CultureCase

'Digital' has changed organisations' strategies as well as their technology

This research was conducted by **Ross Parry** at the **University of Leicester, UK**

Summary

The use of digital technology in museums is no longer something special or revolutionary. This paper focuses on what that means for museums' strategies and structures. It finds that the digital turn has not simply meant the adoption of new technologies but an infusion of organisational practices that reflect those more commonly associated with digital technology: namely collaboration and iteration. Rather than museums having *a* digital strategy or *a* digital presence, digital is now pervasive through all departments and initiatives. It has been assimilated, embedded, naturalised. In fact, it's time to start thinking of museums as 'postdigital'.

Digital technology has infused museums' core strategies

Via case studies of several museums across the UK, the paper shows how digital has become bound up in museums' missions, structures, and self-perceptions. In many respects this has been an outwardly observable shift. For example, prioritising digital technology is now explicitly worked into many museums' mission statements, especially with regard to how museums aim to bring their content to the public. It can also be seen in the shake-up of museums' departmental structures. Staff in many departments are now encouraged take on digital responsibilities and roles. Technology-based work is no longer confined to an IT department that was, traditionally, fairly isolated from the rest of the institution.

Collaboration and iteration are hallmarks of 'digital thinking'

The paper shows how digital thinking (characterised by the collaboration and iteration that are hallmarks of digital projects) has started to influence offline projects as well. This indicates that the adoption of digital as a core facet is not just about acquiring a certain level of technological sophistication, it is a qualitatively different way of thinking and working.

Adapted from a summary by Gwendolyn Rugg that first appeared in Issue 4 of *The Digest* from the Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago

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