

ICOA637: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, THE SPIRIT OF PLACE AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AT THE MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY

Subtheme 03: Protecting and Interpreting Cultural Heritage in the Age of Digital Empowerment

Session 2: Use of Digital Technology for Dissemination and Interpretation

Location: Silver Oak 2, India Habitat Centre

Time: December 14, 2017, 09:10 – 09:25

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Edwina Jans has over 15 years' experience in cultural heritage management. She has won many awards for heritage conservation and interpretation projects and is a member of the Australia ICOMOS Executive Committee. Daryl Karp has worked as a senior executive in the broadcast and cultural industries for over 20 years, and he has including establishing the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's online environment. Her programs have won numerous awards and she is on the board of SBS Australia.

Abstract: Australia has one of the world's leading democracies and our open society is the envy of many. Across the world, however, democracy is under threat. Freedoms are being curtailed, regional conflicts remain unresolved and populism continues to rise. Australia, too, is caught up in this tide, with research showing that satisfaction and trust in Australian democracy is at its lowest level since 1996.

Situated at the heart of the national capital, Canberra, and located within the National Heritage listed Old Parliament House, the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD) is ideally positioned to address these vital issues. More than 350, 000 people engage with MoAD's programs each year and it is an essential element of civics and citizenship education for Australian school students.

Built in 1927 Old Parliament House was the home of Australian parliament until 1988. It witnessed dramatic changes in democratic rights and responsibilities – the increasing empowerment of Australia's Indigenous people, including the right to vote; the ratification of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights; rights for women; disability discrimination legislation. Its heritage values speak to ideas of equality, freedom, justice, representation.

The digital environment has the power to extend and enhance the visitor experience with heritage values, not just in respect both to the processes of conservation and restoration, but in building active and engaged communities. Interpretation is no longer a passive experience; visitors are demanding tailored experiences, including the opportunity to comment, participate, and even co-curate.

Using a number of recent projects as case studies, this paper will share the ways in which MoAD is approaching the intersection of cultural heritage and democracy using the digital environment. It explores opportunities and challenges of the democratisation of knowledge making at a time when digital technology is rewriting the rules of engagement between politicians, citizens and trusted cultural institutions.

Introduction

If democracy were an Olympic sport, we would be gold medal champions. Australia has pioneered many democratic firsts such as the secret ballot, professional, salaried electoral officials, votes for women and their right to stand for election, a constitution approved by the people. Our open society is the envy of many.

Across the world, however, democracy is under threat. Freedoms are being curtailed, regional conflicts remain unresolved and populism continues to rise. Australia, too, is caught up in this tide, with research showing that satisfaction and trust in Australian democracy is at its lowest level since 1992.

The digital environment has the power to extend and enhance the visitor experience with heritage values, not just in respect both to the processes of conservation and restoration, but in building active and engaged communities. Interpretation is no longer a passive experience; visitors are demanding tailored experiences, including the opportunity to comment, participate, and even co-curate.

With an Australian perspective, in a country made up of over 200 nationalities, the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD) provides a space not just to celebrate our democratic traditions, but also to truly collaborate with our audiences and stakeholders to connect communities, encourage participation and value freedom.

At MoAD the intersection of cultural heritage and democracy is explored through learning programs that embrace the spirit of debate that is inherent in the parliamentary chambers; it is communicated through online content that encourages multiple viewpoints and voices; it is experienced through events that encourage the value of expressing, sharing and listening to opinions and it is underpinned by original research that takes the pulse of the nation with regards to current democratic values, its practice and its players.

At a time when digital technology is rewriting the rules of engagement between politicians, citizens and trusted cultural institutions, MoAD's contribution to Australia's future is rooted in the spirit of Old Parliament House (OPH), a spirit that embraces Australia's political heritage and celebrates the capacity for people to govern their own lives and to have their say.

The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House

MoAD, housed within OPH, is located in Canberra, the national capital and within the heart of Australian government.

We help Australians and visitors to understand and explore the unique spirit of Australian democracy, delighting and empowering visitors through activities that are fun and meaningful, conserving the building and communicating its outstanding national significance to 460,000 annual visitors.

Built in 1927 OPH was the home of Australian parliament until 1988. During Canberra's early years, it was the social, geographic and political heart of the new Australian capital. By the 1980s, thousands of people worked in the building including politicians, parliamentary staff, Hansard reporters and journalists. Largely intact and with a well-documented history, OPH is a unique artefact of Australian twentieth century political heritage.

It witnessed dramatic changes in democratic rights and responsibilities – the increasing empowerment of Australia's Indigenous people, including the right to vote; the ratification of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights; rights for women; disability discrimination legislation. Its heritage values speak to ideas of equality, freedom, justice, representation.



Fig.1- (MoAD staff)

Heritage management

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (the EPBC Act) is the Australian Government's central piece of heritage legislation. It provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places and includes the Commonwealth and National Heritage Lists. OPH meets eight of the nine National Heritage List criteria. It is also a significant feature in the Commonwealth Heritage Listed Parliament House Vista.

A Heritage Management Plan is the central decision making tool for the site. The Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter¹ which informs the Plan's policies is world's best practice for making decisions about, and undertaking works to, places of cultural significance that deliver sound conservation outcomes. Core to this success is the understanding the significance of a place and its tangible and intangible values.

Spirit of place

¹ Australia ICOMOS, 2013

Spirit of place is explored in the Quebec Declaration on the Preservation of Spirit of Place². The term encapsulates the idea that the value of cultural and natural heritage comprises both tangible aspects—the things that we can see, touch and feel—and the intangible—the way a place was used in the past, the people that used it and what they thought of it, and how the place is used today.

The spirit of place at OPH is that of the intrinsic value of democracy and the capacity for people to govern their own lives and to have their say. Its story is one of power, passion and politics: hard conversations embraced, failures acknowledged, achievements celebrated, and where access to information as a pillar of a free and democratic society allows individuals to weight up questions of politics and power for themselves.

Recognizing that spirit of place is transmitted essentially by people, and that transmission is an important part of its conservation, at MoAD it is through dialogue and participation of visitors and audiences, onsite and digitally, that the spirit of OPH is most powerfully communicated and embraced.



Fig2-. Mark Nolan

Trust in democracy

The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer calls it ‘an implosion of trust’. According to the barometer, only 15 per cent of the general population believes that the present system is working, and a breakdown of trust in government, business, non-government organisations and the media ‘is now the deciding factor in whether a society can function’³. Australia is not immune from these global trends.

² ICOMOS, 2008

³ Edelman.com

Research shows that the satisfaction with democracy in Australia, and in particular trust in Australia's government, is now at its lowest level since 1992⁴, with increasing mistrust in politicians and voting volatility at an all-time high. As trust in our mainstream institutions and their representatives decline, so too does the capacity for governments to engage with complex issues over the long term.

The 21st century museum

Increasingly museums are engaging with the impact of accelerated technical, economic and social changes of the knowledge economy. A 2002 Smithsonian article sees 21st century museums as facilitators of civic engagement, agents of social change and moderators of complex issues, built around relevance, reflectiveness and responsibility⁵.

The open culture movement of open source, open software, open creation calls for an opening up of content, encouraging people to reuse, remix and share material on their own terms. This trend is nuanced, with audience inclination to participate tempered by increasing privacy and security concerns, and a reluctance to share personal information publicly.

The role of the Museum of Australian Democracy has never been more important.



Fig.3-. MoAD staff

The power of original research

The digital age has changed the way museums do their work but there is still a need to ensure accuracy, that a range of views are expressed and genuine scholarship is presented.

⁴Evans, M, Halupka M, Stoker G, 2016

⁵ Office of Policy and Analysis, 2002

One of our enduring partnerships is with the University of Canberra's Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis (IGPA). IGPA's role is to advance knowledge and improve governance practices through bringing together the best of theory and the best of practice to promote outstanding public sector leadership, policy and delivery in ways that are of real benefit of the public.

Collaborative projects involve original research into the ways Australia's imagine and experience their democracy. With the 2014 exhibition– *The Power of One: does your voice count?*– A baseline survey - 800 people, statistically selected - looked at how Australians not only perceive but participate in their democracy. For the first time in a museum exhibition, Australian's came face to face with data showing emerging patterns of engagement in a digital age, on how citizens get their information about politics. It explored what citizens like and dislike about Australian democracy, what kinds of political action they see as the most effective and what reforms would have the biggest impact⁶.

Commitment to original research is not only providing MoAD with real-time information about our subject area but is contributing to the Australia's research agenda and public discourse on this important topic. How can we do this? Through the lived expression of 'sprit of place': this building has and always will be a theatre for democratic debates, a modern day 'town square'.

Digital citizens

At a time when trust in politicians is decreasing, resources for quality journalism are shrinking and there is a fear that power is now concentrated among the tech giants whose platforms and algorithms have considerable influence on the dissemination of information through society⁷, trust in museums remains high, but only if we continue to present facts, un-biased and from difference perspectives, and remain true to our purpose⁸.

In a museum about democracy, maintaining political neutrality whilst encouraging debate and learning through engaging with multiple voices is something that we work very hard at, especially where visits to websites are decreasing in favour of curated content on third party sites such as Facebook & Twitter.

We don't shy away from tackling difficult, and seemingly boring, subject matter. We see this as central to our role in engaging citizens that can make informed decisions at the ballot box. As Australia has debated same sex marriage, we were there providing background information, putting the debate into context; we've tackled referenda vs. plebiscites, upcoming international elections, dual citizenship. We respond with an approach to establishing the background on issues and a safe place for comments. We've seen our reach grow and importantly engagement not just with us but between online communities.

⁶Evans, Halupka and Stoker, 2014

⁷Viner, 2016

⁸Museums Association, 2013

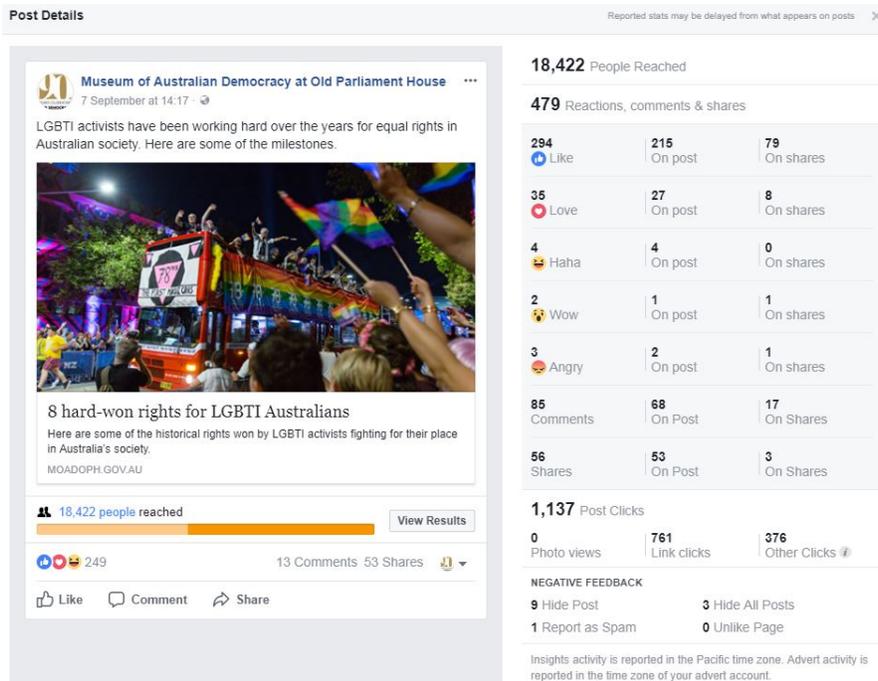


Fig4- MoAD staff

Targeting next-gen voters

Our research challenges negative stereotypes of the apathetic Generation Y and give grounds for optimism because it shows that young people are citizens with the enthusiasm and capacity to change the direction of Australian politics⁹.

MoAD is a nationally recognised conduit for civics and citizenship learning. Importantly, not only is political engagement the content of programs, but democratic ideals, eg inclusion and identity, inform the rigorous pedagogy and engagement strategies of each program and the Museum’s learning philosophy.

We welcome 80, 000 student visitors annually to programs that put students in charge. The integration of technology and hands-on activities in heritage spaces is at the heart of our award-winning education programs that communicate spirit of place and are delivered across exhibition galleries and the Senate and House of Representatives debating chambers. Facilitators support learning through making connections, encouraging conversations and building on the student’s prior knowledge.

⁹ Evans, Halupka and Stocker 2017



Fig.5- MoAD staff

Conclusion

At a time when public trust in government, business and media is declining, active, informed and inclusive civic engagement is more important than ever to ensure Australia's democracy, of which we should be justly proud, remains relevant and responsive to our needs and current challenges.

Digital technologies have the power to extend the visitor experience, and facilitate true dialogue and engagement across a vast nation, providing avenues for connection and knowledge sharing. But for MoAD there remains a strong desire for the tangible, a need to be physically present, and part of a community. As a participatory public space in a significant heritage building, MoAD is a place where values and expectations of behaviour help shape those of society as a whole through experience of authentic objects, contemporary exhibitions and participative public programs.

MoAD provides a space for all Australians to explore and engage with the concepts of active citizenship, by reflecting on, and connecting with, our democratic traditions and spirit of place. Civic engagement - celebrating the spirit of democracy and the power of your voice within it – underpins everything that we do.

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ICOA637: TECHNOLOGIES NUMERIQUES, L'ESPRIT DU LIEU T UNE CITOYENNETE ACTIVE AU MUSEE AUSTRALIEN DE LA DEMOCRATIE

Sous-thème 03: Protéger et interpréter le patrimoine culturel à l'ère de l'autonomisation numérique

Session 2: Utilisation de la technologie numérique pour la diffusion et l'interprétation

Lieu: Silver Oak 2, India Habitat Centre

Date et heure: 14 Décembre, 2017, 09:10 – 09:25

Auteur: Edwina Jans et Daryl Karp

Edwina Jans a plus de 15 ans d'expérience dans la gestion du Patrimoine culturel. Elle a remporté de nombreux prix pour des projets de conservation et d'interprétation du patrimoine et est membre du Comité exécutif australien de l'ICOMOS. Daryl Karp a travaillé comme cadre supérieur dans les industries de la radiodiffusion et de la culture pendant plus de 20 ans, notamment en installant l'environnement en ligne de l'Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Ses programmes ont remporté de nombreux prix et elle est membre du conseil d'administration de SBS Australia.

Résumé : L'Australie est l'une des plus grandes démocraties au monde et notre société ouverte fait beaucoup d'envieux. Cependant, dans le monde entier, la démocratie est menacée. Les libertés sont en train d'être restreintes, les conflits régionaux restent non résolus et le populisme continue d'augmenter. L'Australie est, elle aussi, entraînée par cette vague, les recherches montrant que la satisfaction et la confiance dans la démocratie australienne sont à leur plus bas niveau depuis 1996.

Situé au cœur de la capitale nationale, Canberra, au sein de l'ancien Parlement classé au patrimoine national, le Musée de la démocratie australienne (MoAD) est idéalement placé pour aborder ces questions vitales. Plus de 350 000 personnes participent aux programmes du MoAD chaque année et c'est un élément essentiel de l'éducation civique et à la formation à la citoyenneté pour les écoliers australiens.

Construit en 1927, l'Old Parliament House fut la résidence du Parlement australien jusqu'en 1988. Il a connu les changements radicaux intervenus dans les droits et les responsabilités démocratiques : l'autonomisation croissante des populations autochtones de l'Australie, y compris le droit de vote; la ratification de la Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme; les droits des femmes; la législation sur la discrimination liée au handicap. Ses valeurs patrimoniales renvoient aux idées d'égalité, de liberté, de justice, de représentativité.

L'environnement numérique offre la possibilité d'étendre et d'améliorer l'expérience du visiteur en fonction des valeurs patrimoniales, non seulement en ce qui concerne les processus de conservation et de restauration, mais aussi en constituant des communautés actives et engagées. L'interprétation n'est plus une expérience passive : les visiteurs exigent des expériences sur mesure, y compris la possibilité de commenter, de participer et même de co-organiser.

Utilisant un certain nombre de projets récents comme études de cas, ce document partagera les manières dont le MoAD6 approche l'intersection du patrimoine culturel et de la démocratie en utilisant

l'environnement numérique. Il explore les opportunités et les défis de la démocratisation de la connaissance à une époque où le numérique réécrit les règles d'engagement entre politiciens, citoyens et institutions culturelles éprouvées.