The Brian Johns Lecture June 11 2019
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Breaking down the silos – creativity in the digital age

The rapid development and proliferation of new digital technologies this century, has transformed our society's traditional ways of being together, working, doing business and learning.

Digital media now permeates our lives in ways that were unimaginable a decade ago and has fundamentally changed the way we produce, distribute and consume media.

The tools to make, share, distribute, and watch media content now lies in the hands of the many, rather than the few.

It is true that these new technologies have the capacity to empower individuals and communities and provide opportunities for new voices. But equally they demand that we rethink how we engage with and use digital media, as our user patterns are transformed and our institutions, both traditional and non-traditional are dramatically disrupted.

I know it's a cliché to suggest opportunity is the flip side of challenge – but in my experience, I really do think it's true: these changes really do provide opportunities – for transformation, collaboration, for finding new ways of working and working together. And the arts and creativity are at the heart of these opportunities.

Previous speakers delivering the Brian Johns Lecture have focused on traditional media industries and the seismic shifts they have undergone as new technologies and competitors have arrived, disrupting established business models and scattering their audiences. These industries have required complete reinvention to remain economically sustainable and audience focused.

My interest, as the Director of a public funded cultural institution, is how new technologies and media can be harnessed in creative ways across the arts and cultural sectors to break down silos between art forms and platforms, to remove traditional barriers to access and to foster innovation. The enormous shifts we are witnessing can empower audiences to self select the media they want to explore, to curate their consumption – and they can create media and distribute it instantly. With this power, their expectations are changing. They want to have a two way conversation, not simply to be delivered to. And yet as the public enjoys its agency through social media and search engines, it is subject to the relentless drive of 'surveillance capitalism' where 'public' becomes 'consumer' and their data and its

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deployment has incredible revenue attached. Algorithms are simultaneously narrowing the access audiences and consumers get through targeted digital marketing.

In this frame, how can traditional cultural institutions – museums, festivals, public broadcasters – innovate to extend the reach, impact and public value of our missions? How can the arts and media sectors work together to support creative practitioners to foster cross disciplinary collaboration and, through this, innovation?

How can we embed the value of this creative experimentation and R&D more deeply within government policy as our society, industries and economy transforms? And how can we foster critical media literacy across our community to navigate this torrent of media that is invading our lives?

We have to change – the digital age is here. How do we manage and take advantage of this shifting landscape? How do public institutions define their missions – and their operating spaces – in a digital mediascape where we are all imagined as consumers and where the digital 'public square' is actually a non-stop shopping centre?

Powerful creative tools are increasingly accessible – in our studios, our homes, our offices, our schools and in our pockets. We can access almost any piece of information from anywhere at any time. Tea Uglow, Director of Google Creative Lab, described the digital transformation in learning to me as a shift from knowledge to curiosity – a move away from a paradigm in which knowledge used to be locked away in discrete spaces and books, in which rote learning and remembering swathes of information was vital – to a new 'way of knowing' where what matters is developing the critical skills to enable us to discover and explore and interpret.

As the economy of the developed world turns increasingly away from 'hard' industries, and jobs in manufacturing and many service industries vanish – the robots are coming! – governments and corporations and policy makers recognise that the so called 'soft skills' – those we learn in the arts and humanities – intuition, imagination, creativity, communication – will be vital to drive our future.

It was at the end of the 19th Century, at the rise of Modernism that the moving image arrived – alongside the commercialisation of the internal combustion engine, sound recording and the telephone. The steam driven movement of machines – in factories, in trains – transformed our world, and altered how we experienced time and movement. As travel and long distance communication opened up for the masses, and working hours shifted and changed, new collaborations were possible and it was a dawn – like now – of an incredibly fertile period of innovation and experimentation.

Louis Le Prince shot the first known film footage outside his home in Leeds in 1888, on his single lens camera using paper roll film. This pioneering achievement is not

widely known however, as shortly before a scheduled public display of his new technology, Le Prince went missing – boarding a train never to be seen again.

Thomas Edison's Kinetoscope was first publicly displayed in 1893. The single person peep-hole viewer used a 50-foot loop of 35mm celluloid film and was influenced by the work of several inventors including Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey. In 1896 the Kinetoscope debuted in Australia, with twenty-five thousand people traveling to Sydney in the first month of its exhibition to see the new moving pictures.

On Jan. 25, 1896, the Lumière brothers screened their 50 second short film *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* at a café in Paris to a small audience seeing film for the very first time. It was the simple documentation of a train pulling in to a station, towards the camera. The audience cowered, shrieked with fear, ran from their seats, unable to process that the moving image was not real. It was terrifying and wondrous – full of power and magic. The Cinématographe Lumière could record, develop and project motion pictures and even lent its name to the thrilling new art form – *cinema*.

The moving image has been utterly transformative. To the way we tell stories – fictional and factual – and the way we disseminate news – fictional and factual. The animation of images not only created a new way to express ideas, communicate and create artworks, it enabled their creator to play with time as they manipulated the individual frames. And like photography, film was portable and reproducible. Suddenly distribution could be global and to a mass audience.

No one could have anticipated that within one hundred years people everywhere would be consuming and creating a veritable torrent of moving images. For many years the creation of moving image – celluloid – was expensive, the purview of the few. It required specialist technology and teams, complex chemical processes, and distribution was highly controlled by the industry that had rapidly built up around it. But as quickly as cinema spread across the globe, new avenues for access were being created, speeding up throughout the 20th Century into a frenzy of innovation in the 21st.

The first electronic television picture was created in 1927. Televisions hit the market in the mid-30s, and now moving images were in our homes. The first TV satellite was launched in 1962 enabling millions to share the same news story at the same time. In 1965 Eastman Kodak released the Super 8 camera and film cartridge making filmmaking available to the masses.

In 1976 VHS (and Betamax) were launched and in 1977 the first feature film VHS tapes were released so we could watch films at home instead of the cinema – interestingly the first three films released on these pioneering new platforms were *The Sound of Music*, *Patton* and *M*A*S*H,* which probably tells us more about the popular culture of the 1970s than we need to know.

The first consumer video camcorders were released in the 1980s, Blockbuster video arrived in 1985, one year after digital video was invented. In 1997 Reed Hastings founded Netflix, partly out of frustration after being fined $40 for a late return at Blockbuster – boy did he get his revenge – and this was the same year the first known picture was publicly shared via a cell phone, and DVDs arrived. 1999 - TiVo launched Digital Video Recording for the home. 2002 GoPro is launched, 2003 YouTube is launched, 2007 Apple TV is launched.

At ACMI, we recently closed our free permanent exhibition Screen Worlds as part of the major Renewal program we are undertaking. Attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, it opened to the public in 2009 – Australia's first exhibition that told the global story of the arrival of the moving image from pre-cinema to the present. It was designed, as most exhibitions are, to arrive and stay the same. But a decade on, the final section called The Digital Era, 1991 to the present day featured a glass dome in which sat an iPhone 3. It had just been released in Australia as the exhibition opened. Clearly a few things have changed since then.

Over the course of a decade that followed the release of the iPhone 3, the proliferation of smart mobile technology has meant that the majority of the population carry ever more sophisticated tools of creation, consumption and distribution in their pockets. The 4G network has played a key role in enabling this pervasive, radical mediation and the arrival of 5G networks sometime in 2020 – will, quite literally – accelerate this process: 5G is predicted to be 100 times faster than the NBN network. This speed and depth of data transference will enable high quality audio visual content to be consumed anywhere and at any time.

We are witnessing an extraordinary democratization of the moving image, at once wonderful and terrifying. We can choose what we watch, when we want it watch it, wherever we want to see it (though I have to say my mobile signal in Brunswick East is fairly poor!) – and our data is being harnessed to exploit, control and monetize our choices. When we think of media we think of it as the main means of mass communication (broadcasting, publishing, and the Internet). But anyone who can afford a smartphone has the possibility of both making and distributing video – becoming a broadcaster. This incredible power is equally available to our children and our parents, as readily accessible to wannabe pornographers as to would be feminist film makers. It makes media producers of student climate activists, right wing nationalists, garage bands and wedding guests alike.

While high production value content remains costly and valued – cheap and ubiquitous often wins out – just like the aphorism 'the best camera is the one you have in your pocket'. Two of the most popular You Tube toy unboxing channels – where they literally just show hands unboxing a toy – have racked up a combined 38.6 billion views since launching. And citizen journalism, capturing and streaming real moments in real time can have massive and sometimes terrible ramifications – from Tariq Square to the Christchurch massacre.

The revolution is upon us – and it is being televised.

From the beginning media makers - artists, journalists, filmmakers, technicians – have experimented with these new platforms to tell and share stories and ideas in an utterly new way. It is the creative industries whose innovation has driven these multi trillion dollar industries globally.

For the arts, the increased accessibility and affordability of moving image technologies is full of potential. It remains expensive to create moving image content with high production values – but as the digital tools of making and distributing have become more affordable, the silos are starting to break down between disciplines and form. Practitioners in traditional disciplines – music, dance, theatre, opera, visual arts – can expand their canvas to use the moving image within their practice.

When I was a performer in the late 80s/early 90s, I worked with a wonderful, multi-disciplinary theatre company called Etcetera. It gave me my passion for fostering cross disciplinary collaboration that has been a defining part of my career ever since. Russell Garbutt, who was one of the founders of Etcetera, created a stunning eight minute theatre piece in 1989. He projected super 8 footage onto his face as he simultaneously performed live the speech he had captured on film. It was strange and magical with a mix of liveness and animation that, at that time, was rare. But it was pre-recorded, and the analogue technology at that time allowed no spontaneity or improvisation of the image with the liveness.

A couple of years later, the great Canadian theatre maker Robert Lepage came to the Sydney Festival with his ground breaking production *Needles and Opium* – a theatre piece that incorporated ingenious analogue theatrical tricks but also lots of projection. His technician sat on stage, live cueing the projection so that the performer was leading the content rather than the other way. It was a revelation to me, back in 1991, that digital tools could be applied to enable the moving images to work so sympathetically – so organically – with live performance.

Fifteen years later so much more was possible technologically, and artists have been seizing these opportunities to experiment. I'll show you two great examples:

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In 2006 choreographer Gideon Obarzanek's *Glow* took this further with its stunning use of motion image capture technology as the dancer triggered moving projections around them to life with their live movement.

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Most recently at the Adelaide Festival of Arts, Barry Kosky presented his Berlin Komische opera production of *The Magic Flute* – his collaboration with projection artists '1927' created the entire set as a moving image that plays around the singers.

But despite highly creative applications of moving image into the performing and visual arts, many of our leading artists aren't easily able to move into the worlds of Film and TV.

Despite its history of experimentation and innovation and its highly creative, ensemble-based practices (like the performing arts), film has, in the main, remained separate from the rest of the arts.

Film is defined as an industry and the measures for investment and success are often different to that of the rest of the arts. The funding mechanisms as they are structured in Australia ensure that film and TV sit separately from the rest of the arts, and often require the agencies to prioritise 'stimulating the industry' with quantitative selection criteria – market attachments, economic impact, jobs – sometimes disproportionally over qualitative selection criteria: the calibre of the creative team, the pushing of form, the quality of the idea or script, the cultural importance of the story being told.

The Indigenous Unit Screen Australia is a shining example of the benefits and impact a screen agency can have when other criteria are applied. Over its 26 years of operations, the Indigenous Unit has identified talented individuals and over years invested in developing their filmmaking skills. The alumni of this program are leaders in Australia's film and television industry.

Penny Smallacombe, Head of Indigenous, said at their 25th anniversary celebration last year:
> SBS, NITV, the ABC, AFTRS and other Indigenous organisations like CAAMA have all been on this incredible journey and together we have gone from a place where we were absent from screens, or stories were told about us, to being able to tell our own stories.
>
> Our faces are now routinely seen on television. Our languages are heard at the cinema. Our stories are now shared online with people around the world. Our work is celebrated at international festivals, treasured at home and has become a cultural and commercial resource for our people.

Screen Australia's Indigenous Unit shows the value of backing talent over years, investing in their skills development, supporting these practitioners to experiment and take chances – and through this process finding success, artistically and commercially, in making ground breaking film and television.

At the biennial Adelaide Film Festival, where I was founding director for a decade from 2003, we were granted an Investment Fund by the then Premier Mike Rann.

Amazingly the $1m every two years was provided with only a couple of caveats – projects had to return some kind of economic return to South Australia and the works had to ideally world premiere at Adelaide Film Festival. But our principal selection criteria was the creative potential of the work and how it can speak to an audience in a festival environment – that is the caliber of the artists involved and the championing of that voice, and the quality of the idea – the story, the subject matter, the pushing of form.

This was hugely liberating, enabling us to make some bold choices, and demonstrated the benefit that film industry investment based principally on qualitative selection criteria could bring.

In 2005, our first year for the Fund, we were the first investors in Sarah Watt's debut feature film *LOOK BOTH WAYS*. An award winning animator, she was moving into live action of the first time, taking the ideas she had explored through her beautiful hand painted cell animations into a broader, long form, live narrative canvas, with animation intermittently intervening into the action. It was a risk – a debut feature writer-director who had no history of working with live action – but the script was wonderful to read, and the form exciting. They agreed to shoot in Adelaide and we were in. The film went on to win the Discovery Award at Toronto International Film Festival and Best Director for Sarah at the AFIs.

We supported many other first time filmmakers films – Warwick Thornton's *Samson & Delilah*, Justin Kurzel's *Snowtown*, Beck Cole's *Here I am* - fictional and factual films, animations, shorts, cross platform practitioners and visual artists; and we supported some grand experiments, sometimes with real success.

The Adelaide Film Festival Investment Fund gave us a truly rare opportunity to apply subsidy to enable practitioners to experiment and take risks. Whilst government funding opportunities are shrinking, it's vital the agencies are given the backing to establish programs that support experimentation and new forms and models – and that they can consistently back talent over time – diverse talent – and invest longer term in their careers. It works for the Australian Institute for Sport, and it can work in the arts and cultural sectors.

When I was programming arts and film festivals, I loved the opportunity to create a moment of critical mass that invites a broad audience to explore, to be curious and try things they might not otherwise see. I sought to deliver a balanced program. That is, one that offers an audience multiple points of entry, programming work that spans the spectrum from glossy and broad appeal attracting large audiences to the experimental and niche – sometimes only for one person at a time.

By applying the government subsidy we had, we enabled access and removed barriers – distance, cost, invitation – to audiences to see a broad range of work and hear from voices across Australia and the globe. We also understood that a mass

audience is really a series of smaller *audiences and communities* who can gain value from this approach – i.e., it doesn't *all* have to appeal *to lots* of people *all* the time – just *some* of the time.

Public broadcasting should do the same thing.

Through the public broadcasters, audiences can access arts programming – and perhaps discover something that might encourage them to go to see new Australian theatre or visit a gallery – to engage with the artists who are reflecting our society and stories back to ourselves – or inspire them to even create something themselves.

The importance of this – the removing of the barriers to access and engagement in the arts (often seen as only for some kind of undefined 'elite') through public broadcast – be it on radio, online or television – is perhaps why the ABC charter particularly states that the broadcaster exists in part to promote the arts.

In the 3 years I was Head of Arts for ABC TV, one thing I struggled with was the different interpretations the leadership team had around the measures of reach and impact.

Quantitative measures – ratings – are important. ABC TV Arts had to ensure across a balanced program that some of its investment delivered prime time high rating programs. These were the easier commissioning conversations – and we managed to secure some prime time spots in the schedule and gain significant ratings for well-made cultural and arts based series and programs.

It was harder to argue that a program should be commissioned or acquired when it was clear that the ratings would be relatively small – for example a one off half hour – or even more challengingly a feature or documentary that showcased for example an artist and their practice.

Australian practitioners – some of our leading theatre and dance companies, musicians, visual artists, opera companies – might perform or exhibit for up to a few thousand people each year. Most Australian's will have never had the opportunity – or perhaps even had the inclination – to seek them out and see their work live. I think it's vital we showcase the creative processes and work of these practitioners. And equally that we support the filmmakers who have a passion to creatively tell these practitioners stories. But that's not all arts should be doing on the ABC.

Channel 4 in the UK has charted a very clear path in its approach to its distinctive and high impact arts programming, and deliberately avoids these kinds of arts themed-documentaries, as they state:

> Channel 4 tries to do the reverse of what most other channels do in this area: we don't make programmes about artists; we commission artists to

make programmes about us. In other words, we ask artists (in the broad sense, i.e. singers, dancers, photographers etc.) to author the films.

Alumni from this approach to programming, which was supported by Arts Council England include visual artist now internationally acclaimed filmmaker Steve McQueen and Turner award winning ceramicist Grayson Perry – now a regular on BBC screens.

An intervention that we began here in Australia in 2007 was The Hive. I was struck when I began working at the Adelaide Film Festival, after so many years around the performing arts, how linear the creative development of new work was in film – and how our funding structures embed this linearity. There are of course exceptions to this – but generally the funding is set up so that the writer writes, then when the script has the market attachments it needs, the director takes over with the producer who then brings together the rest of the key creative team – DOP, composer, production & costume design, editor and the acting ensemble – as the director directs, to deliver the new work.

Whilst the performing arts also has people in these specialist roles, my experience there – in the creative development of new work – is that the process is more often collaborative, and far earlier in the process. The development of a new theatre or dance production brings the key creatives and ensemble together much earlier in the process – through creative development periods – flattening the structure and enabling cross disciplinary collaboration throughout the creation of the work.

We thought it might be fruitful to create a space where practitioners from a range of screen and art forms could come together. The Hive Lab was set up at the Adelaide Film Festival with the Australia Council and ABC TV Arts to bring together filmmakers with leading practitioners from across the arts to talk together in a lab environment about their creative processes and to share ideas about the making of new work. It set up new kinds of conversations, new collaborations and for a number of the participants inspired different kinds of projects and working approaches.

Out of this, the Hive Production Fund was established – an $800,000 biennial fund with matched funding from Adelaide Film Festival, ABC TV Arts, the Australia Council and Screen Australia. This rare pool of money invited practitioners from across the arts into the world of film and TV – and a number of important works have been created that could have never been commissioned or funded via the conventional routes.

Stephen Page adapted his full-length dance piece *SPEAR* with Bangarra into a feature film. Rosemary Myers from Windmill Performing Arts adapted her production for young people *Girl Asleep* into a feature film that went on to premiere at the Berlin Film Festival. Lynette Wallworth's documentary *Tender* not only saw Lynette win the Kit Denton Award that year but the start-up community run funeral business in Port Kembla that she tenderly documented, successfully fundraised and established a now viable business.

Over a dozen films have been made, screening on ABC TV and at film festivals here and around the globe to hundreds of thousands of viewers.

The innovation here – the big breakthrough – was that these practitioners, who often are leading their field in Australia, were able to contemplate Film and or TV as a medium for their storytelling in the future: the barriers between these silos – theatre and film, dance and television, independent theatre and the ABC – were shown to be at least partly porous. These artists – dancers, video makers, theatre makers – now have film making credits to their name that make them eligible to apply to the state and federal screen agencies.

One of the most successful of the Hive projects was a half hour comedy drama created by Back to Back Theatre. Back to Back is led by Artistic Director Bruce Gladwin with an ensemble of hugely talented performers and creators with a perceived disability. Based in Geelong, they are one of Australia's most successful theatre companies, touring and collaborating with festivals and companies all over the globe, most recently with the Sundance Theatre Institute. (And I should at this moment declare a conflict as I am on their Board).

Through Hive, Back to Back have made a half hour TV Sci-Fi comedy drama called *Oddlands*, devised and performed by the Ensemble, in collaboration with Bruce who directed and wrote the script. It was produced by one of Australia's leading film and TV production companies Matchbox.

In any year they might perform live to 2000 – 3000 people here and overseas. The live to air ABC TV broadcast that screened earlier this year attracted 140,000 viewers. Now the company has received funding from Screen Australia to develop the scripts for a 6 part series. This has to be seen as a success on any measure: this is about changing the conversation and empowering this company, whose ensemble members happen to have a disability, to have a voice on our public television screens – and they are, like they do in theatre, creating distinctive, important, entertaining and engaging television. The ABC can give leading creative practitioners the opportunity to tell their stories on this canvas and to reach a far broader audience than ever possible in the world of theatre. But it takes a different kind of commissioning process like The Hive to overcome the usual funding and commissioning barriers.

In the ABC's new genre-based structure there is a great deal of potential to leverage the arts more effectively across the broadcaster's platforms – radio, TV online. There is also the opportunity to also explore commissioning artist led projects that harness these platforms with live site specific elements to create some really impactful artistic works that can be experienced in situ and through broadcast.

But this potential is at serious risk. There is currently no dedicated Head of Arts at the ABC – and the broadcaster needs to employ one fast and, with the support of

the state and federal funding agencies, give them the resources to commission bold and engaging Arts content on TV, radio and online by screen and arts practitioners across the nation.

For the federal agencies which have faced unprecedented cuts in recent years – Screen Australia, the Australia Council, the National Film and Sound Archive, the ABC and SBS – it is vital to remember the value that creative experimentation and innovation can bring to technology. After all technology is simply a tool – it is what you do with the tool. Content is queen – and we must ensure we are supporting and developing those practitioners who have the talent to shift the dial and really break through to make new discoveries and often new and significant audiences.

Lynette Wallworth is an Australian artist whose work across her career has been pushing the boundaries of the technologies she works with to tell urgent social impact stories. Her most recent work, *Awavena*, is a virtual reality artwork made at the invitation of, and in collaboration with, the Yawanawa People of the Amazon Basin, who saw the possibilities 360 degree video had to tell their story. Lynette wanted to scan the forest and community in incredible detail and through her production partners was able to take one of the only three ultra high definition LIDAR scanners available in the US at that time with her crew to the Amazon. The LIDAR scanner collects 300,000 points of data per second. Lynette was seeking a way to harness this brand new technology to create footage that was at once completely specific and ethereal at the same time – to match the vision state the Yawanawa were seeking the VR work to express.

Lynette returned to the US and through Sundance had a residency at the Technicolor Experience Centre in LA to undertake her post production. She worked with Technicolor's team to deliver this very complicated work and ensure its seamless interactivity. Technicolor saw how Lynette had pushed this new technological tool, and has now bought a LIDAR scanner and is applying it to other projects. A residency of this kind has not only been hugely beneficial for Lynette – but also for Technicolor – that is why this 100 year old company has an artist in residence program: to see how artists experiment with these tools and then apply this commercially.

Creativity thrives on experimentation and risk – it's not safe, outcomes are not guaranteed. The cuts to the federal agencies have reduced their capacity to support this experimentation and this slows down cultural innovation in our nation. There are fewer opportunities for fewer practitioners and barriers are coming up, reducing diversity as choices inevitably become safer, and outcomes are judged more and more on their quantitative rather than balanced with qualitative outcomes.

As we pivot into the new economy, digital technology changes our workforce. The robots – or more specifically, automation - are coming. But they are coming *with* us, enabling us to do more, to explore new ideas, expand our creative horizons. Soft skills – intuition, creativity, innovation, collaboration, problem solving,

communication, nuance, lateral and tangential thinking – these are vital skills to learn that robots can't replace. And these buzzwords are central to the creative industries and the arts.

They are our DNA.

But we need resources to explore and push technology and platforms, to create content in different ways, to build new businesses and audiences through this. We need R&D.

When the Federal Government released its National Innovation and Science Agenda in 2015, it missed a big opportunity. It set a focus on science, research and innovation as long-term drivers of economic prosperity, jobs and growth and $1.1 billion was committed over four years – which was great.

But it was so very frustrating that as a national Agenda on Innovation was established – vital for our nation – that it neglected to propose a focus on, and vitally provide investment into creativity and the creative industries. Artists and the creative industries push form, they take risks, they look at digital tools in a different way, they are entrepreneurial – and they are about CONTENT.

Consider one of the very successful start-up communities in Australia – particularly in Melbourne currently – the games industry. The multi billion global games industries is now bigger than the global film and television industries combined. And let's get beyond the cliché that games are only for sweaty boys playing first person shooters – video games are as broad ranging in their form and as creative an industry as film and TV, offering content for everyone and anyone. While the industry has major issues with gender diversity on the production side of the equation (as does TV and film), the same can't be said for the audience – around half of all video game players are women. The games industry is all about innovation – and business. And because the success of a game is not just code but storytelling, design, sound, music, user experience design, it's not just STEM – its science technology engineering mathematics and the arts – its STEAM!

At ACMI we are currently running an Accelerator program for Creative Victoria in partnership with the State Library. It is for Victorian start ups in the creative industries – right now we have twelve companies resident at our co-working space ACMI X for a two month program which applies tech start up methodologies to creative businesses, and it is the third Accelerator we have run of this kind over the past 18 months. Its early days but investing in these creative industries companies and supporting them to build sustainable businesses has huge potential.

ACMI was established by the Victorian Government in 2002. Despite no federal investment, and because of its unique remit, it is the national museum for film television videogames digital culture and art. But it grew out of the State Film

Centre which had the care of the Victoria's State Film Archive – a small, idiosyncratic but wonderful collection of over 170,000 objects and media.

The digitization of collections has been a priority for many collecting institutions for two decades now. The opportunity to make objects – artworks, artefacts – in museums and galleries available online for audiences to access anywhere at any time reverses the traditional inward looking culture of collecting institutions and archives, and enables the public to share the wonder and knowledge that resides in these often publicly owned collections.

I am excited by the opportunities the creative use of digital tools can bring to realise a commitment to public and equitable access to audio visual archives, even with its complex copyright and commercial requirements.

As Lord David Puttnam said:
> It's quite simple, we all pay for the upkeep of the material in these archives – we should all be able to access them. If we are unable to access most, if not all, of the riches locked up in these treasure troves, then it quite naturally begs the question, 'why are we paying for them to be preserved in the first place'?

Rick Prelinger is the founder of the Prelinger Archives. Over twenty years, he amassed a collection of 60,000 advertising, educational, industrial, and amateur films which were then acquired by the Library of Congress in 2002.

Prelinger says that, "archives are a primary weapon against amnesia".

Rick has partnered with the Internet Archive to make over 6,000 films from Prelinger Archives available online for free viewing, downloading and vitally for reuse.

This is an incredible resource for researchers and practitioners but also for the public.

So, say you were a train spotter – you could mine the archive for train clips and save them, you could make audio visual party tapes of this footage to share with your train spotting friends, or you could create a magnificent mash up of train footage to create a music video for your Garage band's new single.

I should also just highlight the amazing resource that the Internet Archive is. They are supported in the US only by public donations and billionaire Brewster Kahle's largesse. But they have rescued:
- millions of pieces of footage including international cable TV broadcasts of 9/11 as it happened
- home and amateur movies
- millions of books
- thousands of videogames
- all the tweets that celebrities and politicians try to delete

- and they also back up most of the internet with the Wayback Machine

Removing barriers to be able to access these treasures and guard against our amnesia, to mine these collections and remake them anew so that they are living and contributing to creativity today seems a magical thing.

At ACMI we are digitising our collection as quickly as possible with reuse at the forefront of our minds.

What if our museums, libraries and archives were properly resourced to increase their digitisation programs?

What if the public broadcasters could also release elements of the hidden treasures in their archives and we could create a portal that our publics could then access for research, play or remake our memories?

Through the internet we have access to almost any information. The audience is given agency to choose what, when and where they consume content, but also freedom to roam through ideas, research – to go deeper and discover knowledge and inspiration that previously had to be doled out to them via a curator in a museum or scheduler in television.

The flip side of this however is the torrent of stuff we have to navigate to find the gems and the new ideas that challenge us and our thinking. Within the torrent, increasingly we rely on algorithms to feed us suggestions and recommendations. But these algorithms are based on what 'they' have learnt we already like, and usually based on the potential for commercial gain. In this model, where is the opportunity for discovery through serendipity, and which can take us beyond limits set by ourselves and these algorithms to the new?

This may be why curated events that gather people together are growing in popularity.

As the music industry became digitized, music festivals of all sizes and scales have massively increased their audiences. Seeing artists live is brilliant, so is gathering together as a community, and so is having an expert person shape a program for you to be inspired again by your favourite artists but also to discover someone or something new.

Progressive museums, festivals and galleries the world over are increasing their attendances. At the same time as Google Arts & Culture and the institutions themselves offer digitised versions of the originals to access anywhere, the excitement of having an expert curator shape a narrative and tell a story through an exhibition in a social and safe space with other people has more and more value.

And I say 'progressive' because the institutions that are thinking about audience or user experience and leveraging digital and design tools to deliver new ways to experience the arts and culture that they offer are the venues that are bringing in the crowds. It is not about dumbing down – it is about accepting audience expectations have changed and we have new opportunities to engage them in different ways.

Why come to a contemporary museum like ACMI where the bulk of the moving image work we show is designed to be replicated and widely distributed, and can be consumed via a device in your pocket?

We can illuminate the process of creating the moving image to our curious audiences as much as presenting the final work. As a subsidized institution that doesn't compete on commercial terms we can challenge the dominant narrative in entertaining and illuminating ways. We offer a shared space – enabling our public to gather together to explore ideas and engage with creativity in a safe space that is imbued with trust - fostering social cohesion and enabling connection.

We have just closed the museum's doors for a year to undertake a $40m renewal, funded by the Victorian Government and by generous partners and donors. This investment will see our museum transformed into a leading 21st century museum, harnessing the digital tools available to us to tell our stories in new ways, to extend the audience experience, alongside the physical experience of the museum visit.

In a time of constrained funding, we've successfully argued our case for this investment to our government because of all the opportunities and challenges I have outlined here tonight. Because the moving images, the practitioners, artists and industries – along with the technologies that we champion and celebrate – are central to our lives, and to our futures.

We need to be media literate to wade through the torrent and participate meaningfully in our democracy; and we need to curate journeys for our audiences that enable them to discover voices and artworks and ideas that sit outside the dominant media and its algorithms.

We need to celebrate artists and moving image makers and their innovation and creativity as vital not only for the cultural enrichment of our society but equally vitally for the enrichment of our future economy.

Thank you.

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Presented by the Centre for Media History, Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University and supported by the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund

The Copyright Agency is a not-for-profit rights management organisation that ensures artists, writers and publishers are fairly rewarded for the reproduction of their work. The Cultural Fund provides grants to creative individuals and organisations for a diverse range of projects which aim to enrich Australian cultural life. See https://www.copyright.com.au/culturalfund/

The Centre for Media History works with researchers and industry to explore the history of the rapidly changing media and communications landscape. Its members include award-winning scholars and media practitioners who engage with industry and the community to create innovative historical works. The Centre hosts events, from major conferences and public lectures, to intimate workshops and masterclasses. It provides world-class databases and other electronic resources designed to preserve and make available our media heritage, and works closely with equivalent centres throughout the world. See http://www.mq.edu.au/cmh

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