

VSG CONFERENCE 2024

THE COST OF CULTURE: *MEASURING BARRIERS AFFECTING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE*

DAY 1

PRE-CONFERENCE MEET-UP

4-6 pm | London Transport Museum

Join us for a guided tour of the new Global Poster and Photography Galleries with an LTM Young Freelancer, followed by a hot drink in the museum cafe. Once the museum closes, we will go on to the Royal Opera House bar.

Book on the VSG EventBrite page

DAY 2

WELCOME

9.15 - 9.50AM

Registration & Hot Drinks

9.50 - 10AM

Welcome from VSG

SESSION 1: 10 - 10.40AM

The Revels Office + Wentworth Woodhouse

Radical culture and unapologetically 'Rotherham' - Connecting the community with an ambitious culture strategy in Yorkshire

Why should the Rotherham community care about a heritage culture strategy when faced with pressing economic or social priorities? Hear how Wentworth Woodhouse identified their role as a hub for radical creative culture that would be truly meaningful and valuable for the people who live near them.

Sarah McLeod, CEO Wentworth Woodhouse

In 2017 Sarah was engaged as the first CEO of Wentworth Woodhouse following the establishment of the Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust.. She has since launched the Wentworth Woodhouse Masterplan – a £130m regeneration programme for the site - as well as setting an ambitious cultural vision that has international scale with local relevance.

Kate Rolfe, Director of The Revels Office

After working in-house at The National Gallery, NHM and RADA, Kate founded The Revels Office in 2018 as a strategic commercial and audience development consultancy. The Revels Office work to make culture more relevant and resilient, transforming visitor attractions into highly magnetic and truly responsible cultural destinations.

SPEAKERS

In parallel SESSION 2: 10.45 - 11.25AM

SESSION A: GULBENKIAN ROOM

V&A, MHM & ROH

How is the cost-of-living crisis impacting older audience's visitation to cultural venues?

Since the end of lockdowns, a range of cultural venues, including museums and concert venues, have noticed fewer visitors from older age groups (aged 55+) physically returning to their sites. The V&A, Wallace Collection, Royal Albert Hall and Royal Opera House, with the support of ALVA, commissioned Morris Hargreaves McIntyre to conduct research to understand: the scale of the decrease in attendance; the attitudes and habits of older audiences concerning culture in a post-pandemic context; and how to re-engage these audiences. The findings showed that a fifth of older audiences who attended culture pre-pandemic have not returned post-pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis was a key factor influencing this behaviour change.

Abigail Perry, Audience Researcher, V&A (she/her)

Abi is the Audience Researcher at the V&A. She joined the V&A in 2023 with a background in social research. She has conducted research with a wide range of audiences across sectors, including exploring people's experiences of the cost-of-living crisis. Her experience includes ethnography, focus groups, observation and interviews, both within and outside museum settings.

Medwen Roberts, Director, MHM (she/her)

Medwen has over 25 years of research experience in the cultural heritage sector. She was lead consultant on a project providing ongoing visitor data for London nationals for 10 years and now leads a similar project for Swedish national museums. Medwen also conducts programme evaluations, feasibility studies and market appraisals.

Isabella Anderson, Senior Insights Manager, Royal Opera House (she/her)

Isabella is Senior Insights Manager at the Royal Opera House, where she leads a team using qualitative and quantitative research to deliver insights about their range of in-person and online audiences. Previously, she held insight roles at the National Theatre, Southbank Centre and the V&A and started her analyst career as a consultant at Baker Richards.

SPEAKERS

SESSION B: PORTLAND ROOM

National Gallery

NG200: How the National Gallery is understanding visitors to its bicentenary celebrations

On 10th May 2024, the National Gallery, London turns 200. The National Gallery is celebrating this significant moment through a nationwide programme of events, as well as significant capital works including the redevelopment of the Sainsbury Wing Entrance and Learning Centre. The NG200 programme aims to broaden the National Gallery's audience, acting as the first initiative under our new Audience Strategy and segmentation model, which explicitly segments people based on their ability and willingness to spend money on cultural activity. Hear from the National Gallery's visitor researchers about how we plan to evaluate NG200 and track our performance over the next two years of activity.

Josie Wood, Learning Evaluation Manager, The National Gallery (she/her)

Josie is responsible for evaluation and research about activities run by the Learning & National Programmes team at the National Gallery, with a focus on making this work more audience-led. She has previously worked at the V&A, Museum of London and Science Museum Group, conducting research across programming, exhibitions and permanent galleries.

Hailey Craig, Audience Researcher, The National Gallery (she/her)

Hailey is spearheading qualitative research initiatives across diverse activities and managing their ongoing visitor research. As a member of the Museums and Galleries Insight Consortium, she brings over five years of experience in mixed methods research, spanning multiple countries and sectors.

SPEAKERS

BREAK (15 MINUTES)

In parallel SESSION 3: 11.40 - 12.20PM

SESSION A: GULBENKIAN ROOM

IKT

Free admission to museums in Berlin: perceived barriers, values and effects by and within the audience

Berlin's admission-free „Museum Sunday“ aims to make museums more attractive and easier to access for the general public. The IKTf conducted a survey of 7,500 interviews in 2021/22 in order to evaluate the initiative's success. Does free admission attract a more diverse audience and what is its role in the decision making process of the audience?

SPEAKER

Dr. Britta Noerenberg, Institute for Research on Cultural Participation

Dr. Britta Noerenberg is a film scholar. Since 2020, she has been conducting research at the Institute for Research on Cultural Participation Research (IKTf) in Berlin, Germany on (non-)visitors and strategic audience development in cultural institutions. Previously, she was Head of Market Research and Statistics at the German Federal Film Board (FFA). She also worked for the Toronto International Film Festival Group (TIFFG) and as research associate at York University, Toronto/Canada, researching the audience of Canadian films.

SESSION B: PORTLAND ROOM

Barbican Centre & Beth Bryan Consultancy

Well-intentioned, but immeasurable: Lessons Learnt from a Pay What You Can and Concessions review at the Barbican

In recent years, the Barbican has introduced new ticketing schemes and concessions aimed to reduce or remove financial barriers to meet audience needs – well-intentioned. The challenge? Schemes lacked sufficient objectives and data collection processes, making impact difficult to assess and in some cases immeasurable. How did this happen?

In this session, delegates will hear a transparent account of lessons learnt, gain tips to avoid pitfalls when measuring the impact of ticketing schemes and learn how we changed the internal language around the value of concessions. These are foundational to the principles of visitor studies, but can be overlooked in practice.

SPEAKER

Beth Bryan, Senior Engagement Manager for London and South at NHLF, formerly Barbican Futures Planning Officer and Audience Strategy Lead (she/her)

Beth has led on transforming the way the Barbican approaches and works in relation to audiences. Her practice centres audiences in evidence-informed strategic decision-making and advocates for ambitious and measurable goals. She strives to embody collaborative and transparent leadership, is the current Chair of the Visitor Studies Group and recently appointed Senior Engagement Manager for London at the National Lottery Heritage Fund. She holds a M.A. in Museum Studies from UCL.

SESSION 4: 12.25 - 13.05PM

Imperial War Museum & Curiouser

More than Money: Understanding Decision-Making for Lower Socio-economic Audiences

In 2022, IWM's audience data revealed a decline in diversity at IWM London, a free branch. This inspired a bespoke research and internal engagement project to understand the conscious and subconscious barriers to visiting IWM branches. The research focused on those already engaged in cultural activities from three under-represented audiences: disabled people, people from global majority backgrounds, and those in lower socio-economic groups. The purpose of the research was to investigate barriers (including cultural and financial) as well as the additional challenges for those with intersectional identities across those three groups.

IWM's subject matter, while somewhat unique in scope, shares its challenges with many other organisations, particularly those assumed by the public to be expensive, inaccessible and lacking interactive interpretation. Sharing these barriers and the process of engaging internal stakeholders will allow attendees to consider their offerings and practices, and how they might be able to appeal to those from lower socio-economic groups. Delegates will hear the cultural, emotional and financial barriers to visiting among lower SEG audiences and learn ways to successfully engage staff throughout the process of a sensitive research project among other takeaways.

Charlotte Rhoades (she/her)

Charlotte is responsible for the implementation of the access and inclusion strategy across the Imperial War Museums (IWM). She is leading on a number of projects to make IWM more accessible and welcoming for underrepresented audiences. She is also passionate about ensuring the voices and needs of all staff and visitors at IWM are heard. Before coming to IWM, Charlotte worked on developing more inclusive HR practice and policies & introducing best practice people network frameworks at Openreach. Prior to this she was chair of the mental health & wellbeing staff network at The Walt Disney Company.

Kate Thompson (she/her)

Kate leads visitor research and evaluation at the Imperial War Museums (IWM). She is focused on expanding the use of visitor insights to inspire programming and further public engagement, particularly with diverse audiences. She is champions the use of the museum's Social Impact Framework to measure the most important aspects of IWM's remit: the lasting impact of the content and programming on visitors and stakeholders. Before arriving at IWM, Kate worked most recently for the destination marketing organization for Washington, DC, USA, where she worked closely with museums and galleries as they used citywide data to inform their own visitor research.

Alice Fenyoe (she/her)

Alice is the Director of Curiouser, a research agency delivering specialist audience insight to the cultural and charity sectors. Prior to setting up this business she honed her research skills with a number of well-known research companies. Much of the research Curiouser does focuses on social inequality. From supporting Save the Children to develop a new narrative around child poverty; to evaluating Centre for Life's local community programme; to helping the Royal Albert Hall optimise its 'Relaxed' live music offer – our research helps organisations better understand how to deliver for audiences who often feel unheard, unseen or unrepresented within society.

SPEAKERS

LUNCH (1 HOUR)

VSG AGM: 14.05 - 14.45PM

VSG elections announcement, membership and financial update, hear from the VSG mentorship programme and help us shape the future of VSG events, non-members welcome

SESSION 5: 2.50 - 3.30PM

London Transport Museum

Driving Change: LTM's Engine and Economic Equity in Consultation

The Engine are a group of young people who consult with London Transport Museum to evaluate our young people's programmes. Throughout 2023, they were trained in evaluative techniques, designed plans and tools to collect data, then analysed the findings to shape changes for the future. Their lived experience as trailblazing young Londoners and a co-produced manifesto informs their analysis and the questions they ask about the programmes, guiding their recommendations to our programme team and ensuring it is truly youth-led.

The Engine are paid for their time, and often advocate for greater economic investment in other young people who engage with the museum. This model, and its economic structure, not only creates equity in consultation practice, but also has ripple effects on the way we think about the cost of living for young people seeking meaningful careers in the cultural and transport & engineering sectors – and how the museum can better support them in this process.

Kelley Tackett (she/her)

Kelley is completing her post-graduate diploma in law, where her work focuses on cultural heritage law with particular attention to practices of forced displacement and the restitution of cultural property. She is a member of the London Transport Museum's youth evaluation program, the Engine, and previously received a BA in archaeology from Brown University and an MA in Cultural Heritage Studies from UCL.

Beth Atkinson (she/her)

Beth is an Interim Head of Learning and Young People's Skills and Communities Programme Manager at London Transport Museum. She has over 12 years' experience leading successful and innovative skills and engagement programmes for underrepresented young people seeking careers in the creative sector and connecting and collaborating with communities. She has worked at October Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery and the Horniman Museum in learning and engagement programmes.

Tiggy Allen (she/her)

Tiggy is the Impact & Evaluation Manager at London Transport Museum, responsible for evaluating learning impact and understanding visitor experience. She is also the interim Communications Lead at VSG. She previously worked as a heritage consultant in Bangalore with community groups, youth advisory boards, on designing and evaluating volunteering and learning programmes, and conducted India's first arts audience segmentation research study.

SPEAKERS

BREAK (15 MINUTES)

PANEL: 3.45 - 4.25PM

Understanding the Cost of Culture: What has the VSG Conference 2024 told us?

Round up the day as we collectively look at the main takeaways from the presentations and case studies we have heard and share our own success stories and challenges with assessing financial barriers affecting visitor experiences.

CLOSING REMARKS

Closing Remarks from VSG Conference Lead, Ogo Okafor

POST-CONFERENCE SOCIAL

Join us straight after the conference for a networking opportunity and debrief.

The Albany
240 Great Portland St, Greater, London W1W 5QU
5pm onwards