin or the ‘Van Gogh Letters’ podcast of the Met allow visitors to learn about an aspect of the artist, which is not represented in the exhibition and in this way help visitors to prepare (or follow up) their visit. It was argued that these types of podcasts foster a much more informed audience, which in turn makes them more confident as they walk around the works on view. In this respect, therefore, the study on podcasting reveals that this medium is able to make art more accessible and move beyond the illusion of access, as defined in Chapter 1.

However, as has been illustrated most clearly in Case Study 3, whether this may truly be achieved is a question of communication styles. In other words, the key question is not so much whether to distribute an audio or video programme as podcast, as QuickTime, or other form. The real question is to find appropriate content for carefully chosen target audiences and to consider how to communicate that content in appropriate ways. Consequently, podcasting can be seen not so much in terms of a big communication revolution in museums, but as a continuation of previous efforts to make art in museums accessible and relevant to people’s lives. Hence, what this study suggests is that people will use podcasts produced by museums if they are relevant to their specific needs rather than for the simple fact that they are distributed as feeds. This is also an important conclusion, considering the fact that most people, who were producing podcasts in museums at the time when the fieldwork for this study was carried out, were doing podcasts because they believed that this would help them to bring their institution to the cutting edge of technical developments. What this study shows, though, is that a successful podcast is not so much a technological question but one of quality of content and communication styles. In any case, what all the three case studies suggested is that a successful podcast has little to do with an audio newsletter. Most clearly, this argument is supported through analysing examples of podcasts, which reflect truly novel types of AV content in museums.

A podcast is not an Audio Newsletter.

In the early stages of podcasting in museums, one often heard when talking to museum professionals, that a podcast is something akin to an audio newsletter. Looking at the examples mentioned here one could clearly see that museums are developing new formats of programmes, which go clearly way beyond the idea of an audio newsletter.

A newsletter provides details about upcoming exhibitions and events. It has a strong promotional element. Some of the podcasts or other types of videos on exhibitions embedded in websites, such as the Dulwich's series or Tate Shots mentioned in Chapter 4, do have a promotional element, but the key focus is on interpreting and communicating works of art. They are about demystifying the meaning of paintings and about helping people making art relevant to their lives. In terms of their content and format they often recall TV documentaries on art and artists. Moreover, they occasionally reference new museological discourse. Looking at the National Gallery's episode on the Velazquez exhibition also makes this point clearer.

In this episode a person with restricted growth is asked to respond to paintings by Velazquez, which depicts dwarfs. One could argue whether or not this makes sense, but one certainly has to acknowledge that the NG's use of podcasting is trying to explore different manners of talking about art. Indeed, it is a person with restricted growth, rather than an art historian who talks about the meaning of the dwarfs in Velazquez' paintings. It is a personal response rather than a scholarly interpretation that is in the focus. This example clearly shows that podcasting can be a medium to realise a museum's agenda on social inclusion.

The SFMOMA's VoxPops also show new approaches to talking about an exhibition. Rather than having only curators talking about the show, this museum also hands the microphone over to their visitors. Again, even if this is very much a politically correct thing to do, one could or indeed should, think about whether this type of casual chitchat of visitors' responses to an exhibition is the type of

content that users of podcasts are interested in. However that may be, in terms of making a differentiation between an audio newsletter and a quality podcast, this example shows once again how a museum is using the medium of podcasting as a means to explore novel ways of talking and interpreting art.

The key outcome of this is that podcasting cannot only provide museums new forms of delivering content to audiences. It also provides an opportunity to re-think processes of content production as well as styles of communication. In this respect podcasting is about exploring ways of presenting, interpreting and talking about art and about breaking with the “authoritative voice of the museum”.³⁶¹ It is also about integrating the voices other than those of museum experts in new forms. Summing up, there are some podcasts, which reference some of the aims and objectives of the ‘New Museology;’ and it is this reference to museums’ strategies of being less didactic, more inclusive and visitor-centred that clearly differentiates a podcast from an audio newsletter. Today in 2008 this conclusion does not seem so significant. However, considering the very short history of this still very young medium, it is an important conclusion to make. It shows that whereas at the beginning people believed podcasting was chiefly a medium that can be used for promotional purposes, some people very quickly developed ideas how one can use AV media to experiment with new ways of addressing the audiences; new ways of engaging them and new ways of talking about art, so as to make it more relevant to peoples lives and more accessible to people without an arts background. Out of this conclusion, another one developed: if museums produce high quality programmes, then this medium is not a cheap alternative to audio production companies.

Podcasting is not a cheap alternative to audio production companies

As the typology developed in CS 1 has made explicit, there are many museums, which have produced audio guides as podcasts. Even if there are currently only

³⁶¹ Peter Walsh.

few examples, which show a truly progressive approach towards new kind of content production, one can clearly see a potential for development in this area. The user survey carried out in CS 2 also supports this, as it shows that people are interested in such content. Examples cited in the typology have also revealed that the medium of podcasting lends itself particularly well for the production of audio guides for a variety of specific target groups. Rather than offering one audio guide for all at a museums entrance, museums could offer a range of different audio and video programmes according to the different interests and needs of different target groups. Through applying the ideas of Falk and Dierking and Hooper-Greenhill allows one to argue that this indeed shows that podcasting has the potential to make art more accessible to broader audiences, because differentiated target groups may be addressed in a manner that takes into account their specific interests, needs and abilities.³⁶² However, a thorough look at the many different podcasts listed in the typology as well as others from the media sector shows that the quality of museum podcasts is very heterogenous. This suggests that producers of podcasts need to be realistic about the fact that such programmes can be rather expensive.

One of the things that came up in the interviews with museum professionals was that they believed podcasting could be a very cost effective solution for museums on low budgets. The data collected here shows that this is not the case. Yes, podcasting may be less expensive than hiring or buying hard- and software from audio production companies such as Antenna Audio or Acoustiguide. However, it is not only that. If a museum really wants to offer progressive audio content, if a museum really wants to exploit some of the many opportunities, which come with the flexibility and migratability of digital media, then it will cost money to employ people who produce content and edit it in appropriate ways. If, for instance, the medium's potential to address various target groups should be exploited, then that means that a museum will need to produce content for those target groups.

³⁶² John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 'Changing Values in the Artmuseum'

An interview with an artist for instance, may need different interpretation and contextualization if it is used in an audio guide for children; it will need to be edited differently if the target audience is a tourist group, or again differently if the target group is a group of subject specialists. The technology is not the issue. The technology allows us to do all this and a whole lot more. On top of it, technology is becoming easier to handle and cheaper to acquire. However, the real question is whether the content offered satisfies the needs of users; and producing a range of different programmes for a range of different target groups, to a high quality will cost money. This study has not collected any data, which would allow one to draw conclusions on the question whether podcasts are cheap alternatives to audio production companies. However, based upon the evidence collected in CS 1, one can certainly say that the idea that podcasting is a cheaper solution for museums is an illusion. Considering the fact that many people interviewed for this study argued that they see podcasting as a cheap way of producing AV content for their museum, this is an important outcome. It shows that there are many people who underestimate the complexity behind the production of AV media. Converting pre-existing audio-tours into podcast compatible format is possible from a technical point of view. But what this study has shown is that podcasting as a medium to make art more accessible is not a technical question. Much rather, as examples of the SFMOMA, the Dulwich, the Tate, the NG and others have shown, it is a question of selecting appropriate content and moderating, interpreting and communicating it in terms that non art experts feel comfortable with. And to produce that type of quality content, one can say with a high level of certainty, it will not be cheap.

What is the impact of podcasting on the relationship between museums and audiences?

One of the crucial outcomes of CS 1 was that museums are podcasting because they want to reach new (particularly young) audiences and that they aim to use this medium to build sustainable relationships with them. What this study has shown, though, is that whether podcasting may be an appropriate tool for audience development in museums is not a question of technology. Yes, CS 2

has shown that podcast users tend to be younger people and CS 1 showed that museums are targeting this age group. But CS 3 has made explicit that reaching new audiences and building sustainable relationships with them is a question of communication styles.

This study is not about demonstrating that there is a direct link between a museum's podcast and their improved relationships with audiences. In fact, I doubt that any museum has actually evaluated their podcasts in exactly these terms.³⁶³ It is simply too early, the medium too young, to make surveys and to evaluate podcasting from this perspective. However, what this study did show through carrying out a CDA of an excerpt of a podcast, is that the medium itself does not realise the potential means for audience development itself. What it came down to in CS 3 is that the excerpt showed evidence of the breaking with the traditional, scholarly tone of institutional authority. This tone of voice was replaced by a chitchatty, casual and conversational tone. In terms of communication styles, hence, the SFMOMA has managed to use the medium creatively, hoping to promote a new image of the museum. This approach to talking about art is very much in line with new museological discourse, yet, it is convincing only on the surface. This podcast failed to show that it really has the potential to bring about clearly visible and measurable change in the manner that museums communicate with their audiences.

However negative this may sound, it is not to suggest that podcasting is no good for audience development. What is suggested again, though, is that whether podcasting can make a true impact upon the relationship between museums and audiences, is not a question of technology but one of quality of content and communication style. In fact, whether podcasts can reach new audiences is a question of a number of aspects. It includes questions about who is using which technology, when and how. But more important is the content and the style of how it is communicated.

³⁶³ When I conducted the interviews with museum professionals who produce podcasts, I have always asked if and how they evaluate their podcasts. As of January 2007 none of the museums interviewed had done evaluations, though some e.g. the SFMOMA and the V&A said that they are planning to do so. At the time, though, they could not indicate which aspect they would evaluate and what methodologies they would employ.

What is proposed here is that, since we are in a time of experimentation, why not focus the experimentation on the content and then, in a second step, find out who might be reached with it? If long lasting change is the goal, if one is seriously talking about sustainable change rather than about a short lived trend, then this study shows that more time needs to be put into thinking about what kind of programmes, and what kind of content is suitable for podcasting. What this comes down to is that if the content is useful and relevant to people than they will use it, and then this medium will be able to make art more accessible.

Podcasting only really dates back to 2004. To conclude a comprehensive study on podcasting towards the end of 2007 is a great challenge in many ways. Although some of the podcasts mentioned in this thesis were released in 2005, most of them were from 2006, the year the fieldwork was completed. In fact, the fieldwork was taking place at more or less the same time as many museums were just beginning to think about podcasting, experimenting and trying things out. Many of the interviewees could hardly believe that someone was working on a doctoral dissertation focussing on podcasting in museums simply because they were not sure whether this subject could bring enough relevant data together as everything was still so new.

One of the reasons for devoting one case study to the question of why museums are engaging in podcasting was that interviewees often asked why other museums are doing it. Case Study 1 therefore contributes to bringing light into this question of what motivates museums to engage in podcasting. The analysis of the interviews in addition to the typology of podcasts draws a first picture of the many possibilities of how podcasting can be used in museums. Another interesting outcome of Case Study 1 was, that it became clear that there were some institutions like the SFMOMA and the Tate, who know exactly where they are coming from and where they want to go with their podcasts, but there were many others who did not have any specific ideas. They were simply experimenting and taking a 'learning by doing' approach. There were also others who indicated that they had very clear ideas about what they wanted to achieve in the long run, but they admitted not knowing whether they would ever get

there. In short, it is difficult to be harsh with critique, when people have just started doing something. Time will pass and the quality of podcasts is likely to change as producers gain more experience. Possibly some will realise that making a podcast is not as simple as it is often touted, and they will hire professionals to do programmes for them. Maybe, some who started podcasting will stop again because they do not feel that it serves their needs.

In any case, what this thesis has proved is that AV media can make art more accessible to people and to foster a more informed and more engaged audience. Moreover, the study has shown that podcasting in particular, is a suitable channel of distributing such content. The technology is likely to change. Maybe the word podcast will not be in use in a few years time; maybe it will be called something else. But what one can be sure about is that the Web will continue to become driven by richer, more substantial and pervasive AV content. Taking this into account and also based upon what has been achieved by museums so far, one can say with a high degree of confidence that AV programmes evidently have the potential to be powerful tools to make art more accessible to people with or without background in the fine arts.

GLOSSARY

Accessibility to collections usually meant making collections available to view online, adopting interoperable online metadata standards (Dublin Core Metadata Initiative) and respecting accessibility guidelines (World Wide Web Consortium).³⁶⁴ This thesis argues that after more than a decade of hypermedia, and especially in view of the rapid developments on the Web – commonly referred to as Web 2.0 – one needs to take a much more differentiated approach to issues of accessibility. The thesis uses the Web 2.0 phenomenon, particularly podcasting, as a catalyst to develop and promote a much broader understanding of notions of accessibility, or more precisely intellectual accessibility.

Blog A weblog or blog is published as a website and can contain text, images, audio- and video files, and hyperlinks. Anyone with access to the Web may set up and maintain one's own blog and invite other users to contribute to it. Blogging describes the activity of making contributions to a blog.

Constructivism is understood in this thesis in relation to George Hein. Hein draws upon constructivist learning theories, which are widely accepted today by educators, curriculum developers and cognitive psychologists, and applies them to the context of museum learning. Constructivism refers to the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves. The consequence is that the one producing the learning material is focusing on the learner, not the subject to be taught.³⁶⁵ Constructivism has had a strong influence on recent museological discourse. Eileen Hooper-Greenhill is another author who is considered to be one of the key theorists, who applied constructivism to museum education.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴ Dublin Core Metadata Initiative <http://dublincore.org/> (as of 30.5.2008) and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) <http://www.w3.org/> (as of 30.5.2008).

³⁶⁵ George Hein, 'Constructivist Learning Theory. The Museum and the Needs of People' CECA Conference, Jerusalem 15-22 October 1991 http://www.youth.org.pl/s/p/artykuly/70/704/Constructivist_Learning_Theory.doc (as of 29.5.2008).

³⁶⁶ Eileen Hooper-Greenhill Ed., *The Educational Role of the Museum*. Leicester Reader in Museum Studies (New York and London: Routledge, 1999).

Discourse In this study the term discourse is understood in terms of Fairclough's use of the term, for which it signals the particular view of language in use as an element of social life which is closely interconnected with other elements.³⁶⁷ Another useful definition of the term that influenced its understanding in the context of this text is provided by Gee, who argues that "people build identities and activities not just through language but by using language together with other 'stuff' that isn't language. If you want to get recognized as a street-gang member of a certain sort you have to speak in the 'right' way, but you also have to act and dress in the 'right' way, as well."³⁶⁸

Learning is understood in this thesis in relation to constructivist learning theories. According to this learning theory, learning is constructing meaning. Or as Hein, a key theorist in this area of study, puts it: "Learning is not understanding the 'true' nature of things, nor is it (as Plato suggested) remembering dimly perceived perfect ideas, but rather a personal and social construction of meaning out of the bewildering array of sensations which have no order or structure besides the explanations (and I stress the plural) which we fabricate for them."³⁶⁹ Most importantly, this quote shows that learning is understood as being based upon the idea that it consists of individuals' constructed meanings and that knowledge is produced as one learns, rather than pre-existing independent of the learner. Moreover, it shows that learning is conceived as something that is an active rather than a passive process.

Mp3 A digital audio encoding format, which is designed to greatly reduce the amount of data required compared to the uncompressed original audio. It is designed so that audio files may be easily organized and transferred between various digital devices, such as computers, mobile phones or MP3-Players. In 1991 it became the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) Standard

³⁶⁷ Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse. Textual analysis for social research*. (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.3.

³⁶⁸ James Paul Gee, *An introduction to Discourse analysis Theory and Method*. 2nd Edition. (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2005), p.21.

³⁶⁹ George Hein.

Mp4 A filename extension for MPEG-4 files, a multimedia container format, which is used to store digital audio and video streams.

New Museology a term, which was used as a title of a book edited by Peter Vergo in 1989.³⁷⁰ It came to name a whole new school and movement in museology, and set off new reflexive theorization and re-conceptualizations that took place in the subject in the 1970s and 1980s.

Podcasting refers to a Web feed of audio or video files that any user can subscribe to, so that they are automatically updated and downloaded as they become available. For a more thorough definition see the paragraph under the sub-heading 'Definition' in the Introduction of Chapter 4.

QuickTime Developed by Apple Inc., it is a multimedia framework for encoding and decoding audio and video. The QuickTime Player is a media player. QuickTime Movie is a file format (.mov).

RSS is a file format for syndicating content of websites. Syndicating Web content means that one can make content of one website accessible on another. Hence, it is a format that allows easy sharing of Web content.

Second digital wave With the second digital wave, or more commonly called the Web 2.0, a whole range of new online services became available: social networking sites such as My Space and Facebook, Wikis such as the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, weblogs, tagging and podcasting all aim to facilitate the building of communities, and fostering the creativity, collaboration and sharing of text and AV content between users. Podcasting is also part of this second generation of the Web. Section 3.2 in Chapter 3 will explain this further.

Streaming multimedia is a method of delivering multimedia. In contrast to e.g. a podcast, where content is downloaded onto a digital device before the

³⁷⁰ Peter Vergo, *The New Museology*, (London: Reaction Books, 1989).

programme may be consumed, streaming multimedia means that the content is received by the user, while it is being delivered by the provider.

Tagging an object means to label objects on websites with a keyword or term associated with it. A tag cloud is a visual depiction of tags generated by users. It is (usually an alphabetical) list of tags, which are hyperlinks to a collection of objects that are associated with that keyword. The larger the tag appears in the cloud, the more digital objects are connected with it.

VoxPops (lat.) Vox populi, meaning voice of the people. In the context of museums podcasts analysed here, it refers to short responses from visitors about an exhibition or an artist, which are recorded and edited into the podcast. VoxPops are used

Web 2.0 see *second digital wave*

Wiki is software, which is particularly well suited to build collaborative websites. It allows users to easily publish content online, to edit and to link it.

APPENDIX 1

Excerpts of Interview Transcripts

Why are museums interested in making a podcast?

Warum interessieren Sie sich für Podcasting?

Christian Dirks (JMB): Ich bin gerade dabei einen Audio Guide für die Dauerausstellung zu machen. Dabei versuche ich diese Produktion mit der Entwicklung eines Podcast zu verbinden. Ich denke, dass Podcasting eine ganz wichtige Entwicklung ist. Wir wollen an dieser gerne aktiv dabei sein, anstatt von ihr überrollt zu werden. Beim MoMA in New York hat man ja gesehen wie schnell es passieren kann, dass sich eine Bewegung neben dem Museum entwickelt und das Museum die Kontrolle über Inhalte der angebotenen Podcasts verliert. [Eine Gruppe von Studenten hat Podcast als alternative Audio Guides produziert.]

How did the idea of making a podcast for the V&A come up?

Toby Travis (V&A): Gail Durbin had read about it, and had started listening to podcasts on knitting. She thought it would be a good idea to apply podcasting to the museum. So she decided to put some money aside to buy the equipment and to start experiment with it to see how that goes. And I got the job.

How did the idea of making podcasts came up in your museum?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): It started via my interest. I was listening to podcasts and thought it would be ideal to introduce it to the museum as another form of interpretation.

Which podcasts did inspire you?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): Completely unrelated ones! I have a friend who is a web developer and he started podcasting from his house on a Friday night, from all things! And that's what started it off.

Mit Podcasts zu den Ausstellungen Melancholie – Genie und Wahnsinn in der Kunst in der Neuen Nationalgalerie Berlin und Rembrandt – Genie auf der Suche, haben Sie die ersten beiden Museumspodcasts dieser Art in Deutschland vorgestellt. Was war das Ziel, das Sie mit diesen erreichen wollten?

Eva Wesemann (Antenna Audio): Beim Melancholie-Podcast hatten wir im Grunde drei Ziele. Erstens wollten wir ein Publikum ansprechen, das vielleicht noch nicht zu den gängigen Museumsbesuchern gehört, und es auf die Ausstellung aufmerksam machen. Zweitens wollten wir eine inhaltliche Ergänzung zur Ausstellung bieten, indem wir die Idee der Melancholie in der Literatur beleuchtet haben. Und schließlich sollte der Podcast auf das wöchentliche Begleitprogramm der Ausstellung, den „Salon Noir“ hinweisen. Beim Rembrandt-Podcast haben wir uns noch stärker darauf konzentriert, in welcher Weise der Podcast Informationen geben kann, die so nicht in der Ausstellung vorkommen.

Zudem sollte er unabhängig von der Ausstellung funktionieren und auch daran anschließend noch von Interesse sein. Wir haben uns daher entschieden, Rembrandts Leben zu erzählen – angereichert durch zahlreiche Zitate seiner Zeitgenossen und des Künstlers selbst.

Who is the target audience?

Can podcasting have an impact on audience development?

PETER SAMIS (SFMOMA): At this point we do not have the empirical evidence which supports that. But I think the idea is, that podcasting is to service, to expose the creative impulse that is going on inside the museums walls, to people who may or may not know that this is a fascinating place to visit. And then we give them the added incentive of giving them a discount on the ticket if they bring the ArtCast on their players into the museum.

With the ArtCasts we try to stay away from the manner that experts and curators tend to talk about art. This is also because we want to reach for a young audience.

Denken Sie, dass man mit Podcasts neue Besuchergruppen ins BA-CA Kunstforum locken kann?

Who is your target audience?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): Up until now, with our first series, it was mainly teachers and pupils, I guess. Also, I would hope that we could reach older visitors as well, who could relate to the topic that we were dealing with. In the future, however, we would like to address a more diverse audience. And again, that is also about trying to make content that brings as much variety as possible, rather than getting stuck into something.

Do you work a lot with schools?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): Yes, we do. Both, I and the keeper of social history, we are tied up with educational visits from Easter right through to October.

Reactions of colleagues on podcasting

Wie ist die Idee einen Podcast zu machen im JMB angekommen?

Christian Dirks (JMB): Erste Ideen sind von den Kolleginnen und Kollegen hier im Haus sehr positiv aufgenommen worden. Ein gewisser Informationsbedarf über die Technologie und Umsetzung ist allerdings vorhanden. Viele haben bislang keinerlei Erfahrungen mit Podcasting.

Warum finden Ihre Kollegen Podcasting gut?

Christian Dirks (JMB): Einerseits ist Podcasting sicher etwas schickes und modernes. Andererseits liegt es auch auf der Hand, dass man mit diesem Medium neue Besuchergruppen erreichen kann. Dazu kommt noch, dass unsere Dauerausstellung sehr multimedial eingerichtet ist. So gesehen wollen wir mit Podcasting an diesen Schwerpunkt des JMB, Neue Medien, anknüpfen. Aufgrund unserer Besucherstruktur (größte Gruppe sind die „Twens“ zwischen 20-30 Jahren alt) sehe ich Podcasting als ein adäquates Instrument, um die Besucher über aktuelle Entwicklungen im Museum, Veranstaltungen, Ausstellungen etc. auf dem Laufenden zu halten.

When you first started making podcast, what were the reactions from your colleagues in your department?

Toby Travis (V&A): In the web team, most people haven't ever listened to one. I would say it was mixed. Everyone is doing their own projects. I have been doing this pretty much on my own. People are interested in this, they are curious. Mainly, it has been driven by the enthusiasm of Gail Durbin. The reactions in the museum in general, are very positive. All the curators want to be involved in it. Everyone that I have spoken to so far wanted to get involved.

Are you in touch with any other people working in museums who are producing podcasts? Do you know whether any other London museums are planning to make podcasts in the near future?

Toby Travis (V&A): No, I am in my own kind of podcast bubble here. There are some people who are contacting us to enquire about podcasting. They just want to know, how it's done and how it's going. Mainly these are people from other museums. People are interested in the practical side of it. They want to know whether it's worth putting all this effort into it. Sometimes I have a feeling that the interest in museum podcasting is mainly coming from within the professional museum community. I wonder who our audience is, and I have a feeling that a lot of them are other museum practitioners trying to work out what other museums are doing. Sometimes I wonder whether we are just talking to each other all the time.

Are you in touch with other museum podcasters?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): No, I haven't been at all. From a personal interest point of view, it would be nice to be in touch with people who are doing natural history podcasts. I don't think there are many museums into that. I probably deal more with normal as with museum people. I know that the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History has played with the idea of doing a podcast, but I don't think they have kept it going.

How do people develop a format for their podcasts?

Which museum podcasts are you inspired by?

Toby Travis (V&A): The SFMOMA's. Also I am listening to MOMA in New York.

Wie entstand das Konzept für die beiden Podcasts?

Eva Wesemann (Antenna Audio): In enger Zusammenarbeit mit den Kuratoren der Ausstellung und der Abteilung „Besucherdienste“ der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Dem Besucherdienst war vor allem wichtig, das Begleitprogramm der Ausstellungen zu bewerben.

Wie kann man sich den Produktionsprozess eines solchen Podcasts vorstellen?

Eva Wesemann (Antenna Audio): Im Fall des Melancholie- und des Rembrandt-Podcasts hat dasselbe Kreativteam bestehend aus Kreativ Manager, Autor und Tonmeister daran gearbeitet wie an den beiden die Ausstellungen begleitenden Audioführungen. Das heißt, Idee und Durchführung lagen bei Antenna Audio. In den USA, wo die Museen oft große und personell gut besetzte didaktische Abteilungen unterhalten, erfolgt die Konzepterarbeitung, Recherche und inhaltliche Vorarbeit häufig innerhalb der Museen und wir stehen beratend zur Seite und übernehmen die Produktion. Dies unter anderem auch deshalb, weil die Museen am eigenen Leib erfahren haben, wie zeit- und arbeitsintensiv eine solche Produktion ist, wenn man sie gut machen will.

Das Leben und Werk vieler Künstler wurde in verschiedensten Medien und Genres geschildert: In Spielfilmen, wissenschaftlichen oder populären Dokumentationen. Von Fernsehen und Radio kennen wir zum Beispiel auch das Genre des Künstlerinterviews. Dann ist da auch noch Ihr eigenes Format – der Audioguide. Im Vergleich zu all diesen, haben wir mit Podcasts natürlich ein ganz anderes Medium, einen anderen Kontext (die Ausstellung) und ein anderes

Zielpublikum. Hatte eines der genannten Genres trotzdem irgendeine Art von Vorbildfunktion?

Eva Wesemann (Antenna Audio): Podcasts sind gerade erst dabei, sich als eigenständiges Medium zu definieren. Vielfach findet man derzeit noch Sendungen, die nur aus dem Radio oder Fernsehen übernommen wurden – denken Sie etwa an die Tagesschau, die man alternativ als Audio- oder Videostream abonnieren kann. Das heißt, hier stellt der Podcast nur eine zusätzliche Verbreitungsform dar, aber kein neues Format. Wir wollen Podcasts hingegen als Chance nutzen, sich den Dingen auch *inhaltlich* anders zu nähern. Und dafür ist die Frage ganz entscheidend, wer nutzt Podcasts und unter welchen Bedingungen? Über 75 Prozent der Nutzer etwa hören Podcasts im Auto oder in der U-Bahn – also wenn Sie unterwegs sind. Das sind Umstände, die sich von einem Museumsbesuch und der Audioführung vor Ort ganz deutlich unterscheiden – und das muss sich auch in der Art und Weise widerspiegeln, in der wir uns der Kunst nähern.

Die Losgelöstheit vom Ort ermöglicht etwa eine größere Freiheit. Wir können über Themen sprechen, die inhaltlich mit der Ausstellung oder Sammlung verknüpft sind, aber noch einmal einen ganz anderen Blick, eine ganz andere Annäherung erlauben. Das wiederum wirkt auf die Ausstellung zurück und regt im besten Fall dazu an, sich diese anzusehen – vielleicht auch, wenn man das vorher gar nicht vorhatte.

Wenn man sich verschiedene Beispiele von Museumspodcast anhört, dann fällt auf, dass die von Antenna Audio produzierten eine hohe Qualität haben; sowohl was den Ton angeht als auch was das Redaktionelle betrifft. Ist dieser Qualitätsanspruch gegen die Kultur des Podcasting?

Eva Wesemann (Antenna Audio): Nein, ganz im Gegenteil. Podcasts sind ja auch teilweise aus dem Wunsch heraus entstanden, dem sinnentleerten Geplappere unserer Radiolandschaft heute etwas entgegenzusetzen und da wieder eine dem Hörer entsprechende Qualität hineinzubringen.

Der Wunsch der Museen nach qualitätvollen Inhalten entspricht daher dem Wunsch vieler Hörer nach anspruchsvoller Information. Ich glaube, dass das Medium Podcast so unendlich viele Möglichkeiten – auch didaktischer Art für Museen bietet, dass sie damit ihrem Bildungsauftrag auf ganz neue, unterhaltsame und ansprechende Weise nachkommen können - und wie nebenbei auch noch unzählige neue Besuchergruppen gewinnen werden.

Rein theoretisch kann man mit Podcasting alles machen, was sich mit Mikrofon oder Videokamera aufnehmen lässt oder schon im Audio- oder Video-Format vorliegt. Mit Podcasts machen Museen zum Beispiel kurze News- und Informationsbeiträge über aktuelle Ausstellungen, Aufnahmen von Vorträgen oder Interviews mit Kuratoren und Künstlern. Wie entscheiden Museen für was sie das Medium Podcast einsetzen?

Eva Wesemann (Antenna Audio): Wofür man sich entscheidet, ist von verschiedenen Faktoren abhängig, nicht zuletzt auch vom Budget eines Museums. Ganz grundlegend ist aber natürlich die Frage: Was wollen wir mit dem Podcast erreichen? Wollen wir ein neues Publikum auf uns aufmerksam machen und zusätzliche Eintritte generieren? Oder nutzen wir dieses neue, aber immer stärker akzeptierte Medium, um unser didaktisches Programm zu erweitern? Etwa um thematische Bereiche unserer Sammlung inhaltlich zu vertiefen, Aspekte zu beleuchten, die in anderen Medien wie Katalog oder Saalbeschriftung keinen Platz finden. Ein ganz wichtiger Aspekt ist auch, dass ich über Podcasts die Möglichkeit habe, intensiv auf Rückmeldungen meiner Besucher bzw. Abonnenten einzugehen und zum Beispiele Beiträge, die diese einsenden, in einer der folgenden Podcast-Folgen einzubauen. Das führt zu einer wirklichen Nachhaltigkeit meines Angebots.

Some say that the key feature of a podcast is its DIY nature. Museums on the other hand would serve their audience better with producing quality programmes, like yours. Do you think there should be accepted quality standards that museums could use as guidelines?

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): Interesting question. I wouldn't want to get locked down too quickly, into something like a clone production. I think each museum should think about its own identity and the way it wants to relate to its audience and the way that it expresses this dialogue, or maybe it's a monologue. There are many different possibilities.

Even here at SFMOMA we have different ways of how we address our audience. The current Matthew Barney Gallery Exploration, for example is a very formal audio tour that we add at the end. Then there are other things, which are much less formal, like the kids who have written pieces in response to three artworks in the collection, and they are reading them out in their own voices. I wouldn't want to have a template that all museums should follow, I would like it if museums would feel free to be creative and explore ways of podcasting that feels good to them.

Sorry, I didn't really mean that there should be standards for content or format. What I meant were quality standards in terms of production and post-production.

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): Once again, I think museums need to experiment with that in order to find out what they feel comfortable with. We didn't feel comfortable to make something with no production quality, but another museum might feel this is good for them. I think that's good.

In your conference paper you say that your podcasts went through a three stage development. The first was following the format of audio guides; the second was 'a more generalized tour' with audio recordings from artist's writings. The third was the audiozine... can you tell me more about this development. How did you decide that one worked better than the other... did you make an evaluation... did you follow your gut feeling... did you speak with colleagues... how many people in the museum were involved in this process... did you decide yourself...?

Stephanie Pau (SFMOMA): I think it was more of a gut feeling. I think we followed more what we felt about what was successful and what wasn't. One of the reasons why we wanted to make a podcast was not only that we wanted to

take advantage of this new technology, but more importantly that we thought that this would be a forum for integrating multiple voices. We have so many creative people in our community, artists, musicians, writers, poets and we felt that the format of podcasting would allow us to integrate the variety of those voices.

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): Yes, I think it was definitely a gut feeling. Also we saw the difficulties with the Tuttle prototype. It's always like that; you try something out without knowing what the problems are going to be. You bring your equipment to the gallery and at first you don't know all the problems that are going to come up. We felt like we are reinventing the wheel of how to make an audio tour. Then we thought that this is not something that we liked. With the Robert Adams we realised that its more successful if we disengaged the visual track from the visitor's itinerary through the show. We were making it more by having the user in mind, which is sitting at home on their computer.

Stephanie Pau (SFMOMA): Yes, we wanted to say something that could enhance the visitor's experience, even for an audience, which is not in front of the artwork. That approach was less didactic and allowed us to provide a more creative perspective about the works on view.

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): It's not that we necessarily always gotten it right. Even once we came to those conclusions, and we created the format of the Gallery Exploration, they are still a little bit problematic and they are still in flux. For example, we had a great Gallery Exploration for the Tomatsu exhibition. Yet, you would probably be a bit frustrated, if you would listen to it in the Gallery. Sometimes things just don't work as you might have imagined at first. The problem with the Tomatsu Gallery Exploration is that it doesn't at all reflect the order of the sequence, the photographs are hung. Now, with the Matthew Barney, for the first time since the Tuttle, we have reverted to putting a formal sequence gallery tour, an audio tour and we are going to see how people are going to respond to that.

When you define the format and the content of a programme, do you think about what kind of hardware users are listening on? Do you think about what users are

doing whilst listening? They could be engaging in all sorts of actions... from travelling in the car to doing a workout....

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): I think we have a pretty good sense for that. So far, we haven't done a survey yet. We are doing a survey this summer, and we compare the podcast, the audio tour and the cell phone tour, and we ask the visitors what they prefer and see how we can map those preferences to different psychographic profiles. Having said that, we wanted to extend our goal and extend the museum out into the community in order to reach people that not normally come to museums. That was the zine idea. We kind of expected that people would listen to it on the go. But then we know that there are people who listen to it at home. So we thought that we need to optimize it for those two experiences. The third venue would be bringing it into museums. I think we were actually thinking of the off-site first and the museum only as the third venue. And that was why we offered a two dollar discount for those who bring their mp3 players into the museum and show us that they have downloaded the ArtCasts.

When you make the programme, do you think about whether listeners would be sitting at their desktop computers or whether they would download it onto a portable device?

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): We are expecting people to download it onto their computers. What we would like to do in the future is to make more interpretation in the museum that they could use on iPods as they walk round. Most people I know listen to podcasts on computers rather than on iPods.

As far as I understood, most podcast you are doing are related to a specific exhibition.

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): Yeah, to a large extent. But I want to stay as flexible as possible and get as much diversity into it as possible. I think that the biggest risk is that they become too similar. We are looking into experiment more with different formats.

Listening to the interviews you have done so far, one can hear that the interviewer was very well prepared. Is there a lot of work going into the pre-production process?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): No, in this case the preparation did not take a great deal of time. The first series of podcasts were all related to an exhibition. The people that we interviewed came to the museum to talk to children anyway, as part of an educational activity. So we took notes as they were talking to the children and then after a break we did the interviews. It probably sounds more pre-planned as it was.

How did you find those people?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): We work with a national charity, which helped identify people who might be interested in taking part in our activities. We held a few sessions before we started doing the actual activities. In those sessions we talked about what we would like to do and we got them to agree that the activities are being recorded.

Podcasting as means to build bridges with other art forms

You mention the potential to build new relationships with audiences through podcasting... you also mention 'the encouragement of dialogue' as one point of your podcast model... how does podcasting encourage genuine dialogue? (genuine dialogue is not only about including VoxPops or your model of the Invitational ArtCasts, is it?)

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): One of the relations we are trying to build is with the arts community here in San Francisco. And that's not only the visual arts community. It's also the music and literary communities. We are interested in building bridges between different voices.

In the Matthew Barney podcast a curator from the Guggenheim is interviewed. Do curators from other museums like to contribute to other museum's podcasts? Is it easy to convince them? Do you think that podcasting can be seen as a driver for more co-operations amongst museum practitioners?

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): I like this idea. Actually, the idea to interview Nancy Specter came from Antenna Audio, when they were doing the Audiotour and they were looking for experts to interview. Typically we are interviewing people here locally. We also want the people who we interview to see the works here, so that we can capture their response to the works on show here. What you are saying is, that there might be people who know something about our topic and they might be half way around the world, and we could ask them for their perspective, regardless of whether they have seen the show.

On your web site you invite users to send emails with questions, one of which will be addressed in the podcast series. Do you receive many questions?

Stephanie Pau (SFMOMA): Not really. I think people misunderstand what it's for. So far we have received mainly technical questions. That's fine, we are very

happy to answer technical questions, but at the same time it would be interesting if we received questions about the content of our exhibitions, or how the museum works etc.

RE: ArtCasts Invitational: The deadline for submissions was in May. Did you receive lots of entries? Were they any good and when will you announce the winner?

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): Very few. We expected that there would be more interest. Maybe we raised the bar too high, as regards the production values. Maybe it's just, that people prefer to listen rather than go through all the troubles of producing something themselves.

Stephanie Pau (SFMOMA): I think that because its not guaranteed that they get in, people are reluctant to produce something.

Podcast as Audio Guides

Von dem Melancholie Podcast konnte man einmal wöchentlich eine Episode herunterladen. Es war also nicht gedacht dass man ihn während des Ausstellungsbesuches anhört?

Eva Wesemann (Antenna Audio): Nein. Der Podcast ist keine Audioführung, sondern ein ganz eigenständiges Medium. Allerdings kann man auch unsere Audioführungen, so wie sie für den Museumsbesuch gedacht sind, mit geringfügigen Änderungen kostenpflichtig aus dem Internet herunterladen. Dazu sind wir Kooperationen mit audible.com und libri.de eingegangen.

Was meine Sie genau mit geringfügigen Änderungen?

Eva Wesemann (Antenna Audio): Dass wir zum Beispiel auf Wegbeschreibungen innerhalb der Ausstellung verzichten. Manche Dinge werden ein bisschen allgemeiner formuliert, sodass man sich die Führung nicht nur mit seinem eigenen Mp3-Player vor Ort im Museum anhören kann, sondern auch zu Hause auf dem Sofa.

Heißt das, dass Download-Führungen in Zukunft sogar die konventionellen Audioführungen ersetzen können, und die Besucher nur noch mit Ihren eigenen MP3-Playern ins Museum kommen?

Eva Wesemann (Antenna Audio): Eine gute Frage! Ganz sicher wird die Entwicklung in diese Richtung gehen. Und die Vorteile für die Museen liegen auf der Hand: Es müssen keine teuren Audiogeräte mehr angeschafft und gewartet werden, und auch die personalintensive Ausgabe und Rücknahme vor Ort entfallen. Noch ist dies allerdings Zukunftsmusik. Unter Museumsbesuchern sind MP3-Besitzer zur Zeit eher die Ausnahme, so dass die Museen auf jeden Fall noch eigene Audiogeräte bereit halten müssen, um ein umfassendes Angebot zu garantieren. Außerdem gibt es noch Kompatibilitätsprobleme zwischen den

unterschiedlichen Formaten der Geräte. Aber in drei bis fünf Jahren sieht das sicher schon ganz anders aus.

Petra Nietzky (WAYS OF WONDERING): Bei den Audio-Dateien des Podcast handelt es sich um die gleichen Files, die der Besucher auch über ein mobiles Informationssystem innerhalb der Ausstellung abrufen kann (mit Ausnahme von Texten, bei denen die Rechte nicht bei der Firma lagen). Der Podcast bietet jedoch die Möglichkeit, fortwährend auf die Ausstellung aufmerksam zu machen. Und genau darin liegt auch das Ziel für diesen Podcast. Die Ausstellung wird während der 4-monatigen Laufzeit von verschiedenen Veranstaltungen begleitet, die zum Teil auch in den Skulpturen stattfinden und Teil des künstlerischen Konzeptes sind. Durch den Podcast wird der Abonnent wöchentlich an die Ausstellung erinnert. In dieser Hinsicht kann ein Podcast auch ein wirksames Instrument der Öffentlichkeitsarbeit sein, das bereits vorhandenes Material für weitere Zwecke nutzt und daher sehr kostengünstig ist. Der Podcast ist auch keine ‚Konkurrenz‘ zur Audioführung, da die komplette Audioführung erst zum Ende der Ausstellungszeit vollständig geladen ist.

MOMA New York provides their audio tour as podcast. What do you think of that?

Toby Travis (V&A): A lot of people here in the V&A are interested in doing that. A lot of curators want to do that for their exhibitions. I am sure that kind of thing will happen in the future. At the moment, Gail and myself too, find it more interesting to explore the podcasting as a distinct medium and see what you can do with it. I am interested in staying within the podcasting culture. I quite like the DIY aspect of it, the low-fi sound. I like the radio show type podcasts, its interesting for me too, because I get around the museum interviewing people, finding out whats going on etc. That's really interesting. I think the idea of providing audio tours is interesting, but its not something we are doing at the moment.

Are museums evaluating their podcasts?

Der Melancholie Podcast war sehr schnell recht weit oben in den iTunes Rankings...

Eva Wesemann (Antenna Audio): Ja. Bei iTunes werden diese Rankings täglich aktualisiert und erstellen sich automatisch aus der Anzahl der Downloads. Alle elf Folgen schafften es unter die Top 100 bei iTunes, unsere beste – und bekannte - Position war Platz 35. Am Ende hatten wir über 6000 Zugriffe – ein riesiger Erfolg für ein doch sehr anspruchsvolles Programm und den ersten Podcast dieser Art in Deutschland!

Haben Sie Nutzerstudien zu den Podcasts gemacht?

Eva Wesemann (Antenna Audio): Wir haben keine detaillierten Umfragen gestartet, wenn Sie das meinen. Aber in beiden Podcasts haben wir eine Art Gewinnspiel eingebaut: Kam man mit dem Lösungswort an den Stand von Antenna Audio im Museum, erhielt man zwei Audioführungen zum Preis von einer. Bei der *Melancholie*-Ausstellung gab es da auch einen gewissen Rücklauf. Es waren zirka zwei Prozent. Das klingt vielleicht erst einmal wenig, aber wenn man bedenkt, dass bei Direct-Mailings ein Prozent Rücklauf bereits als großer Erfolg gilt, haben wir schon beim ersten Mal das Doppelte erreicht!

How many people do you have approximately, who bring in their MP3-Player and get the two Dollar discount?

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): 130-150 approximately. Its great, because they might not otherwise come to the museum at all.

How do you evaluate your podcasts?

Toby Travis (V&A): We use a statistic package called feedburner (www.feedburner.com) and its designed to show you how many people have

subscribed to a particular RSS feed or podcast. But even if you know how many people have subscribed to it, you do not know whether they have actually listened to it. That's very hard to find out. Making a survey is probably a very useful thing. At the moment, I think people are just shooting out in the dark, putting it out there. I guess we have so far concentrated upon how we produce podcasts. In the future, however, we will have to think about how we are going to evaluate them, but we really haven't thought about that much yet. What we had so far is direct feedback, from people sending us emails.

Do evaluate your podcasts?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): No, we haven't done that yet. But that's something that is designed into the new website. So that we can get more feedback on how people are using the podcasts. However, lots of friends of mine were downloading them and so I got some very useful informal feedback from them.

Producing a podcast: Some practical issues

When seeking info on how to make a podcast on the web.... It always is portrayed as something that anyone can do within a matter of minutes... you say that it's not actually that easy without having an audio training... what were your major problems obstacles... What would your two or three advices be to a museum practitioner who wants to embark on his first podcasting project?

Peter Samis And Stephanie Pau (SFMOMA): Get GarageBand!!! When we first started GarageBand was not available I think. We were using this ridiculous method with Final Cut Pro. The great thing about GarageBand is that you can easily drag and drop things. So, definitely GarageBand is your number one purchase.

Stephanie Pau (SFMOMA): I think we have very high production standards for ourselves and working with Antenna Audio helps us to reach these. Yet, I think that the decision on how high you want to set your standards in terms of production quality depends on the type of style of the podcasts.

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): You also need to bear in mind that you don't necessarily have to contract with Antenna Audio or Acoustiguide. There are many freelance audio producers all over. That's what I would recommend. And this is what came out of our session at the Museum and the Web conference. There was a comment from the audience, who pointed to a website which lists audio producers who work all throughout the country. And a museum could simply locate one of those. I think that's what I would recommend. If you do not have the expertise to do it yourself and you also do not want to contract with an expensive production company, then I think the best way to get good value for money is to employ one of those freelancers.

Stephanie Pau (SFMOMA): I would also recommend buying a good quality microphone, we are using a Marantz, and you also need a good digital recorder.

Now you are working with Antenna Audio... How can one imagine the production process? Does Antenna come into the museum and make the interviews, or do you send them the interviews you have produced and they edit them afterwards? Who writes the scripts and how time consuming is this process?

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): We also record in-house. But, it depends. If its an artist, we typically do video recordings of interviews. Then we transcribe it, and by looking at the script we think about how to make this interesting for the ArtCast. Then Stephanie sends a clip to Antenna and then they have the sound to edit. For the VoxPops, Antenna goes to the gallery with Stephanie and records that.

So Antenna is not only doing the technical part, they are also giving editorial advice?

Peter Samis (SFMOMA): A little bit. Normally, when they do audio guides they do everything. They do the research, they write the scripts, they do the interviewing and recordings etc. Now with our podcasts, we do most of the interviewing and then we send them those files. Or we are contracting with outside artists who then provide files to Antenna. Or they go into Antenna's studio for recordings. Musicians can typically record their own thing, and then send the .wav file. We collect all that material and then give it to Antenna. We also brainstorm what each new zine would be with Antenna. So typically it's a collaborative thing.

How many people were involved in the production?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): Only myself and the keeper of social history. We are not a big museum; we only have four curatorial staff.

Were you hired specifically to make the podcasts?

Toby Travis (V&A): No, I was hired to manage the content management system or to help manage it and just to do general web development. I have never done podcasting before.

So you are now responsible for all the podcasting at the V&A?

Toby Travis (V&A): Yes, I do the recording, pretty much decide what goes into them and then publish them. In a couple of months time, we are going to have a review and decide whether we will go ahead with it.

Promoters of podcasting often say that to produce a podcast relatively little equipment and only very basic computer skills are needed. Do you agree with this?

Toby Travis (V&A): I think it depends what you want to do. If you want to produce a fairly DIY sounding podcast, then I think it is quite easy to produce. However, if you want to make something in the quality of the SFMOMA, then its not so easy. I found the hardest thing is to get decent audio recordings. Particularly in situations where there is a group of people discussing. Its one thing sitting down and interviewing someone, that's ok. Having said that, at the V&A there is no quiet room, or no studio, so even if you are recording just one person, producing a high quality sound recording of it is difficult. There is always some background noise or something going on. Even more so, in a group discussion, I have done one discussion with some designers... knowing nothing about audio recording, I ended up with something that was usable, but really quite poor quality of audio.

What kind of audio equipment did you use and how did you decide on which one to get?

Toby Travis (V&A): I bought a book called 'Podcasting solutions' and that recommended some equipment, which I went and bought. We are now using a 'Marantz PMD 660 Portable Solid State Recorder.' You can plug a dynamic microphone into that and record a .wav file from it. I also bought a mixer to go

between the two, a USB mixer called 'MultiMix 8'. And that's ok, if you have time to set it up and a quiet place to do it. The mixer does cut out some of the background noise. You have more ways of processing the audio before it goes into the recorder. However, most of the time I do recordings, I am going around the museum, interviewing in galleries or at events, and the mixer is not suitable for that.

Do you usually have a script or do you just fire away?

Toby Travis (V&A): I think of a few questions. But all podcasts I have done so far, were five minute articles. And I thought that scripts were not really appropriate for them. However, we have lots of different approaches. Sometimes I am interviewing, sometimes a curator is interviewing e.g. a designer. Sometimes a curator is just talking about an exhibition; sometimes it's a group of people discussing, like on the latest edition on the Che Guevara exhibition three designers talked. Sometimes curators come in with a script, but I think this sometimes sounds a bit artificial. In most cases, I think it is better to make it have a conversational feel.

Does the editing take a lot of time? What editing software are you using?

Toby Travis (V&A): At the moment we are using freeware called Audacity. Its ok, you can do basic things. You can set up multiple tracks, you can cut bits of audio out and do basic compression techniques. But you get what you pay for, i.e. its very buggy. Sometimes it does crash and you loose files.

Are you working on a PC or Mac?

Toby Travis (V&A): I started off on a PC and now changed to Mac. Mainly because GarageBand is the best software to put podcasts together, and it only works on Mac. Working on a Mac made live much easier. You can use iTunes and iPhoto for sound and images and then GarageBand to put it all together.

Are you working on PC or Mac? Did you buy any equipment for the production of podcasts?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): Because we work for a local authority, we are tied in with PCs. We bought a couple of MicroTrack digital recorders and a couple of microphones for the interviews. The microphones we bought for another project which will come to fruition next year. This is a natural history project for which we are going to produce podcasts. So this year I have been doing a lot of Nature recording, i.e. recording of natural sounds. That's due to go live next Easter.

What software are you using?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): Audacity. I always try to use free software.

Were did you learn how to podcast?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): I just grabbed the software and started doing it.

Where did you learn of how to do podcasts?

Toby Travis (V&A): Everything I know about podcasting I learned from this one book called 'Podcasting solutions.'

How much did you invest in equipment?

Toby Travis (V&A): Approx. 2500 GBP. I think we have to invest into decent audio editing software. But I haven't started researching that yet.

On what listening media do you reckon your users are consuming the podcasts?

Toby Travis (V&A): I imagine that most people watch/listen to podcasts on an iPod. My feeling is that more and more people will start downloading onto their portable devices.

How easy is it to create RSS feeds?

Toby Travis (V&A): I have done RSS feeds for other projects, so when I started podcasting, I already knew how to hand code RSS feeds. But because its so easy to make mistakes, I have just bought some software. You also have to validate the feed. You can do that on www.feedvalidator.org. I used that when I was hand coding it. Now I am using this software called feeder (for Mac), but I think it is still good to check the feed in the feedvalidator. The feeder simplifies the process, the other thing it does it adds the iTunes tags. iTunes requires a whole set of tags, which makes it writing it by hand really cumbersome. If you have never done HTML or XML hand coding is probably very difficult and such a software is very helpful. I think without such software, it would be quite daunting if you have no experience.

You were the first museum in the UK which offered a podcast, weren't you?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): Yes. To start the ball rolling, we released a prototype audio tour in December 2005. We hand-coded the RSS feed, so this was mainly a way to get my head around how to programme everything. I ripped the content of our audio guide from a CD and turned it into an mp3 file. We did this first episode mainly to familiarise ourselves with the process of producing a podcast. Then we got a grant for an exhibition and in January 2006 we started recording the first sort of *real* podcast.

What was the key thing you learned from the first test podcast?

Dave Anderson (Towneley Hall): There was a lot of trial and error involved in trying to set up the RSS feed. The actual production of the audio was the easiest part of it, really. The challenge was to categorise it correctly, so that iTunes can pick it up.

Why are you doing one episode with and one without images?

Toby Travis (V&A): If you have not got a mp3 player with images than the one with images on it doesn't work.

On which listening media are you testing your podcasts?

Toby Travis (V&A): On an iPod nano and an iPod video.

Do you know whether there are any regulations that you as a podcast provider needs to stick to?

Toby Travis (V&A): I am unaware of that. Of course, there are the standard kinds of copyrights, which the V&A has to clear. Any kind of music, I use is copyright free music, which I find on www.music.podshow.com there is really good stuff on there.

Do you think that podcasting effects web space on the server?

Toby Travis (V&A): I think there is going to be a server issue. But at the moment it's ok, we have about 250 downloaders. If we get into the 1000s of downloaders then we probably need to do something with the server.

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire for the User-survey at the Ars Electronica Center

1. Have you ever listened to the Ars Electronica podcasts?³⁷¹

Yes

No, I never listen to podcasts

No, I did not know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts

No, but i know that Ars Electronica offers podcasts

2. What type of podcasting programmes are you listening to? (more ticks possible)

News and informational programmes

Educational programmes

Comedy

Music

Other³⁷²

3. What I appreciate about podcasting is that... (more ticks possible)

I can choose when to listen to programmes

I can choose to listen to programmes wherever I like, because I can download them to a portable player

Podcasts allow me to make good use of my time

Podcasts stimulate my interest in various subjects

Podcasts are enjoyable

Other

4. Primarily I listen to podcasts on...

A desktop computer

A laptop computer

An iPod

Another type of MP3-Player

A PDA

A mobile phone

5. I did not download podcasts to a portable device because...

I had technical difficulties with downloading

³⁷¹ One of the shortcomings of this survey is that Question 1, forces different types of respondents into the same response. People who listen to podcasts generally and know about the AE podcasts but have not used them as well as those who do not listen to any podcasts but know about the AE podcasts.

³⁷² Throughout the survey, users could make comments, if they ticked "Other."

I prefer using the portable device for listening to music only
Not applicable, I download podcasts to a portable device
Other

6. When I listen to podcasts...

I do nothing but listening
I am on the move, e.g. on the way to work
Other

7. I listen to podcasts...

Every day
A few times a week
A few times a month
With no specific pattern

8. I listen to podcasts...

On the same day, or very soon after they have become available.
Weeks after they became available
Months after they became available
No specific pattern

9. I download podcasts...

Every day
A few times a week
Once a month
With no specific pattern

10. Ars Electronica offers webcasts and podcasts. I believe that a podcasts serves me better than a webcast.

Yes
No
What is the difference?
I don't know

11. Have you ever downloaded a museum's audio tour and listened to it in an exhibition?

No
If yes, which museum?

12. If Ars Electronica offers an audio tour as podcast, would you download it and take it in the exhibition?

Yes
Not sure

No, I prefer conventional audio guides
No, I never use audio guides

13. What type of programmes would you be interested in receiving from Ars Electronica? (more ticks possible)

Audio tours
Recordings of lectures and other public programmes
Brief information on the museum's activities
In-depth news programmes on the museum's activities (including e.g. interviews with artists and curators)
Other

14. In order to listen to podcasts one needs an iPod?

True
False

15. How often do you visit the Ars Electronica Center?

More than once a month
A few times a year
Hardly ever
Never

16. How often do you visit the Ars Electronica website?

Every day
A few times a week
A few times a month
A few times a year
Never

17. Where do you usually visit museums?

I visit my local museums
I visit museums when I travel
Other

18. Your age

Below 20
20-30
31-40
41-50
Above 50

19. Your gender

Male

Female

20. Your nationality

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