

A call for a more focused cultural offer

A joint letter in response to the Digital Britain Report

March 2009

Dear Lord Carter,

We write to you collectively as we all share a belief that digital technologies offer us a profound way to engage audiences with our rich UK culture. As a group of organisations who are fortunate to receive public funding, we have in our hands a unique and rich set of assets which have yet to be fully exploited in the online world.

Over the last ten years, millions of pounds have been spent in order to digitise our rich heritage. We have all in different ways used our skills to begin to exploit these assets in a range of developing online services. Some of us individually have become digital publishers and curators and are modelling what could be called a new kind of public sector broadcaster.

We believe by working together we can make our publicly funded cultural assets more readily available to people online in ways that we believe would:

- Incentivise people to engage creatively with the online world
- Enrich their experience by allowing them to search, locate, organise, interact in new and more ambitious ways
- Support learning and research both formally and informally across diverse subject areas

This letter seeks to make clear to government what we see as being a huge opportunity to further exploit these cultural assets in new ways and for new and larger audiences. As such we have come together to collectively sign up to a set of recommendations for action that we wish you to consider. These are:

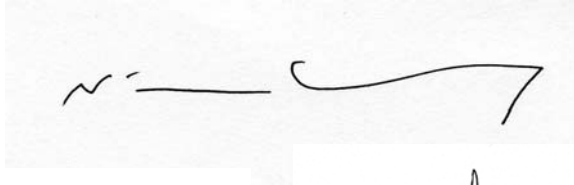
- Explore new models and new ways of thinking that take a more open approach to knowledge and ownership.
- Develop a unified vision and infrastructure that will reduce the proliferation of databases, systems, URLs and marketing campaigns.
- Define an architecture that can support national services and will enhance the value of our combined data in order to develop joint services with commercial and education providers.

Furthermore, a more unified, comprehensive and better marketed offer from our institutions will be a powerful driver of online engagement for people in every part of the UK, will help raise the profile of culture and the arts in the national curriculum and promote Britain as a leading destination for cultural tourism.

As signatories to this submission to Lord Carter and the Digital Britain review group, we declare our intention to work together to achieve these outcomes and to consider what new models of public sector broadcaster may be needed to do so. We look forward to contributing in any way we can to the next stage of the review and the realisation of a truly Digital Britain.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Brindley



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Chief Executive, The National Archives
Chief Executive, Museums Libraries Archive Council
Deputy Chief Executive, Visit Britain
Director, Culture24
Director, Victoria & Albert Museum
Chief Executive, UKOLN
Director, National Portrait Gallery
Chief Executive, Collections Trust
Director of Tate Media, Tate

The Arts Council of England share many of the aims stated in this letter and wish to support wholeheartedly the principle of working together.

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