

Bubbles and Easter eggs

- I'm Mia
- I work for the Science Museum
- vitamin database project
- Twitter @mia_out with comments or questions
- <http://openobjects.org.uk> – my blog on digital heritage, blah blah blah

Museum Tech Pecha Kucha Night, British Museum, London, June 18, 2009

Presumably I'll think of all the things I should have said immediately after I get off the stage, so I'll update my notes and put them on slideshare/my blog (<http://openobjects.blogspot.com/>) later.

Why am I here today?



Why am I here? To keep momentum going and to share insights from MW2009. To suggest challenges to museums and to museum geeks. Do something with bubbles of excitement.

We can get excited at our museum geek events all we like but what really changes? Take that energy and sense of community and use to change things.



In my humble opinion – normally this is the bit where I tell non-museum people why museums are exciting, but in this case I'm using it to say I'll be presenting quick fire personal opinions consolidated at Museums and the Web (and an MCG committee away day).

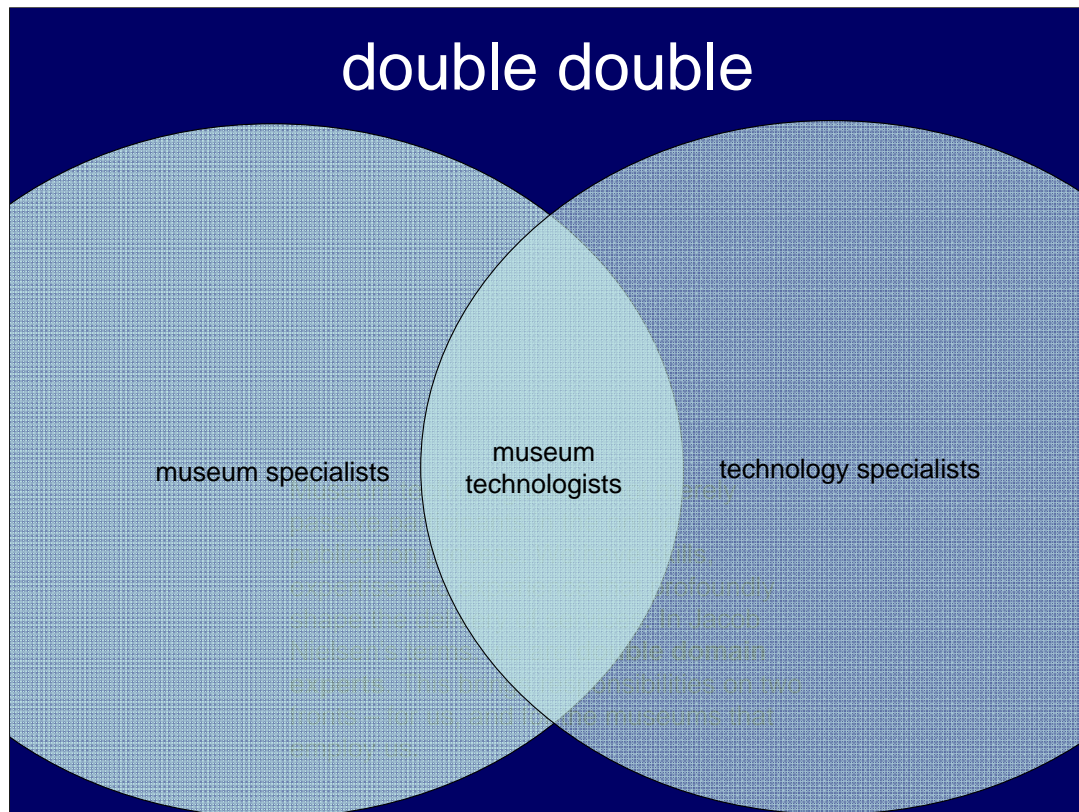
I think museums can change lives

"Those who do not study history are doomed to repeat it. "

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes" Marcel Proust

Museums should be about delight, serendipity and answers that provoke more questions

Museums should also be committed to accessibility, transparency, curation, respecting and enabling expertise and sharing the excitement and joy of learning



Museum technologists are not merely passive participants in the online publication process. We have skills, expertise and experience that profoundly shape the delivery of services. In Jacob Nielsen's terms, we are **double domain experts**. This brings responsibilities on two fronts – for us, and for the museums that employ us.

Don't hide museum geeks like Easter eggs



A post-MW2009 call to arms. Museums should recognise us (museum technologists) as double domain experts. Don't bury us like Easter eggs in software/gardens. There's a lot of expertise in your museum, if you just look. We can save you from mistakes you don't even know you're making. Respect our expertise - anyone can have an opinion about the web but a little knowledge is easily pushed too far. Don't wait for an external expert to tell you what to do – ask your staff (and validate with research and peer opinions if necessary). I'll mention some possible ways to connect staff...



For the museum geeks – don't let recognition as a double domain expert make you arrogant or a 'know it all'. Be humble. Listen. Look for the moment of epiphany – yours from conversation with others, and others from conversation with you. Don't get carried away with idea that we are holders of truth, we need to take adv of knowledge and research of others. We have lots of expertise but we need to constantly refresh that by checking back with our audiences and internal stakeholders. We also need to listen to concerns and consider them seriously; to acknowledge and respect their challenges and fears.



Break out of the bubble tech jargon creates. Share your excitement. Explain how a new technology will benefit staff and audiences, show them why it's exciting. Respect the intelligence of others we work with, and consider it part of our job to talk to them in language they understand. Bring them with us instead of trying to drag them along.

Show, don't tell.

Don't be afraid to call in peers to help with examples, moral support and documentation.

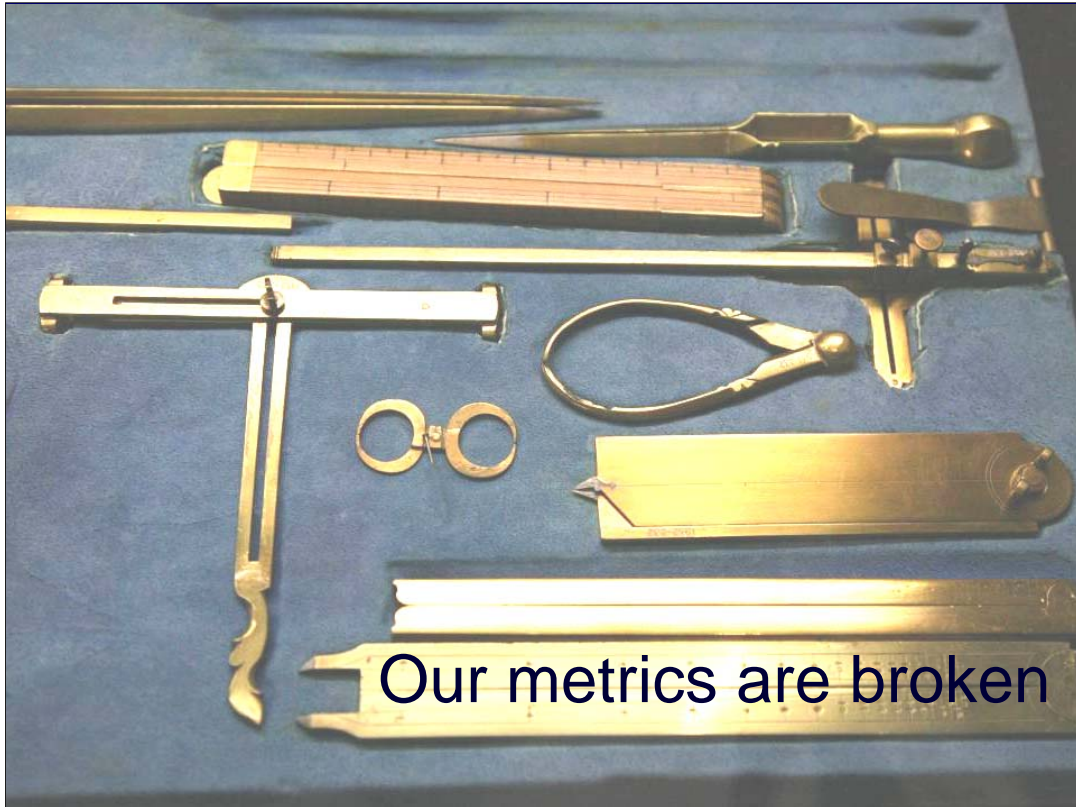


There was a great unconference session at MW2009 about 'intelligent failure' (<http://openobjects.blogspot.com/2009/04/oh-noes-fail-notes-from-unconference.html>)

To be more successful, we need to get better at failure. Constructive critiques that respect the bravery of people who make efforts towards transparency.

Do one thing – think about what you could add to the MCN project registry with an insightful reflection on the large or small failures of the project (<http://musetechcentral.org/>)

Do one thing – before posting a response about someone else's project, ask yourself – how would I feel if that remark was addressed to me or my project?



Project metrics are broken. Projects are broken from the start if they're predicated on the wrong goals and measurements. Start with what's useful, what's measurable; build in different metrics for different people. Move from box ticking to asking 'what's the real benefit for the public?'.

Projects and project metrics should be primarily driven by audience needs, not internal politics or concerns.

Do one thing – share ideas for better metrics



Pitch the goal, not the method.

Going back to the double domain expertise - to design projects to benefit audiences from the ground up, you need to involve museum technologists at early planning stages of projects, and to value their expertise. In an ideal world, tech wouldn't just be told, this is what we want the site/project to do, but the conversation would start a step earlier, with the overall goals of the project, audiences, key messages, etc. The most obvious solution might not be the best, or the solutions suggested might not be taking advantage of improvements in technology and development methods.

It's 2009

The web has changed our audiences and changed their expectations about content and interactivity: **mash-up, re-use, re-mix**

- **“The ten most heavily used web brands account for 45% of total UK internet time.**

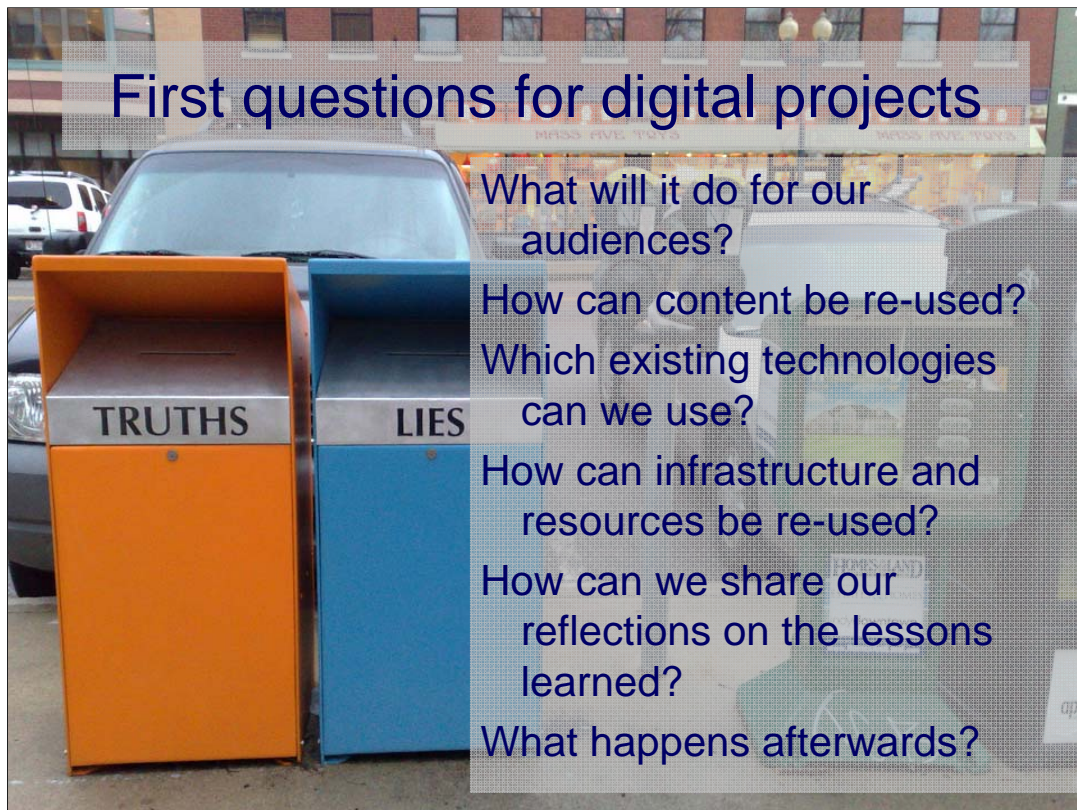
Facebook is the most heavily used web brand, accounting for 13 percent of all UK Internet time – or one in every eight minutes

Communication and entertainment are central themes amongst most heavily used web brands”

http://www.nielsen-online.com/pr/pr_090513_UK.pdf

Audience expectations have changed. We live in a post-spin, post-modern, deconstructed world. We might think our audiences are accessing our content from a cathedral-like space similar to a dedicated gallery - but they're not in the cathedral, they're in the bazaar, and we're just one of a million things to look at or experience.

We need to trust our audiences to understand context, authority, levels of interpretation. We can help educate them about this, but we also need to be open to learning from (and with) them.



If you don't have good answers to these questions, why are you proposing this project?

Do one thing - this is a random first go from me - please critique, expand, share them.

Other possible questions – should this really be a website/technology-led project?
Your place (website) or mine?

Whole museum view

- What kind of interaction is appropriate for your
 - context and technology
 - audiences
 - goals?
- What organisational resources need to be in place to support true engagement?
- Where else will your audience interact with this content?

Take a view over the whole offering of your museum - online and in the galleries, through social media, marketing, media coverage... Work to the strengths of the physical and online museum, with a good knowledge of how the user journey flows between them and how each can fill the gaps of the other.

This requires organisational change - push for it.

Who's already talking to your audiences?



Who's actually listening to your audiences?



Quickly flip over to the next slide...

[Learning point: you can't do this in Pecha Kucha, cos the slide progressions are timed. Still, it gave me a chance to catch up on the previous slide]



Most of our content, research, staff, collections, objects, work, investment is hidden. Visitors only see the tiny tip of the iceberg.

Show your audiences all the good stuff that happens behind the scenes

You can only fit so many people on a storeroom tour, but the web has unlimited capacity

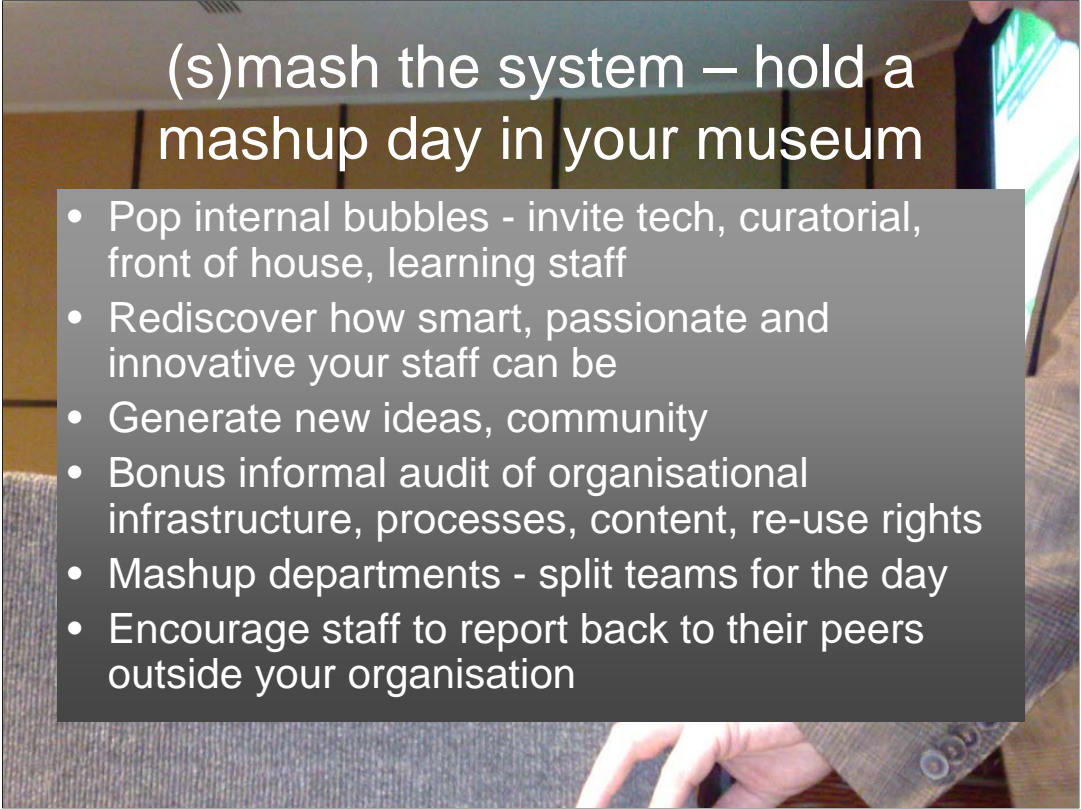
It's a natural fit for social media

Now is a good time for transparency – turn visitors into supporters, and supporters into advocates

Innovation bubbles

- Innovation is happening throughout your organisation
- Do you know where?
- What's being done to encourage it?





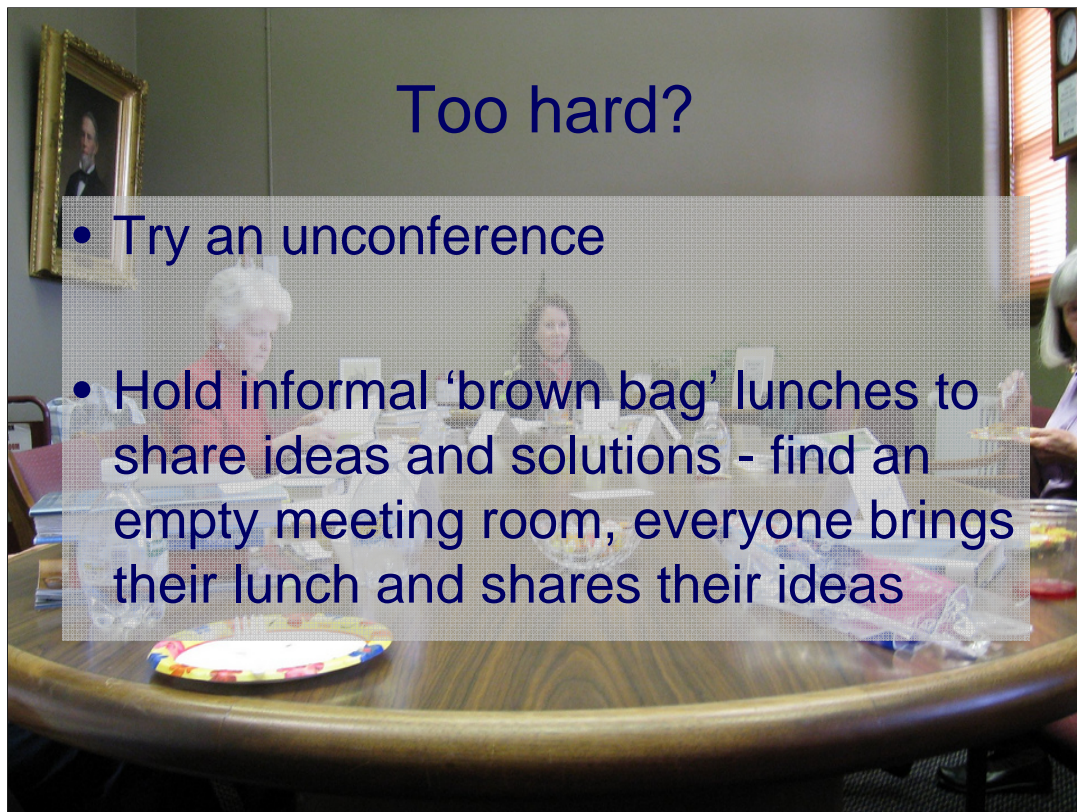
(s)mash the system – hold a mashup day in your museum

- Pop internal bubbles - invite tech, curatorial, front of house, learning staff
- Rediscover how smart, passionate and innovative your staff can be
- Generate new ideas, community
- Bonus informal audit of organisational infrastructure, processes, content, re-use rights
- Mashup departments - split teams for the day
- Encourage staff to report back to their peers outside your organisation

Hold a mashup day in your museum.

Make space for innovation, and send the message that it's valued.

Make sure you pop the bubbles still so that people don't regroup around departmental or team lines



Unconference - people get up and pitch ideas, issues for discussion in informal breakout groups.

Do whatever you can - do your 'one thing', and report on it. Encourage others to do the same.

It might not work - but you'll never know if you don't try.

A challenge

Has the web
fundamentally
changed your
museum?

(Why not?)



I don't know if I need 20 seconds for this one, you're either squirming in your seat or you're not.

Turn your analytic gaze inwards. It's time for a maturity of approaches to the web. Work towards more effective, integrated and considered use of technology. This brings new challenges for us, but the benefits of collaboration and reflection are worth it.

Thank you for listening

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- <http://flickr.com/photos/phploveme/2679669420/> (Instrument case)
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:LondonScienceMuseumsReplicaDifferenceEngine.jpg> (Replica Difference Engine)
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