ACMI PILOT STUDY— PHASE 1
Social Media, Digital Wayfaring and the Future of Museum Audiences

RMIT UNIVERSITY | Design & Creative Practice

ACMI PILOT STUDY (PHASE 1 REPORT):
Social Media, Digital Wayfaring and the Future of Museum Audiences

Jacina Leong, Indigo Holcombe-James, Adelina Onicas and Distinguished Professor Larissa Hjorth.

May 2019

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ACMI Pilot Study (Phase 1): Social Media, Digital Wayfaring and the Future of Museum Audiences

Our ethnographic research design was driven by consultation with members of the ACMI team. Through these conversations, we developed a series of broad themes that guided our work:

- **Feelings**: how ACMI audiences *felt* about the digital and non-digital spaces;
- **Behaviours**: how ACMI audiences *engaged* with both digital and non-digital spaces;
- **Co-present sociality**: how, or whether, ACMI audiences *enacted* sociality in both digital and non-digital contexts;
- **Places & wayfaring**: how digital and non-digital spaces were *represented* and *influenced* engagement;
- **Programming**: how ACMI programming *influenced* digital and non-digital spaces.

This study was involved by ethnographic fieldwork:

Ethnography focuses on lived experiences through understanding practices.	**Wayfaring** puts the knowing body (proprioception) at the centre of practice.	**Digital wayfaring** acknowledges the entanglement of the digital, material and social in everyday life.

Our research revealed complex relationalities between the places, wayfaring, co-presence (physical and/or digital proximity), and digital sociality that ACMI itself enacted, and that in turn was enacted by ACMI's audiences. Through combining close analysis of the enacted digital participation by both parties with rich ethnographic data, we demonstrate an opportunity for alignment between institutional and audience-led digital practices. **Based on this insight, we provide recommendations to calibrate differences between *perceived* and *lived* participation, through integrating institutional and informal digital practices.**

KEY FINDINGS

ACMI as a *comfortable*, familiar and welcoming social hub (see 4.2.3)

Lack of awareness of temporary closure of ACMI (see 4.2.2)

"I didn't know ACMI was closing. I'm excited to see new changes …I'm interested to keep up to date about what's happening."

"I work in town so I pop in often just to have a look. I really feel comfortable here, that's why I come often—and it's free".

Co-present sociality (see 4.2.4)

"We've been here many times…my sons are only interested in the games and not the museum be-cause they're young—maybe if it was more interactive on the museum side, well that could help us to interact together".

Documenting and posting practices (see 4.2.1)

"I don't normally [post photos]… having kids, you tend to be a bit more aware because they're minors. I have taken photos of my own kids, but it's too dark in here, they'd be very grainy, not to my standard.
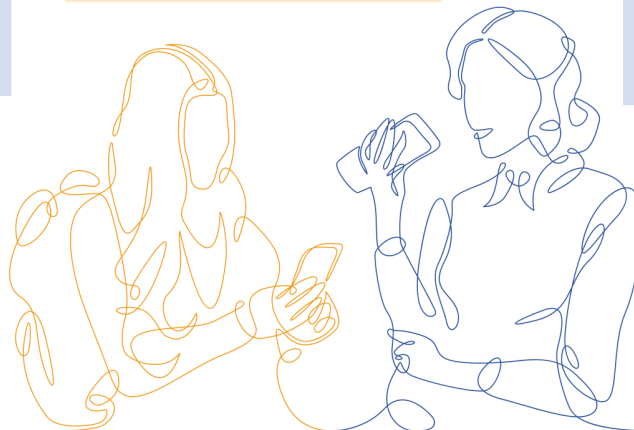
Intergenerational and temporal notions of play (see 4.2.5)

"I do play the games with the kids, I tend to play the older games from the 1980s and 1990s, that's when I was their age."

RMIT UNIVERSITY | Design & Creative Practice

RECOMMENDATIONS

To further connect the informal understandings of ACMI as a "social hub" with its leadership in co-curating spaces for cultural experiences and digital invention, we offer the following recommendations (expanded in Section 5 of full report) and identify **strong potential** in further exploring and producing new museum experiences through the forthcoming **ACMI Audience Lab**.

AUDIENCE LIVING LAB:
Embed, enact and enhance opportunities for audiences to share their lived experiences *within* and *beyond* the space (see 5.1.1 and 5.1.5)

CO-FUTURING WITH DIVERSE AGENCIES:
Curate opportunities (with and) for diverse and intergenerational, human and non-human, social encounters and exchanges within museum interactives and exhibits (see 5.1.2)

SOCIAL AND INTEGRATED ENCOUNTERS:
Co-curate social media encounters for audiences to engage and connect *across* internal departments including Exhibitions, Public, Education and Industry programs that coalesce the digital, social and material (see 5.1.3)

CRITICAL-CREATIVE AND INVENTIVE PLAY:
Enact deeper engagement and two-way social media practices and digital wayfaring *for* and *with* diverse audiences (see 5.1.4)

See the full report for details and *Impactful Directions and Future Outcomes* (including an ARC Linkage, a series of iterative workshops and encounters, an open source toolkit and industry conference) moving forward.

RMIT UNIVERSITY | Design & Creative Practice

SOCIAL MEDIA, DIGITAL WAYFARING AND THE FUTURE OF MUSEUM AUDIENCES

The pilot seeks to explore how we can engage with social media platforms beyond the blunt instrumentalization of hashtags, likes and follows, to co-create and co-future inventive and responsive engagements with and for diverse and intergenerational museum audiences. Deploying the notion of digital wayfaring that acknowledges that digital, social and material worlds are interconnected, the pilot used ethnographic techniques in the context of the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI). Ethnography provides insight into practice and lived experience— dynamic processes that big data can't address. This type of ethnographic work contributes meaningfully to emergent methods around social media that seek to understand it as part of the messy complexity of everyday life rather than flattened into metrics. Understanding social practice can help to inform how we can create co-futuring experiences with and for audiences.

This pilot is a collaboration between RMIT University and ACMI.

1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

One of the biggest priorities facing the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums) sector today is finding new ways to develop, support and sustain relevant and responsive engagement with diverse audiences—before, during, after and even without a visit—across many interactions and touch points (International Audience Engagement Network 2018, Mattern 2014). As Angelina Russo and Philip Pond (2018, 107) argue, "the photographing and social sharing of images taken within museums have extended the museum into digital space, so that for many visitors, the 'curated experience' begins well before they set foot within the physical architecture of the museum".

This motivation towards audience engagement practices that aspire for novel, as well as meaningful and (although not necessarily) deep, forms of participation, on-site and on-line, also raises questions about the host of "ever-changing social and symbolic functions" (Mattern 2014) that museums and galleries can and should occupy as facilitators of social change. These include questions about civic relevancy and responsibilities, engagement and impact, amidst complex global transformations and changing knowledge markets, now and into the future (Nicholls, Simon and Gabriel 2015).

Such motivations and questions are reflected in ACMI's recent developments to transform into one of the world's leading innovative museums. This renewal project (2019–2020) is expected to improve not only ACMI's existing permanent gallery spaces, but result in the inclusion of an expanded **Learning Centre, Audience Lab**, and **Digital Preservation Lab**.

In recent discussions with the RMIT research team, ACMI have identified this time – in advance of its temporary physical closure – as a key opportunity to explore pioneering co-futuring models and techniques (as outlined by the UNESCO Chair Inayatullah). These models and techniques are intended to use social media platforms and digital wayfaring to deepen audience engagement with not only regular-repeat visitors but also those not already active on (and beyond) the museum's social media platforms, as well as new audiences.

2. PILOT STUDY AIMS: PHASE 1

Timed to coincide two-weeks prior to ACMI's temporary closure for renewal, Phase 1 of the Pilot Study was intended to identify possibilities for maintaining digital connections to ACMI while access to non-digital counterparts (such as the building) were restricted. The Pilot thus sought to explore how social media practices enacted by ACMI might influence, inform and shape the practices of its audiences, and how insights to this might be used to deepen ACMI's existing digital engagement strategies.

By putting social media into context, we sought to explore developing methods to capture these complex and often tacit practices. We were particularly interested in what these practices might suggest about feelings, behaviours, co-present sociality, places and wayfaring, and programming in relation to, and around, ACMI. Accordingly, the study focused on digital wayfaring—that is, the embodied role of digital media in material and social practices. While big data focuses on tastes, this qualitative approach acknowledges the entangled relationship between the digital, social and material in everyday practices and meanings. In sum, it focuses on practices enacted across different spaces and social encounters.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN, ANALYSIS AND METHODS

By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches (Hjorth and Hinton forthcoming), this study makes an intervention into social media methods and metrics. There is an increasing need within social media scholarship for inventive methods that explore the **lived experiences** of participants. Building on work conducted around the "digital wayfarer" (Hjorth and Pink 2014), the research design and theoretical approach of this project seeks to take seriously the lived and moving body and its proprioceptive entanglement with digital and material worlds.

The research design was intentionally staged to allow learnings from the Phase 1 of the Pilot Study (pre-closure) to inform the (forthcoming) Phase 2 (post-closure). In this section, we detail the methods used and approach to data analysis the researchers engaged in to coalesce and identify key findings between the three sets of data collected: (1) Instagram posts, (2) ACMI Audience Insight reports, and (3) onsite ACMI fieldwork through audience interviews and ethnographic observations.

It was the researcher's intention to conduct "scenarios of use" involving following participants as they moved in and around the site to understand the tacit dimensions of social media engagement and how this interfaced with digital wayfaring. However, due to the interview participants engaged with, and (as discussed below), their relative lack of lived digital practices in relation to ACMI, this proved unfeasible. Accordingly, we suggest that scenarios of use be the topic of future research.
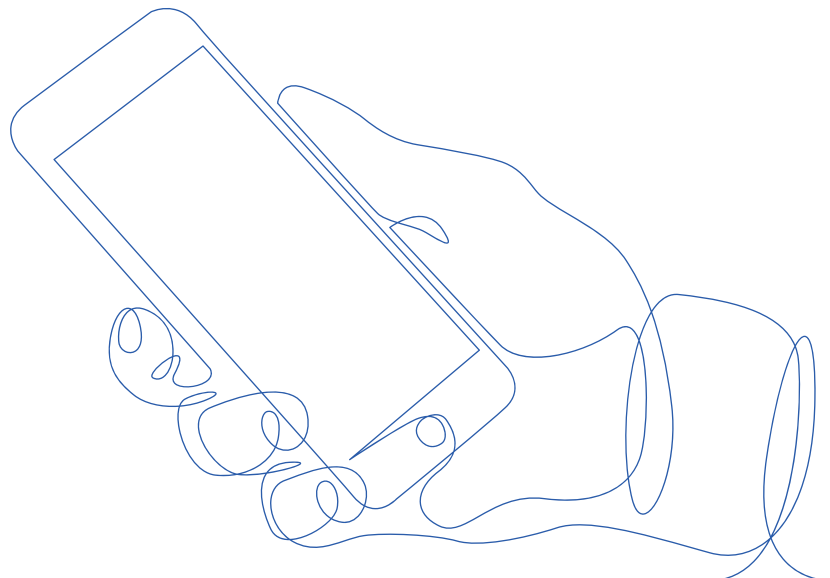
3.1   Social media analysis

Given the increasing relevance of Instagram's visual and social affordances within the cultural sector (see, for example, Jensen 2013, Budge 2017, Budge and Burness 2018, Russo and Pond 2018), we restricted our focus to the one platform. We were particularly interested in exploring how (or whether) Instagram was being used by both ACMI and ACMI audiences to engage with co-present sociality. Additionally, we were keen to use insights generated from this analysis to identify possibilities for the use of this platform as a site for value creation and alternative impact metrics.

In response to both the time constraints of the Pilot Study, and our interest in examining ACMI and related digital participation enacted pre-closure, we further restricted our analysis to posts made within one month (March 2019). Data was collected across three elements of the platform: (1) public posts made by @acmionline, (2) public posts using the official ACMI hashtag, #acmimelbourne, and (3) public posts that tagged @acmionline within the image itself. [1]

Each of the three datasets were subjected to a process of textual analysis. As Fürsich (2009) notes, textual analysis involves deconstructing a text (in this case, an Instagram post) to examine the context in which it was produced. Rather than looking for the precise, or truthful, meaning of each Instagram post, we were interested in understanding what Hartley (2012) describes as "the variety of meanings made possible by a text" (227).

Data was collected manually by the research team, enabling a close reading of each post. Our analysis was structured through gathering the below data points for each post, resulting in a dataset of 136 posts (116 images, 20 videos), 13, 670 likes and 649 comments (see Table 1).

Instagram derived data	Image/caption content
Posted by	Description of image
Date posted	Repost or original post
Caption	
Likes	
Video views	
Tagged in photo	
Location tag	
Number of comments	

Table 1: Instagram data collection.

Varied engagement was observed across the three data sets, as illustrated in Table 2.

	Total number of posts	Photos/Videos	Total number of likes	Total number of comments
@acmionline	12	11/1	2, 235	75
#acmimelbourne	30	25/5	991	73
Tagged @acmionline	94	80/14	10, 444	501

Table 2: Data set engagement.

Importantly, there is some overlap within these datasets. For example, one image posted by @acmionline was *also* hashtagged #acmimelbourne. Accordingly, this post appears within both datasets. Given, however, that these are both examples of different modes of engagement, each dataset has been analysed separately, and such posts remain included in both datasets.

Creative tagging techniques such as mapping images to both the physical spaces within ACMI that they depicted (for example, the Flinders Street entrance), as well as connections to ACMI programming (such as the cinema) were used to understand how both places, wayfaring and programming influenced digital participation by both ACMI and their audience.

Insights derived from these processes were then leveraged in the following stages of our research (see 3.2 and 3.3).

[1] The research team investigated the feasibility of also gathering posts that were geo-tagged with ACMI as their location. Upon gathering data across the above described three data sets, however, the decision was made that we had reached saturation. It is our recommendation that future studies take up the task of examining such data.

3.2   ACMI Audience Insight Reports (Big Data)

The following big data reports, provided by ACMI, were manually analysed by the researchers to corroborate similarities and differences between the research findings gained through interviews and ethnographic observations, and Instagram posts, comments and likes (described above).

1. *Guided by the audience: an examination of the market for the Australian Centre for the Moving Image*, MHM, November 2015;

2. *ACMI: 2018 Market Monitor Report*, EY Sweeney, July 2018;

3. *A strong foundation: Australian Centre for the Moving Image Visitor 360 Annual Report 2017/18*, MHM, July 2018.
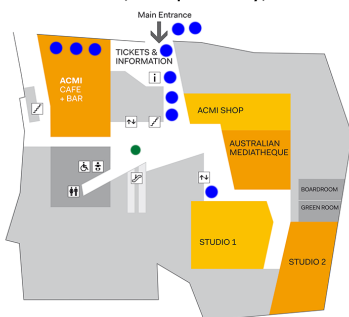
3.3   Interviews *with* and ethnographic observations *of* ACMI audiences

Informal interviews with audiences to better understand the **lived experiences** and patterns of social media use were conducted with consenting participants (18 years +) at ACMI on April 12 2019 (10AM – 5PM). An informal and conversational approach to interviewing was adopted to accommodate "flexibility" in the interview process, allowing the researchers to remain responsive to emergent "experiences, opinions, attitudes, values, and processes" (Rowley 2012, 262). Interviews were captured using hand written and digital notes and audio recordings.

Of the 23 people approached for interviews, 16 accepted. Most who declined to be interviewed cited language barriers (non-English speaking); a perception that they had little to "offer" or "say" on the subject of social media; or were not interested in sharing their experiences with the research team. To respect the identity of those interviewed, interviewee names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

While we approached visitors in different areas of the museum, the area we found most success identifying consenting interviewees was *Screen Worlds* (13 interviewees). Two interviews took place in the Flinders Street Foyer, and one in the Federation Square Foyer. The spatial arrangement of *Screen Worlds* meant that there were particular areas where people came to a natural rest (for example, on the couches near the *Mad Max* car), which facilitated an opportunity for engagement via interview. In contrast, areas deeper within the exhibition, where screens and noise was more prominent, actively discouraged engagement (see figure 1).
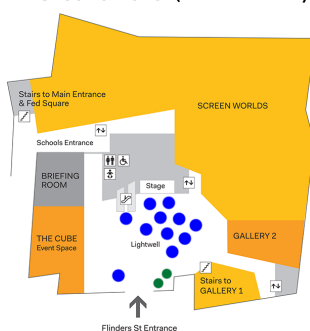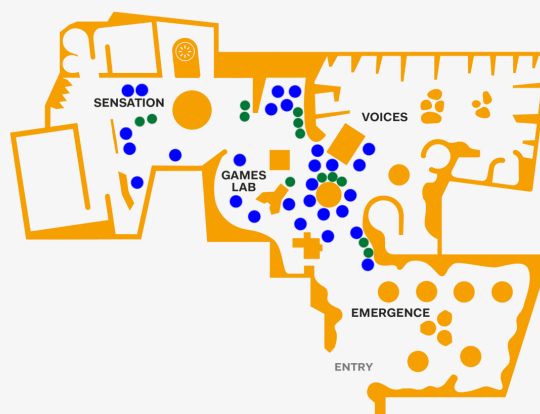

Figure 1: *Mapping of interviews and ethnographic observations of digital media use.*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the spatial (*Screen Worlds*) and temporal (during Victorian school holidays) positioning of our field work, the majority of interviewees were parents or guardians of young children. A significant finding (discussed further below) was that of the 16 people interviewed, 14 did not follow ACMI on Instagram, with one suggesting that they were unsure.

See *Appendix A* for questions asked.

In parallel to the interviews, the researchers also engaged in ethnographic observations of audiences using a range of well-established qualitative visual ethnographic research methods, such as sketching, note-taking and journaling, and photographing, to investigate social meanings and ordinary activities of people in "naturally occurring" settings (Schuler and Namioka 1993). These observational methods were used to achieve "in-depth and less linear insight into complex situations" through more "visible and tangible" means than verbal communication (Zweifel and Van Wezemeal 2012) that might otherwise have remained latent in the interviews (Lezuan et al. 2016).
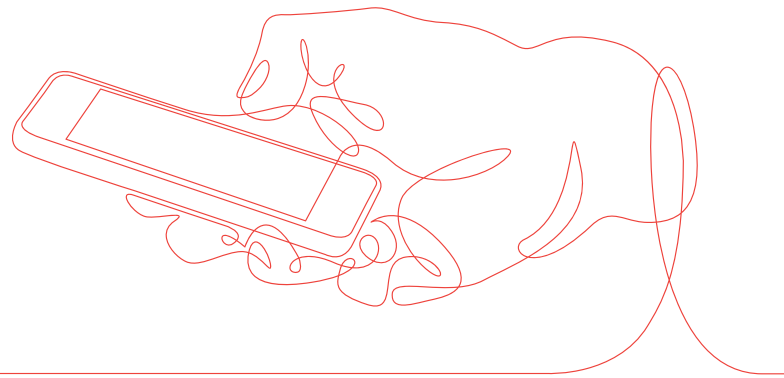
4.   KEY FINDINGS

This section provides summaries of the key findings from Phase 1 of the pilot study.

As discussed above, our research design was driven by consultation with members of the ACMI team. Through these conversations, we developed a series of broad themes that guided our work:

- **Feelings:** how ACMI audiences *felt* about the digital and non-digital spaces;
- **Behaviours:** how ACMI audiences *engaged* with both digital and non-digital spaces;
- **Co-present sociality:** how, or whether, ACMI audiences *enacted* sociality in both digital and non-digital contexts;
- **Places and wayfaring:** how digital and non-digital spaces were *represented* and *influenced* engagement;
- **Programming:** how ACMI programming *influenced* digital and non-digital spaces.

While our data collection was shaped by these themes, our analysis revealed that each were deeply interwoven. Accordingly, in an effort to move beyond the blunt instrumentalism of categories, hashtags and likes, *our key findings are blended* and *integrated*. Through deep qualitative engagement with both digital and non-digital participation, we complicate existing approaches to audience insights. Through a richer engagement with the data, we provide richer engagement with the audiences.

Our research revealed complex relationalities between the places, wayfaring, co-presence (physical and/or digital proximity), and digital sociality that ACMI itself enacted, and that in turn was enacted by ACMI's audiences. Through combining close analysis of the enacted digital participation by both parties with rich ethnographic data, we demonstrate an opportunity for alignment between institutional and audience-led digital practices. Based on this insight, we provide recommendations to calibrate differences between *perceived* and *lived* participation, through integrating institutional and informal digital practices.

4.1 Disjunctures between institutional and audience-led digital practices

Our research suggests that there is a disjuncture between the digital practices enacted by ACMI, and those enacted by their audiences. We see this as a key opportunity as detailed in our recommendations.

Drawing on the digital datasets described above (see section 3.1), insight into ACMI's digital participation can be gleaned. In March, 2019, ACMI posted 12 images to Instagram (figure 2).
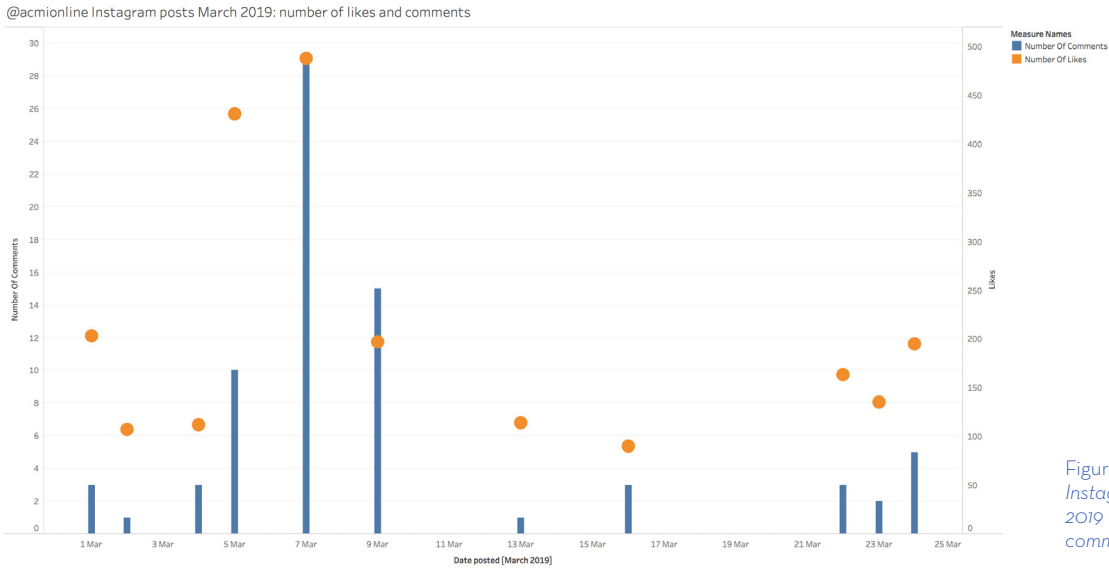
Figure 2: Graph: @acmionline Instagram posts March 2019 (number of likes and comments).

When analysed through creative tagging techniques such as mapping images to the spaces within ACMI that they depicted (for example, the Flinders Street entrance), as well as connections to ACMI programming, a distinct bias towards ACMI's cinema program was revealed. Of the twelve images posted, seven (58%) were direct references to events associated with the cinema (figure 3).
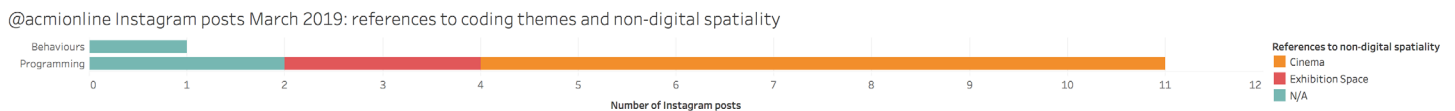
Figure 3: Graph: @acmionline Instagram posts March 2019 (references to coding themes and non-digital spatiality).

For example an image featuring a still from a movie currently on show in the ACMI cinemas is captioned (see figure 4):

> *"Good news as you gallop into the weekend! Dennis Hopper's THE LAST MOVIE, on of the great lost films of the 1970s, has been digitally restored and is riding our cinemas into the sunset from 13 April."*
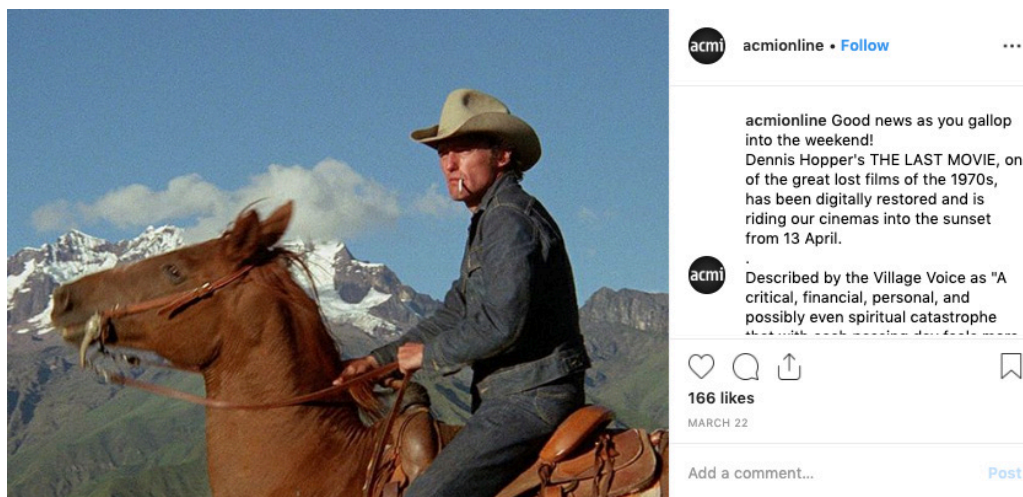
Figure 4: Screenshot from @acmionline Instagram account: The Last Movie, ACMI, 2019.

While @acmionline posted only 12 times, including data detailing the posts that were hashtagged #acmimelbourne and tagged with @acmionline in the images themselves provides a fuller picture of the type and diversity of digital participation that occurred in March 2019. The allocation of posts between the three datasets is demonstrated in the below timeline (figure 5).
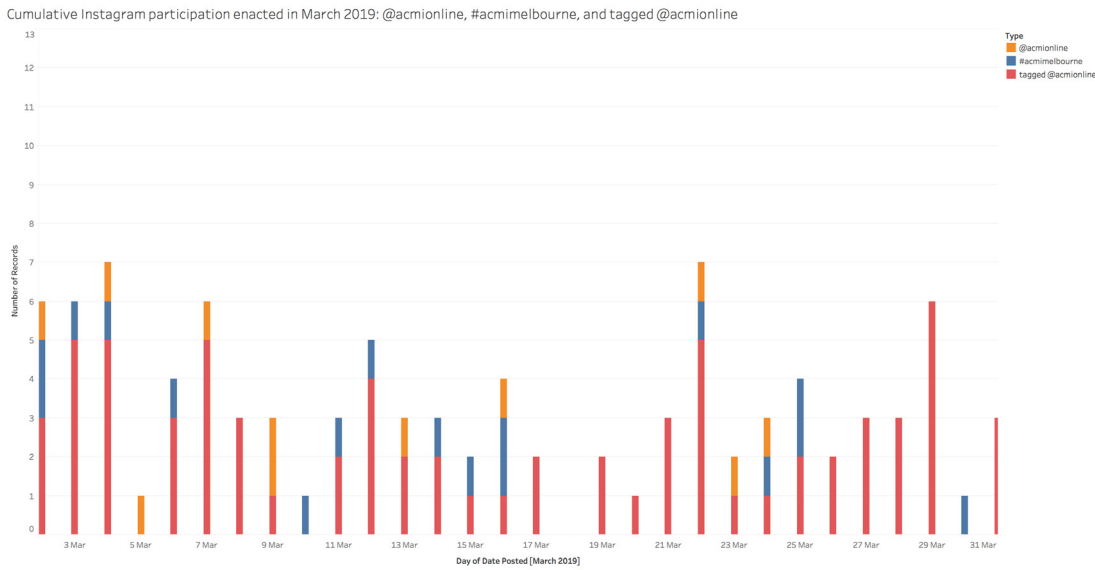
Figure 5: *Graph: cumulative Instagram participation enacted in March 2019: @acmionline, #acmimelbourne and tagged @acminonline.*

Examining the posts enacted by those external to ACMI (through close engagement with those hashtagged #acmimelbourne and tagged @acmionline) provides insight into audience-led digital participation, and reveals a more diverse picture of the institution. Where @acmionline posts remained focussed on the cinema offerings, user generated content was far more varied.

Of the 124 images included in these audience-led datasets (#acmimelbourne and tagged @acmionline), 44 were not directly associated with either ACMI's physical spaces or programming. As such, they have been excluded from this analysis.
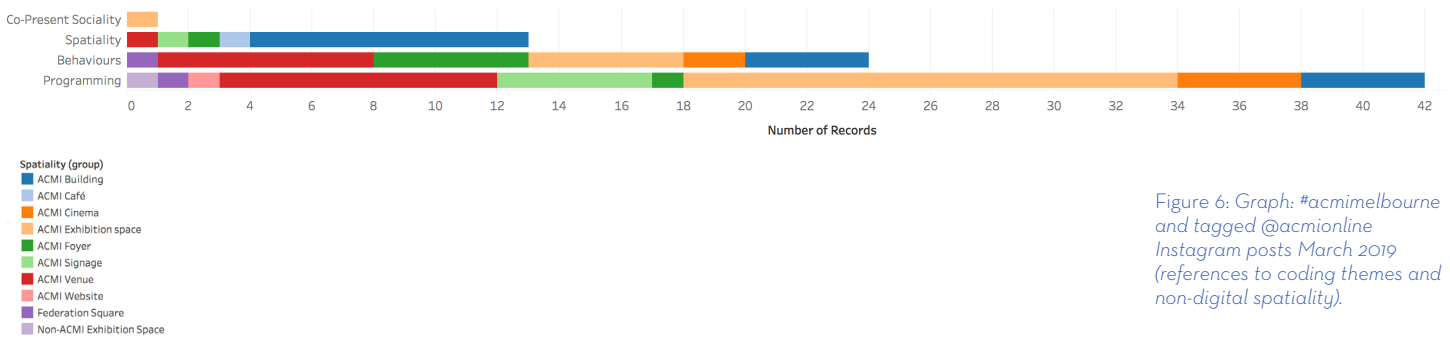
Figure 6: *Graph: #acmimelbourne and tagged @acmionline Instagram posts March 2019 (references to coding themes and non-digital spatiality).*

Of the 80 remaining images (see figure 6, above), only 6 were associated with the ACMI cinema (7.5%). In contrast:

- 17 (21.25%) were of the ACMI building;
- 17 (21.25%) were of the ACMI venues (and were predominantly associated with venue hire arrangements, for example the Melbourne Queer Film Festival [n=2] and the Melbourne International Comedy Festival [n=10]);
- 7 (8.75%) were of the ACMI foyer, and;
- 6 (7.5%) were of ACMI signage.

There is thus a disjuncture between the digital participation enacted by ACMI and that which was enacted by audience members. Where @acmionline presented a cinema, the participating audiences presented a richer representation of the institutional offering. Based on these findings, we suggest that there are (at least) three distinct and fractious audiences coalescing around ACMI on Instagram:

1. The cinema-based audience that @acmionline is targeting;
2. Audiences visiting the building; and
3. Event-specific audiences (Melbourne Queer Film Festival, Melbourne International Comedy Festival) that develop their own content.

Importantly, there were very few images that engaged with ACMI's exhibitions (see figure 7).
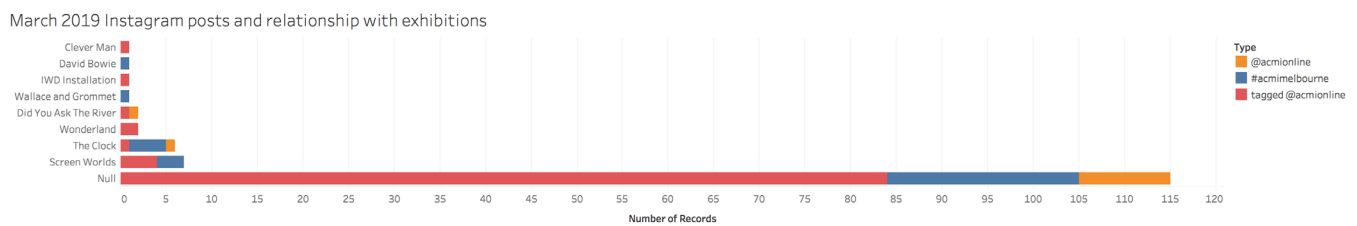
Figure 7: *Graph: March 2019 Instagram posts and relationship with exhibitions.*

Given this disparity, during our time in the field, we purposefully engaged with ACMI visitors *within* exhibitions. This technique was also deployed to develop a better understanding of the complex relationalities between places, wayfaring, co-presence (physical and/or digital proximity), and digital sociality that the museum itself fostered, encouraged, and perpetuated, and to gain a deeper insight into the relationship between the *lived* and *perceived* experiences of such experiences. In the following sections, we describe our key findings drawn from these interviews and observations.

We begin by noting the divergent documenting and posting practices within this cohort.

4.2.1   Documenting and posting practices

Our interviews revealed divergent documenting (photographic) and posting practices. Regular visitors to ACMI were more likely to have taken photographs during past visits, but less likely to have done so during recent visits to ACMI: "I don't take photos anymore, but I've done so in the past". First time visitors to ACMI, however, were more likely to have taken photos during their recent/current visits to ACMI.

Commonly, both regular, returning and first time visitors commented that they had taken photos of the exhibits ("the *Mad Max* car" and "*Cleverman* costumes"); photos of their children engaging in interactive and participatory experiences (such as "space invaders" and the "shadow thing"); photos of "the place in general"; and "selfies" outside ACMI. Those who cited that they had not taken photos, nor planned to, suggested low lighting as a contributing factor ("it's a bit too dark") and lack of interesting objects to document. Some parents also suggested security and privacy concerns as a reason for not taking photos within the space ("having kids, you tend to be a little bit more aware of not taking photos of children because they're minors").

The motivations expressed by participants for taking photos *of* and *at* ACMI were also divergent. Some of the visitors, for example, suggested that doing so was a way for them to archive and retain memories of their visit to ACMI; others because they wanted to share an experience with a friend or family member ("I want to show my husband because I hear the exhibition is only open for another 10 days—I want to show him it's awesome and we should come back").

Several of the participants commented that they planned to share their photos on social media. Others suggested that they had already posted a photo of ACMI to Instagram, adding "I'll probably put more up there too. I always share! I love to post." Another participant, however, commented that they liked to take their time, and would likely post a photo once they had left ACMI: "I'm quite selective about what I post". When participants were asked if they had used, or planned to use, a geo-location or hashtag, some responded: "I only just commented and tagged ACMI in the comment, I didn't use a hashtag"; "I haven't but I should. I usually tag the location. In today's post I tagged Fed Square." Others planned to use hashtags related to their interests such as #travel, #arts and #photography.

Most interviewees (14) had private social media accounts—one participant had gone so far as to deactivate their accounts for privacy reasons, possibly gesturing to new *digital literacy* practices predicated on "opting out" (Susarla 2019). Only one participant reported having a public account: "anyone can see my posts, I like to post so the wider world can see". One of these digitally participating audience members was also an older visitor (55+), perhaps subverting common perceptions about aged-digital participation. While it is not possible from this data to extrapolate insights for the entirety of ACMI's audiences, these examples do point to directions for future research. *How can ACMI care-fully uncover, facilitate and engage with the digital participation of such audiences when it is enacted on private accounts and through divergent digital literacies?*

4.2.2   Lack of awareness of temporary closure of ACMI

Of the 16 people interviewed, only 1 was aware of the temporary closure of ACMI. They had seen a sign (see figure 8) on the upper level foyer. Many of the visitors interviewed expressed surprise and some reservations upon finding out, but were equally excited about the forthcoming renewal and opportunities for change and new experiences:

- *"I didn't know ACMI was closing. But I think that's a great thing to keep moving things forward, and drawing people back, even though they might have enjoyed the experience the first time."*

- *"I am interested to see what it's going to look like once it reopens, and what is going to be on. I am excited to see what it will look like."*

Figure 8: *Signage announcing forthcoming closure.*

- *"It's great that they're changing, they need something new. Screen Worlds has been here for about 8 years and hasn't changed, except for some of the games. Regular visitors get bored."*

- *"I didn't know ACMI is closing. Wow, that's okay, that's good. Actually, it's good that it's closing. It needs it. It would be nice to see something different."*

- *"It makes me feel sad to know that there's going to be something new because I've also seen that there are new exhibits here from when I came here a while ago—I got really excited to see everything again. I'm excited to see the new things too."*

- *"I'm all about moving forward. I think it's time that this place does get an uplift."*

A lack of awareness of the forthcoming closure was also reflected in one of the visitor's perception of ACMI's marketing and communication: *"ACMI doesn't really advertise much, so not many visitors or tourists know about this place. Even some of our other friends from other states, when I ask if they want to come here, they don't know about it."*

When asked whether digital opportunities to connect and engage with ACMI during the period of closure were of interest, approximately half of those interviewed suggested that they would actively follow ACMI to keep informed about renewal developments:

- *"I don't know if ACMI have an affiliate or if there are an umbrella of things that are related to ACMI that we could visit during the break?"*

- *"I didn't know ACMI was closing. I'm excited to see new changes but it feels like I have nothing to look forward to in the coming months—I'm interested to keep up to date about what's happening."*

- *"I could definitely follow ACMI on Instagram now to keep up to date."*

4.2.3   ACMI as a "comfortable", familiar and welcoming social hub

Whereas *Screen Worlds* was described by interviewees as a place for parents and guardians to occupy their children for a few hours, several participants indicated that ACMI — and specifically the Flinders Street foyer — was a social hub; a space to meet and reconnect with people, to unwind after work, to eat and drink, to pass time, and in some instances, to FaceTime friends and family (see figure 9).

Figure 9: *A visitor Facetiming in the Flinders Street ACMI foyer.*

A similar motivation for audience visitation was cited in the report *A Strong Foundation: Australian Centre for the Moving Image Visitor 360 Annual Report* (MHM 2018), which suggests that ACMI as a "social hub" (22) is a commonly held perception, particularly amongst returning visitors. This finding was reflected in the following interviews (framed as vignettes), as well as in the researcher's ethnographic observations within the Flinders Street foyer.

Han is a returning visitor to ACMI. When we approach Han, she is seated next to her sister who is watching "films" on the computers next to the (Flinders Street) revolving doors. Han has visited ACMI "countless times". She feels comfortable in the space, adding "I like to chillax and see if there is anything new". Her visit to ACMI today, however, is unplanned. She is here for a "quick browse" and admits that it has been a while since her last visit because "not much has changed".

When we approach John, he is seated alone on the computers next to the revolving doors. Unlike Han and her sister, John is not watching the films but interacting with his phone. It is also not his first visit to ACMI, "I work in town so I pop in often just to have a look. I really feel comfortable here, that's why I come often—and it's free". He admits that while he is not planning to see any exhibitions today, he does visit Screen Worlds "constantly", and has often taken photos of the exhibits, such as the Clever Man costuming.

It's 3.30pm and the audience group within the foyer has changed. There are fewer families, more adults, a few young couples, and lots of dads with sons that don't particularly look like they want to be here. People are also walking out of Screen Worlds with their phones and ACMI brochures in hand. A group of mothers and young children is amongst the exiting audiences—they stop, a few metres from the entrance to Screen Worlds, talking with each other and laughing, before going their separate ways.

An ACMI attendant is positioned at a moveable table, between the Flinders Street revolving doors and adjacent stage. Behind them, visitors gather—some are de-briefing about the exhibitions, others are eating and drinking from lunch containers, switching their attention between watching others in the space and the film screening above the stage. What looks like a grandfather and his three grandchildren share a box of Shapes. It surprises one of the researchers that the ACMI attendant—who has not actively engaged with those gathered behind them—has also not discouraged any of the groups from eating or drinking in the space.

Towards the end of the day, some audiences, mainly family groups with young teens, appear to have regrouped in the foyer after independently exploring ACMI and the surrounding spaces.

The perception of ACMI as a social hub was also reflected in the language used by some visitors to describe their *feelings* of the space as "intimate", "dynamic", "comfortable", "welcoming", and "stimulating". However, other common perceptions of ACMI, particularly *Screen Worlds*, was that it was "too dark" and "confusing" and difficult to take photographs of objects and companions (children, friends and family).

4.2.4   Co-present sociality

Co-present sociality facilitated through mobile devices between individuals not in the same location was evident through several of the researcher's discussions with visitors and ethnographic observations:

> *Lee is seated next her young daughter when we approach her for an interview. Her daughter is interacting with a game exhibit. When we approach Lee, we note that like many of the other visitors (predominantly parents and guardians), she is using her phone: "I was just chatting to my friends but not on social media—they're in Melbourne." Lee does not use Instagram, nor has she ever had a social media account, adding: "I avoid social media".*

> *Matias and Alejandro are two international students visiting ACMI as part of a group excursion. When we approach them they are interacting with the Flip Book exhibit. They both have Instagram but are not likely to post photos from their time at ACMI. Instead, they suggest that they plan to share photos via WhatsApp, as a means to keep in contact and share their experiences with family and friends, "because they are in a different country from us".*

> *Ryan is curled up on one of the couches when we approach him. He's reading Hanya Yanagihara's "A Little Life" on his Kindle, and is at ACMI with his two sons, aged 8 and 12. Ryan has recently de-activated his social media accounts, but tells us that in the past he would have shared images of his visit because he's Canadian, and "it's one way of sharing what I'm doing here in Australia. It's a two-way experience, or conversation, with my friends".*

> *A female visitor completes several laps of Screen Worlds, one hand guiding a pram with a young child in it, the other holding her smart phone at arm's length as she FaceTimes someone. Every now and then she pauses at an exhibition and turns the mobile device to share this exhibition (via the phone's camera) with the person on the other end.*
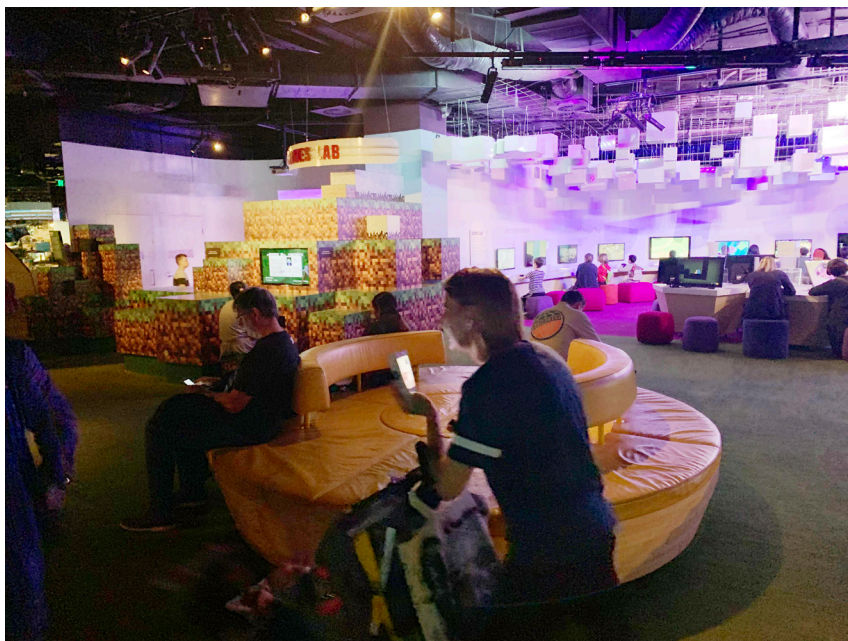
When asked about possibilities and opportunities for co-present sociality with those within the gallery, many respondents expressed disinterest in experiencing a deeper engagement with other people:

- *"I feel connected to other people to a limited extent—I was chatting to some of the other parents. But, no, I'm okay that they're in their own space and that we're in ours."*
- *"I don't really feel connected to people here. I don't think it's necessary in order to enjoy the space. I would probably chat to people but it's not crucial to my experience of the space."*
- *"I don't often consult other people here in the space. I'm not interested in other opportunities to connect. There's lots of stuff to do."*
- *"Not really, if you want to connect you'd have to talk to the people around you. Everyone here is having fun, that's nice."*

Others found the prevalent use of mobile phones amongst many visitors a deterrent from person-to-person communication (see figure 10):

- *"It's a bit dark for that. I think the other thing is, sometimes you look around and everyone is on their devices. When you've got your device in front of you, it's not the most inviting situation to engage with a parent or person. It doesn't give you the green light to engage with someone."*

Figure 10: *Visitors using their personal mobile devices in Screen Worlds.*

Other visitors, however, expressed feeling a sense of (physical) co-presence with fellow *Screen Worlds* audiences, for example, in the "more interactive spaces, like the choreographic and the shadow ones where you connect more". As one visitor added, "yes, we're sharing the same experience".

Two visitors expressed a desire for more opportunities for co-present sociality *for* and *with* their children:

> Bernadette is a regular visitor to ACMI. When we approach her, she is interacting with an iPad exhibit within Screen Worlds, with her back to her sons. They are interacting with the games behind her. As she opens up about her experience of ACMI, it becomes clear that while she has enjoyed seeing the exhibits in Screen Worlds in past visits (she gestures to the area where the Mad Max car is), she has not visited these or other exhibits recently: "we've been here many times, there's not too much to discover". She also adds: "my sons are only interested in the games and not the museum because they're young—maybe if it was more interactive on the museum side, well that could help us to interact together".

Hayley is seated next to her two young children who are playing on the interactive screens. This is Hayley's first time to ACMI: "Sadly so. I'm actually a creative person so I can't believe I haven't been here yet. My son came for an excursion and he has been asking to come back." Hayley does not feel particularly connected to other people in the space, citing for example an experience with the "shadow piece": "I felt the line was that you wait your turn, you have your turn, and then someone else has their turn. It wasn't collaborative." This is disappointing for Hayley as it seems like a "kid friendly space", adding that she is interested in digital and non-digital collaborative activities "that encourage these guys to come out of their shell more".

4.2.5   Intergenerational and temporal notions of play

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the historical content of *Screen Worlds*, several of the participants (predominantly parents and guardians) expressed a sense of nostalgia and feeling of co-presence with many of the exhibits on display. For example:

* *"I do play the games with the kids, I tend to play the older games from the 1980s and 1990s, that's when I was their age. These new ones, I can't really relate to them because … it doesn't really interest me. It's all about building things (like Minecraft). That's one of the games that we, my wife and I, actually encourage them to play. I'm not into Fortnites and shoot them up games."*

* *"Also, for me, looking at the cinema history, I forgot about Moulin Rouge. So, I'm going to go home and watch those movies. The museum has sparked more of an interest in things that I haven't thought about for a while."*

* *"I have used these computers (in the foyer) previously. I like the nostalgia, seeing Melbourne in the old times, it's really good."*

* *"I was on my phone when we started talking. I used to have an XP Falcon and I was just looking that up as a nostalgic trip down memory lane. Mine was blue and white."*

In these examples is evidence of audience members experiencing a sense of *more-than-human co-presence*: feeling(s) of sociality with material elements of the exhibition. We return to this experience and provide suggest an opportunity for building on these moments of sociality below (see Recommendation 2).
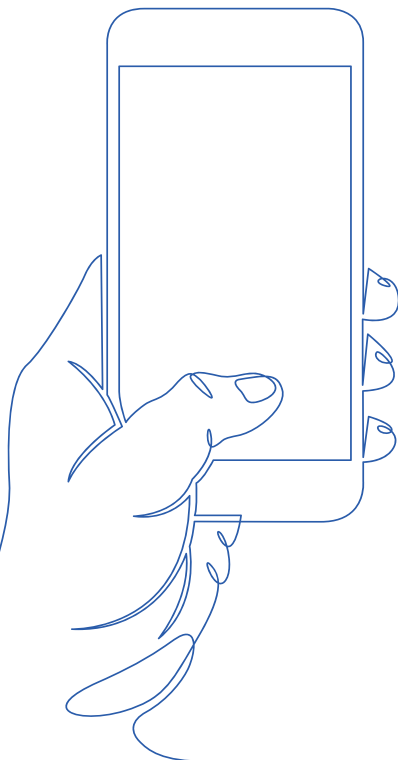
5   RECOMMENDATIONS

While the pilot study was intended to identify possibilities for maintaining digital connections to ACMI while access to non-digital counterparts were restricted, we provide the following recommendations framed as opportunities for both digital and non-digital audience engagement **during the period of closure** *and* **ongoing engagement** through the **ACMI Audience Lab**:

> **5.1.1   Embed, enact and enhance opportunities for audiences to share their lived experiences within and beyond the space—*"We don't know who our people actually are".***

It is evident from our interviews and analysis of digital data that audiences are keen to share their experiences of the space, its exhibits and interactives, although not necessarily publicly, through their social media accounts. Indeed, the openness and generosity of audiences to share their experiences with the RMIT research team suggest that both regular-repeat and first-time audiences would be interested in sharing rich narratives with ACMI and ACMI audiences. These narratives could be captured by the institution through multimodal interviews with onsite visitors and shared via the museum's social media and website platforms. These might also act as alternative to or complementary exhibition didactics. Doing so might help ACMI to better understand "who our *people* actually are" but also establish, build and sustain a deeper connection between and across the museum and regular-repeat and first-time visitors.

There are also existing opportunities to do so through on-site activities (for example *The Future of Media*), which currently invites audiences to share their ideas on paper, which are then broadcast on the one screen near the entrance/exit. In our observations, this was an under utilised/viewed exhibit. This could be extended to screens throughout the space, as well as the museum's social media platforms. In parallel, if ACMI wished to share more user-generated content and audience experiences on their social media accounts, for broader audiences to engage with, more visible signage within the space inviting users to do so would be helpful. Only one sign was noted during the researcher's fieldwork, on an upper level near the cinema entrance (see figure 11).
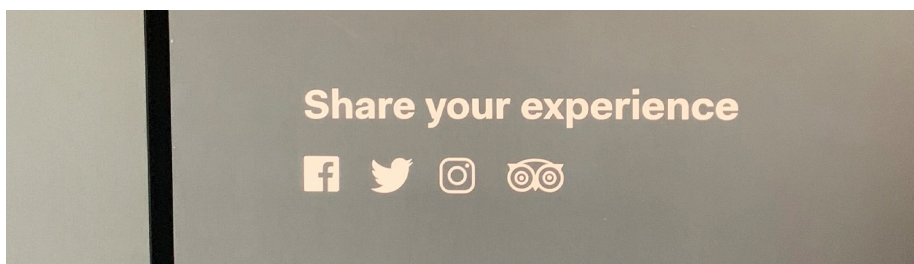
Figure 11: *Sign inviting visitors to "share your experience", ACMI.*

> **5.1.2   Curate opportunities (with and) for diverse and intergenerational, human and nonhuman, social encounters and exchanges within museum interactives and exhibits—*"Are parents and guardians disengaged from the institution? Should we be creating discussion moments for parents and families to talk to each other? Experiences for families to do something together?"***

Our interviews suggest that there are opportunities to curate social encounters and moments of exchange with and for diverse and intergenerational museum audiences. This was particularly expressed by parents and guardians of younger children who felt disconnected from the activities their children engaged with (see section 4.2.4) and through ethnographic observations of many adult carers and guardians (as above). While most interviewees were not interested in deepening their connection with other adults within the space, they were interested in opportunities to establish deeper and more playful exchanges with their children.

There was also interest expressed by some parents in further opportunities for collaborative exchanges between children within the exhibition spaces. These opportunities could be established by embedding digital and non-digital interactive activities across the museum's exhibits that provide a platform for social encounters and collaborative exchanges between museum visitors, for those who desire a deeper connection with co-present others. These activities might also include "discussion moments" for families and young children to consider and explore in their own time, together.

Our interviews also suggest that there are possibilities for further developing more-than-human social encounters (see 4.2.5). This could occur through more interactive opportunities that could be developed through following Donna Haraway's (2016) call to think with and through the materiality of the objects on display. For example, the Mad Max car prompted one interviewee to 'think through' the materiality of his own engagement with that technology, generating a temporally and spatially distinct sense of sociality that was mediated both through the car, the museum, and the participant's mobile. *How might similar experiences be curated to encourage and complicate such thinking in the future?*

> **5.1.3** **Co-curate integrated social media encounters for audiences to engage and connect with, across internal departments including Exhibitions, Public, Education and Industry programs—*"There is currently no integration. We very rarely hand over our account".***

While our findings suggest that those interviewed do not actively follow ACMI on Instagram, or very rarely use Instagram to find out what is happening at the museum, most expressed a **strong interest** in following the museum's Instagram account to remain informed and connected during ACMI's temporary period of closure. We see this as an opportunity to establish and foster an Instagram account that better reflects a more integrated approach to museum audience engagement, informed by its diverse and complementary exhibition and public program offerings. While this approach is evident, for example, on individual ACMI staff Twitter accounts which demonstrate active, personalised, and connected social media practices, it is not reflected in the museum's Instagram account—which predominantly presents images related to cinema screenings. Further, drawing on the analysis of audience-led digital participation on Instagram, it appears that there exists an audience that is eager and indeed already active in both engaging with, and developing, a richer representation of the institutional offering.

Expanding the institution-presented content to include the experiences enabled by and across internal departments, including Exhibitions, and Public, Education and Industry programs, in parallel with audience-generated content, would reflect a richer and more dynamic digital social space. Simple and existing industry practices such as guest "take-overs" and the use of IGTV could help audiences remain connected with ACMI during the period of closure.
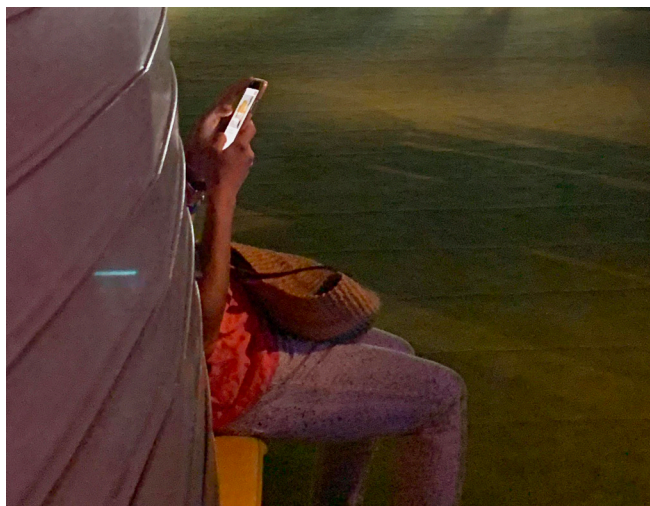
5.1.4   Enact deeper engagement and two-way social media practices and digital wayfaring *for* and *with* diverse audiences

There is also an opportunity to deepen digital engagement in current social media practices, particularly on Instagram, and in relation to events of significance for diverse audiences (including ACMI hosted and programmed events). Our research noted, for example, that while ACMI had posted about a forthcoming event related to *International Women's Day* (see figure 12), no post about the event or the significance of the day was made on March 8. A similar finding found that a post was made days ahead of the screening of *Surviving R Kelly*, however no at-event posting was made, nor were links or information about available resources and support services provided for people who may be experiencing sexual violence.

While a content warning was noted in the image caption — "CW: Discussion relating to sexual assault" — there is an opportunity for ACMI to enact practices that demonstrate critical, careful and responsible social media encounters that move away from superficial practices towards more meaningful engagements with their audiences. Where appropriate, this could also involve more responsive two-way communications between commenting Instagram users and ACMI online and links to richer interviews and personal insights from "guests" via the *Ideas* section of the ACMI website. Doing so, might also help resolve current practices around claiming "diversity numbers" (for example, via hosted events such as international, environmental, queer, and human right film festivals). Rather than hosting events that increase diversity statistics, there is an opportunity for ACMI to enact practices that are informed by a genuine desire to connect with and provide experiences for diverse audiences and audiences with diverse experiences, motivations and needs.

Figure 12: *Screenshot from @acmionline Instagram account: International Women's Day, ACMI, 2019.*

According to our analysis of Instagram data, it appears that members of these audiences are already enacting such practices. For example, attendees of the Melbourne Queer Festival produced a number of images documenting their engagement with the space. ACMI's role in hosting such events could be further developed and articulated online.

Other opportunities for deeper engagement during the period of closure could be enacted by keeping Instagram followers informed of developments, for example by posting building progress shots, interviews with ACMI staff, and "behind the scenes" insights. Indeed, the broad lack of awareness around the museum's temporary closure expressed by those interviewed suggests that more transparent and open communication approaches are required and should be reflected in the content posted by ACMI on its social media and other online platforms.

5.1.5 "Moments of pause" through critical-creative and inventive play

As museums and galleries, and other public institutions, respond to the growing demands and changes of their audiences, through more inventive, innovative and faster-paced digital experiences, it is easy to neglect the need for pause and reflection—breaks in the otherwise chaos and stimulation of worlds within and beyond ACMI. As researchers, this was most evident within the Flinders Street foyer, and in our discussions with visitors like John and ethnographic observations of intergenerational gatherings of people: eating, drinking, watching, listening, sharing experiences and taking a moment to pause from exhibits and interactives. The forthcoming expansion of the museum promises to deepen existing perceptions (and indeed *lived* audience experiences) of ACMI as a social hub, by creating "moments of pause" (Hunn 2019) wit·hin the infrastructure of the building. We propose that going forward, there is a significant opportunity to learn from these physical spaces of pause, to explore and identify strategies for translating similar moments into social media platforms and digital wayfaring practices. Doing so might contribute to advancing inventive and critical-creative methods and strategies to harness different audiences in intergenerational and multisensorial ways.

These recommendations emphasise the need to recognise and leverage the advantage of having regular-repeat and interested first-time audiences. For ACMI to enact and lead the way in inventive methods for audience engagement it requires on the ground work, critical-creative, careful, transdisciplinary research and engagement. Importantly, as Lizzie Muller (Winesmith 2019) emphasises, "we must include our audiences when we plan to collect and then use their data". Doing so might provide an opportunity for the current research to connect with existing efforts around the development and forthcoming implementation of the **ACMI Audience Lab**. If this is to be an "idea, not a place", as noted by Katrina Sedgwick (Winesmith 2019), it is our suggestion that digital place-making such as the kind suggested here offers a possible site for experimenting and producing new museum experiences.

6 IMPACTFUL DIRECTIONS AND FUTURE OUTCOMES

Based on the pilot study, the researchers propose the following initiatives to support impactful directions and future outcomes moving forward:

- An **Australian Research Council Linkage** between RMIT University and ACMI to support a long-term project that follows ACMI as it reopens and moves into new digital and non-digital spaces. Phase 1 of the Pilot Study has identified significant avenues for future research (as discussed above for example investigating scenarios of use by ACMI audiences and locative digital media and participation enacted by and in relation to ACMI). The research team brings together a

significant and highly relevant set of skills and interests – including museum studies and digital participation, social innovation, and inventive and care-full approaches to co-curation—to underpin and deliver such future projects. Of particular interest to the research team is the possibilities that the **Audience Lab** presents for experimenting and producing new museum experiences that facilitate more-than-human social encounters (see 4.2.5) in both digital and non-digital contexts to generate temporally and spatially distinct sociality. Any such future projects would seek to develop methods beyond the blunt instrumentalism of metrics to illustrate impact and growth in both engagement, awareness, and (digital and non-digital, museum, and other) literacies.

- A series of **iterative workshops and encounters** between and with ACMI staff and audiences—to co-explore opportunities for co-futuring, particularly around inventive and responsive methods for integrating audiences lived experiences, motivations, and interests into and across the digital and non-digital practices enacted by ACMI to engage diverse audiences.

- An open source **toolkit** co-designed by ACMI and RMIT University, to support and share strategies for the development of inventive and responsive approaches to social media and digital wayfaring—that move away from quantitative snapshots, towards more complex, multidimensional and multi-sensorial modes of exchange within museum spaces.

- An **industry conference** presentation (for example at the *2019 Museum and Gallery Queensland Conference*, abstract currently under review)—to share key findings, learning and insights from the pilot study with emerging and established industry practitioners.
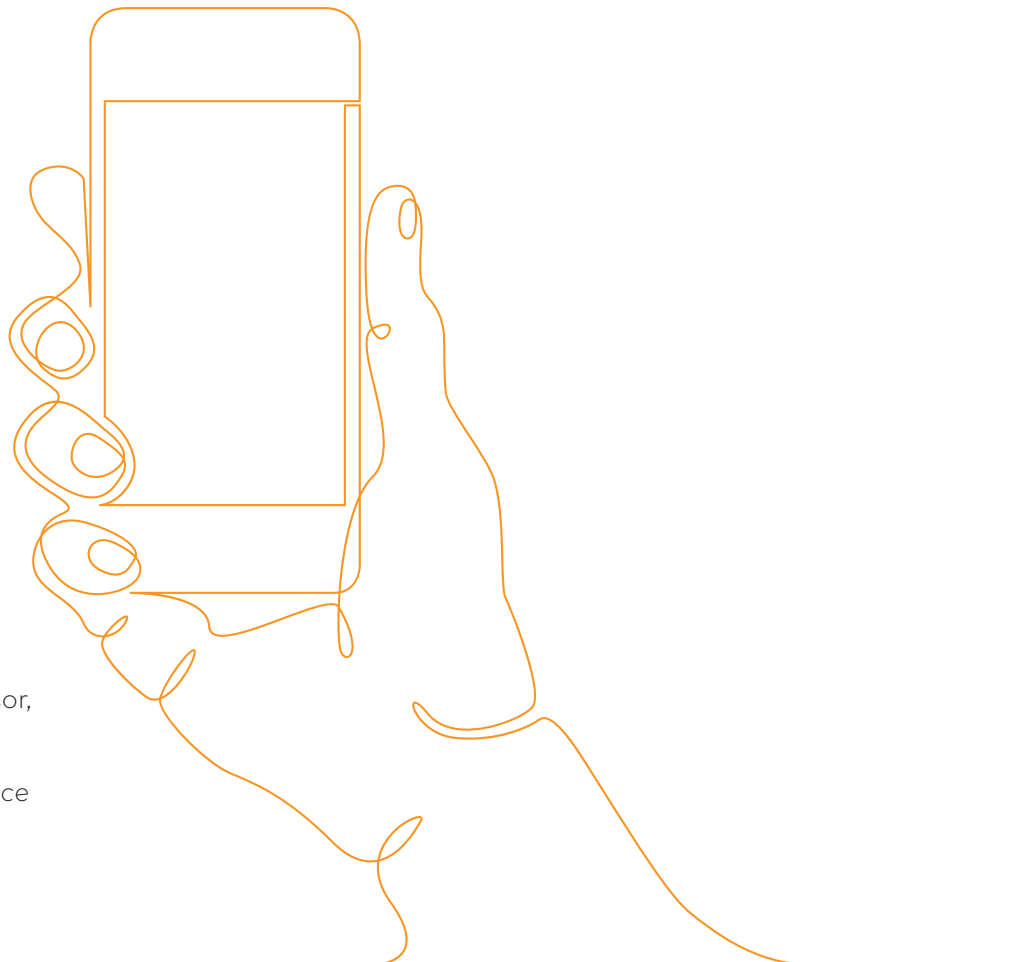
7   CONTACT

Larissa Hjorth, Distinguished Professor, Media and Communication

Director, *Design and Creative Practice Enabling Capability Platform*

Email: larissa.hjorth@rmit.edu.au
Telephone: +61 3 9925 3960

APPENDIX A: Interview Questions

The following questions were used as a guide for engaging ACMI audiences in a series of semi-structured and conversational interviews. ACMI staff were consulted for direction.

Feelings

- Is this your first visit to this space?
- Can you describe how this space makes you feel?
- Have you taken any photos while here?
- Have you shared a photograph from your time today at ACMI on Instagram? Or do you plan to share any of the photos that you've taken so far?
- Can you describe the post your shared / plan to share to Instagram and why you posted it?

Behaviours

- Talk us through how you took and posted the photo. What does the photo depict?
- What made you decide to take a photo of that?
- Did you include other visitors/yourself in the photo?
- After you took the photo, did you filter or edit it?
- Did/will you post it immediately? What caption did/will you use?
- Do you use hashtags, or tag the institution, or interact with ACMI's Instagram page (for example, through likes or comments)? Why or why not?
- If you do, what does 'doing that' feel like?
- What prompts you to share your experiences on Instagram during your visit to ACMI? Other audience members? Signage? Other?
- Why is it important for you to share your experiences on Instagram during your visit?
- Will you post anything after your visit to ACMI about your experience here? Why or why not?

Co-present sociality

- Do you feel connected to the people who are here with you? Why or why not?
- Do you want to feel co-presently social while here?
- To what do you feel co-present with (the collection items, the space, the people, the institution)?
- Do you want to feel co-presently social while in the gallery?
- What does co-presently social mean to you?
- How do people using their phones influence that sociality?
- How does social media change your connection to the people here?

Spatiality

- How would you describe this space to someone who has never visited?
- If you follow ACMI on Instagram, how do/have their posts influence/d your perception of this space?
- Does Instagram extend your connection to ACMI?
- Is the connection based on the physical institution or the cultural content or are they one and the same? How does social media change this?
- Did you see the space represented on Instagram before you arrived?
- Did the representation match what you saw today?

Programming

- What role does Instagram play in your process of finding out what's happening at ACMI?
- Does Instagram extend your connection to ACMI?
- Is the connection based on the physical institution or the cultural content or are they one and the same?
- How does social media change this?

List of Figures

Figure 1: *Mapping of interviews and ethnographic observations of digital media use.*

Figure 2: *Graph: @acmionline Instagram posts March 2019 (number of likes and comments).*

Figure 3: *Graph: @acmionline Instagram posts March 2019 (references to coding themes and non-digital spatiality).*

Figure 4: *Screenshot from @acmionline Instagram account: The Last Movie, ACMI, 2019.*

Figure 5: *Graph: cumulative Instagram participation enacted in March 2019: @acmionline, #acmimelbourne and tagged @acminonline.*

Figure 6: *Graph: #acmimelbourne and tagged @acmionline Instagram posts March 2019 (references to coding themes and non-digital spatiality).*

Figure 7: *Graph: March 2019 Instagram posts and relationship with exhibitions.*

Figure 8: *Signage announcing forthcoming closure.*

Figure 9: *A visitor Facetiming in the Flinders Street ACMI foyer.*

Figure 10: *Visitors using their personal mobile devices in Screen Worlds.*

Figure 11: *Sign inviting visitors to "share your experience", ACMI.*

Figure 12: *Screenshot from @acmionline Instagram account: International Women's Day, ACMI, 2019.*

List of Tables

Table 1: Instagram data collection.

Table 2: Data set engagement.

References

Budge, K., & Burness, A. (2018) Museum objects and Instagram: agency and communication in digital engagement. *Continuum* 32(2):137-150.

Budge, K. (2017) Objects in focus: Museum visitors and Instagram. *Curator: The Museum Journal* 60(1): 67-85.

Fürsich, E. (2009) In defense of textual analysis: Restoring a challenged method for journalism and media studies. *Journalism Studies* 10 (2): 238-252.

Haraway, D. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Hartley, J. (2012) *Communication, cultural and media studies: The key concepts.* Routledge.

Hjorth, L. & Hinton, S. (Forthcoming). *Understanding Social Media* (Second Edition). SAGE Publishing.

Hjorth, L., & Pink, S. (2014). New visualities and the digital wayfarer: Reconceptualizing camera phone photography and locative media. *Mobile Media & Communication,* 2(1): 40–57.

Hunn, P. (2019). BKK and Second Story aim to create 'true public space' with ACMI's first renewal in 17 years. *Architecture AU.* Retrieved from https://architectureau.com/articles/bkk-and-second-story-aim-to-create-true-public-space-with-acmis-first-renewal-in-17-years/

International Audience Engagement Network. (2018). *IAE Report.* Retrieved from https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018_IAE_Report.pdf.

Inayatullah, S. (2008). Six pillars: Futures thinking for transforming. *Foresight*, 10(1), 4-21.

Jensen, B. (2013) 'Instagram as cultural heritage: User participation, historical documentation, and curating in Museums and archives through social media', in *Digital Heritage International Congress (Digital Heritage)*, vol. 2, pp. 311-314. IEEE.

Lezuan, J., Marres, N., & Tironi, M. (2016). 'Experiments in Participation', in *The Science and Technology Studies Handbook.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Mattern, S. (2014). Library as Infrastructure. *Places Journal* (June). Retrieved from https://placesjournal.org/article/library-as-infrastructure/#0.

Nicholls, A., Simon, J., & Gabriel, M. (2015). *New Frontiers in Social Innovation Research.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rowley, J. (2012). Conducting research interviews. *Management Research Review* 35 (3/4), pp. 260–271. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.ezp01.library.qut.edu.au/docview/928748740?pqorigsite=summon

Russo, A. and Pond, P. (2018) Curation at the Threshold: Making Museum Meanings Through New Interfaces. In Parry, R., Page, R., & Moseley, A. (Eds.). *Museum thresholds: The design and media of arrival.* Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com

Schuler, D. and Namioka, A. (1993). *Participatory design: Principles and practices.* Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.

Susarla, A. (2019). The new digital divide is between people who opt out of algorithms and people who don't. *Fast Company.* Retrieved from https://www.fastcompany.com/90336381/the-new-digital-divide-is-between-people-who-opt-out-of-algorithms-and-people-who-dont

Winesmith, K. [drkeir]. (2019, April 12). Great point from Lizzie Muller in the "Remixing cultural data together" session at #RemixSyd. We must include our audiences when we plan to collect and then use their data. [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/drkeir/status/1116572431689195521

Winesmith, K. [drkeir]. (2019, April 12). Katrina Sedgwick says the @ACMI Audience Lab will be an "idea, not a place". Bravo. 100%. Yes. [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/drkeir/status/1116594660854525952

Zweifel, C. & Van Wezemeal, J. (2012). Drawing as a qualitative research tool: an approach to fieldwork from a social complexity perspective. *TRACEY: Drawing Knowledge* (5), 1-16.