Visitor Research Forum 2025

Ngā Pae me ngā Mata
He Tirohanga ki ngā Minenga ā-Tinana, ā-Matihiko

Sites & Screens
Perspectives on Physical and Digital Audiences

March 7th, 2025
Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

8:30   **ARRIVAL & REGISTRATION**

9:00   **MIHI WHAKATAU**
WELCOME SPEECHES BY COURTNEY JOHNSTON - TE PAPA TONGAREWA, TUMU WHAKARAE | CHIEF EXECUTIVE & PROF. NAOMI DALE - UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

9:30   **IGNITING CUSTOMER FOCUS: REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS FROM 5 YEARS OF VISITOR INSIGHTS AT MOTAT**
SALLY MANUIREVA - MUSEUM OF TRANSPORT AND TECHNOLOGY AUCKLAND

MOTAT introduced a post-visit survey in 2018-19, a first step in what has become a powerful visitor insights programme. Since then, the MOTAT team has expanded its research, unlocked data and introduced new tools (such as bespoke segmentation and a CRM). Now more audience centric as an organisation, the insights have helped grow visitor numbers and engagement and have underpinned a reshaping of the public offer. The MOTAT team is now reflecting on this sustained period of visitor insights work, the highs, the challenges and the lessons learned.

10:00   **GROWTH IN DIGITAL AUDIENCES – OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCE**
ABBIE MCPHIE - NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

In recent years, the National Museum of Australia has seen a significant increase in its digital reach, while onsite visitation has remained relatively stable. Like many others, the Museum increased its digital output during Covid, including digital programs, social media, and increased video and audio, and has also in recent years developed new digital content programs, particularly 'Defining Moments in Australian History'. However, even taking into consideration this push to digital content and changes in audience behaviour, the sustained and significant growth in the Museum's digital reach - particularly online - has been somewhat unexpected. To find out why, the Museum set out to find out more about these digital audiences, who they are and what motivates them to engage, and what the relationship between these audiences and the physical Museum space might mean for the future development of the Museum's physical and digital content.

10:30   **PARAMANAWA - MORNING TEA**

11:00   **THE FUTURE OF VISITOR STUDIES: DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE FOR TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT**
PROF. LEE DAVIDSON - VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

This presentation looks at where Visitor Studies has come from, where it is now and what the future might look like. Drawing on my new book, 'The Visitor Studies Guide: Theory and Practice for Heritage Contexts', I discuss how Visitor Studies has been shaped by the conditions of its evolution and look at the challenges it faces today. Some of these challenges are internal to the field, including the need for a community of reflective practice, more sector capacity, and greater dialogue between theory and practice. Other challenges are external, emerging from the social, cultural, and political contexts in which it is practised. I present my thoughts about how Visitor Studies can meet these challenges and realise its potential as a field that helps the heritage sector achieve its stated aims of transformative impact. In doing so, I encourage those who practise visitor research to position themselves consciously and reflexively within this space and carve out their own visions for how to address the challenges in the field.

11:30   **QUALITATIVE TO QUANTITATIVE: USING AI TO UNLOCK INSIGHT FROM VISITOR FREEFORM FEEDBACK**
ANGIE JUDGE - DEXIBIT

With data from visitor reviews across museums and other visitor attractions worldwide, this session explores industry benchmarks for visitor experience, with a particular focus on cultural institution segments and insights specific to Aotearoa and Australasia. Angie will discuss how artificial intelligence can transform qualitative visitor feedback into actionable insights, helping attractions better understand what visitors are talking about, responding to, and trending on. By leveraging AI, institutions can uncover key themes in visitor sentiment, identify emerging trends, and benchmark their experiences against global standards. This session will also highlight leading case studies that showcase how museums and attractions are using AI to enhance visitor engagement and operational decision making. Gain practical strategies for making the most of qualitative feedback and discover how data insights can shape the future of visitor experience.

12:00   **HOW PERFORMANCE TOOLS CAN HELP YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR DIGITAL AUDIENCE?**
LANA GIBSON - LANALYTICS

Lana will talk about how to use performance tools to understand our digital audiences. Tools like Google Analytics are sometimes seen as 'conversion optimisation' tools for commerce sites, but they can help us all understand the nuances of our audience needs. Lana will talk about how these tools can uncover opportunities to improve the user experience, create better content, and help get buy-in for improvements, using real life case studies. She'll show how Te Papa, RNZ and other organisations have used data to understand and serve their audiences, while meeting their organisational goals. For Te Papa Venues, video recordings of people having problems with the Te Papa Venues contact form were used to persuade everyone that improvements were needed. Google Analytics data revealed that the wedding venue section was underperforming. Search data revealed insights that informed content improvements, resulting in measurable improvements. There's a lot of potential in these tools, and Lana will bring the data to life and show you how to get the most out of them.

12:30   **TINA - LUNCH**

13:15   **THINK DIGITAL: A DIGITAL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR GLAM**
              DR. LYNDA KELLY - LYNDAKELLYNETWORKS

Undertaking digital projects can be an organisational-transforming process, and also an extremely daunting one. Sometimes just knowing where to begin and where the organisation sits within the ecosystem of all that digital entails can be a huge, yet exciting, challenge. To this end, Creative Australia, with Kopi Su Studio and Dr Lynda Kelly, developed 'Think Digital', a free, online self-assessment tool for arts and cultural organisations to enable them to self-assess and evaluate their digital capabilities, identify key priorities and areas for further development, with the goal of developing a digital strategy. Think Digital is designed to help arts organisations thrive in digital environments and increase literacy to embed digital transformation across an organisation. It can be used across any sized organisation, as well as performing and visual arts, heritage sites and other visitor attractions. While specific to the Australian arts and culture environment, the tool can be used and adapted across a range of contexts. Dr Kelly will discuss the background to developing Think Digital and give a live demonstration of this amazing tool!

13:45   **HOW TO GET BETTER WHEN YOU'RE ALREADY PRETTY GOOD – HOW APPLYING QUALITY RESEARCH CAN DIRECTLY IMPROVE VISITATION**
              GARRY WATSON & JOSÉ ROBERTSON - NCETP

The National Capital Educational Tourism Project (NCETP) has been operational for over 25 years, encouraging school Students from across Australia to visit their National Capital to immerse themselves in Civics & Citizenship, arts, culture, history and science programs delivered by around 25 national attractions. The longitudinal Size & Effect of School Excursions to Canberra study has been undertaken over that time, and is now allied with data extracted from the world-leading Book Canberra Excursions system. We will discuss the evolution of school excursions in the light of this research, focussing on key years when the NCETP undertook market interventions on behalf of the collective national attractions, outlining the type of intervention undertaken and the extent of the statistically trackable response to it. We will address how conducting sound research helps to shape the understanding of a market sector such as educational tourism, enabling advocacy for improvement in government policy settings and funding, and assists the NCETP to bring about significant outcomes.

14:15   **MEETING AUDIENCE NEEDS: HOW TE PAPA USES THE AUDIENCE IMPACT MODEL**
              PAWEŁ BANAŚ - TE PAPA TONGAREWA

The Audience Impact Model (AIM) has been a key tool used by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa to conceptualize, develop, and evaluate experiences that are meaningful to our visitors. Informed by audience insights from both internal research and external studies, AIM plays a crucial role in shaping programs that resonate. Using an evaluation of a public program held last year at Te Papa to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Dawn Raids, I will discuss how AIM's iterative cycle is applied to meet the needs and expectations of our priority audiences.

14:45   **THE DIGITAL MUSEUM: THE HIDDEN, ACTIVE, VISITORS TO TE PAPA**
              ADRIAN KINGSTON - TE PAPA TONAGREWA

Adrian Kingston, Head of Digital Channels at Te Papa, will discuss understanding audiences to the "Digital Museum", feedback mechanisms, using AI to process tens of thousands or lines of audience feedback, and how all that works with the Audience Impact Model (AIM). This will be generously peppered with all kinds of feedback and stories of impact from people using Te Papa's collections and research online.

15:15	**PARAMANAWA - AFTERNOON TEA**

15:30 **UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCES: UNPACKING INSIGHTS, TECHNOLOGY, AND EVOLVING ENGAGEMENT**
PANEL DISCUSSION

PROF. LEE DAVIDSON - VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON (FACILITATOR) - COURTNEY JOHNSTON TE PAPA TONGAREWA, TUMU WHAKARAE | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ABBIE MCPHIE - NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA, SALLY MANUIREVA - MUSEUM OF TRANSPORT AND TECHNOLOGY AUCKLAND.

16:15 **CLOSING REMARKS:** BY PROF. NAOMI DALE - UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA & DR. SAMUELE DE STEFANI - TE PAPA TONGAREWA

16:30 **TOUR**

17:30 **WHAKAMUTUNGA - END OF DAY**