



How brilliant is this from #theatre and #arts folk in #Bristol!? A new Bristol Arts Channel launched from @BristolOldVic @Colston_Hall @wshed @Paraorchestra and more - I love it! Other regions sit up and take notice - we need more of this!!!? theatrejam.uk/launch-of-bris... #artshare

1. Background

"If you were to ask a cross-section of people what makes Bristol such a special city, its rich culture would likely be a common answer. People from all over want to live here because of that strong cultural identity and vibrancy, while many who grew up here don't want to leave.

But the cultural and creative sectors are some of the hardest hit by Covid-19, putting the most beloved cultural venues in Bristol and further afield at serious risk.

Bristol without culture is unthinkable. "

- Robin Murray, 21 May 2020

1. Background

Within the first few weeks of the Coronavirus Pandemic hitting the UK, causing arts organisations across the country to temporarily shut their doors, a city-wide collaboration between Bristol-based arts organisations was formed. This collective came together as a rapid response to the crisis, to offer a lockdown lifeline for local audiences missing the buzz and community of Bristol's brilliant arts scene.

The aim was to strengthen the online audiences for the participating organisations, by collaboratively curating an online offer, which specifically spoke to local audiences, support cultural organisations to develop digital content during lockdown who haven't done so before and to be as accessible as possible - supporting the network to do captioning and BSL interpretation.

This is how it happened and what we learnt.





WHATS ONLINE





UPRISING 2020

Watch on demand



Bristol Museums

FILM Watershed

WHATS ONLINE



UPRISING 2020

Watch on demand



FILM

Watershed

MOVING THROUGH THE IMAGE

Join the discussion



FILM Slapstick Festival

FRENCH AND SAUNDERS COMEDY LEGEND AWARD

Watch on demand

2. Timeline

MARCH

- 5 Number of COVID cases in UK reaches 100
- 12 The UK Chief Medical Officers raise the Coronavirus risk to the UK from moderate to high
- 17 Bristol Arts Venues are all temporarily closed across the city
- 25 Bristol Old Vic and Watershed approach The Space for support with scoping a city wide content strategy

APRIL

- 6 The Space allocate two associates to scope potential options for City-wide arts offer
- 23 The Space associates (Katherine Jewkes & Joe Bell) discuss findings from scoping phase to the core steering group

MAY

- Proposal for Bristol Arts Channel sent to Bristol + Bath Digital R + D, who allocated £15,000 to the project
- 10 A number of other funders were approached to match fund the initiative, but timelines for their responses were incompatible with urgency of need
- 12 The Steering group decide to go ahead on slimline budget, Katherine Jewkes appointed as Curator. Call out for Volunteers put out to the City
- 18 Initial programme presented to steering group for sign off. Jon Aitken brought on to team to lead Digital Communications
- Colston Hall premiered their first Takeover Festival BAC uses this as an opportunity to observe audience behaviours
- 25 W/C 25, BAC website was designed, built and week one of programme rights cleared. Channel trailer was signed off for distribution

JUNE

1 Channel was launched to public.



3. Key figures.

Between 1 June - 6 July, Bristol Arts Channel worked with over **60 Organisations, independent artists and festivals** based in Bristol to showcase a programme of **over 140 online offerings** from the best of Bristol's cultural scene, reimagined for audiences at home.

From experimental digital initiatives through to day long music festivals, reimagined archive content to live cinema watch parties, living room raves to more intimate conversations.

We were interested in exploring what a digital offer in a localised region might look like- in relation to creating a sense of community and togetherness. As a very conservative estimate, we had over **half a million interactions** across the programme, with 43.5% audiences based in the South West (72% audiences based in UK).

We were supported by 30 volunteers, most of whom were furloughed from their current organisations.

THE SPACE (£3850 in kind support)

6 days - 2 Associates to Scope idea and network

2 days - Press Support

2 days - Internal Staff time (In Kind)

1 day - Training sessions (In Kind)

BRISTOL + BATH R+D (15K GRANT)

This grant was spent on

- Commissioning work from communities underrepresented on the Channel
- Distribution 'boosts' for smaller organisations
- Specific delivery resource for technically challenging projects, e.g. covering the cost of hiring someone to help with health and safety challenges presented by reopening Trinity Centre for St Pauls Carnival livestream.
- Core Staff for the initiative (47 days total) including Project Lead,
 Communications Lead, Volunteer Manager.

4. Delivery Resource

IN KIND

Bristol arts channel would not have been possible without leveraging significant in kind and volunteer support, which we have conservatively estimated equates to a value of £62,000. In addition, each organisation in the core partnership invested between £500 - £5000 into content production, totalling a conservative estimate value of £40,000 across the pilot.

- 120 days in kind volunteers (30 people, 1 day per week, 4 weeks)
- 6 days In kind Designer (Bristol Old Vic)
- 7 days In kind Web Designer (Watershed)
- Organistions allocated an In Kind staff time ranging between 30 hours total - 1 FT member of staff for 6 weeks

5. How the Channel Worked

The Bristol Arts Channel was about supporting creative organisations and artists across the city to use their existing platforms & networks to reach local audiences during lockdown.

The Channel and its resource provided a centralised hub to editorially curate and manage activity over a month as well as generate promotional assets/material, provide guidance and advice around content or publishing including support with accessibility. There were also commissioning funds specifically for smaller organisations/artists who would otherwise be unable to participate.

During the pilot phase, participating network members, alongside their current 'BAU', took on new activity according to the centralised schedule, either pushing their hero piece of content when its 'their' day or else promoting/sharing/cross-posting the output of others when it's not. All content that goes out as part of this activity will be in someway branded as part of the Channel – either with a hashtag or potentially with graphics too.

A microsite was created as a single place to point people to and gather activity – this was purposefully designed as a simple streamlined space to embed links to various social posts from partner organisations, has the schedule and any contextualising information. The website offered a centralised place for audiences to see whats on, but our hope was that the majority of audiences would likely experience content 'in feed' either from the host organisation or the cross-promotional activity from another arts organisation they follow. This was a deliberate choice in order to ensure Bristol Arts Channel would be strengthening communication with audiences across the network, rather than driving audiences to a new destination.

Ultimately this was an opportunity to celebrate the best of Bristol's cultural scene – to unite and connect people through these challenging times and remind audiences that whatever the circumstances, the arts community remains committed to being an affirming, entertaining and inspiring presence in their daily lives.

6. What we did & why

A centralised programme for audiences - we created a bespoke microsite which audiences could use to explore a weekly programme of work from across the city. By collectively programming across Bristol, we were able to encourage organisations to take more risks with their offers-responding quickly to trends, to each others programme and to try presenting work in new ways with less pressure.

- Organisations say that they were able to "represent a diverse programme online that didn't feel 'alien' alongside the rest of the BAC programme by other venues."
- For audiences, there was something interesting to do every day of the week during this period. Some audiences commented that they "saw more culture at home during lockdown in one week, than they would usually see in a month."
- We supported the the website with a twitter account which audience members could follow- and partner organisations could amplify through RT
- We did not want to drive audiences to a new youtube channel, or other platform- we wanted instead to support and grow the audience demographics within each organisation and help to amplify their content through cross posting between accounts.

Each week we tried to follow a regular pattern with key organisations owning and 'hosting' particular days

- We were keen to avoid over saturation of online activity- at the time a lot of organisations across the UK were moving their work online, by working together as a city, we were able to avoid some of the content fatigue that audiences in other cities were experiencing.
- We tended to encourage organisations to leave their work up for a minimum of 7 days or longer after each event to allow for audiences at home to catch up when suited around their new lockdown lives.
- Bristol Museum was particularly interesting case study within this programme as they would often respond creatively to the cultural offer of other organisations- pointing to objects and stories from their collections which spoke to themes represented elsewhere in that weeks programmme.
- Regular content slots within the core programme gave a weekly heartbeat to the programme and fostered a sense of calm for communities.
- Bringing familiar events online felt particularly comforting to audiences and artists.

Bringing familiar events from the city into online spaces felt particularly comforting to local audiences and artists.



Wonderful news! @StGeorgesBristol lunchtime concerts are back! In #lockdown of course. Please join me and @RachPodger #adamheron and @OliverWassHarp this Thursday at 1pm @Bristol_Arts @BrisCentreBID stgeorgesbristol.co.uk/listen-in/youtube.com/channel/UChzV5...

St George's Bristol @stgeorgesbris · Jun 15

Can't wait for our next Listen In #lunchtimeconcert on Thursday! We have the amazing @Reiko_Fujisawa @RachPodger #adamheron @OliverWassHarp with us! 1pm for your #lunchhourlistening @Bristol_Arts @BrisCentreBID stgeorgesbristol.co.uk/listen-in



Amber_Druce
@DorisSkull

I'm a big fan of lunchtime concerts so thank you to @stgeorgesbris and @Bristol_Arts for today.





We're thrilled to be part the brilliant new @Bristol_Arts
Channel, performing as part of the inaugural concert from
@stgeorgesbris on Thursday at 1pm

A wonderful initiative, thanks to everyone who's worked so hard to get it up and running

bristolartschannel.com

Bristol Arts Channel @Bristol_Arts · Jun 1

We're so excited to be launching today! Stay tuned over the next month for some of the best of Bristol's cultural offering reimagined for you at home. bristolartschannel.com

Show this thread



9:53 AM · Jun 16, 2020 · Twitter Web App

6. What we did & why

Each week, we made a **channel trailer** for what was coming up in the next 7 days, which was a useful central resource for the organisations to share.

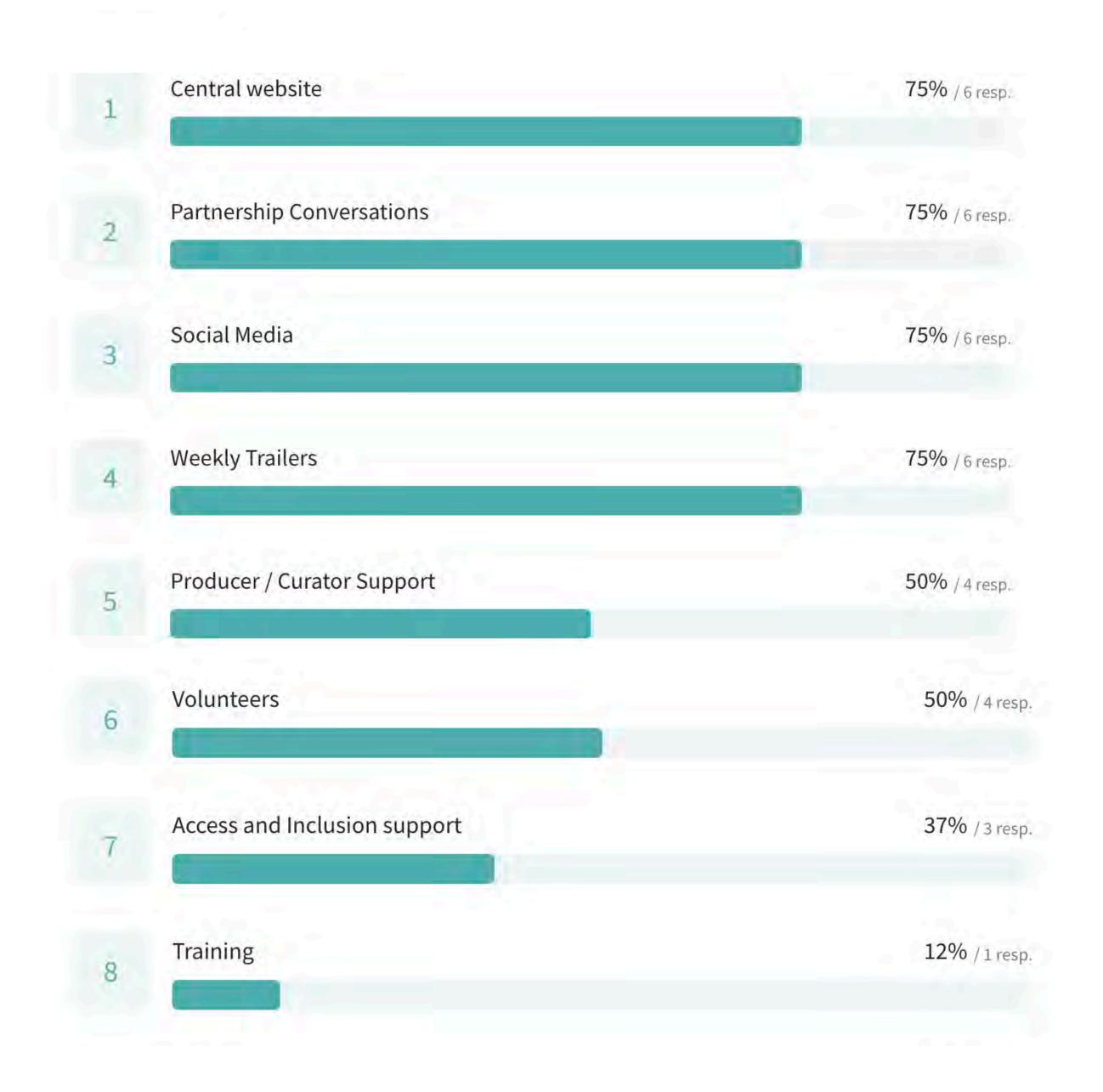
- Because we were working on a slimline budget, we depended on organisations working together to promote and share-through establishing cross-posting relationships on Facebook, and amplifying and championing each other throughout the week, rather than driving audiences to new channels.

Additional to the heartbeats of the weekly programming cycle, Bristol Arts Channel were able to directly support 'hero' events - these were special events commissioned in response to the lockdown. Bristol arts channel was able to offer special support either technically, or to promote as unusual offers for the city. e.g. moving St Pauls Carnival online and an online expanded performance of the acclaimed 'Love Letters Straight From Your Heart' by Uninvited Guests as part of an international Zoom tour.

Any artist from across the city was able to submit an idea or a project to Bristol Arts Channel, and wherever possible we would help them to promote the work and make it happen. The Channel gave access to a Digital Producer, and additional freelancer expertise, which would otherwise have been prohibitively expensive for an independent artist to hire.

- if we were to have had a bigger commissioning budget, we had around 70 enquiries from a very light touch offer and call out - we would have liked to have been able to offer more micro grants and/or commissioning opportunities for new work. During this pilot phase we concentrated on commissioning work from underrepresented demographics on the channel.

Which parts of the pilot phase were most useful to partner organisations?



Case Study: Bristol Old Vic At Home

Collaboration with Google Arts & Culture and The Space



When Bristol Old Vic was forced to close its doors in March, we decided to find another way of keeping audiences engaged and launched a season of 5 plays, previously recorded on our stage, to be streamed via YouTube for free. The season was to take place over 5 weeks, with each play given a week-long streaming period following its Friday night premiere. The shape of the season was designed to build audiences incrementally, culminating in what we anticipated to be most popular show – The Grinning Man. This gave audiences the time to familiarise themselves with our product and understand the timelines and execution of our streamed work ahead of the final premiere. Having observed the success of the National Theatre's At Home streaming offer, we set a number-of-views target at 50,000 for The Grinning Man.

We received help from The Space who advised us on how to shape our season and the technologies to use to support it. Through our work with the city-wide Bristol Arts Channel we also found ways to share best practice, secure volunteer help to make our work as accessible as possible and connect with other local audiences. Through our work with the Space, we were introduced to the team at Google Arts and Culture, with whom we were able to reach a much wider, global audience for our online offer, resulting in larger viewing figures and subsequently increased revenue. Google ensured that The Grinning Man (the final streamed show of our season) was highlighted on YouTube and that the premiere link was hosted on The Space's GA&C partner page. Together with the Bristol Old Vic team, The Space also created 3 distinct 'stories' to support The Grinning Man narrative and provide further wraparound content for the show. This was highlighted on Google UK, Google Arts and Culture and The Space's Twitter as well.

Between 22 April and 3 July, our number of YouTube subscribers grew by 449% (1433 to 8000). Over the week of The Grinning Man, the number of subscriptions grew by 43% alone. The Grinning Man (26 Jun – 3 Jul) had 128,500 views and a total watch time of 44,100 hours. The average view duration was 20:35. During the premiere on 26 Jun, we had 1,356 concurrent viewers. The video had 23.3 million impressions – 99.2% of which came from YouTube recommending our content (Thanks to Google Arts & Culture!) The Grinning Man outperformed any other show that was streamed as part of our season. For comparison, A Monster Calls had 107,000 views and 4 million impressions, Wise Children had 24,600 views and 5.4 million impressions, Messiah had 22,200 views and 111,900 impressions and Mr Maglump had 2600 views and 8500 impressions.

The success of the premiere for The Grinning Man also resulted in #TheGrinningMan trending on Twitter on Fri 26 Jun, with that week reaching 405,100 impressions and a 3.1% engagement rate (compared to an average 1.9% engagement rate). The call for donations during The Grinning Man resulted in £10,235.50, meaning that there was a 300% increase in revenue compared to the other streams.

Case Study: Watershed



Watershed used Bristol Arts Channel to experiment with what their audiences might want online, by presenting a range of content in every week. This included hosting and producing live events with their creative community, moving some of their core programme online (Deaf Conversations about Cinema) and a cooking demo from our chef (to represent the full breadth of our business).

"With the Deaf Conversations about Cinema event we had attendees from Birmingham and London participating - this is possible when it is venue based."

The work was captioned and had BSL interpretation. Their aim was to engage with existing audiences inclusively - the content set a new standard for how we presented work online. Watershed also handed over their online spaces to others without chairing or facilitation (eg CARGO), which was a successful new experience for the team, producing richer, more authentic content.

"During this strange and difficult period Bristol Arts Channel has been one of the rare beacons of hope, joy and celebration. All the elements that make this city so great - its community, approach, attitude and audiences - are clearly evident in this project. Partners have been open, generous and collaborative, the online experiences have been inventive, accessible and diverse, and audiences have been entertained by the programme. Above all, what's really made this such a joy is seeing how it has brought people together - both behind the scenes with all the partners, freelancers and creatives involved, and those watching, listening, and taking part online"

Case Study: St Pauls Carnival & Trinity Centre



"Being a part of Bristol Arts Channel meant that Trinity had a platform to showcase all the brilliant things that usually happen in our building, but online. Talent and artistic brilliance in Bristol is evident, but to have what this city has to offer to the cultural landscape all in one place was invaluable."

- Trinity Centre

Bristol Arts Channel supported St Pauls Carnival to present their First ever Digital Carnival **Spirit Up! United at Home** live from Trinity Centre, which was the closing celebration from Bristol Arts Channel Pilot programme.

Support included:

- provision of a volunteer digital communications specialist in addition the core Bristol Arts Channel team, who worked with the St Paul's Carnival team on distribution strategy around the content.
- Provision of a Health and Safety advisor to work with Trinity Centre on the safe and secure work practices at their Venue under current COVID protocols, which enabled Trinity Centre to open up their venue as a host for the Spirit up! livestream.

Spirit Up! Was a huge success for St Pauls Carnival, with a reach of over 250,000 people and 1,199 new followers on social media. The team settled on a Multiplatform distribution model, they discovered that Facebook was best for streaming, Twitter best for the fringe events and signposting each day during the festival, and Instagram stories for whipping up excitement and showing behind the scenes.

A full report from St Pauls Carnival can be found here: https://www.stpaulscarnival.net/news/2020/9/3/wrap-report

Case Study: Bristol Takeover Online



On 20 June 2020, Bristol Beacon (prev. Colston Hall) curated 10+ Hours of Livestreamed music on Youtube and their website. All sets were broadcast from Artist' homes of studios, with a mix of live sets, archive footage, premieres of new music videos, specially pre-recorded films and more. Audiences were asked to donate if they were able to and 50% of donations went to support the participating artists, and the remaining 50% of donations went to support Bristol music venues in collaboration with Music Venue Trust's Save Our Venues campaign.

"The two takeover events were created for the BAC so that was a lengthy but ultimately worthwhile commitment. Collaboration gave us confidence. A wider working relationship with other arts organisations was also beneficial.

Bristol Arts Channel highlighted what the city can do for its audiences in a short amount of time and in the midst of a crisis. Whilst many of the arts organisations involved have worked together previously and have relationships this was the first time, as far as I'm aware, that there was a significant cross-sector collaborative approach, which bodes well for the future. I've always felt that Bristol has the potential to create a city-wide festival incorporating all of the great work arts organisations do and produce and now we've seen we can do it online why not do it when we reopen?

It was a privilege to work with the independent music venues in Bristol as well as the 70+ artists that got involved in the two Bristol Takeover Online festivals we produced. The reaction from gig-goers to both events was incredible and helped keep us inspired and motivated to do what we love doing I.e. presenting great music to our audiences despite these strange times we find ourselves in."

Case Study: Bristol Museums

Bristol Museums engaged in a number of ways with Bristol Arts Channel, from offering 360 tours of some of their museums, staging talks and exhibitions online, to programming Digital Festivals. There were a number of interesting learnings from the team, particularly around reuse and adapting museum content to share online and responding quickly to current events to drive traffic and provide a service to the people of Bristol and beyond.

"Taking part in Bristol Arts Channel we dived head-first into the digital world. It was great to be experimenting with digital programming alongside other arts organisations in the city, with the enthusiastic support of The Bristol Arts Channel Team.

We have found that programming digital festivals e.g. our week-long World in Bristol and Archaeology festivals worked well in the current situation. A big learning point for us is that it is possible to re-use and adapt museum content to share digitally, especially online talks and video streaming as well as contributions from Bristol's communities e.g. dance classes, recipes on instagram.

Visits to our websites spiked dramatically in the 24 hours following the Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol and the toppling of the statue of Colston. We had 30,000 web visits in 24 hours, mainly to content relating to the history of slavery and Black people in the city. This reminded us that where what we do intersects with world issues it is the most successful. Since then we have partially developed our main website to make collections content and stories easier to find."

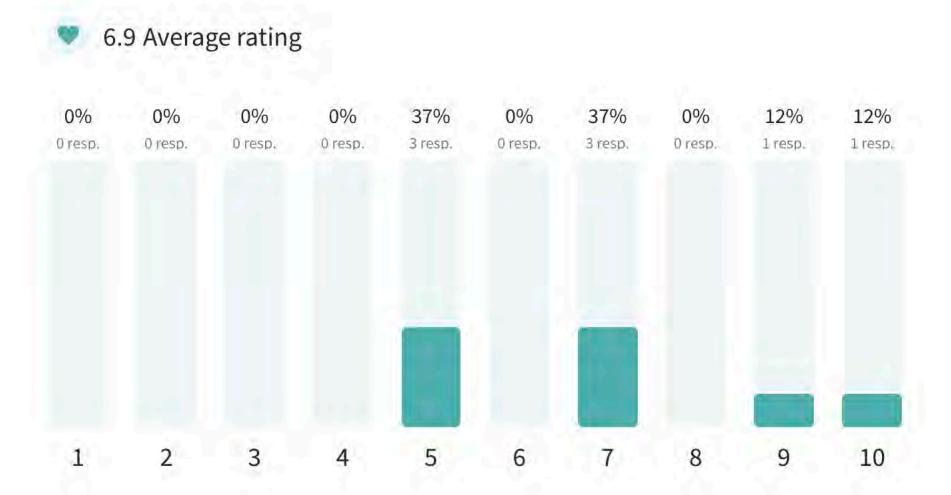


6. Improving engagement in technology

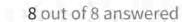
The Bristol Arts Channel asked the partner organisations to rate their engagement with technology pre lockdown and post engaging with the Channel- all organisations noted an uptick, with the average rating moving from 6.9 to 8.4

On a sliding scale of 1 (very little) to 10 (everything) how would you rate your organisations engagement with technology before lockdown?

8 out of 8 answered



On a sliding scale of 1 (very little) to 10 (everything) how would you rate your organisations engagement with technology now?







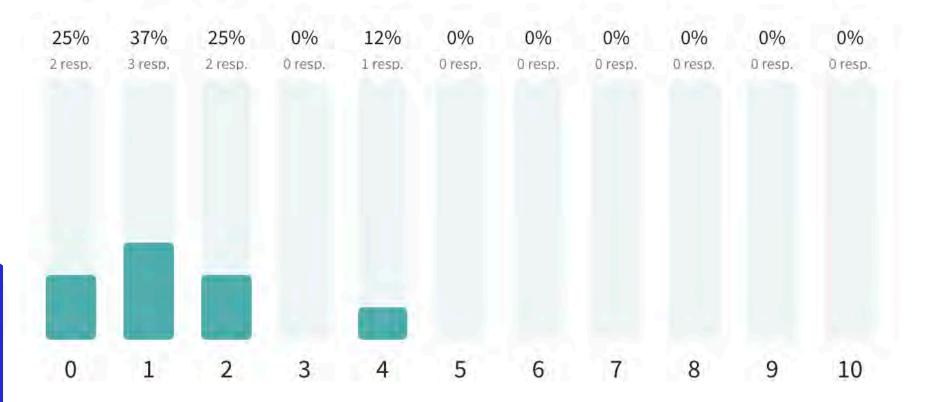
7. Changing business models

The Bristol Arts Channel asked the partner organisations to estimate the extent to which hybrid models of physical and digital events whorl form part of their business models pre lockdown and post engaging with the Channel- all organisations noted an uptick, with the average rating moving from 1.4 to 7.2

How much did hybrid models of physical and digital events form part of your business prelockdown? (0 = none 10 = everything)

8 out of 8 answered

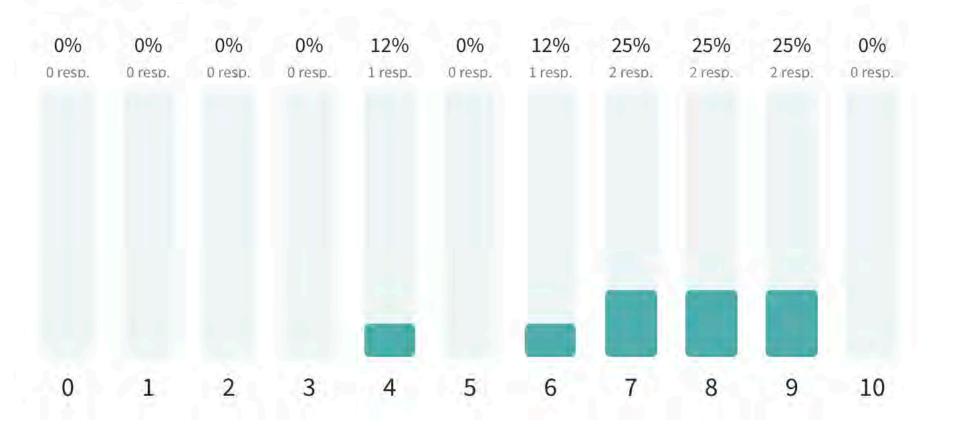
1.4 Average rating



How much might hybrid models of physical and digital events form part of your future business? (0 = none 10 = everything)

8 out of 8 answered

7.2 Average rating



7. Bath University findings

Ana Levordashka, Research Associate from the University of Bath (Bristol + Bath Creative R+D) conducted a focus study on the Audience behaviour of Bristol Arts Channel audiences.

She concluded that Individuals engaging with the Channel attended more events, experienced a greater sense of place and connection. Instead of diminishing interest in physical attendance, online experiences inspired a desire to revisit performances and venues in person.

Audiences noted the following benefits of engaging with Bristol arts channel;

- "Being able to continue my interest in Bristol's arts scene, for example, a chance to see a play I might have missed in the theatre, to experience a lockdown concert recorded in a musician's home."
- "There was lots of content that was available to watch whilst venues were/are closed during lockdown. It was good that the individual venues continued to host their own content but BAC brought it together on a single platform to make it easier to browse."
- "I could still connect with cultural and arts events. Definitely more than I would have done in real life as I'm a single parent."
- "Bringing the arts community of Bristol in one place to inform the wider community of their work. The cross over work it's whats valuable. My mum looking up Wise Children but finding St George's is a great example."
- "Bristol Arts Channel made me feel connected again with the city I grew up in but was cut off from due to the lockdown."
- "I enjoyed how they all came together to put on a months worth of free content online. It made me learn more about the different venues in the city. It was a good distraction against the current situation and lifted my mood."

8. What's next

Throughout the pilot phase, our aim was to **unite and support** audiences and look to develop digital- physical transition points that ensure a legacy after lockdown. This legacy can be seen in the programmes of all of our collaborators who are taking forward digital programming as part of their core offer.

In addition, we are exploring how to leverage further research funding to explore **hybridity** (the combination of digital and physical audiences), **internationalism**, and **accessibility**. We also are keen to secure a future phase of Bristol Arts Channel to explore collaborations with the city's food and drink scene, perhaps with partnerships and shared events, to fully **enhance the sense of cooperation and community**.



Replying to @clarered @Bristol_Arts and @Bristol_BathRD

So excited by the potential for this project, to build on our already strong spirit of collaboration to create something that can truly reach beyond our walls, our city, and beyond. Can't wait to see what can be achieved!

5:45 PM · Jun 24, 2020 · Twitter for Android







WATERSHED





Spike Island











