

6th International Culturemondo Roundtable: Notes for the afternoon workshop

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Float or Dive?

What if the newspaper “The Guardian” took over your cultural heritage institution?

Our team was given the task to compare our institution to the “Guardian. First we had to look for similarities and differences of our target audience, assets and value proposition. Then we had to figure out which strategies we would like to embed in our culture heritage organisation. Finally we had to figure out what would happen if they took over our institution, what would they keep, what would they change? We started by defining The Guardian. Our views were very similar to the description on Wikipedia..

You talking to me?

The Guardian (formerly known as The Manchester Guardian) is a British national daily [newspaper](#) owned by the [Guardian Media Group](#). Founded in 1821, it is unique among major British daily newspapers in being owned by a [foundation](#) (the [Scott Trust](#), via the Guardian Media Group). It is known for its left-of-centre political stance.^[3] At the [2010 election](#) it supported the [Liberal Democrats](#).

The Guardian had a certified average daily circulation of 283,063 copies in March 2010, behind [The Daily Telegraph](#) and [The Times](#), but ahead of [The Independent](#).^[2] The website, [guardian.co.uk](#), is one of the highest-traffic English-language news websites. According to its editor, The Guardian has the second largest online readership of any English-language newspaper in the world, after the [New York Times](#).^[4]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Guardian

Well, who the hell else are you talkin' to? You talkin' to me? Well, I'm the only one here

Where is the Guardian heading in terms of circulation? On October 2010, sales compared to last year had dropped by 13%

ABCs: National dailies, October 2010							
	October 2010	October 2009	% change	September 2010	October 2010 (without bulks)	May 2010 - October 2010	% change on last year
The Sun	2,904,180	3,026,556	-4.04	2,974,405	2,904,180	2,974,939	-2.9
Daily Mirror	1,215,081	1,295,972	-6.24	1,213,323	1,215,081	1,231,726	-6.76
Daily Star	793,487	836,556	-5.15	864,315	793,487	833,017	-3.74
Daily Record	320,736	339,226	-5.45	323,974	318,773	325,214	-5.63
Daily Mail	2,129,328	2,157,085	-1.29	2,144,229	2,008,419	2,123,886	-2.47
Daily Telegraph	655,006	767,894	-14.7	659,445	655,006	673,858	-17.11
The Times	479,107	571,783	-16.21	486,868	479,107	496,732	-14.4
Financial Times	401,898	412,854	-2.65	390,228	365,708	389,834	-4.03
The Guardian	276,428	311,878	-11.37	278,129	276,428	281,670	-12.9
The Independent	182,412	187,047	-2.48	182,776	118,422	185,438	-3.61

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/table/2010/nov/12/abcs-national-newspapers>

But online traffic soared...January 2009 was a bumper month for national newspapers online, with guardian.co.uk reaching a new high of almost 30 million unique users and all seven websites with officially audited figures posting record traffic .Fuelled by a busy news period with the conflict in Gaza, US president Barack Obama's inauguration and the continuing financial crisis, the traditionally busy online traffic month of January was particularly good for quality national newspapers' websites.Guardian.co.uk recorded 29,811,671 unique users last month, up 51% year on year and 31% from December 2008. The Guardian News & Media website network, which includes MediaGuardian.co.uk, also topped 11 million UK unique users in a month for the first time.

But this amount of traffic does not generate enough revenues to break even. The Guardian is developing ways to harness its brand and large and loyal online community to generate revenue through services such as Soulmates, the well-known Guardian dating site: <http://dating.guardian.co.uk/s/>.

The Guardian is also rumoured to be looking at introducing a paywall. Just like the Times, among other online news publishers, it is rumoured to be looking at introducing a paywall to bring in extra revenue from some parts of its online content, though no decisions have yet been taken. The move would be likely to reduce its overall online audience figure but could potentially increase revenue.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2009/feb/26/record-traffic-for-guardian-website>

Well, who the hell else are you talkin' to?

So what are the differences and similarities in target audience?

We saw a lot of similarities among our target audience. Cultural heritage audiences are predominantly left leaning and in possession of some form of higher education. But our brand lacks the impact and narrative of the Guardian brand. The Guardian brand stands for distinguished taste and high quality – it is unashamedly targeting a well-educated, affluent audience.

Assets

The brand appears to be the largest asset of the Guardian. The readers themselves are proud to be part of the Guardian family. Anything brought to their attention through the Guardian gatekeepers is thought to be of importance. Anything recommended is thought to have above-mentioned qualities.

Unique Value Proposition

Our team saw a lot of similarities in uvp. The Guardian product is a combination of knowledge gathering and sharing. What makes it unique is the combination of perspective and the quality of the knowledge collected and shared. However its distribution method is changing and no sustainable business model has yet surfaced. They don't dare to ask for payment, fearing readers will flock to free news outlets. The Guardian is still working to establish and communicate its uvp.

What if they took over?

The Guardian team would focus on the same target group. But their communication strategy would point out the distinguished taste and high quality of the collection of the institution. They would see the collection as media publications meant to be brought to the attention of their target audience. These media have to adhere to the Guardian standards: distinguished taste and high quality. Therefore, they would re-evaluate the collection of the institution.

Secondly they would report on the development of ideas around a work of art. It is their core business to report on the development of ideas. Interested parties could then decide that the development of those ideas is to their interest and subscribe to that communication channel.

The challenges the Guardian faces are very similar to the challenges that cultural heritage institutions face. Both are yet unwilling to drastically change their business model and they might be right. It is our belief that the Internet amplifies existing economic and social structures. That would point to a paywall. This model is therefore recommended for cultural institutions, go online and multiply.....

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