



Arts Council England and BBC

Arts content online: assessing the potential

Findings of a survey of selected Arts Council regularly funded organisations

January 2010

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Executive summary

A key objective of the recently agreed Public Value Partnership between Arts Council England and the BBC is to use digital technologies to better connect publicly funded arts content with audiences through digital services and platforms. Broadband Britain, a key strand of the partnership, includes a strong focus on opening arts archives to the public. As part of this work, and in order to assess the potential, the Arts Council and the BBC agreed to undertake a research project. The two research objectives were:

- 1 to establish the extent and type of content held by selected Arts Council England regularly funded organisations
- 2 to understand the level of interest among regularly funded organisations in making content available via online platforms

A questionnaire devised by Arts Council England and the BBC was sent to 50 regularly funded organisations identified by the MTM London research as providing content with some or all characteristics of public service content.¹ A list of the organisations and the questionnaire are given in the annexes. Forty of the 50 selected organisations completed the questionnaire, a response rate of 80%. Within the 40 responding organisations, the research found a wide range of digital capability: some organisations are just starting to consider the opportunities and implications of adapting to the digital age, others have a sophisticated online presence.

All organisations (100%) said they had an archive, or some form of content resource. Organisations were less able to quantify the amount of material they hold and their responses contained caveats. Bearing these limitations in mind, the total content reported was estimated to be approximately 60,000 hours and 31,000 items. The most common response was 150 hours (a third of organisations held between 100 and 200 hours). One organisation – an online radio station – reported that they hold 35,000 hours (58% of the total) and 5,000 items (16%).

Excluding the online radio station, most of the content held was in long form: 60% of items held were five minutes and over; and the total amount of digital content was 5,350 hours, held between 36 organisations. Artist interviews were the most commonly held content type (83% of organisations), followed by recordings of performances (75%) and talks and debates (73%).

The majority (93%) of organisations made their content available through their own website; 60% used YouTube. Fifty-five per cent distributed content through other means including: big screen (outdoor) and cinema broadcast, Vimeo, CDs, Facebook and MySpace. Only one organisation stated that their

¹ www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/downloads/MTM-snapshot.pdf

content was not available to access. Twenty-eight organisations (70%) did not charge for access to their content; 12 organisations (30%) charged for access to some of their content.

The research aimed to find out broadly whether organisations' current rights situation allows sharing of content via online platforms. Thirteen organisations (33%) could distribute 100% of their content themselves. A further three organisations could distribute 100% of their content within certain limitations. Respondents commonly felt that arts organisations struggle with rights issues, particularly of archived content.

All 40 responding organisations (100%) were interested, in principle, in making their audio and audio-visual content more widely available via online and digital platforms. In line with this high level of interest, 37 organisations (93%) said they would seek to produce or commission work specifically for such platforms in the future.

The main benefits of a potential collaboration between the Arts Council, the BBC and arts organisations were seen as: improving access to their content and raising their own profile, and that of the work and artists. A particular benefit connected with improving access to content was 'improving discoverability of content'. Some organisations felt that a potential partnership project would help direct people through the mass of content on individual websites. A further potential benefit was access to BBC expertise and resources. This included access to BBC technical knowhow and resources, and support with archiving.

Issues raised included whether the project would enable a curatorial approach to content. Related to this were questions about the intended audience. Organisations asked whether this project intended to present the 'best of' art online, or whether the intention was to broadly distribute all content. In addition, there were a handful of digitally literate organisations that were not interested in the 'linear' dissemination process implied by a broadcast model – and who were instead developing interactive, participatory and user-led experiences on their own platforms. These organisations were unlikely to be interested in this project as it stands but were open to exploring with the Arts Council and the BBC ways for the project to tap into, or showcase, this level of innovation.

If the Arts Council and the BBC wish to take this project forward, rights are likely to be an area that arts organisations will need support with. It will also be important to consider how best to build in the views of the rest of the Arts Council's regularly funded portfolio, and possibly cultural organisations more widely.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

One of Arts Council England's current priorities is to help arts organisations make the most of the opportunities provided by digital technology to reach and engage new audiences. The digital research programme is part of the Arts Council's digital opportunities programme, which is a three-year investigation of three core areas:

- the impact of digital technology on how the public perceives, understands and engages with the arts
- how digital technology is transforming art and artistic practice
- the implications for content creation, distribution and ownership

Phase one of the research programme has just been completed, focusing on the first of these areas. The Arts Council commissioned research to examine the current online offer of its regularly funded organisations.² This found that 56 organisations were providing 'good' or 'excellent' public service content through their online presence. It also found that high-quality arts content online can be hard for people to discover. The websites of regularly funded organisations tend to have low Google PageRank³ scores, which means users are unlikely to find much of this content unless they search for the organisations' names or for an exact phrase on a site. Very few of the sites appear to be reaching large online audiences, therefore their impact is limited.

The report *Digital Britain* identified arts organisations as increasingly important providers of public service broadcasting content. The BBC has a strong cultural and creative purpose, and as referenced in *Digital Britain*, the BBC is seeking 'greater collaboration with the cultural sector, enabling more public sector organisations to harness the power of digital content'.⁴

1.2 Research objectives

Arts Council England and the BBC have recently agreed a Public Value Partnership. A key objective of this partnership is to use digital technologies to better connect publicly funded arts content with audiences through digital services and platforms. A key strand of the partnership is Broadband Britain, within which there is a strong focus on opening arts archives to the public. One stated ambition within this strand identifies potential for the Arts Council's Film Collection to be made available to the public and a first-stage feasibility report has been produced by John Wyver, outlining potential options.

² *Digital Content Snapshot*, MTM London, 2009, www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/downloads/MTM-snapshot.pdf

³ See Section 3.1 of MTM London's report for a definition of Google PageRank

⁴ *Digital Britain*, DCMS/BIS, June 2009

Another objective within the strand is to support greater access to a range of arts content from the publicly funded arts sector and potential within the BBC i-Player. As part of this work, and in order to assess the potential, the Arts Council and the BBC agreed to joint research in order to understand better the archives held by arts organisations. The Arts Council and the BBC agreed two research objectives:

- 1 to establish the extent and type of content held by selected Arts Council England regularly funded organisations
- 2 to understand the level of interest among regularly funded organisations in making content available via online platforms

The information presented in this research report will be used by the Arts Council and the BBC to inform strategic decision-making about the viability of collaboration by the two organisations in this area, on behalf of the sector as a whole.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research questions

The research gathered information from regularly funded organisations to address the following questions:

- what type of content is held – whether audio or audio-visual
- amount of material held – in hours and number of items
- format and genre
- whether the material is digitised
- whether there is metadata for the material
- whether the metadata is held on a database
- are archives of regularly funded organisations available – on their own or another platform; are they free or do they need to be paid for to gain access?
- whether organisations are interested in sharing content
- broadly, whether the current rights situation of regularly funded organisations allows sharing in this way
- whether organisations would seek to produce or commission work to go any future platform(s)

2.2 Research materials

The following research materials were developed:

- an introductory letter from the BBC and the Arts Council explaining the purpose of the survey and how the information would be used
- a brief questionnaire for self-completion or telephone interview

The questionnaire was developed by Arts Council England following an initial meeting of staff from the Arts Council and the BBC. The BBC provided expert assistance with the questionnaire design. The questionnaire was then piloted with two arts organisations and reviewed. Final drafts of the introductory letter and questionnaire were reviewed and approved by the Arts Council and the BBC.

2.3 Sample

For this initial exploration, 50 regularly funded organisations identified by the MTM London research as providing content with some or all characteristics of public service content were surveyed.⁵ These are listed in Annex 1. MTM London describes these organisations as follows:

⁵ Of the 56 organisations listed by MTM London, one organisation was not surveyed because they had already spoken to Arts Council staff about online content in connection with other projects, one opted out because they had existing national relationships with the BBC, and four were excluded for other reasons.

'Most of these organisations are either major cultural institutions with strong brand names and (relatively) substantial budgets, or small but digitally literate organisations with a focus on the moving image or multimedia.'⁶

A range of Arts Council staff were consulted to ensure that the correct person at each organisation was approached. The Arts Council made initial contact by email, introducing the project and asking for agreement to take part in the survey. Organisations chose whether to self-complete the survey, take part in a telephone interview or a combination of the two options.

2.4 Timetable

The introductory letter was sent out on 28 September 2009. Responding organisations were sent the questionnaire for completion by 21 October 2009.

2.5 Response rates

There was a high level of interest in the project: 40 of the 50 selected organisations completed the questionnaire, a response rate of 80%. Of the remaining 10 organisations: two made detailed comments about the project, which have been incorporated into Section 3.5; three were interested in the project but declined to participate at this point in time (discussed in Section 3.1 below) and five did not respond.

Of the 40 responding organisations, 22 sent in self-completed questionnaires and 18 took part in interviews, or discussed their self-completed responses on the phone. The high level of telephone contact enabled detailed contextualising information to be gathered in the course of the fieldwork.

2.6 Quality control and analysis

Responses during the telephone interviews were handwritten onto interview schedules and then data-entered. Self-completed questionnaires were reviewed to ensure all questions had been answered. Ten per cent of data-entered questionnaires were checked to ensure data had been captured correctly.

Form fields were used to code and enter the data from completed questionnaires onto an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. Narrative responses were analysed using a grounded-theory approach – identifying common themes that emerge in the responses, looking for alternative points of view.

⁶ *Digital Content Snapshot*, MTM London, 2009

2.7 Boundaries of the study

This first phase of research into digital content comprised a short, top-level survey of selected organisations in order to provide some headline information on the volume and kinds of material that could be showcased or linked to by any new online platform (or platforms). The requirement was for a top-level report that would allow senior management at the Arts Council and the BBC to understand the type and extent of content held by arts organisations and the level of interest among arts organisations in making content available. The boundaries of the study are therefore as follows.

Sample

This initial scoping study was limited to 50 selected arts organisations (listed in Annex 1). A second phase of research may follow covering all other Arts Council regularly funded organisations that express an interest in taking part.

Top-level information

Organisations were informed that the research was exploratory and that the information would be used to inform strategic decisions about the viability of any future partnership between the Arts Council, the BBC and arts organisations. The questionnaire was deliberately kept as short as possible. This avoided placing a heavy burden of information-collection on participating organisations. The absence of very detailed guidance notes providing definitions of terms reflects this top-level approach and requires the reader of this report to bear in mind that the questions may have been interpreted differently by respondents.

Addressing the research questions, Section 3 of this report summarises the research findings and discusses the key emerging issues. Section 4 presents initial conclusions. The introductory letter and questionnaire are given in the annexes.

All figures in the report show responses from the base of 40 responding organisations, unless otherwise indicated. Where percentages do not add up to 100% , this is due to rounding, or because multiple responses were allowed.

3. Findings

3.1 Responding organisations

Half the responding organisations were from the visual arts (50%); the next largest proportion were music organisations (18%). This reflects the profile of the organisations selected by the MTM London research as providing ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ public service content:

‘Organisations active in artistic practices heavily impacted by digital, such as visual arts and music, are more likely to maintain sophisticated online properties than organisations specialising in other art forms: together with Theatre (the largest art form in terms of number of organisations), they are responsible for nearly three quarters of the most sophisticated sites.’⁷

Of the remaining artforms, 10% were combined arts, 10% theatre, 5% were dance and 5% not artform specific. Only one organisation was classified as literature.⁸ The regional split again reflects the overall MTM London findings – 60% were based in London, and five other regions had between one and six organisations.

In addition to the 40 organisations that completed the questionnaire, five organisations contacted the researcher to discuss the project. Three organisations were very interested in the project but reported that they were not creating any digital content currently or their archiving was at a very elementary stage. All three organisations intended to begin archiving or making content available online in the near future so asked to be kept up to date with developments. Two organisations with sophisticated online profiles did not complete the questionnaire but instead made detailed comments about the project. Their comments have been included in Section 3.5.

3.2 Digital capability

Digital technology is changing the way the arts are created, distributed and consumed. The 50 organisations that were invited to participate in this research project were selected because they had been independently identified as providing ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ public service content via their online profiles. However, within the 40 responding organisations, the research found a wide range of digital capability. At one end of the spectrum, some organisations had extensive material stored but none digitised, and are just

⁷ ‘Properties rated as either Rich Marketing Sites, Multi-Platform Cultural Institutions, and Online Specialists’, *Digital Content Snapshot*, MTM London, 2009, p5

⁸ However, two organisations with ‘poetry’ in their name responded.

starting to consider the opportunities and implications of adapting to the digital age:

'Most material in our archive is not rights cleared (especially rehearsal material)... there is currently limited public access because the content is not digitised.'

Many organisations we spoke to are beginning to think about how they manage their content, including making it more accessible online.

'This project opened up discussion in the organisation: we're creating content for exhibition, it's an important archive resource but it's not really used. This is being considered alongside how to make the exhibitions more widely accessed.'

Often, organisations are beginning to think of themselves as content creators, and to rethink the public and economic value of the content they hold.

'Our whole organisation is moving from being an arts organisation to a cross-platform creative content provider with arts at the core.'

However, in larger organisations this can be a complex rethinking of how the organisation works and its core purposes:

'Where does responsibility for content creation sit in our organisation – production or communication departments?... It's vital to start asking these questions.'

At the other end of the spectrum, a digitally literate organisation such as Furtherfield.org talked about their work as 'process-focused co-creation':

'VisitorsStudio.org is an online platform for real time mixing and collaboration, people can chat and build 8 layer audio-visual collages...'

It is helpful to bear in mind when interpreting the findings that even among this group of 40, organisations are in very different places and the extent of their digital capability and how far they have embraced the new digital context affected the way they approached and answered the survey questions.

3.3 Content held

All organisations (100%) said they had an archive, or some form of content resource. Regarding types of content held, 34 organisations (85%) reported that they held both audio and audio-visual material; three had only audio – Resonance104.4fm, Artquest and The Poetry Archive; three had only audio-visual material – LUX, Liverpool Biennial and onedotzero.

Organisations were less able to quantify the amount of material they held. Thirty-five organisations were able to give an approximate number of hours held; and 34 organisations gave a number of items. Responses from many organisations contained caveats: several reported on materials where ‘some was indexed, and some not’, or where the extent was ‘unknown as currently materials are unsorted’. One stated:

‘Please note figures are approximations. We are currently in the process of conducting an audit of all our archive material; we will have more accurate figures later on this year.’

Bearing in mind these limitations, the total content reported was estimated to be approximately 60,000 hours and 31,000 items. Resonance104.4fm, an online radio station, reported that they hold 35,000 hours (58% of the total) and 5,000 items (16%). Their content is audio only.

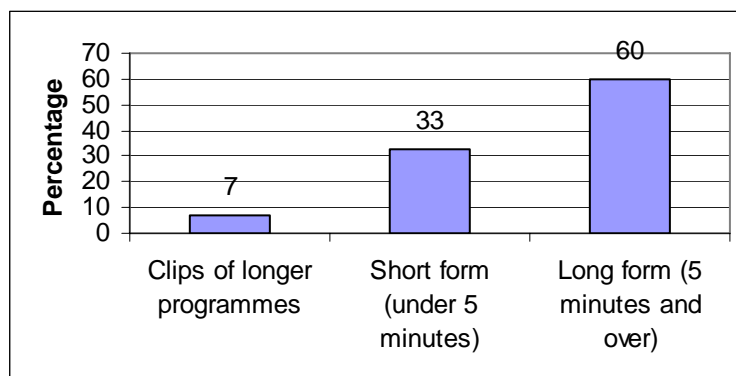
The most common response was 150 hours (a third of organisations held between 100 and 200 hours). The number of items ranged from six to 5,000. The median⁹ number of items held was 300.

Organisations were asked, ‘Thinking about your content in terms of individual items, what percentage of your material is either: clips of longer programmes (under five minutes), short-form programmes (under five minutes) or long-form programmes (five minutes and over)?’ Thirty-two organisations provided these estimated percentages. The total number of items held by these organisations was reported to be 27,919 (taking out Resonance104.4fm’s 5,000 items, that leaves 22,919).

For each organisation, the number of items held as either clips, short-form or long-form programmes was calculated; totalling the number of items in each format and then dividing this by 22,919, gave estimated percentages of total items held by these 32 organisations as clips, short-form or long-form programmes. Figure 1 below shows that, on average, most content held is in long form: 60% of items held are five minutes and over.

⁹ The mid-point in a range of values ordered from highest to lowest. Used when answers may be skewed by a few very large amounts.

Figure 1: Percentage of items by length



Base: 22,919 items held by 31 organisations w reported number *and* length of items. (excludes Resonance104.4fm)

Organisations were asked, in terms of number of hours held, what proportion of their audio and audio-visual content is digital and stored electronically. Calculating this against the estimated number of hours gives an approximate total of 40,000 hours of content that is reported to be digital and stored electronically. However, the bulk of this content is held by Resonance104.4fm, which reported holding 34,650 hours digitally (87% of the total). Taking out Resonance104.4fm leaves total digital content of 5,350 hours, held between 36 organisations.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of digital content held electronically across organisations. Twelve organisations held 100% of their content digitally and stored electronically, and one organisation (Wolverhampton Art Gallery) did not hold any content digitally and stored electronically. Their content was mainly stored on DVDs.

Figure 2: Percentage of digital content held electronically, by number of organisations

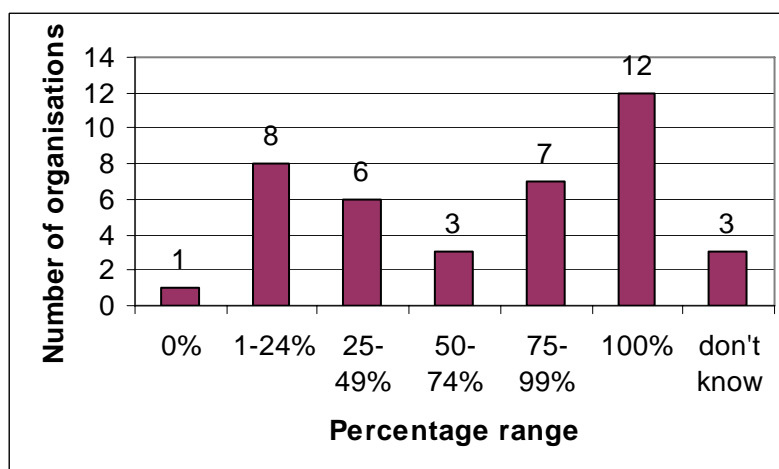
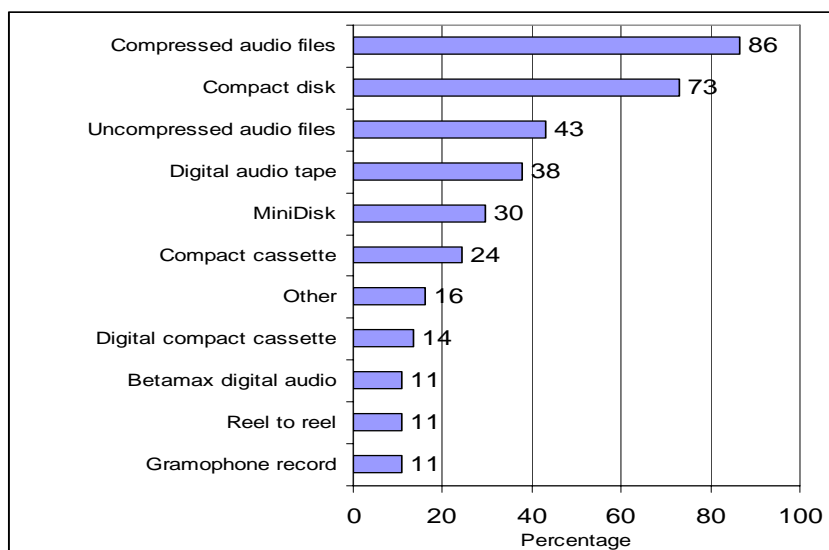


Figure 3 shows that the majority of arts organisations held audio materials as compressed audio files (86%) and as compact discs (73%).

Figure 3: Percentage of arts organisations using different formats for audio material



Base: 37 organisations with audio content.

Thirty-one organisations (84%) held audio-visual materials in file-based formats. Specified formats were as follows:

Figure 4: Number of arts organisations using different file-based formats

Format	Number of organisations
Any file-based format	31
MPEG-4 / H264	20
AVI wrapped	11
MPEG-2	7
MXF wrapped DV	4
JPEG-2000	4
MPEG-1	3
MXF wrapped Uncompressed AV	1
MXF wrapped JPEG-2000	1
AVC	1
AAF	0
<i>Don't know</i>	6

Base: 37 organisations with audio-visual content

Twelve organisations (32%) held audio-visual materials as film (specific film formats were not asked about). Twenty-five organisations (66%) held content as professional video tape. Formats held were:

Figure 5: Number of arts organisations holding different professional video tape formats

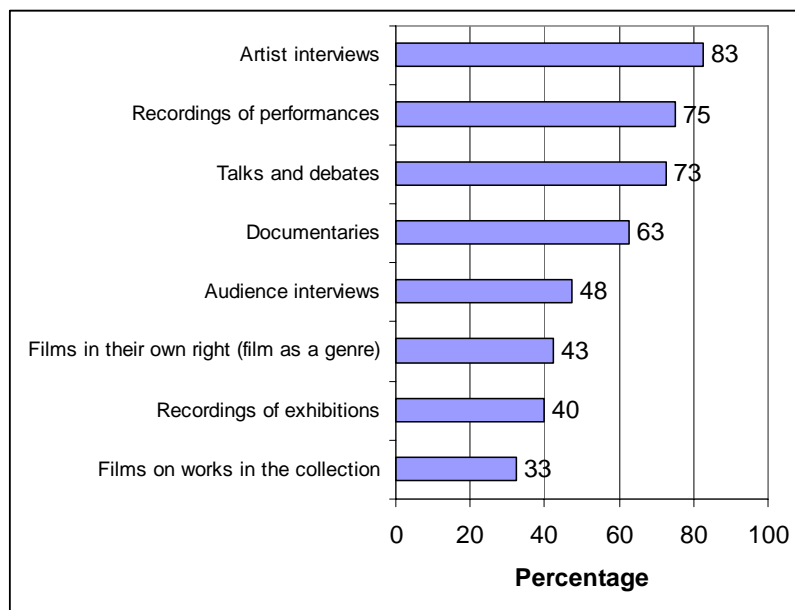
Format	Number of organisations
Any professional videotape format	25
DVCAM	18
HDCAM	11
Betacam	11
Umatic	7
DVPRO	5
D3	3
D2	2
Quad tapes	2
<i>Don't know</i>	9

Base: 37 organisations with audio-visual content

Twenty organisations held audio-visual material in domestic videotape format. Formats specified included: videotape in VHS format (17 organisations) and Betamax (five organisations); three organisations did not know what format their domestic videotape was. Other formats specified included: Quicktime (compressed and uncompressed) held by six organisations, DVDs (four organisations), MiniDV (four).

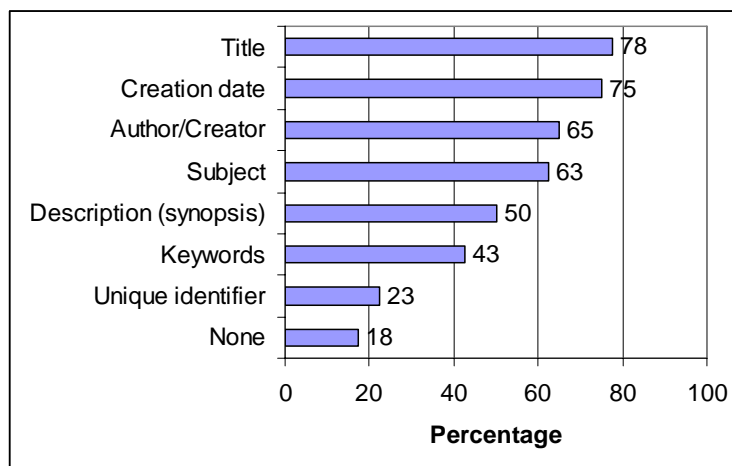
Figure 6 shows that the most commonly held type of content was artist interviews (83% of organisations), followed by recordings of performances (75%) and talks and debates (73%).

Figure 6: Percentage of arts organisations holding different types of content



Metadata is information describing context, content and structure of records. Figure 7 below shows that 18% of organisations did not hold metadata on their material. Of those 33 organisations (83%) that did hold metadata, 78% of organisations held title data, followed by creation date (75%).

Figure 7: Percentage of arts organisations holding different types of metadata



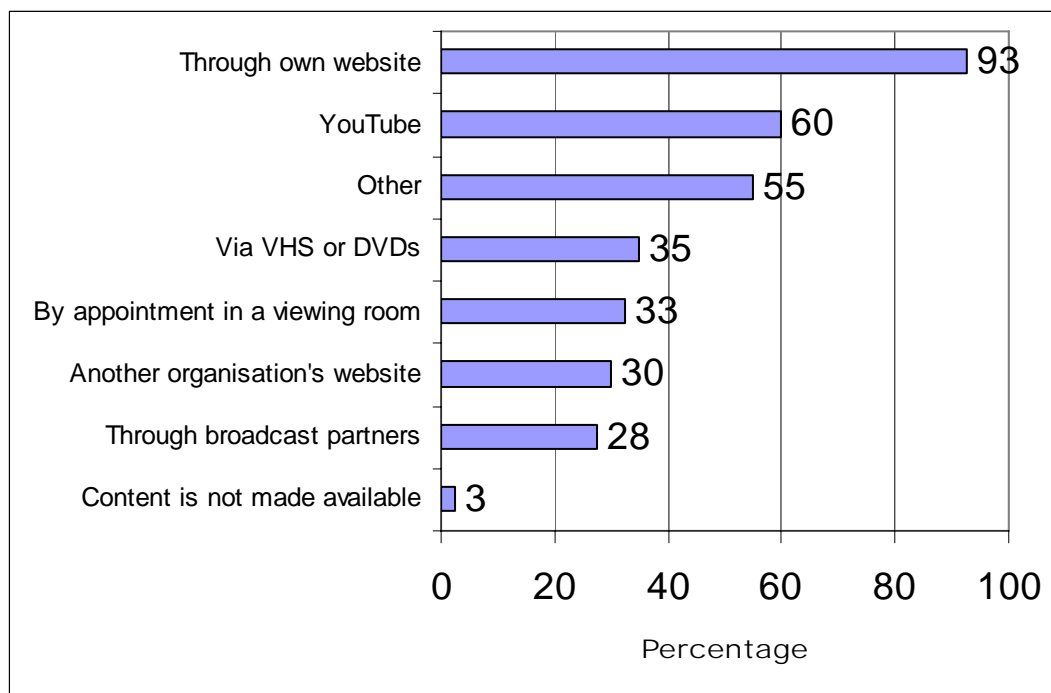
Of the 33 organisations that hold metadata on their material, 21 hold this information in an electronic database (64%).

3.4 Access to content

Figure 8 shows that the majority (93%) of organisations made their content available through their own website, 60% via YouTube and 55% by other means. Organisations were asked to specify what 'other' means they used. Answers included: big screen (outdoor) and cinema broadcast, Vimeo and CDs (three organisations gave each response); British Library archive, Live Arts Development Agency study room archive, Facebook, MySpace and distribution to education establishments (two organisations gave each response). One organisation said they used DropBox, a file-sharing system that allows artists and producers or reviewers access to restricted material. Only one organisation stated that their content was not available to access.

Just under a third of the organisations who responded (28%) made their content available through broadcast partners. These organisations included: Artangel, Bobby Baker's Daily Life, English National Opera, London Symphony Orchestra, LUX, onedotzero, Rambert Dance Company, Resonance104.4fm, Royal Opera House and Royal Shakespeare Company.

Figure 8: Percentage of arts organisations using different platforms to make content accessible



To provide a rough sense of the current reach of arts organisations, and therefore an indication of the uplift a potential partnership between arts organisations, the Arts Council and the BBC could achieve, the regularly funded organisations were asked to provide estimated figures for the number of people currently accessing their content. The following figures need to be treated with extreme caution: some organisations provided number of visits to

their website, others gave unique visitor numbers, some totalled on- and offline visitor numbers, many pointed out that web visitors may not necessarily look at their audio and audio-visual content. Bearing these caveats in mind, the total number of visits to content held by these 40 organisations was estimated to be in the region of 15 million a year. However, we currently have no way of measuring the actual number of people this content was reaching.

Twenty-eight organisations (70%) stated that they did not charge for access to their content. Twelve organisations (30%) said that they charged for access to some of their content; of these:

- seven sold physical copies of DVDs, etc
- six charged other costs (examples given include: access by education institutions – Webplay, TV licensing fees – anonymous)
- three covered distribution costs only (Royal Shakespeare Company, Bobby Baker’s Daily Life and anonymous)
- two sold downloads (London Symphony Orchestra and anonymous)
- one charged subscription fees via their website (London Symphony Orchestra)

Organisations were asked, ‘Who is the creator of the audio and audio-visual material you keep?’ Respondents could list more than one option. Ninety-three per cent of organisations said that they were the creator of the audio and audio-visual material that they keep; 58% of organisations said that ‘an artist’ was the creator; organisations reported that a ‘partner organisation’ (45%) or ‘other rights holder’ (45%) were also creators of the material they kept.

The research aimed to find out broadly whether organisations’ current rights situation allows sharing of content via online platforms. Organisations were asked, ‘What percentage of your audio and audio-visual material has had all rights cleared for distribution by yourselves; and by someone else?’

Thirteen organisations (33%) stated that they could distribute 100% of their content themselves; these organisations included: Axis, Artquest, art gene, Beaconsfield, English National Opera, LUX, Pilot Theatre, Poetry Translation Centre, The Poetry Archive, Visiting Arts and Webplay.

A further three organisations stated that they could distribute 100% of their content within certain limitations – Artangel, Manchester Camerata, Moti Roti. The limitations included: time limits; could promote their own organisation but not for commercial gain. Several organisations were auditing their current rights position and one was engaged in clearing rights for their entire archive. However, a common view was that the organisations struggle with rights issues, particularly of archived content:

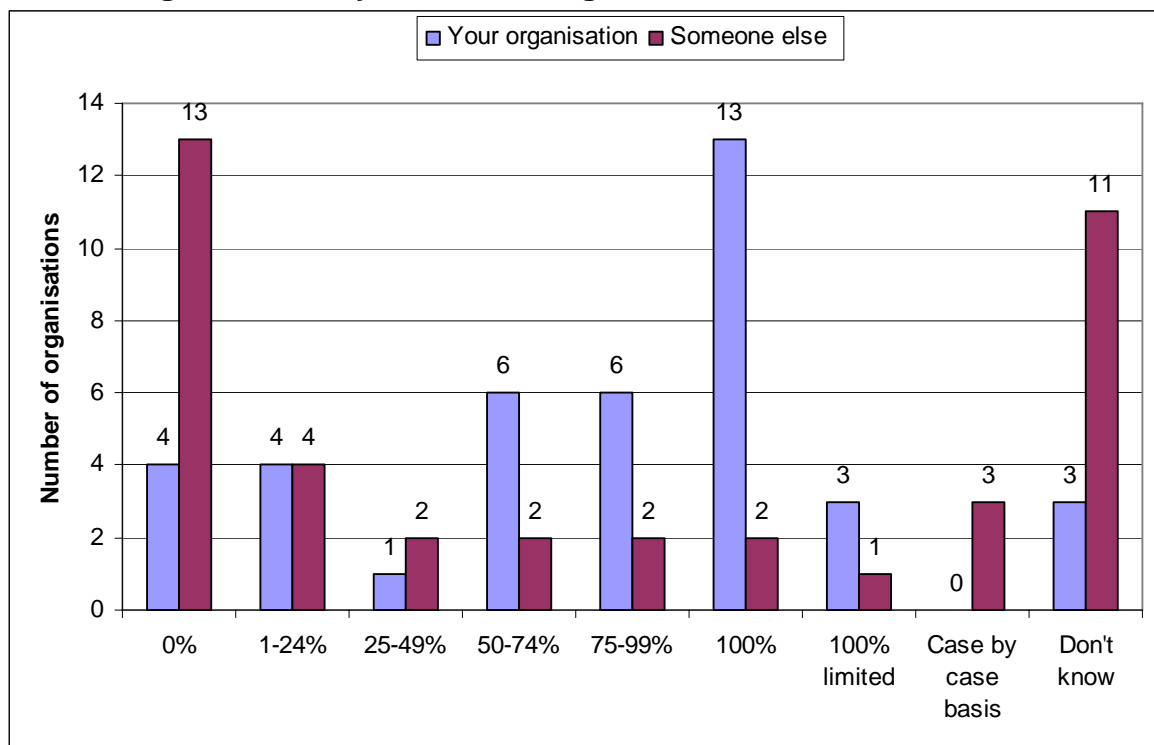
‘A major sticking point for any arts organisation remains... rights – there is very little chance of gaining agreement with historic actors, directors, musicians to allow digital access online to archived materials.’

Several respondents raised the issue of Equity rules limiting what can be filmed and broadcast. One commented that:

‘Current Equity rules mean that [we] have to film rehearsals instead of final performances.’

Fewer organisations held content that had all rights cleared for distribution by someone else – 13 organisations (33%) said that none or less than 1% of their content was cleared for distribution by someone else. Organisations also tended to be less clear about the rights situation for distribution by someone else – 10 organisations did not know if their content had all rights cleared in this way.

Figure 9: Percentage of content that can be distributed by your own or another organisation, by number of organisations



Two organisations, Artquest and Pilot Theatre, stated that 100% of their material had all rights cleared for distribution, both by themselves or someone else.

3.5 Interest in this project

Organisations were asked whether in principle they were interested in making their audio and audio-visual content more widely available via online and digital platforms. There was a very high level of interest: all 40 organisations that completed the questionnaire (100%) said they were interested in principle. In line with this high level of interest 'in principle', when asked whether the organisation would seek to produce or commission work specifically for such platforms in the future, 37 organisations said yes (93%), one said 'maybe' and two said 'no'.

They were then asked to state the main reason why their organisation was interested in making their content more widely available via online and digital platforms. Many respondents said that they were 'doing it anyway': many were engaged in reassessing how they deliver or commission content, so this project fits with their objectives:

'As technology improves and online potential improves even faster we're quite aware that we need to be doing even more.'

The main benefits of a potential collaboration between the Arts Council, the BBC and arts organisations were seen as:

- improving access to their content (20 organisations of those who provided a main reason said this)
- raising their own profile, and that of the work and artists (12 organisations mentioned this)

A particular benefit connected with improving access to content was 'improving discoverability of content'.

'People are used to coming across information in the way they look for it (searches) – they may be interested in the work we hold, but not know that we hold it, or be aware of our site.'

Some organisations felt that a potential partnership project would help direct people through the mass of content on their individual websites. Two organisations pointed out that the BBC's involvement could potentially help put content where the traffic is already, rather than arts organisations trying to pull people to their own websites.

A further potential benefit was access to BBC expertise and resources. This was mentioned by several organisations. One respondent commented:

'Every single arts organisation is looking at overhauling their arts technology and website at the moment, a partnership with the BBC offers a great deal.'

Broadly, two types of support were mentioned by respondents:

- access to BBC technical knowhow and resources
- support with archiving

Comments included:

'The BBC has access to a wealth of resources... that could be invaluable. These include storage, bandwidth, digital asset management systems and encoding systems.'

'Access [to] the BBC's archival expertise... would help fully form a picture of the history and context of arts in England.'

Respondents were asked if they had any additional comments about the project or the work of their organisations. Three organisations suggested the need to provide context to material. Suggested contextual information included: where material that has been created for purposes other than online distribution; to describe the organisation and how it goes about its work; to present curatorial information alongside pieces that may have been commissioned specifically for an exhibition.

Several other organisations discussed the need for a curatorial approach to the presentation of content. Related to this were questions and comments about the intended audience:

'Every arts organisation brings their own context to things – whether an artist is in Tate or Royal Festival Hall – it connects the artist to the audience. If this context is lost... it's just a large number of videos online and I'm not sure how interesting this is.'

'Do you want the key great talks or everything? Who is the audience? These are questions we're also thinking about at the moment – whether to curate or broadly distribute?'

Two organisations also asked about the potential for them charging for content and how this might work. One commented that they would want to consider what content they made freely available to the public and what they charged for access to, and perhaps build on their experience of creating a picture library by developing a sliding scale for charging for content.

Some organisations' content is already held in BBC archives. One organisation raised the issue of whether the rights would allow this content to be shared. Several organisations mentioned existing relationships with the BBC.

'We already have a content partnership with BBC Film Network but would be keen to expand this, on our own platform, using shareable content.'

Questions arising from the BBC's involvement included: restrictions on the reach of content – would distribution via a BBC platform mean people outside the UK cannot access the material; and would the BBC want to curate the content themselves.

Some organisations raised specific challenges to the project as they saw it. Two organisations were concerned that this project could add to the amount of classical music available on the web, which they saw as unhelpful.

'In principle this project could be fantastic, but the concern is that there's already too much old audio and audio-visual recordings made available. This feeds the myth about classical music being old fashioned and out of date.'

These respondents wanted to see the focus of the project being today's talent and suggested that regularly funded organisations should instead be asked to come up with creative ideas for exploiting the material they hold with the ultimate aim of getting people to experience live performance and arts online.

Three organisations with highly sophisticated online profiles queried the assumptions underlying the survey.

'This survey assumes that all digital content is in linear form, or is accessed via a linear form of distribution such as YouTube. That is primarily an archival system and this is all changing and very rapidly.'

An organisation working on the type of 'process-focused co-creation' projects described in Section 3.2 stated:

'We're not "creating content for dissemination" so don't fit into the "broadcaster online" way of thinking of this project.'

Several organisations pointed to existing initiatives that they felt should be considered when developing this project further. These included:

'FACT is developing a new platform based on Fact.tv with social networking at the forefront of its design. It will be part curated, part archive, part user generated content.'

'folly is currently developing an online social networking space called LoveCulture through which we intend to make media linked from cultural sites and user-generated content available.'

'Artbabble.org is an example of arts organisations getting together to share content. Has good video player, can jump to specific place in a video.'

Despite the challenges, these organisations, together with many others, commented that they were keen to remain involved in the conversations about how this project is developed. As an indication of the high level of interest in this project, 39 organisations (98%) wished to receive a copy of the final report.

4. Conclusions

The survey aimed to establish the extent and type of content held by regularly funded organisations and the level of interest in making this content more widely available via online platforms.

There is estimated to be approximately 40,000 hours of digital content held by the 40 responding organisations. Respondents highlighted the cultural and historical value of the material they hold. Content includes little-seen artist talks, records of exhibitions or dress rehearsals of performances central to the history of the arts in England. There was an overwhelming level of interest in the project, and the opportunity to widen access to this content was embraced by organisations.

However, the study also uncovered some issues that need to be considered as the project develops. Digitised content is not evenly distributed. Critically, one organisation with a sophisticated online presence, Resonance104.4fm, holds 34,650 hours of this content (87%).

The study found a wide range of digital capability and archiving capacity among these organisations. In addition to archiving and digitising issues, rights are likely to be an area with which arts organisations will need support.

There were a handful of very advanced organisations that were not interested in the 'linear' dissemination process implied by a broadcast model – and who were instead developing interactive, participatory and user-led experiences on their own platforms. These organisations were unlikely to be interested in this project as it stands but they were open to exploring, with the Arts Council and the BBC, ways for the project to tap into, or showcase, this level of innovation.

If we wish to take forward this project, it will also be important to consider:

- the high level of interest in the project and the importance of communicating developments to participating organisations
- how best to build in the views of the rest of the Arts Council's regularly funded portfolio, and possibly cultural organisations more widely

Annex 1: List of 50 selected regularly funded organisations

Akademi
a-n, The Artists Information Company
Art Gene
Axis Web
Beaconsfield
Bilston Craft Gallery
Bobby Baker's Daily Life Ltd
Camden Arts Centre
Contact Theatre
Cornerhouse
Crafts Council
English National Opera Ltd
Fact (Foundation for Art & Creative Technology)
Fierce! Festival Limited
folly
Furtherfield.org
Glyndebourne Touring Opera and Glyndebourne Education
Hofesh Shechter Company
Institute of Contemporary Arts
Liverpool Biennial Of Contemporary Art
London Symphony Orchestra
Lux
Mac
Manchester Camerata
Matt's Gallery
Moti Roti Company
New Contemporaries
onedotzero
Philharmonia Orchestra
Pilot Theatre
Poetry Archive
Poetry Translation Centre
Rambert Dance Company
Resonance fm
Royal Opera House
Royal Shakespeare Company
Seven Stories
Southbank Centre Limited
Spike Island Art Space
The Artangel Trust
The Mayor and Commonality and Citizens of the City of London (T/A Barbican Centre)
The Photographers' Gallery
The Roundhouse
UK Centre for Carnival Arts – Luton Carnival
University Of The Arts London – ArtQuest
Visiting Arts
Watershed Arts Trust Ltd
Webplay
Welsh National Opera Ltd
Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Digital Content Survey Arts Council England/BBC

25 September 2009

Introduction

One of the current priorities of Arts Council England is to help arts organisations make the most of the opportunities provided by digital technology to reach and engage new audiences. To this end, the Arts Council recently conducted research to establish the current online offer of its regularly funded organisations. One issue highlighted in the research was that high-quality arts content online can be hard for people to discover. The websites of regularly funded organisations tend to have low Google PageRank¹⁰ scores, meaning that users are unlikely to find much of this content unless they search for the organisations' names or for an exact phrase on a site. Very few of the sites appear to be reaching large online audiences, therefore their impact is limited.

However, as the report *Digital Britain* identified, the arts are important providers of public service broadcasting content. Recognising this fact, and as part of its specific aim of developing new partnerships, the BBC is seeking 'greater collaboration between the BBC and the cultural sector, enabling more public sector organisations to harness the power of digital content.'¹¹

For this reason, the BBC and Arts Council England have recently agreed a Public Value Partnership to enable greater collaboration between the broadcaster and the cultural sector. A key objective of this partnership is to use digital technologies to better connect publicly funded arts content with audiences through digital services and platforms. One outcome of this partnership will be to identify new ways in which online platforms can be used to provide greater access to the Arts Council's film collection and the BBC arts archives. The long-term aim is to identify ways in which online platforms can maximise public access to the audio and audio-visual material produced by arts organisations, including short clips and longer recordings of performances, artist interviews, talks and debates, and other arts-related content.

What are we asking regularly funded organisations for?

To help us to develop these ideas further, we believe it would be in the interests of the sector as a whole for there to be a better understanding of the audio and audio-visual material produced, held and distributed by regularly

¹⁰ See Section 3.1 of MTM London's report for a definition of Google PageRank;

www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/downloads/MTM-snapshot.pdf

¹¹ *Digital Britain*, DCMS/BIS, June 2009

funded organisations. In a first phase of research, a research team at the Arts Council will conduct a short, top-level survey of approximately 50 organisations to give us some headline information on the volume and kinds of material that could be showcased or linked to by any new portal.

Organisations can choose whether to self-complete the survey, take part in a telephone interview lasting approximately 20 minutes or a combination of the two options. This will be followed with a second phase of research covering all other regularly funded organisations that express an interest in taking part.

What will the information be used for?

The information will be used by the Arts Council and the BBC to inform strategic decision-making about the viability of collaboration by the two organisations in this area, on behalf of the sector as a whole. Data relating to individual organisations will be seen by those conducting the research and senior staff of the organisations only. If required, responses can be kept anonymous. Data collected will be analysed and a brief report shared by Arts Council and BBC. The report will be made available to participating organisations on request and should provide an important initial insight into the collective online potential of arts organisations leading the digital field.

What are the potential outcomes?

This is an opportunity for all publicly funded arts organisations, including the Arts Council's regularly funded organisations, to be part of an initiative that explores the potential of digital technologies to give greater exposure to their activities and to increase the size and engagement of their audiences. An explicit aim would be to drive users to the organisations' own websites.

Next steps

Lead officers have been briefed on the project and we are now contacting approximately 50 regularly funded organisations identified by MTM London as holding good or excellent public service content. Participating organisations will be surveyed during September and October 2009. The report will be completed by early November 2009.

Annex 3: Questionnaire

Arts Council and BBC digital content survey

The BBC and Arts Council England have recently agreed a Public Value Partnership. One long-term aim is to identify ways in which online platforms can maximise public access to the audio and audio-visual material produced by arts organisations, including short clips and longer recordings of performances and other arts-related content.

To help develop these ideas we are conducting a short, top-level survey of approximately 50 regularly funded organisations to give us some headline information on the volume and kinds of audio-visual material that they hold. **This is an exploratory piece of work and the information will be used by the Arts Council and the BBC to inform decisions about the viability of collaboration by the two organisations in this area, on behalf of the sector as a whole.**

Data relating to individual organisations will be seen by those conducting the research and senior staff of the Arts Council and BBC only. Data collected will be analysed and a brief report shared by the Arts Council and the BBC. If required, responses can be kept anonymous. The report will be shared with participating organisations on request.

If you have any queries when completing the questionnaire please call Lucy Hutton at Arts Council England on 020 7973 5301 or email lucy.hutton@artscouncil.org.uk

1. Name: _____

2. Job title: _____

3. Organisation: _____

4. Do you have an archive of audio or audio-visual material?

- Yes
 No

5. Is this material....?

Please select one.

- Audio only
 Audio-visual only
 Both audio and audio-visual

6. Approximately how much audio and / or audio-visual material do you hold?

*Please give numbers of hours **and** items.*

_____ hours

_____ items

7. Thinking about your content in terms of *individual items*, what percentage of your material is?

The total should add up to 100%.

_____ % Clips of longer programmes (under 5 minutes)

_____ % Short-form programmes (under 5 minutes)

_____ % Long-form programmes (5 minutes and over)

8. Thinking about your content in terms of *hours*, what percentage of your material is digital and stored electronically?

_____ %

9. In what recording formats are your *audio* materials held?

Please tick all that apply.

- Uncompressed audio files – such as AIFF
- Compressed audio files – such as MP3 or WAV
- Digital compact cassette (DCC)
- MiniDisk (MD)
- Digital audio tape (DAT)
- Compact disk (CD)
- Betamax digital audio
- Compact cassette
- Reel to reel (magnetic tape)
- Gramophone record (vinyl record, shellac record)
- Other (please specify _____)

10. In what recording formats are your *audio-visual* materials held?

Please tick all that apply.

File-based formats

What specific formats do you use?

- MXF wrapped Uncompressed AV
- MXF wrapped JPEG-2000
- MXF wrapped DV
- AAF
- AVI wrapped
- AVC
- MPEG-4 / H264
- MPEG-2
- MPEG-1
- JPEG-2000
- Don't know

Film (such as standard 8mm, 35mm)

Professional videotape

What specific formats do you use?

- HDCAM
- DVPRO
- DVCAM
- D3
- D2
- Betacam
- Umatic
- Quad tapes
- Don't know

Domestic videotape

What specific formats do you use?

- Betamax
- Videotape (VHS)
- Don't know

Other (please specify _____)

11. What types of content do you hold?

Please tick all that apply.

- Recordings of performances
- Artist interviews
- Audience interviews
- Documentaries
- Talks and debates
- Recordings of exhibitions
- Films on works in the collection
- Films in their own right (film as a genre)

12. What metadata do you hold on your audio and audio-visual material?
(Metadata is information describing context, content and structure of records.)

Please tick all that apply.

- Author/Creator
- Title
- Subject
- Keywords
- Creation date
- Description (synopsis)
- Unique identifier
- None

13. Is the metadata held on an electronic database?

- Yes
- No

14. How do you make your audio and audio-visual content available?

Please tick all that apply.

- Through your own website
- YouTube
- Another organisation's website
- By appointment in a viewing room
- Through broadcast partners
- Via VHS or DVDs
- Other (please specify _____)
- The content is not available

15. Roughly how many people access your audio and audio-visual content a year?

Please provide the total number of people accessing online and offline _____

16. Do you charge for access?

- Yes
- No

17. If you answered yes to question 16, how do you charge?

Please tick all that apply.

- Subscription via website
- Sales of downloads
- Sales of physical copies of DVDs, etc
- To cover distribution costs only
- Other commercial means (please specify _____)

18. Who is the creator of the audio and audio visual material you keep?

Please tick all that apply.

- Your own organisation
- Partner organisation
- An artist
- Other rights holder

19. What percentage of your audio and audio-visual material has had all rights cleared?

Please give a percentage for each.

...for distribution by yourselves?

_____ %

...for distribution by someone else?

_____ %

20. Are you interested, in principle, in making your audio and audio-visual content more widely available via online and digital platforms?

Please select one.

- Yes, definitely interested
- Maybe
- Not at the moment
- No, never

What is your main reason for your answer to question 20? _____

21. Would your organisation seek to produce or commission work specifically for such platforms in the future?

- Yes
- No

22. Are you happy for this information to be shared with the BBC or would you prefer that your answers are kept anonymous?

Please tick one.

- Happy to share this information with the BBC
- Please keep my answers anonymous

23. Would you like to receive a copy of the final report?

- Yes
- No

24. Finally, is there anything you'd like to add? _____