DATA MATTERS: THE ARTS, CULTURE, AND BIG DATA

Culture Academy SINGAPORE

*Culture*BYTES

Dear Readers,

In the last three years, digitalisation has become a key enabler for Singapore's arts and culture sector. From digital marketing to artificial intelligence and data analytics, digitalisation presents opportunities to enhance audience and visitor experiences, and boost the productivity and sustainability of arts and culture organisations. In this issue of Culture Bytes, we take a look at one aspect of digitalisation, Big Data, and its importance in enabling the arts and culture sector today as well as for the future.

Our first article, *Cultural Data: Possibilities and Limitations of the Digital Data Universe* by Dr. Lev Manovich, discusses the possibilities and limitations of digital cultural data, and how Cultural Analytics - as a set of open-source methods to analyse culture - can help address the issue of representative data. Beyond the possibilities and limitations of digital cultural data, it is also important to know what researchers are currently writing about on the arts, culture and digital technologies and how Big Data can be utilised in such an investigation. The second article is an overview of the "data maturity" of Scotland's creative sector. Last but not least is an applied research article on the ArtsAPI, a business modelling and analytics tool which enables arts organisations to generate new insights about the value of the relationships and networks they create and sustain.

As Singapore's arts and culture sector transforms itself amidst disruptive technological innovations and a vulnerable, complex and uncertain world, the big data we collect and analyse about our art and culture experiences, our organisations and our audiences matters. We may be in the early stages of our digitalisation journey, but it is not a complete journey into the unknown. So, have a look at Singapore's Arts and Culture Digital Roadmap to understand how the roadmap supports the adoption of digital solutions such as data analytics to enhance and sustain our arts and culture organisations and enable them to make a greater impact.

Find out more about Singapore's Arts and Culture Digital Roadmap

From all of us at Culture Academy Singapore

RESEARCH

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Cultural Data: Possibilities and Limitations of the Digital Data Universe

By Dr. Lev Manovich

Image source: McKinseyDigital.com

The digitisation of cultural heritage has been taking place over the past 20 years, and this has created interesting possibilities for the study of our cultural past using computational "big data" methods. Today, as over two billion people create global "digital culture" by sharing their past and present photos, videos, links, text etc., we can also use the same technologies and methods to study this universe of contemporary digital culture. In this article, Dr. Lev Manovich, a pioneer in Cultural Analytics, discusses some issues regarding the possibilities and limitations of researching the digital cultural data universe. Writing from the point of view of researchers who use computational research methods, he addresses the most basic question for any quantitative study of contemporary digital cultural history: how can we compile representative data that systematically covers everything created in a particular period, geographic area and media – or in many such periods and areas – together? In his view, Cultural Analytics, a set of open-source methods to analyse culture, can be up to this task. A good cultural analyst uses Cultural Analytics to uncover patterns in big cultural data, but also pays equal attention to the individual artifacts, experiences and interactions that cannot be reduced to already existing patterns.

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Developing Data-Driven Innovation in Creative Industries: White Paper

By Caroline Parkinson, Chris Speed, Melissa Terras and Ritchie Somerville

Image source: Auray.com

This White Paper outlines the findings of a 3-year consultation of the Scottish creative sector's relationship with data by the University of Edinburgh. It reveals variable levels of data adoption within the creative sector and four key themes to address the needs of the sector and develop data maturity and data-driven innovation. Although data is rich with potential for innovation, for many creatives, their adeptness in harnessing data for creative or business benefit requires development support, and insight. As such, this White Paper also outlines how the university, and its Data-Driven Innovation (DDI) programme can help as well as co-create interventions that test the effectiveness of the support designed.

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Study

Big Data: Understanding how Creative Organisations Create and Sustain their Networks

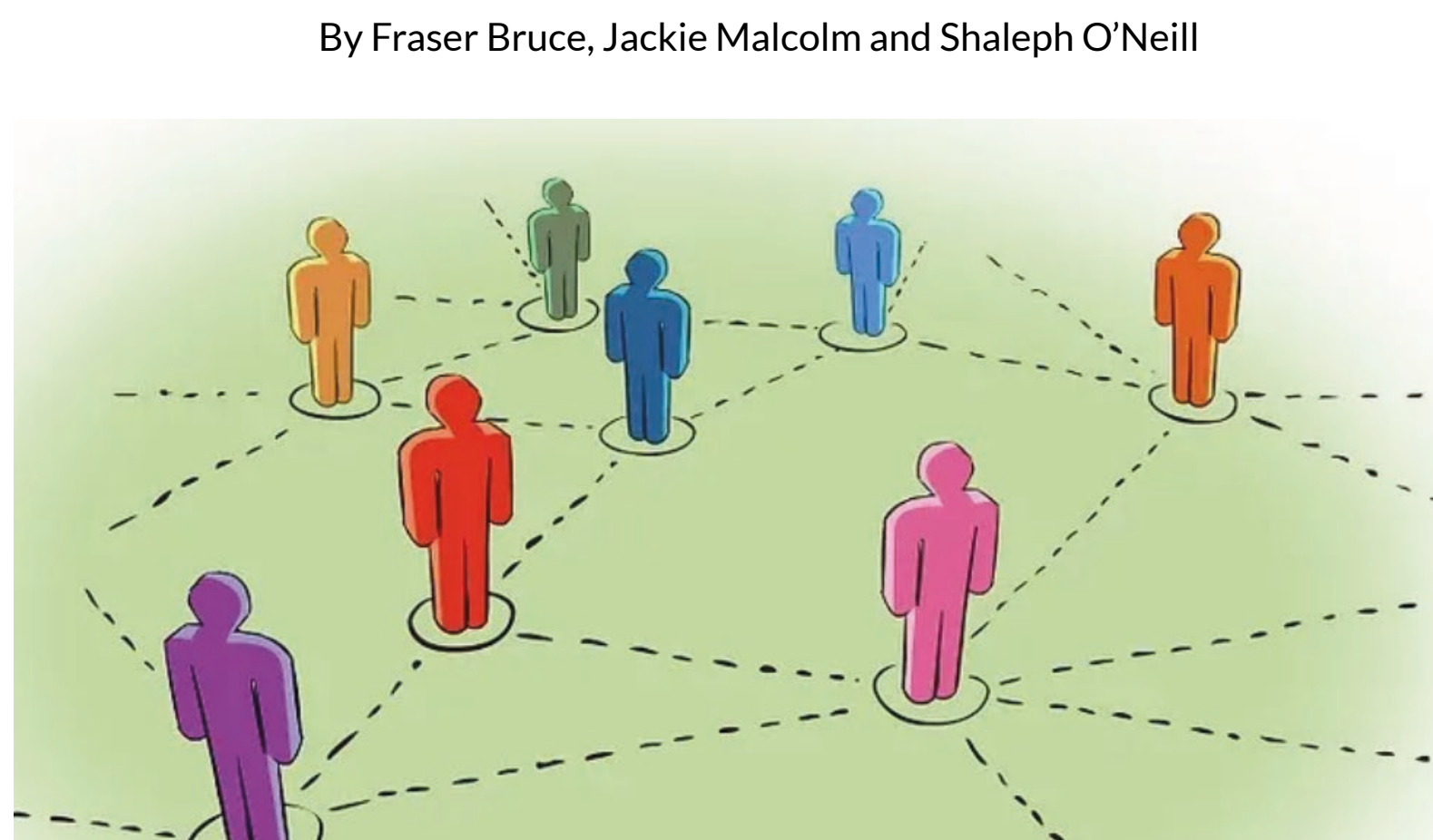By Fraser Bruce, Jackie Malcolm and Shaleph O'Neill

Image source: www.wikihow.com/Start-Your-Own-NGO-in-India

Big data is an evolving term used to describe the variety, volume and velocity of large amounts of structured and unstructured data. It can offer useful insights at both operational and strategic levels, thereby helping organisations to move forward in times of rapid change and uncertainty. However, there are challenges in terms of how best to capture, store and make sense of data. Many cultural arts organisations generate value through the relationships they create and the networks they sustain, but far too often this data is not clearly articulated or evidenced to leverage insight, support and business opportunities. This article presents the results of an R&D project, the ArtsAPI, a business modelling and analytic tool to enable arts organisations to generate new insights about the connections that underpin 'relational value' within the arts sector. Through application of the ArtsAPI's Social Network Analysis, a mapping and analysis of network structures and relationships found within and across five UK arts organisations was generated alongside scenarios for the use of ArtsAPI as a key impact measures tool. This article describes the context and background of the project as well as the outcomes that influenced the development of the ArtsAPI tool.
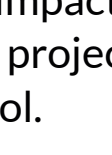
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