Let's Get Real Phase 4
What's the story?

A collaborative action research project to help arts and heritage organisations change the way they work and develop their impact on audiences
(Supported by the British Council)

What it's all about

"The word digital means everything and nothing, focusing on it is the biggest distraction of a generation."[1]

For many people their interaction and behaviour with technology has become integrated and impossible to separate from what we used to call *real life*. We watch TV on our phones, we use our phones to listen to the radio, we read the newspaper on our desktop computer, we go shopping from our desktops, we play games on our TV and watch YouTube on our games console. We don't 'go online', we simply exist in a world where the internet is everywhere and we dip in and out as we need to. The notion of digital as anything separate is outdated and inaccurate.

Meanwhile, publishers, businesses and brands, including arts and heritage organisations, often spend their time arranging themselves and their content around silos (i.e. channels and projects) that increasingly have no meaning for visitors who just want to know *what the story is.*

For Phase 4 of Culture24's dynamic collaborative action research project we will look at **breaking down boundaries in the way we work and the way we make things for our audiences.** To do this we need to think more about audience needs, motivations and behaviors and less about our own desire to push content at people in a broadcast model. We need to forget the word digital, reconsider marketing alongside content production, join up the dots inside our organisations, change our own work patterns and challenge our departmental silos.

During this work we will draw upon the learning from Let's Get Real Phase 3, which sought to explore the crucial question 'is your content fit for purpose'. Phase 4 will build on the insights from Phase 3 to further understand the potential effectiveness of specific pieces of content and to **explore how to develop a coherent story with which audiences can engage more holistically with your content.**

Phase 4 will provide a space to step outside of the day-to-day pressures and demands of your workload and develop a more coherent approach to your online publishing that is part of a broader narrative for your organisation and supports the linking up of different assets, people and areas of expertise. You will be introduced to ideas, working methods, tools and tactics by a range of experts and then supported through an individual research experiment that will help you determine what to change and how to change it.
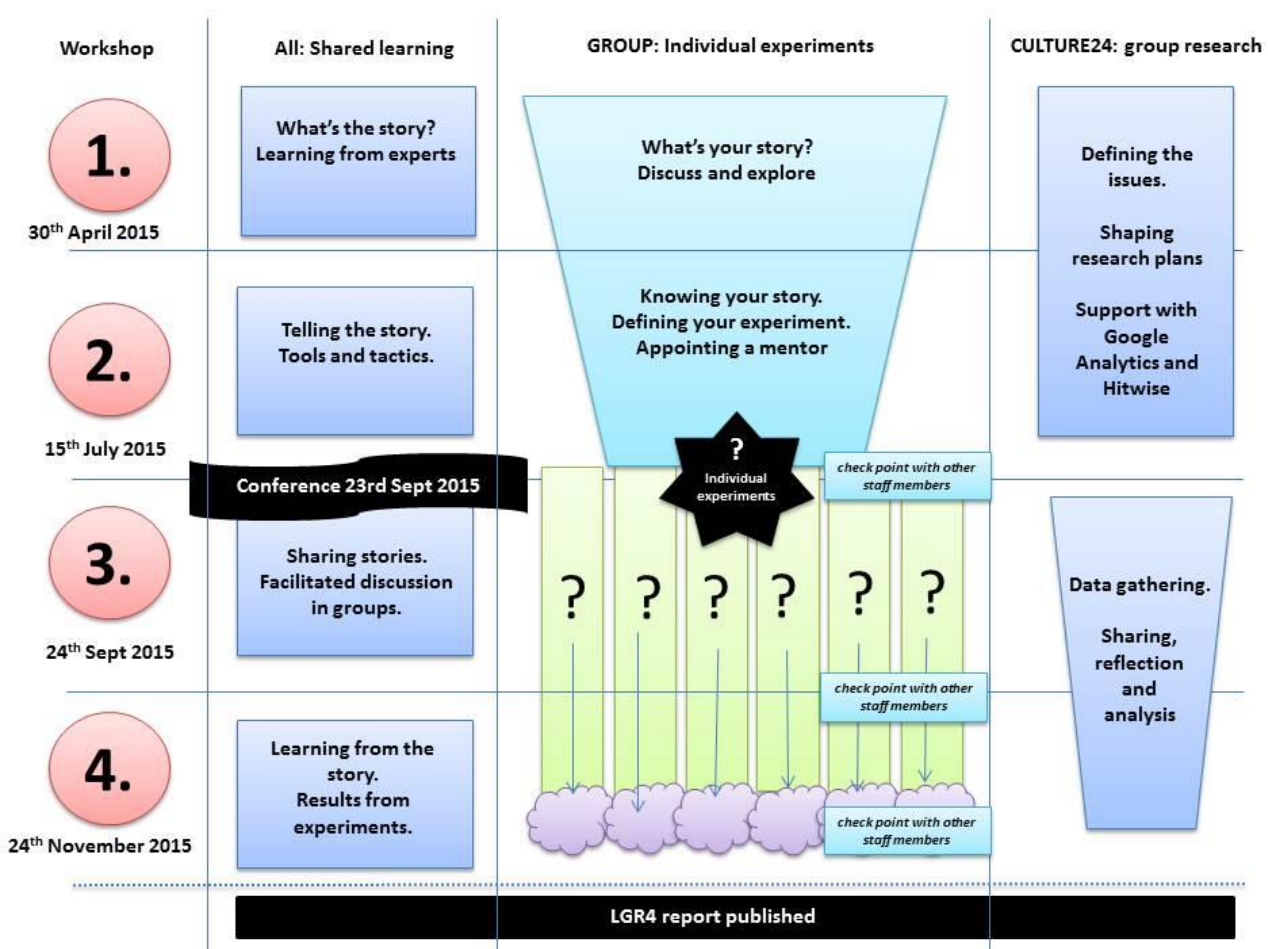
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[1] Tom Goodwin
http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2014/dec/18/future-advertising-digital-media-technology

Those organisations who have begun to successfully change the way they work and how they make things are seeing the rewards in terms of greater audience engagement, community and a sense of participation. This is the goal for those taking part in this project.

How the project will work

Culture24 will work with a group of up to 30 cultural professionals from a range of diverse arts organisations, over a period of ten months. Participants will work alongside colleagues who share similar struggles to improve their organisations' impact and break down the internal barriers that affect the way they work and make content online.

The diagram below shows the structure of the project and the four full day group workshops around which the research hangs. There are three simultaneous strands of research: Shared learning (external experts, ideas presentation from outside the group etc); Individual experiments (carried out by each partner); Group research carried out by Culture24.

Workshop	All: Shared learning	GROUP: Individual experiments	CULTURE24: group research
1. 30th April 2015	What's the story? Learning from experts	What's your story? Discuss and explore	Defining the issues. Shaping research plans
2. 15th July 2015	Telling the story. Tools and tactics.	Knowing your story. Defining your experiment. Appointing a mentor	Support with Google Analytics and Hitwise
3. 24th Sept 2015	Conference 23rd Sept 2015 Sharing stories. Facilitated discussion in groups.	? Individual experiments check point with other staff members ? ? ? ? ? ? check point with other staff members	Data gathering. Sharing, reflection and analysis
4. 24th November 2015	Learning from the story. Results from experiments.	check point with other staff members	
	LGR4 report published		

The project centres on individual research experiments by each partner as a catalyst for building understanding and driving internal change and development. These experiments will explore and measure the ways in which individual pieces of content can be presented within a coherent narrative online and how it meets the needs of audiences.   Each experiment will be defined during

the first two workshops and carried out between the second and fourth workshop. Culture24 will guide partners through a process of definition, measurement, analysis and reporting. Each partner will be supported during their individual experiment by Culture24 and will be assigned a mentor with expertise specific to their area of chosen research. The project will also facilitate the collaborative discussion and sharing of experiment ideas, progress and outcomes by grouping organisations together.

What does it cost?

The project is funded collaboratively by the participating organisations, who each contribute **£2,800 plus VAT**.

Included in this fee are:
- Support for all aspects of the research including data gathering and analysis
- Hosting of the four workshops, including lunch and refreshments
- Cost of bringing in any external experts
- Cost of a mentor to work with you on your experiment
- Co-ordination of the group's shared communication channel through Basecamp
- Cost of any central services or technologies that are adopted for the research
- Analysis and sharing of insights and data from the research
- The writing and production of a final project report for publication and advocacy
- Management of the project.

What is not included:
- The cost of any travel and accommodation to the workshops by each participating organisation
- The cost of any technical changes needed to your own digital systems
- The cost of your staff time.

Taking part

Each participating organisation must put forward one member of staff to act as the liaison point for the research. These nominated individuals should be directly involved in the delivery of the organisation's content offer, either at an implementation or strategic level, preferably both. Ideally they will have responsibility for any other content-related staff, freelancers or technical contractors. This will ensure that they are able to grant access to analytics data and implement any necessary changes as a result of the project.

In addition, these project contacts will need to nominate a minimum of two other members of staff, from other departments or from the senior management, whom they will have access to and can consult with when running the individual experiment. These additional staff need to be available for three internal meetings that are at the start, middle and end of each partner's own individual experiment. This is to allow the organisation to consider more meaningfully any changes that may be needed to its own working methodologies.

Culture24 will bring in a range of experts, tools and methodologies to inform the research process. In between each workshop there will be mandatory homework tasks for each project partner that will support the research and deliver specific value for each partner. The estimated time commitment for each project partner is approximately **8-10 days**, which incorporates attendance at the workshops, the conference plus individual homework and analysis time (supported by Culture24).

Culture24's role

Culture24's role is to lead and coordinate the project and we will identify and bring in experts as necessary to support all stages of the project delivery. The lead contacts at Culture24 will be Jane Finnis and Sejul Malde who will facilitate the workshops and manage the project. They bring expertise in project management, research and evaluation techniques to the project. Crucially we also bring our experience of analysis and strategic thinking that was critical in the production of the first three Let's Get Real reports.

Culture24 will oversee all of the research and liaise with any external partners or contractors. We will carry out the analysis of the project and will write, edit and produce the final report, overseeing its production and distribution across the sector. The project will feed into thinking and approach used in Culture24's work with The Audience Agency as part of their Arts Council England-funded Audience Focus work.

What you will gain by participating?

- Being part of a lively and engaged peer network with a shared sense of purpose. The network will act as a source of community, knowledge and support. It will also provide a space to benchmark, compare and contrast both data and experiences.
- Time to reflect on your wider organisational goals and the role that digital activities can play in fulfilling these (or not). This could include looking honestly at both success and failures internally and the allocation of budget spend and resources in this area.
- Space to experiment with different content publishing tools and tactics in a supported environment.
- An understanding of ways to assess how fit for purpose your content is and how to improve that, both strategically and practically.
- Ability to reflect on your own organisational structures, processes and rhythms when seeking to engage audiences with your content, to develop insights for opportunities for organisational change.
- Deeper insights into the use of Google Analytics for web reporting and how to set up your accounts in accordance with current best practice. This will help provide consistency in the configuration of accounts for reporting and can help to form the basis for a set of recommendations for reporting within the sector.
- Gaining insights in how to segment and separate different user behaviours, intentions and engagement, as well as defining targeted reporting for use by different staff member.
- An understanding of the relationship between the data available from analysis and tracking of web statistics and social media channels and its potential to help meet and fulfil specific key performance indicators.

Timescale

The project will take place over a period of approximately ten months and will be framed by the scheduling of the four workshops and any necessary consideration during the data collection period.

The schedule will be:

- January 2015: Call for participants
  EVENT: February 25th 2015: Launch of LRG3 report, Nesta, London
- March 2015: Sign up Complete
- 30th April 2015: Workshop One – British Council, London
- May and June 2015: First research period
- 15th July 2015: Workshop Two – British Council, London
- July and August 2015: Second research period
  EVENT: September 23rd 2015 Let's Get Real Conference, Brighton
- 24th September 2015: Workshop Three- Culture24 offices, Brighton
- Oct to November 2015: Third research period
- 24th November 2015: Workshop Four- British Council, London, Project conclusion
- Jan and Feb 2016: Report writing and production
- February 2016: Launch of LGR4 report

Background

This is the fourth phase of Culture24's unique and collaborative Let's Get Real action research project. The final reports from Phases 1 and 2 have been downloaded over 15,000 times internationally and have resulted in spin-off projects, conference papers, collaborations and new thinking. The frankness of both reports and their openness in speaking about the failure in the cultural sector to really capture the attention and engagement of online audiences has been met with a very positive reaction. The Phase 3 report will be published on 25th February 2015 at Nesta, London.

The Phase 4 project is supported by the British Council as part of their commitment to convene and strengthen cultural organisations in the UK and internationally. By sharing provocative ideas from a diverse range of sources, new models, methods and collaborations will grow to shape the future of the arts.

BRITISH COUNCIL

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