Delivering Impact with Digital Resources

Planning strategy in the attention economy

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Delivering Impact with Digital Resources

Planning strategy in the attention economy

Simon Tanner

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About the author

Simon Tanner is Professor of Digital Cultural Heritage in the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London. He is a digital humanities scholar with a wide-ranging interest in cross-disciplinary thinking and collaborative approaches that reflect a fascination with interactions between memory institution collections (libraries, museum, archives, media and publishing) and the digital domain.

As an information professional, consultant, digitisation expert and academic he works with major cultural institutions across the world to assist them in transforming their impact, collections and online presence. He has consulted for or managed over 500 digital projects, including digitisation of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Tanner and Bearman, 2009), and has built strategy with a wide range of organisations. These include many national libraries, museums and government agencies in Europe, Africa, America and the Middle East. Tanner has had work commissioned by UNESCO, the Arcadia Fund and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. He founded the capacity-building Digital Futures Academy that has run in the UK, Australia, South Africa and Ghana with participants from over 40 countries.

Research into image use and sales in American art museums by Simon Tanner has had a significant effect on opening up collections access and OpenGLAM in the museum sector (Tanner, 2004, 2016b). Tanner is a strong advocate for open access, open research and the digital humanities. He was chair of the Web Archiving sub-committee as an independent member of the UK government-appointed Legal Deposit Advisory Panel. He is a member of the Europeana Impact Taskforce that developed the *Impact Playbook* based on his Balanced Value Impact Model. He was part of the Arts and Humanities

Research Council funded Academic Book of the Future research team.

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The front cover illustration and Figure 6.2 are illustrations by Alice Maggs of my research ideas, and are reproduced here under licence from Alice Maggs. For more information on this talented artist, see http://alicemaggs.co.uk/.

List of abbreviations

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
API	application programming interface
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BL	British Library
BVI	Balanced Value Impact
DPSIR	drivers, pressures, state, impact and responses
EC	European Commission
EIA	environmental impact assessment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLAM	galleries, libraries, archives and museums
IA	impact assessment
IIIF	International Image Interoperability Framework
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
KPI	key performance indicator
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
OpenGLAM	Open Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums
ROI	return on investment
SIA	social impact assessment
SMART	specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely
SMK	Statens Museum for Kunst (National Gallery of Denmark)
SROI	social return on investment
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats

Introduction

Life writes its own stories

Impact, values, wisdom and wit are all found in newspaper straplines. The strap 'If You Don't Want It Printed, Don't Let It Happen' in the *Aspen Daily Times* speaks simultaneously to avoiding unwarranted attention and maybe also to cheekily planning ways to garner attention. The *Toronto Star*'s 'It's Where You Live' strapline speaks to a sense of close community engagement, much as does the 'As Waikato as It Gets' of New Zealand's *Waikato Times*. The news is about change, about how things are different, for good or ill, than they were before.

Many newspapers claim a mix of social, economic and intrinsic values:

- 'Life Writes Its Own Stories', or 'As Life Writes' ('Wie das Leben so schreibt') in the *Kleine Zeitung*, Graz, Austria;
- 'All the News That's Fit to Print' in the *New York Times*;
- 'The daily diary of the American dream' in the *Wall Street Journal*;
- *The Sowetan*, South Africa's daily newspaper, with slogans such as 'Power your Future' or 'Sowetan. Building the Nation';
- 'Right is of no sex, truth is of no color. God is the father of us all and all we are brethren', the *North Star Newspaper* strapline reflecting the values of founder Frederick Douglass, who escaped slavery in 1838.

Others speak to measures of size, scale or importance. Britain is pretty boastful:

- the 'Biggest daily sale on Earth', in the *Daily Mail*;

- 'When The Times speaks, the World listens', in *The Times*;
- 'Daily Telegraph. Britain's Best Selling Daily Broadsheet'.

Some newspapers speak to education or knowledge. Such as:

- 'There's nothing more valuable than knowledge', in the *Cape Times*;
- 'Your right to know. A new voice for a new Pakistan', in the *Daily Times* newspaper, Lahore, Pakistan;
- '*The Guardian*. Think ...'.

All these newspapers want our attention; they are all seeking to make an impact on our day and to affect our thinking and behaviour.

Newspapers have fascinated me ever since the first permanent professional role I started in 1989. Daily I had to scour all the broadsheets and produce a current-awareness bulletin from clippings for my company by 9 o'clock every morning. Newspapers are not just for the here and now, though; as the saying goes, newspapers may be considered a first rough draft of history (Shafer, 2010). Memory institutions have thus collected newspapers as slices of *zeitgeist* over the centuries, preserving them for future generations. I have been fortunate to be intimately involved with four significant newspaper digitisation projects: the initial 2 million-page British Library (BL) newspaper project (Quint, 2002); the Digidaily newspaper project at the Swedish National Archives (Ahlberg and Rosen, 2019); the Nineteenth Century Serial Edition AHRC project (https://ncse.ac.uk); and the Welsh Newspapers Online from the National Library of Wales (https://newspapers.library.wales). These are all popular and impactful digitisation projects. They each reach out to refresh the audience for these materials, delivering community and social benefits. These online newspapers are used in schools and by local and family historians. For academics, they 'fill a gap for content that is not found elsewhere' (Gooding, 2017). In the Theatre of Memory consultancy for the National Library of Wales, I identified a huge number and range of special-interest communities that are served by these kinds of collections – drama, music, poetry, sport, religion, science, engineering, food, diaspora and language perspectives to name but a few. There are opportunities to solidify a sense of place and time, a personalised narrative and history, to see it reflected in the national and local stories contained in newspapers.

The Library of Congress Historic American Newspapers site shows 155,290 titles available and 14.8 million pages of searchable newspaper digitised

(Library of Congress, n.d.). The British Newspaper Archive is showing almost 31 million pages as I write (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk). Trove in Australia provides access to over 20 million pages from over 1,000 Australian newspapers (National Library of Australia, n.d.). Yet these digitised collections are only a fragment of the newspaper resources that are available to be digitised. The European Newspaper Survey Report states:

> Over half of the libraries have a cutoff date beyond which they will not publish digitised newspapers on the web. Most frequently, this is based on a 70 year sliding scale … Only 12 (26%) of the libraries had digitised more than 10% of their collection (either in terms of titles or page numbers), and only two of those had done more than 50% – the consortium of libraries represented by the Biblioteca Virtual de Prensa Histórica (58% of their pages were digitised) and the National Library of Turkey, unique for having digitised its entire collection of 800,000 pages and 845 titles.
>
> (Dunning, 2012)

These statistics reflect the challenges of building a digitised corpus where there is so much printed material and so few resources for digitisation. In the BL alone there are approximately 450 million pages of printed material, with roughly 18.9 million pages digitised (McKernan, 2017). Newspapers are multi-faceted content with the potential to deliver an impactful experience to audiences worldwide. This simultaneously large volume of page images and relatively small ratio of collection digitisation should make us reflect on the attention focused online and the potential knowledge gap inevitably created. It ignites the desire to understand better the potential impact of digitisation projects and the effects they may have on our audiences and communities. Nineteenth-century media expert Jim Mussell thinks of 'the aura of old newspapers in hard copy and what happens when this is remediated digitally… Digitisation returns newspapers to us, but differently' (Mussell, 2013).

There thus remain questions of what to select, how to decide if this content is worthy of attention and, when content is made available, whether it has succeeded in satisfying information needs and made a difference to the community of users.

The premise of this book

The digital presence of memory institutions has the power to change lives and life opportunities. It is essential to understand the different modes of digital values to consider how organisational presence within digital cultures can create change. Impact assessment is the tool to foster understanding of how strategic decisions about digital resources may be changing behaviour within our communities. This book will introduce and define digital values within an attention economy, with a clear argument that revealing and understanding these values and their strategic perspectives is a crucial means to develop digital content successfully.

The GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) sector strategises to gain the attention of those senior decision makers who act as gatekeepers to the limited funds that exist to support the cultural, educative, creative and heritage sectors as a whole. Digital resources are often built within a mostly unfunded mandate (Tanner, 2006). This unfunded mandate includes such desirable features as:

- providing enhanced access to collections and their information content;
- long-term retention of sustainable digital resources; and
- increased engagement with the public record and memory institutions by their communities.

Whatever the type of memory institution, and wherever funding comes from, there is an imperative to demonstrate that digital content is delivered by ever-increasingly efficient means and within a reduced budget.

Those delivering digital resources thus find themselves in a difficult economic position. As intermediaries to collections and enablers of content use from both non-chargeable and bought content, they experience both the upside and the downside of the internet. The upside is the ability to deliver a much wider aggregation of reliable information at a generally smaller unit price than before. The downside is that, whatever the source and the price of the units being delivered, the infrastructure costs continue to rise and the spectre of a rising total cost of ownership and digital preservation costs is clearly apparent. It has been correctly argued that maintaining digital access and addressing preservation is not necessarily a costly enterprise as compared with the analogue world (Rusbridge, 2006). However, digital costs are not replacing analogue costs but offering additional requirements often not fully financed. This forms a growing unfunded mandate that will provide the

biggest single threat to future digital economic sustainability. Many years ago, a few staff from the National Library of New Zealand had T-shirts privately made which commented on the new legislative mandate to maintain in perpetuity all digital content deposited with the Library, when the Library itself lived on a three-year funding cycle. The T-shirts stated simply, 'Perpetuity is a Very Long Time'.

Politicians demand evidence of the impact of our sectors. Even though most governmental decision making remains wedded to such measures, alongside those of economy come pressures to demonstrate the social value and worth of memory institutions and their digital activities. The value of institutions like museums is associated with a broader set of values than merely fiscal ones. As Plaza puts it:

> It is obvious that the non-market value of museums (meaning, for instance, their artistic, cultural, educational, architectural and prestige value to society) cannot be calculated by means of financial transactions.
>
> (Plaza, 2010)

Even when analysts focus on high-performing, exceptional museums set apart from their contemporaries, they visualise a wide set of values. For instance, Frey characterises these 'Superstar Museums' by five aspects:

- a 'must for tourists'
- large numbers of visitors
- world-famous painters and famous paintings
- architecture
- commercialization (Frey, 2003).

This reductive positioning of value as being about large numbers of users, commercialisation in the form of shops and cafés and the fame of the collection seems designed to focus on easily visible comparators. A focus on elite comparison factors also exposes the temptation to focus on ephemeral goals. Museums (or the rest of GLAM) are not so easily categorised and are so 'extraordinarily varied in their origins … that meaningful comparisons between one and another are rarely possible' (Weil, 2002). The goal of superficial comparison is to show that institutions have expended energies and resources to the benefit of designated communities, and that such investments have beneficial returns to those people.

> Measuring and articulating the value and impact of the sector is more than an academic exercise: given the policy, financial and business structures in which most cultural organisations operate in England, rightly selecting, rigorously measuring and powerfully articulating the value and impact of the sector is one of the key pre-requisites for its sustainability.
>
> (Stanziola, 2008)

An example from the digital domain is the way that the GLAM sector, in particular, has created, purchased or otherwise obtained a mass of digital resources and delivered these online to a range of users worldwide. In the UK alone, over £100 million can be identified as spent on digitisation in museums, libraries, archives and universities between 1997 and 2010 (Tanner and Deegan 2010). The usage statistics of that time inform us that uptake was considerable, and research discovered and identified a considerable range of benefits and value in digital resources and collections (Tanner, 2011). However, many of these resources have subsequently died in 'the "fast fires" of digital obsolescence' as predicted by Anne Kenney (Kenney, 1997). In the UK, research at University College London into the £50 million New Opportunities Fund digitisation programme showed that ~43% (63) of the 147 original web projects reviewed had died, disappeared or gone dark from public access. Another ~27% (40) were only just 'usable and not being maintained or value added' (Hügel, 2012; Mao, 2016).

Thus, there remain questions that we may well not yet accurately know the answers to.

- How do their stakeholders receive and respond to these resources?
- Who exactly are the recipients of the resources?
- What do they do with them?
- Moreover, what impact have they had on their lives?

Moving beyond traditional measures is desirable to address the challenges now facing the creative, cultural and academic sectors. Primary measures of digital have focused on web statistics, anecdotal information or evaluations of outputs (how much digitised) rather than outcomes (value gained). In short, introducing impact assessment responds to the demand for a strategic mechanism demonstrating that digital resources and service ecosystems are

delivering a beneficial change to communities, expressed in economic and social terms.

This book seeks to provide both a mechanism and a way of thinking about strategies and evidence of benefits that extend to impact, such that the existence of a digital resource shows measurable outcomes that demonstrate a change in the life or life opportunities of the community. The book proposes an updated Balanced Value Impact Model (BVI Model) to enable each memory organisation to argue convincingly that they are an efficient and effective operation, working in innovative modes with digital resources for the positive social and economic benefit of their communities. The BVI Model is intended to support memory institutions to become more innovative, learning organisations.

The audiences for this book

This book is for practitioners, decision makers and scholars working with digital content and culture in relation to memory institutions. Impact is a worldwide phenomenon. This book will seek to be inclusive of examples and practices from everywhere.

In using the phrase 'memory institution', this book assumes a common aspiration across multiple sectors in preserving, organising and making available the cultural and intellectual records of their societies. This book uses the phrase as a convenience to refer collectively to archives, museums, libraries and cultural heritage but does not assume primacy in their role as 'memory institutions'. As Robinson states, 'a wider variety of organisations, such as schools, universities, media corporations, government or religious bodies could also legitimately be ascribed this title' (Robinson, 2012), and they are referenced and included within this book's conception of memory institution.

The expected reader may well work in, with or around memory institutions and be looking to make the most significant impact with their digital resources and content. They may also be a decision maker, holder of funding, policy maker, development agency or government body that wishes to promote evidence-based impact assessment of activities and programmes that they support or encourage. In response, managers, project managers and fundraisers who are seeking to justify further investment in digital resources should become aware of the importance of the impact agenda and its value to their objectives. There are also practitioners of evaluation and impact assessment

looking for a framework to assist in assessing the impact of a digital resource. The BVI Model satisfies these needs and provides a staged approach to ease the management of the process.

Academics looking to establish digital projects and digital scholarship collaborations with collection owners will find this book useful to help define common goals and benefits. Academics in countries where impact measurement is a part of academic evaluation (such as the UK's Research Excellence Framework) will also find the principles described in this book applicable to their research environments. Students and other scholars engaged with librarianship, museum studies, information science, archival studies, digital humanities, digital cultures, internet studies, anthropology, social studies, cultural and media studies and cultural economics will find this book useful and informative to their scholarship.

The guidance offered in this book will be especially useful for managing digital presences as diverse as those in memory institutions; creative and cultural industries (e.g. publishing, media and e-commerce); and web-based activities (e.g. social media, crowdsourcing or user-generated content). Publishing, media and business sectors that may be looking for the best means to measure the impact of their digital offerings or are looking to collaborate and align with collection owners, with academia or with memory institutions will find useful content here as well, particularly in relation to strategy and the attention economy.

This book seeks to have resonance with many sectors, including libraries, archives, museums, media, publishing, cultural and creative industries, higher education, digital asset management, project management, marketing, impact assessment and evaluation consultancies. This inclusive scope reflects the author's wide-ranging fascination in cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary thinking and collaborative approaches to interactions between memory organisation collections and the digital domain.

Structure of the book

Chapter 1: the context of measuring impact to deliver strategic value

This chapter articulates the demand for impact assessment, its history and context. The term 'impact' is defined and mapped to the roots of impact assessment in other fields of investigation. There follows an exploration of the early impact evaluations and methods focused on memory institutions

or digital content. The intellectual and administrative journey to deliver the BVI Model 2.0 is sketched out.

Chapter 2: The Balanced Value Impact Model

The BVI Model is applied in five core functional stages:

Stage 1: Set the context
Stage 2: Design the framework
Stage 3: Implement the framework
Stage 4: Narrate the outcomes and results
Stage 5: Review and respond.

The chapter describes the core underlying assumptions that drive the adoption of the BVI Model as a model with a nested BVI Framework within for measuring impact. These enable the reader to: make the most effective use of the model; allow for partial or adapted implementation of the Framework; or allow for the concepts embedded to be used independently of the Framework.

The prerequisites for applying the BVI Model are explained.

Chapter 3: Impact in libraries, archives, museums and other memory institutions

This chapter expands on the definition of impact through specific exemplars and case studies of impact assessment in memory institutions such as libraries, museums and archives. The Wellcome Library, first implementers of the BVI Model for their digitisation programme, is an extended case study.

Chapter 4: Finding value and impact in an attention economy

This chapter focuses on how the attention economy influences digital culture. In a response to understanding the influences and motivators in an attention economy, the chapter then considers how the selection and creation of digital content lead towards impactful resources.

Chapter 5: Strategic Perspectives and Value Lenses

Strategic Perspectives and Value Lenses are foundation stones underpinning the BVI Model. The chapter addresses the theoretical background and

analytical reasoning for adopting these concepts in an impact assessment. The core of this chapter explains the way strategy interacts with values. It ends with a focal case study from the Statens Museum for Kunst (SMK, National Gallery of Denmark) to illuminate these strategic issues.

Chapter 6: Planning to plan with the BVI Model

Set the context, stage 1 of the BVI Model, is shown in detail. The importance of context, ground truths and baselines to the success of impact measurement is emphasised. Methods of investigating the digital ecosystem, stakeholders and situation analysis using SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) are described. Guidance on pairing Strategic Perspectives with Value Lenses is provided. Further advice on how to use stage 1 for strategic goals not associated with impact assessment is also provided.

Chapter 7: Implementing the BVI Framework

Design the BVI Framework (stage 2) is the focus of this chapter. The reader will learn how to set objectives, decided on good indicators of impact and about assigning them to stakeholder groups. The guidance on completing the BVI Framework includes a critical analysis of useful data-gathering techniques and tools.

Stage 3 is introduced and the practicalities of this stage are detailed.

Chapter 8: Europeana case study implementing the BVI Model

This chapter presents a user's perspective on implementing the BVI Model through a case study provided by Julia Fallon of the Europeana Foundation.

The issues focused on in this case study are:

- a reflection on Europeana's implementation of impact assessment, with a focus on one complete cycle;
- the ideas driving how Europeana developed the *Impact Playbook*;
- how these integrate with the BVI Model.

Chapter 9: Using the outcomes of the BVI Model

This chapter explains stage 4 of the BVI Model and how to narrate the outcomes and results of implementing the Model. The chapter focuses on the means of transferring the outputs of data gathering into outcomes that