



Digital Economy Strategy Team
Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
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National Film and Sound Archive of Australia Submission on Digital Economy Strategy

The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA) is a statutory authority established by the *National Film and Sound Archive of Australia Act 2008*. The NFSA is Australia's national audiovisual archive; our reason for being is to develop, preserve and share Australia's audiovisual heritage and to make it available to audiences worldwide for enjoyment, learning, insight and creativity.

The NFSA welcomes the Australian Government commitment to developing a Digital Economy Strategy focusing on ways to improve access to new and emerging technologies and digital infrastructure to increase Australian industry and jobs. The creative sector, including cultural heritage organisations, play an essential role in the growth of the digital economy by providing unique and rich content for education and entertainment, and helping to foster a culture of creativity and innovation. A nation that values its own culture and stories is by definition self-confident and brave in asserting itself on the international stage.

The NFSA's collection of over 2.8 million items represents moving image and sound production from Australia's earliest days to its present. The collection encompasses drama, actuality and documentary, creative arts, social and scientific history, comedy, experimental and unique amateur audiovisual records. We are part of a community of Australian galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAMs), all of which hold collections that together tell the story of Australia's origins, identity and future.

At a national level our partner institutions include the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the Australian War Memorial, Australian National Maritime Museum, the Museum of Australian Democracy, the National Archives of Australia, National Gallery of Australia, National Library of Australia, National Museum of Australia and the National Portrait Gallery. We are all grappling with the challenge of ensuring that our collections – which are held in a wide range of heritage analogue formats, as well as more recently-produced born-digital material – are digitally available for use and access by our audiences. The NFSA's collection is unique within this community, as the only national collection of audiovisual material in Australia.

NFSA's collection is currently accessed in digital format by Australian and international users for a range of education and entertainment activities. Through our website, online exhibitions, curated collections, Soundcloud and YouTube channels we continue to create new pathways for users – achieving millions of views every year for audiences across Australia and internationally. In addition, we provide material for third party re-use and delivery. Some examples of our delivery of digital content include:

- Australian Screen Online education programs for students and teachers, available for download at aso.gov.au,
- Digital learning materials available at nfsa.gov.au,
- successful screen productions, such as the documentary production *David Stratton's Stories of Australian Cinema*, which aired on the ABC in June 2017, the Netflix drama series, *The Crown*, released worldwide in November 2016,

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- Streaming services, such as our partnerships with providers Kanopy and Ozflix, giving access to a number of Australian feature films for educators.

Below are a range of current issues the NFSA considers are key considerations in ensuring that cultural heritage is able to contribute to the growth of the digital economy in Australia.

Contribution of Digital Cultural Heritage to the Digital Economy

There is growing evidence regarding the contribution that digitised cultural material makes to economic development, including to the digital economy. Internationally, it is widely recognised that one of the most significant ways in which innovation, creativity, research, education and community engagement can be fostered and supported is through widespread access to cultural material – which today means through online digital access.

As early as 2006 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) made the connection between the availability of online cultural content and development of the digital economy, concluding that “content is expected to provide new impetus for the digital economy, encouraging innovation, raising the level of skills, triggering dynamic developments and innovations in existing industries and creating new markets...Today, many OECD countries perceive the digital content industries as important elements for international competitiveness” (OECD, Digital Broadband Content 19 May 2006, p6, www.oecd.org, citing E. Lorentzen, *Norway’s Strategy for Electronic Content*).

The 2015 white paper released by European Union think-tank Europeana, *Transforming the World With Culture: Next Steps on Increasing the Use of Digital Cultural Heritage in Research, Education, Tourism and the Creative Industries* concluded that digital cultural heritage is integral to growth in four key areas - research, education, tourism and creative industries. In particular, it argued that access to high-quality, rights-cleared digital cultural content is vital for growth of the creative industries (at page 22) – and cultural heritage collections are the obvious source of this content. The European Union has also accepted the general contribution that culture makes towards economic growth, through its 2015 Good Practice Report, “Towards More Efficient Financial Ecosystems”, which noted the impact that cultural and creative sector organisations have to stimulate growth and innovation in the economy as a whole.

Also in 2015, the Warwick Commission Report, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth*, noted the importance of governments maximising the opportunities presented by the digital age for increasing national productivity and social cohesion, and identified a lack of access to information and engagement as “bad for business and bad for society” (V. Heywood CBE, Chairman of the Warwick Commission). The 2016 report by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, *Understanding the Value of Arts & Culture* (G. Crossick & P. Kaszynska), noted a number of studies making a direct connection between a healthy creative economy (product, knowledge and network) and a general culture of innovation (at page 93).

Access to Cultural Content for the Digital Economy

While it is clear that high-quality, rights-cleared cultural content is an important ingredient for the growth of the digital economy, providing (and obtaining) such content in a readily available format is a challenge that all GLAMs in Australia, including the NFSA, are grappling with.

Digitisation

One of the greatest barriers facing the Australian GLAM sector in terms of making high quality cultural content available for use as part of the digital economy, is the process of digitisation. Much of our heritage collections still exist in analogue format. While a growing number of items coming into our collection are ‘born digital’ material (created in digital format), we have a large heritage collection which requires special treatment to transfer it into a usable digital format.

Digitisation of audiovisual material is a time-consuming and complex process, requiring specialist staff and equipment. In addition, analogue collection material deteriorates over time, becoming more difficult

and costly to digitise the longer it is left. For example, much of the material created on video tape in the 1980s that is held in our collection will no longer be accessible if not digitised within the next ten years.

We estimate that just over 1 million items in our collection require digitisation – including film, sound, video tape and documents. We have been working to digitise this group of collection items since 2002 – and we currently digitise around 14,000 items per year using a mixture of in-house and external digitisation processes. At these rates, it will take us many decades to digitise our collection and to make it available for use by Australian and international audiences. We are working to drastically increase our rate of digitisation in order to ensure that we can digitise our collection material and make it available for use as soon as possible, and before it is lost forever.

As part of this push, the NFSA is considering how we can use automation and new technologies to increase our digitisation output. Automation of parts of the collection management and digitisation process – such as quality checking, transcription and accessioning, can drastically reduce the staff input and time required for previously manual processes.

Copyright

In spite of the growing demand for ‘anywhere, anytime’ digital access to cultural heritage material by our audiences, all GLAMs in Australia must operate within the parameters of the Australian copyright framework. Much of the material in the NFSA collection involves third party rights which must be respected in an access environment. Currently, the process of rights clearance, and the payment of royalties for rights, is a time-consuming and complex manual process. The development of technology such as blockchain has the potential to dramatically simplify the rights management process, by automating rights clearances and royalty payments. The Government’s agenda for modernising and updating the copyright framework, such as through the current consultation draft of the Copyright Regulations 2017, will also assist to balance the demand for access with the need to recognise and respect the rights of creators.

Connectivity

Implementation of reliable and strong connectivity at all stages of the content creation, storage and re-use chain is integral to providing quality digital cultural content for use in the digital economy. The NFSA is part of a network of research and educational institutions which benefit from AARNET’s high speed network. However, this network does not extend to our industry partners – the creators of broadcast, film and sound content. As a result, we are still reliant on manual handling processes to receive much of our content from external providers – such as news broadcasters. We are working to bridge this gap however the cost and availability of technology which would allow us to ‘join up’ our institution with providers is at this stage a key barrier to building a fully connected network.

The future of the audiovisual archive: from media to multimedia

The NFSA envisions the future of the audiovisual archive as being smart, connected and open – using new technology to optimise workflows for annotation and content distribution. In this future, we will collaborate with third parties – our partner institutions, and with industry – to co-design and develop new technological solutions to our challenges, acting as frontrunners rather than followers. We will have stronger and closer connections to other sources of information (other collections and contextual sources) and to a wide range of user communities, researchers and the creative industries. Along with our cultural heritage colleagues we will embrace industry standards, improving our capacity to digitise, store and share the collection. We will become a truly ‘open’ archive at our core – in order to maximise our impact and reach: applying open licences for content delivery, using open source software and open standards wherever possible and to promote open access to content.

The media heritage of the future will certainly not be limited to traditional broadcast, print and film channels. New media output is growing exponentially in popularity and impact (especially among young people) and are predominantly manifest online and in interactive forms. Today, everybody is a potential broadcaster or creator of new content. A rapidly growing number of digital platforms offer professional contact that can reach millions of people. News videos now reach viewers quicker – and often exclusively – via social media channels.

The Australian GLAM sector, including the NFSA, have not yet embraced the full scale of opportunity that new technologies present for content creation and distribution. As Australia's national audiovisual archive the NFSA has a critical role in leading this cultural shift. In 2018 we will commence a dedicated project to look at how we can systematically gather a representative collection of multimedia productions in Australia, such as webvideos, games and virtual reality. This will encompass both physical and digital multimedia content that will be archived and presented within a media, transmedia and/or cultural-historical context.

I would be very happy to provide further details regarding the opportunities for digital heritage collections to contribute to the growth of Australia's digital economy. The relevant contact at the NFSA for this topic is Jacqui Uhlmann, Senior Manager, Strategy (Jacqui.uhlmann@nfsa.gov.au).

Thank you for considering our submission.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jan Müller', written in a cursive style.

Jan Müller
CEO

4th December 2017