CultureCase

Applying a digital exclusion framework to understand the performance of cultural organisations

This research was conducted by **Indigo Holcombe-James** at **RMIT University, Australia**

Summary

This paper sets out how a digital exclusion framework of ‘access, abilities, and affordability’ can be used to understand the needs and deficiencies of cultural institutions. The main areas of digital difficulty for organisations were access to devices like 3D cameras, integration with platforms like YouTube, skills in content production and digital communications, and funding (both short-term and long-term) to build and sustain new equipment and skills. Importantly, the author draws out the ways that access, skills and money are intertwined. They conclude that ‘digital inclusion initiatives aimed at resolving barriers to access (whether to devices or platforms) will likely be unsuccessful unless they also address skills, and how they are resourced’.

The research is based on interviews with 73 different cultural institutions in Australia

The work took place during a time of regional lockdowns designed to suppress the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviewees were asked about changes to the use of technology inside their organisation in response to the physical closure of venues. The work of digital teams had been viewed as peripheral or ‘nice to have’, but was fast becoming a core part of the institutions in the study.

Larger organisations had ‘far greater capacity to move online’ than smaller ones

Those organisations who had (or quickly developed) the resources and skills in digital production and communications would sometimes sell those services to others in the sector. Those who had not made investments prior to the 'digital pivot' of the COVID pandemic found it hard to catch up in the worldwide race for digital skills, resources and talent.

Keywords

interview **digital** **Skills** **online** **COVID-19** **Australia**

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