

Thanks for attending, as a quick intro to myself in case you missed this morning – I talked about how the arts and tech are changing audience interaction in the work itself this morning
- now going to be looking at how technology can be used to break down the barriers between arts companies and our audiences. Specifically the use of social media, which I believe could, if used rightly, revolutionise the way that people access and understand art, and the artistic process.

I'm hopefully going to run this to about 30 minutes, to leave 10 minutes or so to answer any questions that you have, and as ever, the presentation and slides will be available at bit.ly/HNSpeech

Firstly I'm going to look at a few misconceptions about social media and tech...

EMBRACE THE FEAR

I'm going to return to the fear that I mentioned this morning though, because this permeates all the work I do with arts people. Let me tell you now that there is nothing you can't learn. Nothing you can't understand. And

YOU CAN'T BREAK THE INTERNET

nothing you can break beyond repair on the internet. My background is entirely arts based, and yet through poking around, and a certain degree of never wanting to be told how to do something, I've built websites, run tech based projects, and eked myself a place on the UK social media stage. If you can google, there is nothing you don't know, only information you've not come across yet. Learn. Embrace the fear and learn continually. Because the secret is,

THERE ARE NO EXPERTS

There Are No Experts there's just us. All of us. Learning as we go. These tools are all so new, and there's always something else on the horizon, because of this the only way to learn how to use them is to use them yourself, become your own expert, and connect to people who know what's coming next. Know that everyone makes mistakes, just as everyone sometimes stumbles over their words.

THIS IS NOT A NEW WAY OF COMMUNICATING

This is just communication, through a different medium. It's just talking. As you'd talk, laugh, and converse in real life, you do so online. Don't try and view it as a different language, engage with it using your own.

BUMS ON SEATS

The last problem with using these new tech based tools is the 'bums on seats' problem.

"PR folk are always asking how do you measure the value of social media?
I'm glad I don't have to rate every conversation I have." @Documentally

I know that you need money to grow art. But this does not mean that everything in art should be measured against the money it cultivates.

The value of social media can and should not be measured against old, analogue-world ideas of promotion and product. Because the way we access our entertainment is changing – peer to peer filesharing, bbc iplayer, 40d, spotify, itunes, these things are changing the way we expect to be able to access our world.

“Digital distribution has changed everything. It's no longer about pushing product. The consumer will pull what they want” Charles Cecil at Shift Happens

The idea of ‘bums on seats’ is no longer relevant, in the context of a digital universe (and make no mistake, your audience is certainly living in one) you cannot *sell*, you cannot *push*. you cannot measure instant results. Old ideas of marketing *just wont wash*.

The way that social media works is that it builds communities – instead of looking at the process as a top down one that ends in your audience, you need to think about opening up your whole process.

There's a whole lot of people out there vying for the attention of the general, public, it's hearts, not minds that you need to engage now, show them how the artwork grows, communicate with the masses. You might even learn something.

So what *will* engaging with social media bring to your art?

Complete the picture: by providing people with access to the personal and day-to-day side of your organisation, think of it as a backstage tour to your organisation.

Break down the barriers: The immediate and personal view that social media allow into your company/projects helps to break down the perceived inaccessibility of the arts. Showing the process as well as the finished piece, even if it is just moaning about a mail-out, means that your communities can

Collaborate: Social media can help you make connections to people and groups you might never have otherwise encountered, it can garner immediate responses to questions, act as an instant audience-survey, it helps you see into other people's worlds in the same way they can access yours. It connects you to people all across the country, and all across the world.

It can help get your art 'out there': Social media is an active pastime, the people who get the most out of it listen as much as they speak – they *participate*. The personal nature of social media means that these people are more likely to actively support you and your work.

Understand: Inhabiting these worlds helps you as artists to understand them. You cannot make art about the world, without having lived in it.

Types of social media:

So where to begin? A lot of social media can seem out of reach, confusing, or difficult at first glance. I will be offering you a basic toolkit here, of both physical kit, and social media tools

There are three main types of content that you're going to be producing in the online world:

- Front Facing
- Real-time
- Audio/video/images

Of course all of these will cross pollinate

Front facing: Your website and your blog. [Posterous](#), [Wordpress](#), [Blogger](#).

Your front-facing media is the main landing page when someone searches for you – this is where you will collate the best of your social media activities, and where you will publish the more traditional marketing, event and company information. It is essential that you keep this space active, and interactive, however, and that's where a blog comes in.

Wordpress and **Blogger** are popular and easy to edit blog hosts, allowing you to add widgets, post updates, allow people to subscribe to your RSS Feed and more.

Quite possible to build a whole website in Wordpress – if you visit mine it's built in WP.

Posterous is a super-simple blogging platform which allows you to post almost anything via email, meaning that they deal with all the media and other content that you want to attach.

Real-time [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) statuses, [Twitvid](#), [Twitpic](#), [12 seconds](#) [Ustream](#)

Currently, almost all mainstream social media is geared to link up with twitter – the simple, short and easy way of sharing your real-time exploits online. Acts as a kind of feed.

Twitter is your main tool with regards to immediacy, and behind the scenes access to your community. For an in depth guide to why you should be using twitter, along with a guide to the jargon, programs and different tones you can cultivate, have a look at my guide to [Twitter for Arts Organisations](#), which is linked, as ever, on bit.ly/HNspeech

What can be a little more challenging as a company new to Twitter is cultivating your presence and community, before you have people to talk to you will be tweeting into what feels like the dark, and you need to make sure you don't fall into the bad habit of only pushing front facing style communication. Keep talking to people, asking questions, and sharing other people's information as much as possible.

Facebook statuses can be used in a similar way to twitter, although try not to replicate information, you want people to feel as though they're discovering

more about you as they explore your digital footprint, not digging up all of the same information.

TwitPic and Twitvid are very simple ways of uploading images and video and sharing them via twitter – you can access them online, or via mobile devices and twitter clients. Bringing a visual face to your real-time action is really important in how accessible you appear. It doesn't always have to be about the art however, you can take pictures of the mountains of envelopes you have to seal, or a wonderful prop or piece of scenery that has showed up. Again, it's all about the taste of your content, and the behind the scenes feel, to which these two tools can contribute (NB there are other platforms, but these are the most widely used)

12 Seconds will also auto-tweet, and is really a wonderful, video version of Twitter, allowing you to send 12 second videos out to the world. This is brilliant for snap shots into a working day, vox pops, or general process. You can post by email, online, or mobile applications.

Ustream. Ustream is an example of many different applications which will allow you to stream video footage to the web, this can be a brilliant way of involving people in the live aspect of art – play readings, a tour around a workshop or exhibition, a wander around a studio, etc. Three things you need for good streaming for an event

- 1) a wired connection
- 2) up speeds
- 3) decent audio

Audio/video/images [Flickr](#), [Youtube](#), [Audioboo](#).

Flickr and **Youtube** allow you to share images and videos respectively; it lets you 'tag' media, meaning that it will be easily found in google searches, and offers the ability to embed elsewhere online.

Audioboo is an instant podcasting solution currently available to iPhones and iPod Touches, though soon to allow file uploads online. Posting to Audioboo you are able to add a location tag, picture, and immediately host a piece of audio. The audio will be auto-tweeted, and can be downloaded/subscribed to via iTunes from the Audioboo site. Audioboo is a brilliant way to keep people updates when you are short on time, and a less overwhelming way of interviewing people.

Other:

[Eventbrite](#) allows you to create 'events' and share them online – you can charge for tickets (though you don't have to), provide links, information and maps, as well as enabling people to instantly download the information to their chosen calendar (outlook or ical usually) These are brilliant ways of disseminating event information far and wide. Also check out the more succinct **Tweetvite** which works in much the same way for smaller non-ticketed events.

Best way for you to learn is through seeing, so I really recommend you check out Hoipolloi, really excellent work.

BASIC KIT RECOMMENDATIONS:

There is much more on the market which will help you interact with your online community, but these are the basic physical tools which will enable you to do all of the above. Assuming you have a computer and an internet connection.

An iPod Touch, (plus mic) –roughly £140 → this will open the door to true real-time interaction, allowing you access to Twitter clients, audioboo, mobile browsing, email-blog posting and more

A Canon Ixus 100 - roughly £150 → this will do HD video, and high quality images. The camera is robust and easy to use (drag and drop)

Gorillapod!

A MiFi free on some contracts → a personal wireless hotspot, utilising 3G networks, this allows you to turn the iPod Touch into an almost replicate of the iPhone, meaning you will be able to tweet, Audioboo, browse and email blog entries almost anywhere.

Where do you find the time?

A large part in engaging with these worlds, aside from understanding that you're not wasting time when you're interacting with people- is cultivating the habit – to notice when something funny, interesting or unusual is worth tweeting about – when to blog, what to blog about, remembering that you have these tools is half of using them. Set aside some time each day to use them.

We are fighting for the attention, now, of a generation who have become used to being their own protagonist, accessing their own world, controlling their own characters. If you open your process up, if you engage with people, if you tell their stories, ask them questions, offer them involvement, ownership, they will want to see the work you make. You will have made participants, not an audience. If you can make them laugh, if you can make them wonder, if you can connect to them in a human way, in *conversation* – you will not just have a bum on a seat, you will have a heart too. And hearts come back.

Don't just join in now, look to the future. Is open-source, wiki developed work the next step in devising? How does theatre writing exist in a wiki-world? Is streaming a new testing-ground for new work? What is the potential for using these tools to find new talent, to help people, to reach out the disenfranchised and disaffected? How can the digital world work on stage? *Is the digital world a stage?*

Find the new stories, ask the big questions. We're heading to a new universe of narrative and being, someone needs to throw ideas around, ask big questions, to "make a mess so we know where we are", to ask who we are, who we might become.

Social media is a conversation, not a piece of equipment. This is a call to arms, for democratisation, for anarchy, consensus. Be excited, embrace your fear, jump in. There's almost always a back button.