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MENTORING
+
ADVICE

Making better
use of limited
resources

TPSE Network Vision

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TPSE Network Vision

Turning Point South East is developing an online tool to support the development of the Turning Point strategy in the South East region.

This report is a vision statement drafted by Saul Albert of [Xchangelab](#) in open consultation with TPSE members, scoping the needs, initiatives and priorities for the network.

This report is part of an ongoing user-led development process that you can join via the online discussion space at <http://tpse.org>

Summary of key findings

"Culture 24, ArtRabbit, JISC, CRUMB, e-flux, art-agenda (etc, etc) are all good existing online information/discussion systems that are all valuable, but I think drawing them in and also providing a focus for our own work/region/communication/sharing will provide a significant place to engage audiences and one another."

Jamie Wyld - Acting Director of Lighthouse

The primary outcome of the visioning process was summarised by Jamie Wyld during the first few online discussions: there is a clearly stated shared need for a TPSE network that collects information from global visual arts sources and provides audiences with a regional snapshot.

Engaging audiences is the top priority

The most pressing need identified through the process was to create a shared audience development resource, which in the first instance means a shared TPSE event and announcements resource for audiences in the region.

Syndicate, aggregate, recirculate

All TPSE members have websites, and many listings sites provide updates in easy-to-reuse [RSS](#) feeds. Nobody wanted to have to post their events and information in multiple places online, so automatic aggregation is advisable.

A regional focus is critical

Regional focus is practical ("what's going on near me?"), and as Stephen Foster said at the event: "It's important to create a cultural identity that allows for cultural opportunities and cultural development".

Online discussions will need to evolve

Although there were deeply held ambitions for the TPSE network to become a hub of online discussion around practice, resource sharing and bottom-up policy, TPSE may not be able to start this from scratch.

Openness is the starting point

Opening access to information about the activities of TPSE and inviting broader participation through the visioning process has been valuable in itself, and reflects strong shared ambitions towards inclusiveness.

Summary of recommendations

- To build a system to 'aggregate' up-to-date visual arts information from all TPSE members' websites automatically into a central resource.
- A discussion of which audiences to target before making public sites.
- A way to survey audiences online, to measure the success of the tool.
- Ongoing web publishing ([RSS](#)) workshops for TPSE members.
- A broad discussion on regional cultural identity to feed into branding.
- Online publication of TPSE governance and rules of engagement.
- An automatically updated public-facing site based on the 'aggregator'

Engaging audiences

An online, shared listings site

"A place where all the information about what's happening in this region can be centrally accessible. That's not as exciting as a communications tool for us to network, but there is a chance for us to make it happen and to have a serious impact on our audiences".

John Gillett - Winchester Gallery, Winchester School of Art.

Although it sounds obvious and simple, a comprehensive online listing, specifically for visual arts in the region is direly needed, and will require a high degree of coordination and some training to realise.

There is provision of general cultural information from national resources such as [Culture 24](#), and regional visual arts listings in newspapers and magazines. However, everyone agreed on the need for a regionally specific consolidation of this information, which would greatly enhance the ability of audiences to access visual arts in the South East.

Which audiences should we engage first?

Any listings website needs to have a 'target audience' to engage, so before creating a public-facing website, we need to know who to target.

"although our knowledge of who constitutes our audience is patchy, our knowledge of who we want to reach is focused... perhaps that provides a starting point for the TPSE web presence. Who do we want to catch who we can't/don't currently reach?"

Matt Adams, Blast Theory

Most TPSE members found it hard to describe their existing audiences, but there were plenty of shared ambitions about which new audiences could be engaged through TPSE's online presence.

Matt Adams also mentioned Blast Theory's desire to reach audiences that are usually marginalised from the visual arts, consistent with the shared ambition to democratise and open up access to visual arts.

However, targeting the professional international visual art audiences at the Venice Biennale is an active TPSE priority. Prior to establishing a first online presence, it will be necessary to poll the TPSE network and prioritise which audiences should be targeted first.

Data Capture

It will also be necessary to be able to measure the success of an online audience engagement campaign by capturing live audience information.

"Capturing data is difficult and heavy on resources, meaning that the data that is captured is often only a short snapshot as opposed to long term data capture strategy"

James Gough, Audiences South,

In an [online discussion](#) James Gough points out that market research is difficult and expensive for small organisations without the capacity to employ teams of researchers to survey visitors and then analyse the results.

TPSE's online tool could have an in-built survey tool to enable audience data to be captured as people use the service, which would provide much-needed audience data for TPSE members as well as enabling TPSE to measure the success of their marketing campaigns.

Multi-platform / flexible publishing

There were many suggestions for using both new and old technologies, from bluetooth, and [twitter](#) to SMS and [traditional email newsletters](#).

One key requirement that emerged was that information should come to people, rather than requiring them to visit a website regularly.

The major challenge, however, is in gathering consistent and current programme data from each TPSE organisation. Once that data has been gathered, deciding on which platform on which to publish it becomes an integral part of a measurable, specific marketing campaign.

Therefore, decisions about which media or platform should not be made at this stage, but should follow from a decision about which audiences to target first.

Aggregation

The fact that most TPSE members have websites opened up the possibility of using an [aggregator](#) system to gather everyone's up-to-date information from their own websites and redistribute it centrally from TPSE's site.

Since members already keep their websites up-to-date, this would eliminate the need for them to visit and update the TPSE site separately.

However, after a quick review of the websites of organisations involved in the discussion so far, none of them publish [RSS](#) or [iCal](#) feeds of upcoming events on their sites.

These days producing feeds online is free and simple, and a day training programme would be a good investment for TPSE in raising the capacity of TPSE organisations to publish RSS/iCal, enabling the TPSE online tool, but also other aggregators and audiences to syndicate their event and project information online.

Regional focus

"A lot of the organisations in the region have a very international outlook and presence, but to engage in identifying our cultural identity is an opportunity for artists and creative people."

Stephen Foster, Director of the John Hansard Gallery

Initially, there was some concern that a regional focus would be parochial, however, it became clear through discussions that a strong regional identity was central to the purpose and success of the tool.

However, regional and international approaches are not incompatible. For example, projects and exhibitions can be listed with geographical as well as thematic 'tags', enabling them to be represented either within a geographical radius, or alongside international posts grouped by theme or artist.

If one of the goals of the tool is to foster a regional/cultural identity, it would probably make sense to commission some artistic work on that theme to accompany the launch of the first public-facing website that draws on the TPSE online visual arts database.

Online discussion may need to evolve gradually

During the visioning event, there were strongly argued ambitions to create a new online space for discourse around artistic practice, skills and resource sharing: a new online community.

However, among the 21 attendees of the event, who subsequently joined a mailing list, and were given ample opportunity (via a [blog](#), a [wiki](#) or [live web chat](#)) to communicate further online, very little was said, and no new members were invited to join by their peers.

This may be because TPSE members want to discuss visual arts practice, not the TPSE development process. Once there is some artistic content on the table, discussions may develop.

Also, TPSE is primarily a professional network convened to implement an Arts Council strategy, it is not a grass-roots network as such, so people are less likely to volunteer their time and energy to lengthy online discussions.

If discussions are a key priority alongside audience engagement, TPSE could find a suitable grass-roots discussion-focused project to support, and delay designing and implementing this aspect of the network until the online tool contains some artistic practice to discuss.

Openness and rules of engagement

One of the most clearly stated ambitions shared by everyone in the discussions so far has been to work openly, and to enable audiences, participants, and organisations of all kinds to join TPSE and help develop it as a bottom-up visual arts strategy for the region.

To this end, the [blog](#), [wiki](#) and [mailing list](#) will be maintained throughout this development process, and can be kept going beyond it to provide a 'backchannel' for sharing TPSE internal development processes openly.

If this invitation is extended to new members, it is [best practice](#) publish clear 'rules of engagement' and governance structures for the network, so that participants know what they are getting involved in.

An audience-facing web service.

Once an 'aggregator' is built, providing up-to-date local visual arts information, a first audience-facing web service can be designed and built.

The service will look very different depending on target audiences. For example, it could be delivered primarily via social networking sites or SMS to appeal to certain groups.

Designing new web sites and campaigns for subsequent new audiences, events, local or international campaigns will be relatively simple and cheap to implement using open source software, and the results of each should be measurable by enabling audiences to provide feedback online.

Appendix 1: Visioning Process

This appendix outlines the visioning phase of the TPSE network development.

Agenda

The agenda for the first meeting on the 18th May was developed in a meeting with the TPSE Steering Group, in response to a series of [preparatory questions sent out as a letter before the meeting](#).

The outcome of that meeting was to develop a series of opportunities, questions, priorities and outcomes to be discussed and developed at the first visioning meeting on the 18th May.

Some of these have been dealt with in this document, some will remain on the agenda for further development, so feel free to contribute further online.

Opportunities

- There is not yet a 'one stop shop' listings of visual arts in the South East
- We can grow audiences for visual art by working together online and sharing information.
- There is world class art happening in the South East, but it isn't profiled globally.
- There are not enough spaces for developing critical discourse locally and online.
- There is a need to involve more people and groups in developing visual arts strategies
- Visual arts organisations are not taking advantage of online tools to share project development and delivery.
- We could enhance a sense of the visual arts community with an online tool

Please contribute more to this list on the tpse wiki:

<http://tpse.org/wiki/index.php/Opportunities>

Questions

- How do we measure when we've succeeded?
 - (also see [Outcomes](#))
- What are the problems we're trying to solve?

- (also see [Opportunities](#))
- Which audiences do we want to develop first?
 - (also see [Priorities](#))
 - See the list of [Audiences](#) being developed
- How can this site co-ordinate with Marketing?
- Do we emphasise local or global connections?
 - For example, do we want a map of the region, with dots on it representing visual arts organisations?
- Should the site be more about content or networking?
 - For example, editorialising or profiling artists and organisations, or enabling conversations between them?
- What media / technology should the site use?
 - Is Video, sms, email reminders, mobile systems, file/document, or image sharing the main priority?
 - Should it integrate with existing social networking sites?
- How is it different to facebook?
- What are the barriers to participation?
 - To different organisations, individuals etc.
 - a follow-on questions could be: what could be done to support participation?
- What should the site be called?
 - tpse.org is a bit regional
 - It can have many names, maybe the best would be chosen by the users / stake holders

Please contribute more to this list on the tpse wiki:
<http://tpse.org/wiki/index.php/Questions>

Priorities

- Raising the profile of visual arts
 - Once there is a buzz, shared programme information and critical debate, this can be enhanced with editorial profiling specific events, artists, and projects in the region on an ongoing basis.
- Locally
 - It makes sense to start local, use existing contacts and established relationships to get a critical mass.
- Globally
 - Once the local network is active, specific, measurable projects can be defined to expand the reach of the site.
- Enabling greater communication between visual arts organisations
 - Enabling sharing of information as a first starting point, should enable us to branch out from there.
- Developing critical discourse around visual arts
 - Once people are using the site to communicate about the tpse process, we can move on to more topical discussions about what is actually happening in the region.

Please contribute more to this list on the tpse wiki:

<http://tpse.org/wiki/index.php/Priorities>

Outcomes

Here are some of the intended, measurable outcomes proposed so far. Please add your own:

- A one-stop shop for information about visual arts in the South East
- Measurably more audiences attending events/exhibitions promote on the website
- Measurably more international awareness of art promoted via the site.
- Greater perceived communication between arts organisations using the site.
- A greater sense of community involvement amongst users of the site.

- Measurably more feedback, response and wider involvement in visual arts strategy development

Please contribute more to this list on the tpse wiki:

<http://tpse.org/wiki/index.php/Outcomes>

Resources

It is useful to have a sense of what existing resources, initiatives, bodies of information could be brought together with an on-line information resource.

Who already provides a 'one stop shop' for visual arts information in the South East? Who has a static body of information that they might be willing to contribute? Which publications already provide regular listings, and might contribute them?

Who is gathering data about audiences in the South East? Where are the centres of expertise about gathering and analysing audience data? Which existing initiatives could TPSE join up with, or help join together?

Visual Arts initiatives and resources

- [Audiences South](#) - the audience development agency for the South East
- [Culture 24](#) - an existing one-stop shop for contemporary arts announcements & searching in the UK
- [ArtRabbit](#) - UK-based art discussion, paid advertising, listings, announcements.
- [JISC](#) - general academic information resource for opportunities, information.
- [CRUMB](#) - mailing list (focus on new media practice and curating)
- [e-flux](#) - nyc based international paid advertising mailing list for art shows
- [art-agenda](#) - more internationally focused version of e-flux including arts education, announcements and jobs etc.

Best Practice

- Fabrica's "Rendevous" project with Project Art Works (is there a link for that?)

Please contribute more to this list on the tpse wiki:

<http://tpse.org/wiki/index.php/Resources>

Visioning Event

On the 18th May, [The People Speak](#) with Andy Gibson from [Sociability](#) ran a visioning workshop with 22 members of the TPSE network.

There is a [write-up of the event on the tpse wiki](#).

There are several videos from the event online, linked from the tpse blog, where they were used to summarise the debate and invite further online discussion:

- <http://tpse.org/2009/05/29/a-one-stop-shop-for-visual-arts/>
- <http://tpse.org/2009/06/11/regional-and-cultural-identity/>
- <http://tpse.org/2009/05/25/starting-a-network/>

More photos and material was taken at the event, all available on request from [The People Speak](#).

Online discussion infrastructure

To facilitate online discussion and development after the event on the 18th May, several online systems were set up:

- The blog: <http://tpse.org> for publication of project news
- The wiki: <http://tpse.org/wiki> for documenting project process
- The mailing list: <http://groups.google.com/group/tpse> for discussion
- The chat room: <http://tpse.org/live-chat/> to experiment with live chat

These were used for propogating information about the visioning process.

Appendix 2: Project Phases

This report is the final vision document from phase 1.

Phase 1: Visioning

- Seed content & questions for site agreed, initial invites to Strategy Group
- Web presence established (project blog / vlog / information point)
- Initial consultations complete, project website & visioning event publicised
- Initial visioning event with TPSE Strategy Group
- Results & video of event posted to project site for feedback/evaluation
- Vision document collated and published on project site

Phase 2: Features

- Feature outlines extrapolated from vision & published for feedback
- Research & publish comparisons of features from other sites & software
- Feature sketches designed, prototyped and tested with Strategy Group
- Invitation to Feature development workshop sent out
- Feature development workshop with Strategy Group
- Results / video of workshop posted to project blog for feedback/evaluation
- Feedback collated, and feature list finalised and published on blog.

Phase 3: Stories

- User Story outlines extrapolated from feature list and published on blog
- Research & publish comparisons of User Stories from around the 'net
- Invitation to User Story workshop sent out
- User Story workshop with the Strategy Group
- Results / video of workshop posted to project blog for feedback/evaluation

Phase 4: Software

- Wireframes, designs and interface proposals published on blog
- Feedback collated, final Wireframes and designs completed
- Prototype site completed and ready for testing
- Testing report published on blog
- Prototype site released to RFOs and other users for feedback/evaluation
- User testing & training
- Final build of 1st iteration of TPSE website
- TPSE online tool, documentation and user guide goes live
- Final workshop with RFOs, users and stakeholders to launch site

Appendix 3: Credits / Technologies & Methods

This project would not have been possible without the hard work of the following open source projects and their contributors:

MediaWiki

- <http://mediawiki.org>

Extensions

- <http://www.liang-chen.com/myworld/content/view/36/70/>
- http://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:Bullet_Feed
- <http://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:SelectCategoryTagCloud>

WordPress

- <http://wordpress.org>

plugins

- http://www.feedburner.com/fb/a/help/wordpress_quickstart
- <http://akismet.com>
- <http://www.press75.com/docs/simple-video-embedder/>

IRC

- <http://mibbit.com>

Google Groups

- <http://groups.google.com>

Facilitation Processes

Not strictly Open Source (they're not software), but they are all open processes used for this consultation, which readers may be curious about.

Talkaoke

Talkaoke was used in the visioning event, and hosted by Andy Gibson of [Sociability](#). (It's the round table you see in the videos and photos), to ensure that all participants got a chance to have a say.

The facilitation format was invented by Mikey Weinkove of [The People Speak](#) as a mobile talk-show, which is regularly used to find out what people have to say about almost anything.

- <http://talkaoke.com>

Unlecture

The Unlecture is [The People Speak's Open Space Technology](#) format and an open source software tool developed for working with groups that want to discuss different things, but keep track of what other groups are saying.

Each table is allocated a colour and a volunteer facilitator with a laptop. Keywords and phrases typed by the volunteer are displayed on the projection in the appropriate colour, so everyone can keep track of the conversations, and can review them individually later.

- <http://thepts.net/unlecture/>

Spectroscope

This facilitation process - designed to help groups prioritise between a number of ideas in a fluid and colourful manner, requires the use of Paperchase's '[Spectroscope](#)' line of coloured note pads.

Different colours are numbered 1-7, and participants are given one note paper of each colour, and are asked to write their wants and needs in a few words, on different coloured paper in order of their priorities.

After writing their ideas down, participants can put them into loose categories, developed through the earlier 'unlecture' process, and it becomes immediately clear, visually, what the group's top priorities are.

- <http://thepts.net/spectroscope/>

About this document

This document was drafted by Saul Albert on the TPSE wiki, where [a current version is available](#) for further editing and amendment.

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