

Leading Libraries Strategic Challenge Case Study

Service: Inspire: Culture, Learning and Libraries, Nottinghamshire

1. Strategic Challenge Focus

How do we articulate the value of our new digital offer?

2. Rationale and Context

The pandemic ceased face to face interaction with customers and service users and resulted in the cancellation of a full programme of cultural events. The service wanted to continue the cultural offer to its service users and to continue working with and supporting artists.

The strategic challenge sought to explore:

- How workshops could be delivered in new ways in an online environment
- How to understand how, and to what extent, users and libraries were engaging in this new digital offer
- As an NPO, how to provide reporting data to stakeholders

Initially Inspire was providing pre-recorded workshops on You Tube and sharing them socially. It was difficult to know how people were engaging with them – were they scrolling past them, or were they clicking through to the links that were shared? Were people actively participating in the creative workshops?

Inspire developed new ways of delivery including creating a blended offer. This involved delivering some elements live or to a website and people collecting materials from closed libraries, or click and collect banks and then interacting in different ways. This blended approach provided some additional data collection opportunities.

A key challenge in this delivery environment was knowing what was needed to be counted by our stakeholders and funders and for Inspire to be able to count consistently across the service especially when different platforms were being used.

3. Approach and Activity

Initially a range of different data sets were collected. This included: views; likes; shares; click throughs in order to see what worked and it was noted that there were inconsistencies.

A creative evaluation form was trialled on the website. This was presented whenever someone interacted with a resource or in an event. It helped to provide vital qualitative data which was missing from counts of activity.

<https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/arts-culture/community/open-studios-notts/2021-open-studios-notts-virtual-exhibition/>



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Social media sharing was encouraged. This was found to be beneficial as it provided evidence of how people had taken part in digital workshops, how they had interacted with artists and examples of work produced.

"We were so happy to see that there was actual work being made and that even when people were watching it, they were actually taking part and then sharing back to us their enjoyment of it, so it was brilliant."

Here is our family effort! Thank you for the session Alex and inspire. #wallsandwords



Like Reply 29 w

Author
Inspire Arts and Culture
You've created a fantastic huddle! Well done, we're so pleased you enjoyed yourselves.

Like Reply 29 w

A series of conferences were held. Staff conferences were held to share some of the skills developed between the dedicated programme team and frontline staff and to bring staff together to ensure that the digital offer is more embedded.

Physical brochures were reintroduced. Once libraries began opening again, physical brochures were reintroduced. This provided an additional way of listing digital events and enabling frontline staff to not only know what was going on in their library but across the county.

Core offer guides were produced. A suite of core offer guides was produced by the Libraries and Culture team in collaboration with front line staff and made available on the digital intranet platform. This provides people with inspiration and ideas and have been met with positive feedback and more are being produced.



The whole system of data collection is being reviewed. The project has highlighted the challenges of collecting data in a digital environment. This has included:

- Modifying the current collection tools and questions to help staff interactions with the data process be easy, clear, and aligned to reporting requests.
- Commissioning of a consultant who is advising on the options for a customer relations management system to improve data consistency across Inspire moving forward.

The whole of Inspire, including the library service are considering challenges around the digital offer. The examples given in the following section are a reflection of this.

4. Examples of outcomes and impact to date

The strategic challenge has resulted in a range of exciting outcomes. These include:

Upskilling staff with digital skills. All staff learned about digital delivery often through trial and error. These lessons have been shared widely.

"I think the speed of going digital with programmes is a good example of thriving together as we were supporting each other, getting things wrong, giving each other advice on what had worked, and what had not worked. At the start of the pandemic all these things were completely brand new to a lot of the team. The Libraries and Culture team now has increased digital skills. The frontline staff were given access to more IT and eLearning opportunities while they were on furlough."

Review of accessibility of website and social media. The website and social media presence were reviewed to ensure it met accessibility compliance and provided best practice for the digital presence of the service. This included staff training and web agency development. It resulted in outputs such as new website colours, better use for web tools, web tools for screen readers, alternative text for images use of captioning.

We followed a process of review for making artist call outs and commissions briefs more accessible including BSL, audio and simplified language that are hosted within the website.

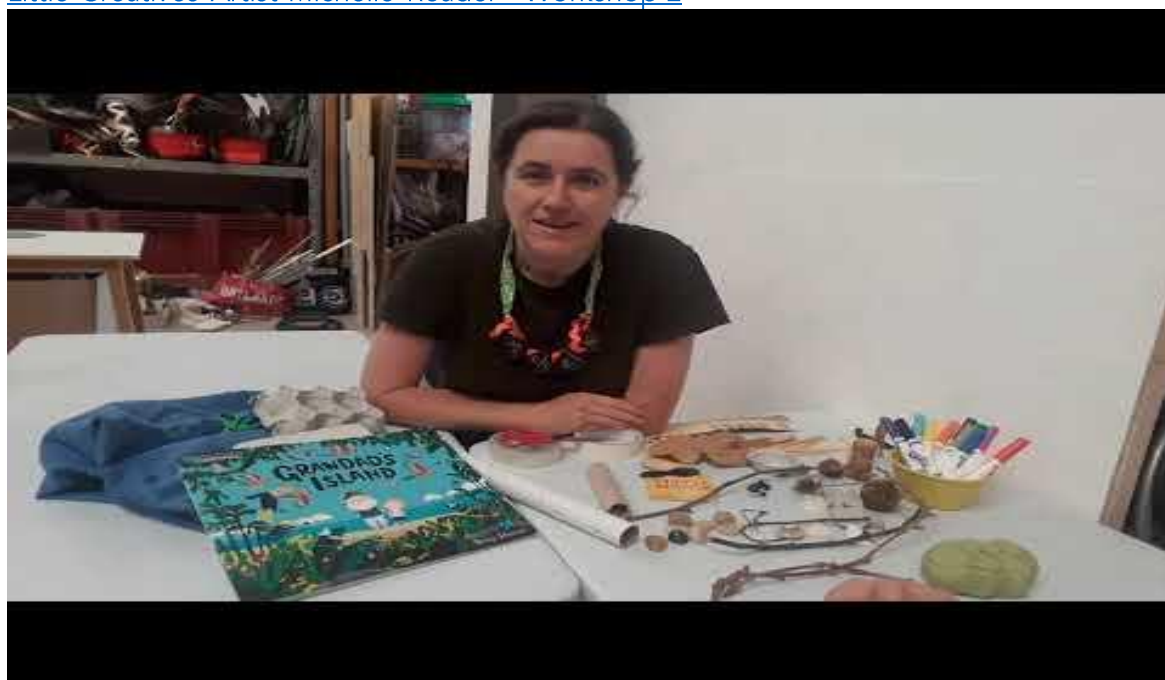
[The Big Draw 2022: Artist's Brief BSL](#)



<https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/arts-culture/community/big-draw/the-big-draw-2022-artist-call-out/>

Support provided for artists. Inspire has supported the artists with digital delivery. This includes providing them with support to create online workshops and tutorials on things such as how to upload on YouTube.

[Little Creatives Artist Michelle Reader - Workshop 2](#)



Reaching new audiences. Digital working has enabled Inspire to reach new audiences. An online book club has attracted customers that didn't or couldn't access the physical offer before.

<https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/reading-information/reading/features/inspire-online-book-group/>

Contributed to COVID recovery. The work on the strategic challenge has contributed to COVID recovery through enabling the service to stay in touch with customers and continue the offer and communicate digitally throughout the whole of the pandemic. The service continues to offer a variety of in person and digital workshops providing a more blended offer which provides multiple opportunities for customers to engage. The value (and measurement of) digital interactions in addition to in person interactions is now more recognised.

5. Next Steps

We are planning regular Staff Conferences to keep communication channels ongoing and keep staff up to speed with new programmes and processes.

We intend to move to commission a CRM system following the consultation period.

6. Lessons learned

The strategic challenge has enabled the library service to learn valuable lessons including:

Planning for data collection:

"We should look at the data and capture it in a variety of ways including the digital elements of a project, so that we've got those mechanisms in place from the start."

Solutions can be complex and non-linear:

"With this project, what perhaps we thought was a fairly straightforward project that could have been a very linear thing has not been that at all. It has splintered off to be lots of pockets of work trying to address challenges on an ongoing basis. We've also learned that it will never be finished!"

7. How the Leading Libraries Programme contributed to delivery of the Strategic Challenge

The Leading Libraries Programme has contributed to delivering the Strategic Challenge in a number of ways:

"We've learned it's okay to fail. We've learned that working with lots of different colleagues is really helpful. We've definitely learned how to become more resilient."

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