



Thoughts on 'What's Next?' for the blended-museum

Irish Museums Association/NI Museums Council
Education and Outreach Forum 19-21 May 2021

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www.ulster.ac.uk/museumscovid19

Project Reference: AH/V01289/1



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



LEARNING

The pandemic was a time of experimentation, reflection and taking stock. A time of opportunity not to waste.

- ‘The past year ‘it’s giving us all **permission to experiment**’ R1
- ‘You’ve got this time that you've been given, that you've not asked for ... and you think, “well, I've **got to make the most of this** ‘cause I'm not going to get it again” R5
- ‘I found the Covid-challenges hugely liberating as a curator, because it's meant that **I've been able to change things in a way I probably wouldn't have been allowed to** had Covid not happened’ R10

Photo: Guildhall Derry



LEARNING

New networks: audiences,
collaborators (internal and external).

- ‘people **discovered** [us] during lockdown’ R9
- ‘It gave us much more of a digital profile than we ever had before and reached **new audiences**’ R4
- [Within the Council] ... ‘another benefit ... the pandemic has **intensified working together** ... [I’ve seen] greater and faster integration’ R4
- ‘**the network is much closer**. There's much more communication throughout all levels’ R10

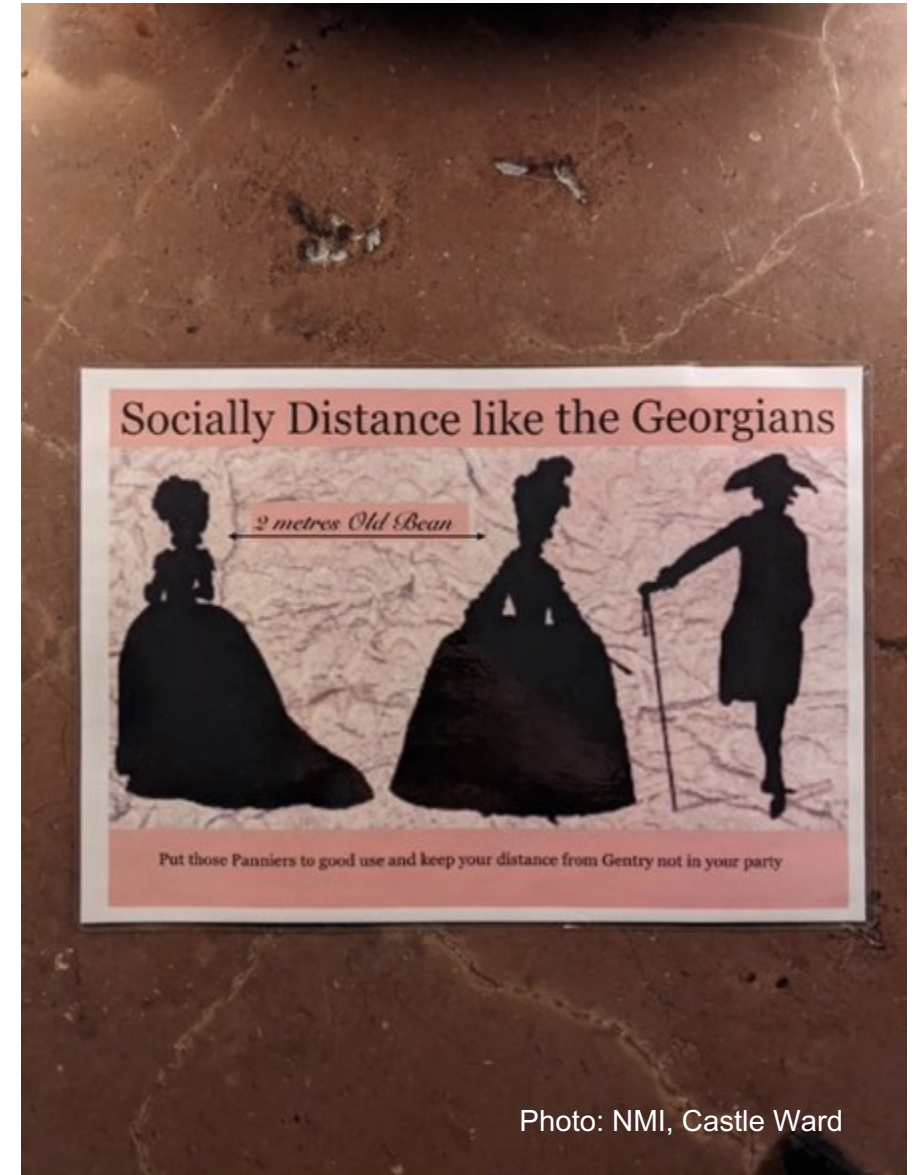


Photo: NMI, Castle Ward

LEARNING

Training, professional development,
collaborative networks encouraging
learning and sharing practice.

- '[The pandemic] has **definitely opened up all kinds of opportunities**. For myself and my own practice' R1



GOING FORWARD

Time to reset our priorities, explore what matters most and ensure that can be delivered.

‘Each individual museum will have to really take a bit of a **reset** and decide for itself what are the priorities going forward?’

‘Because **what might have been a priority eighteen months ago may not be one now**’. R9



Photo NMI, Collins Barracks

GOING FORWARD

Museums will need to mitigate the negative changes to the museum space e.g. loss of interactives and activities.

‘we’re definitely not as child friendly a place as we used to be. I don’t know how you could fix that?’ We had a little children’s play area, but that again has all had to go...
R6

‘Covid is going to **change the architectural landscape of museums** ... the pattern of visitors and how they walk through and engage through a museum’. R10

‘... **the real challenge for everyone will be making people feel comfortable within that Covid landscape**, with all the notices, the procedures and stuff’. R11



GOING FORWARD

A renewed appetite for new ways of looking at museum impact.

'It's not going to be a numbers game, it's going to be much more about qualitative feedback'.

'What's the depth of the engagement? What sort of comments are we getting back from people? Are people enjoying our programmes? Are people engaging with our programmes?' R1



Photo: Hillsborough Castle tour

GOING FORWARD

New conceptualization of what the museum is; new context for the work of museums; new audience interests.

‘With people not being allowed into these places for such a long time, **does that reset their expectations as well?**’ R10

... **there’s such uncertainty now in our sector it’s hard to plan.** R4

‘And then to know what your audience wants as well ...

- Has your audience changed?
- What do they want now?
- What are they interested in?
- Are they actually wanting to leave their homes and walk into your museum again?
- Why would they when they can consume it from their sofa?’ R4



Photo: POLIN, Warsaw

GOING FORWARD

Importance of nurturing and retaining some of the special aspects of being a museum.

Importance of the face-to-face: the value of touch and immersion in the museum space.



- ‘There's nothing that can replace the benefits ... of a participant being able to **physically hold something and physically touch something**’ R1
- ‘People do value seeing the real objects and making those connections with the real objects ... **the real experience in the gallery with the real object**, is quite different than viewing it online’. R9
- ‘I think that's really, really important that **there's no substitute for actually being here. There's no substitute for being with the collection**’ R10

GOING FORWARD

Nurture the longer term value of museums as social and community spaces.

- 'It's the **experiences that can't be replicated online** that people will come out for' R4
- 'We are confident now in the time for museums' R3
- 'This is the time for museums, **we can do good** if given the chance to help re-build society on a whole range of fronts' R3



Photo: Tower Museum, Derry

GOING FORWARD

Greater expectation of museums as places that can deliver on multiple platforms.

‘That kind of **blended approach** is an extremely successful one, so it would be one that we want to continue’ R5

‘I think this pandemic will have a **change in the habits of most people**’

‘... **this dual, parallel engagement, physical and digital, is here to stay and it's here to develop**’. R7

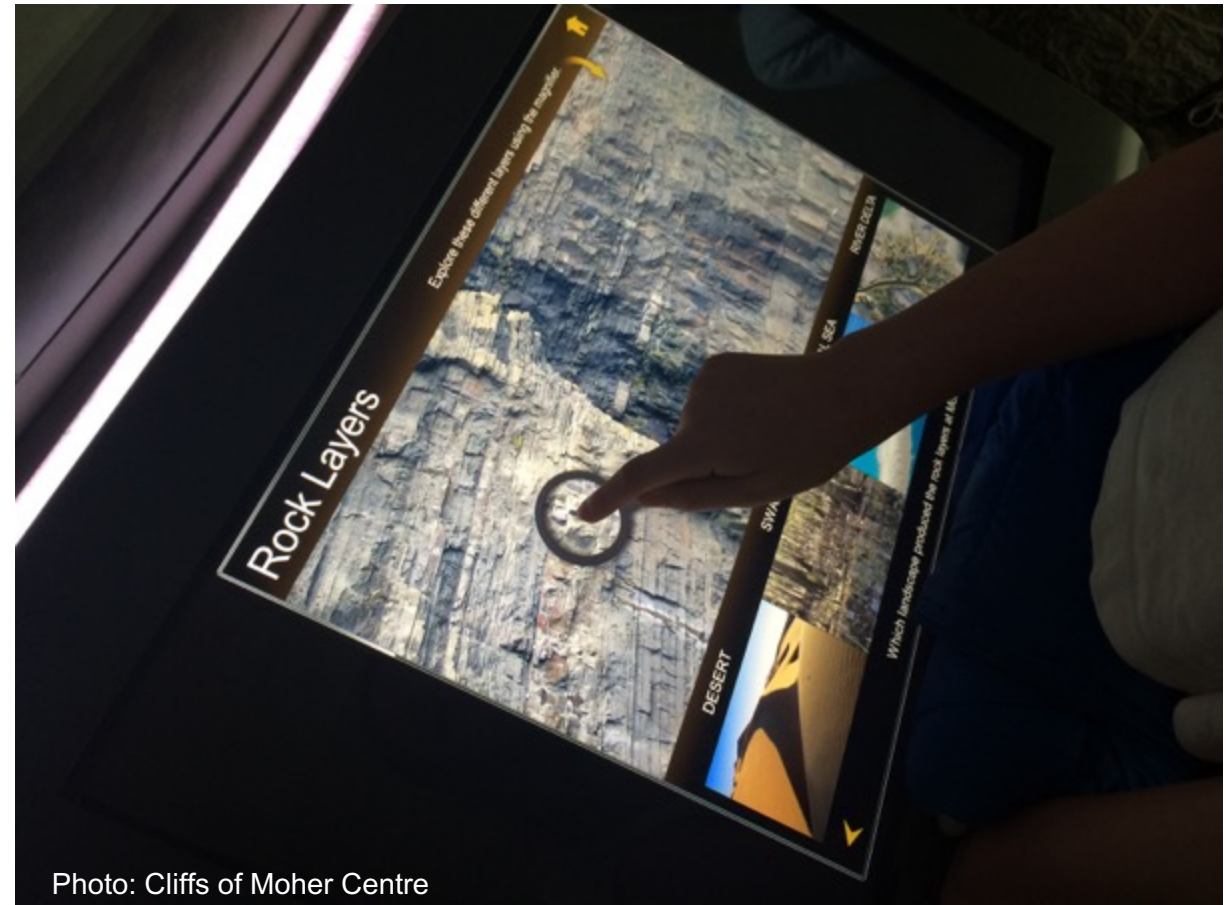


Photo: Cliffs of Moher Centre

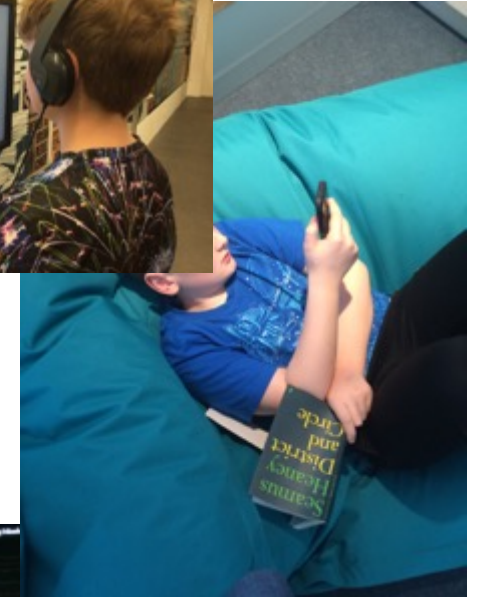
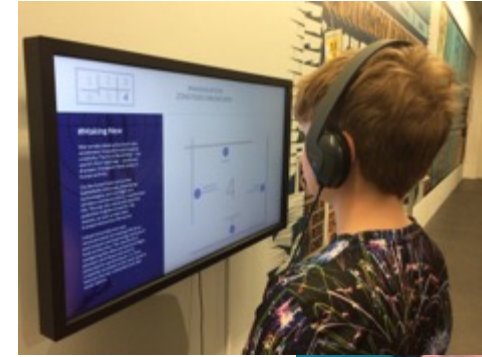


IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE: Blended engagement: The Transmedia Museum

Beyond multimedia: space, objects, displays, participation

Transmedia: 'extension of narrative across **multiple platforms** ...'it is a landscape where increasingly **the museum cannot be contained within walls or within dedicated websites...** (Kidd 2015:1)

the boundaries around a visit to be incredibly blurred so that we might ask when does it begin and when does it end? Kidd (2018: 273)





THANK YOU

To the museum staff who have contributed to this project so far.

Find out more about the Ulster University team:
www.ulster.ac.uk/museumscovid19/people.

This project is being undertaken in consultation with Project Partners and is funded by UK Research and Innovation.





Please get in touch to tell us about your experience in the past year and your ambitions for the future of museums.

Read our blogs: www.ulster.ac.uk/museumcovid19/blogs

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