One-hundred and twenty-seven museums participated in the 2015 Digital Culture Survey, as a part of a longitudinal study of how arts and cultural organisations in England use digital technology. They include organisations of different sizes from across England, giving us a robust picture of how the museums sector is using technology to support its mission.¹

Note: Within this report the statistical significance of the results have been tested to a 95 per cent confidence level. Wherever the word ‘significant’ is used, it refers to the result being statistically significant at this level unless stated otherwise.

### Importance of digital technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most important for</th>
<th>Marketing, preserving and archiving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Least important for</td>
<td>Business models and creation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Museums say digital technology is most important for their marketing (85 per cent describe it as important) and preserving and archiving (81 per cent), and least important for business models (36 per cent) and creating their output (49 per cent). These proportions mirror the overall arts and culture average, as shown in Figure 1, except that museums are significantly less likely to say that digital is important for their business models (36 per cent see it as important vs. 45 per cent of the arts sector as a whole).²

Since 2013 there has been no significant change in the importance of digital to museums. Although the importance of digital technology for business models has grown across the sector (45 per cent in 2015 vs. 34 per cent in 2013), museums have seen no significant change (36 per cent vs. 32 per cent).³
Digital activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top digital activities</th>
<th>Own website, publishing content on free platforms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More likely than other sectors to...</td>
<td>Offer educational interactive experiences, create digital experiences used at the same time as the artwork/exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less likely than other sectors to...</td>
<td>Use email marketing, publish content onto their own website, sell tickets online, crowdfunding, livestream events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Museums tend to be slightly less digitally active compared to the whole arts and culture sector. On average they are doing nine different activities compared to 9.5 for the sector as a whole. At an individual activity level they are generally in line with the rest of the sector, but less digitally active in several key areas, as shown in Figure 2. Museums are significantly less likely to engage in email marketing (67 per cent vs. 83 per cent for the sector as a whole), publish content to their own website (55 per cent vs. 72 per cent), sell event tickets online (31 per cent vs. 45 per cent), post video or audio content (31 per cent vs. 43 per cent), make use of social media video advertising (18 per cent vs. 32 per cent), use crowdfunding (8 per cent vs. 19 per cent) or livestream performances (2 per cent vs. 12 per cent). Museums are significantly more likely than the sector as a whole to sell products or merchandise online (44 per cent vs. 34 per cent), offer digital experiences used at the...
same time as an exhibition or artwork (34 per cent vs. 23 per cent), offer educational interactive experiences (27 per cent vs. 16 per cent) and offer online interactive tours of real-world spaces (19 per cent vs. 7 per cent). Since 2013, however, the number of museums offering educational content has decreased significantly (42 per cent vs. 63 per cent in 2013), while the number publishing content onto free platforms has significantly increased (84 per cent vs. 71 per cent).

Museums are more likely to identify themselves as late adopters of technology, compared to the sector as a whole (33 per cent say they are among the last to try new technologies, vs. 22 per cent sector average).

Figure 2: Digital activities for museums (2015 and change from 2013)

In terms of mobile and social media, museums are similar to the sector average – just over half have a mobile-optimised web presence (55 per cent), and the most popular social platforms are Facebook (90 per cent), Twitter (71 per cent) and YouTube (38 per cent). However, museums are less likely to be using video platforms, namely YouTube (38 per cent vs. 56 per cent for the whole sector) and Vimeo (9 per cent vs. 29 per cent).

Significant changes 2013-2015 (at the 95% significance level) highlighted in bold
2015: Museums n=127, Whole sector n = 984; 2013: Museums n=118

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The impact of digital

Overall, 62 per cent of museums report a major or fairly major positive impact from digital, significantly below the sector average of 72 per cent. At a granular level they also tend to report significantly lower levels of impact compared with other types of arts and cultural organisations, as shown in Figure 3.

Some of the areas with the greatest difference in impact between museums and the rest of the sector relate to audience development, for example boosting public profile (46 per cent vs. 58 per cent for the sector as a whole), reaching a bigger audience (44 per cent vs. 53 per cent), engaging more with existing audiences (31 per cent vs. 41), and connecting with new communities (15 per cent vs. 30 per cent). Impact areas related to the production of content also tend to be lower, for example collaborating with other organisations on artistic projects (7 per cent vs. 24 per cent), overall quality of creative work (8 per cent vs. 22 per cent) and production (14 per cent vs. 27 per cent).

Figure 3: The impact of digital on business areas (museums vs. whole sector, 2015)

Significant changes 2013-2015 (at the 95% significance level) highlighted in bold

2015: Museums n=127, Whole sector n=984; 2013: Museums n=118
Since 2013, significantly more museums report a positive impact from digital on selling tickets online (16 per cent vs. 7 per cent in 2013), while fewer report a positive impact on production (14 per cent vs. 24 per cent) and on collaborating with other organisations (7 per cent vs. 21 per cent).12

Management factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biggest barrier</th>
<th>Lack of in-house staff time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biggest skills gap</td>
<td>User interface design and user testing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In common with the wider sector, museums see lack of time and resources as being the most significant barriers to digital development. Eighty per cent cite lack of in-house staff time as a barrier, significantly above the 71 per cent sector average, while 66 per cent report lack of funding to allocate to digital projects (vs. 73 per cent). Compared to the sector as a whole, museums are significantly more likely to say that slow or limited IT systems or networks (52 per cent vs. 37 per cent) and lack of control over IT systems (43 per cent vs. 27 per cent) are barriers to digital development.13

In terms of skills, museums feel similarly well-served compared to the rest of the sector in most areas, as shown in Figure 4. Museums are significantly more likely to feel well-served for digital archiving (48 per cent vs. 37 per cent for the sector as a whole), but significantly less likely to feel well-served for digital production (31 per cent vs. 44 per cent).14

Since 2013, skills gaps for museums have become significantly worse. In five areas, fewer museums now feel that they are well-served: digital production (31 per cent vs. 44 per cent in 2013), database and customer relationship management (27 per cent vs. 40 per cent), data analysis (22 per cent vs. 38 per cent), legal advice around IP rights (22 per cent vs. 35 per cent), project management (22 per cent vs. 35 per cent) and rights clearance (19 per cent vs. 32 per cent).15

**Figure 4:** Proportion that feel well-served for digital skills (museums vs. whole sector, 2015)

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Significant changes 2013-2015 (at the 95% significance level) highlighted in bold
2015: Museums n=127, Whole sector n=984; 2013: Museums n=118
The Digital R&D Fund for the Arts is a £7 million fund that has supported collaboration between arts organisations, technology providers, and researchers. The Digital R&D Fund is a partnership between Nesta, Arts Council England and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

For information about its projects and to learn more about digital R&D visit the website for the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts at artsdigitalrnd.org.uk or connect with us on Twitter @digitalrnd or using the hashtag #artsdigital