The power of audio: presenting archives via podcasts

Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY

School of Computing,
Engineering & the
Built Environment

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Background & Context: HOPSS

Project:

Heritage Organisations & Podcasts: Scoping Study

Aim:

To explore role of podcast **production** in cultural heritage activities

Inspired By: Project with 'Lorna Lloyd's Diary of the War' podcast focused on **audience**

- https://malvernmuseum.co.uk/lorna-lloyds-diary-of-the-war
- https://hazelhall.org/
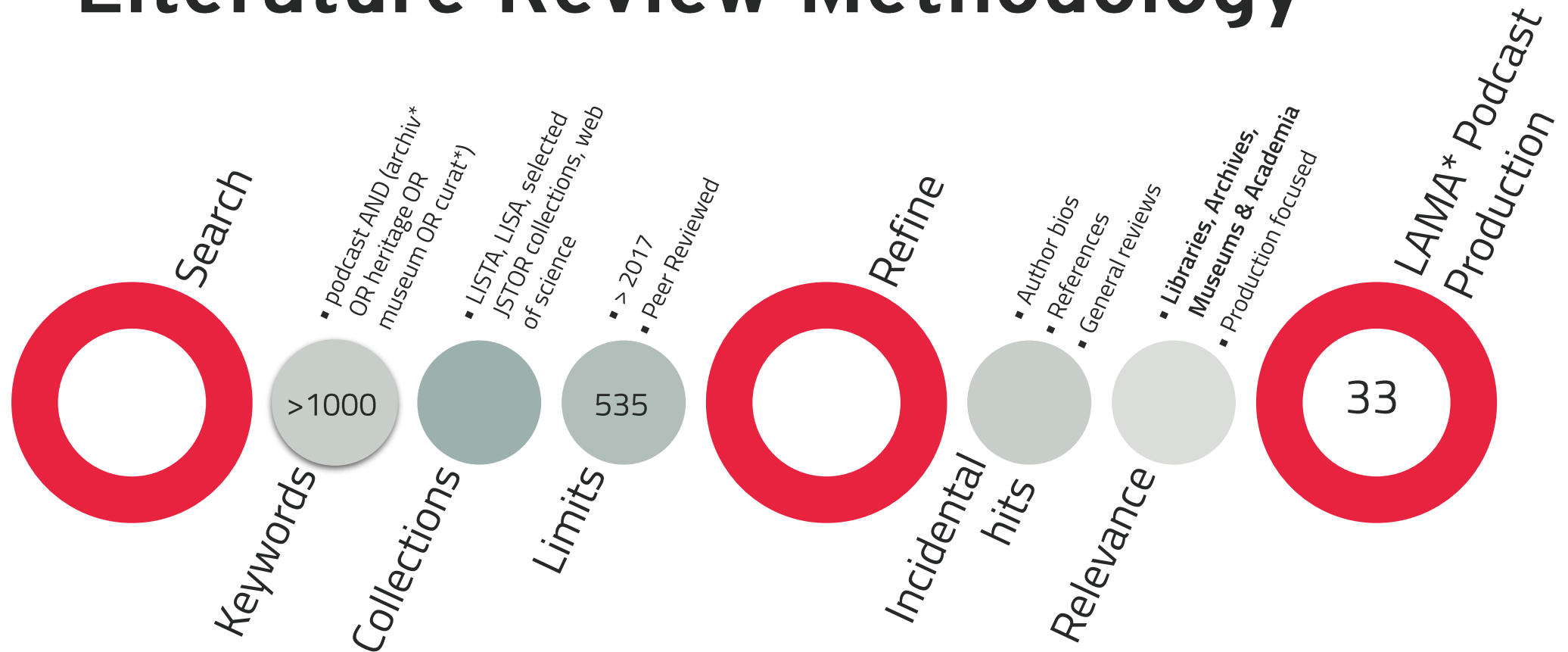- b.ryan@napier.ac.uk

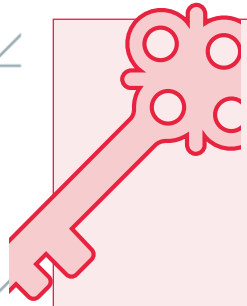BBC ARCHIVE

Research Questions

Podcasts: Radio on demand. Specific form of 'cultural production'* with their own 'distinct textual practice' **

1. To identify the main sources and **types of evidence** available on the use of podcasts by cultural heritage organisations.

2. To highlight the **limits of knowledge** in this area.

3. To pinpoint **key research questions** on the subject of cultural heritage and podcasts.

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* Salvati, 2015, p. 235

** Mchugh, 2018, p. 104

Literature Review Methodology

Search

Keywords
- podcast AND (archiv* OR heritage OR museum OR curat*)

Collections
- LISTA, LISA, selected JSTOR collections, web of science

>1000

Limits
- > 2017
- Peer Reviewed

535

Refine

Incidental hits
- Author bios
- References
- General reviews

Relevance
- **Libraries, Archives, Museums & Academia**
- Production focused

LAMA* Podcast Production

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* Libraries, Archives, Museums & Academia

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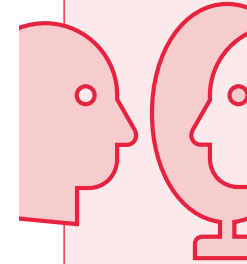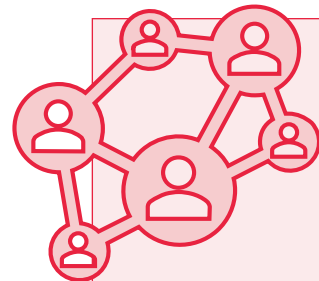
Themes from Literature Review

Accessibility
- Physical access
- Immersive engagement

Representation
- Participatory curation
- Under-represented communities

Collaboration & Community
- Technical Skills
- Content

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Interviews

Main Purpose	Format	Content	Affiliated institution
Public engagement	Interviews	Collection-focused	Local heritage organisation
	Interviews	Collection-focused	National institution
	Hosted exhibition	Collection-focused	Network of local museums
	Roundtable and interviews	Collection and storytelling	Regional museum
Showcasing collection	Conversation	Collection-focused	Specialist archive
	Narrative / storytelling	Storytelling	Independent
	Hosted exhibition	Collection-focused	National institution
Cultural Heritage Practice	Mixed/other	CHI practice & Storytelling	Local heritage organisation
	Interviews	CH practice	National organisation

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Findings

Motivations & Context

Recording Editing & Publishing

Content & Formats

Accessibility & Representation
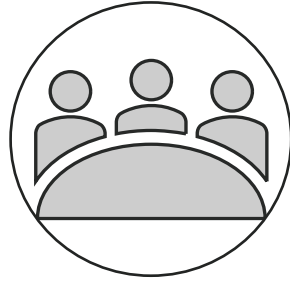
Collaboration & Community

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Motivations & Context

Public Engagement

- 'That young audience that we're maybe not addressing'
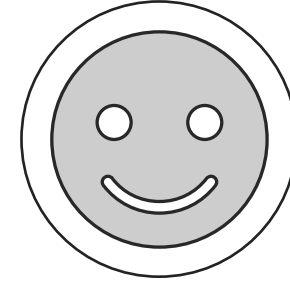- 'Useful tool for getting people to want to give a bit of money to an institution'

Practitioner

- 'Its allowing us to talk to each other more'
- 'Why don't we talk about objectivity and subjectivity in the archive?'

Institution

- 'A natural extension of the work that we were doing'
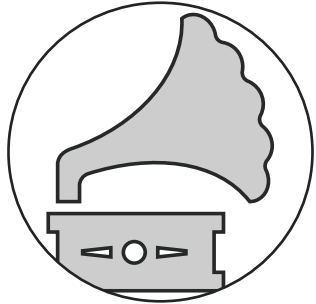- 'In a big organisation it can become very bureaucratic'

Personal Motivations

- 'I like podcasts, I'm going to make something for people like me'
- 'For the craic, we were doing it for each other and to make ourselves laugh'

'Accessible, permanent and free'
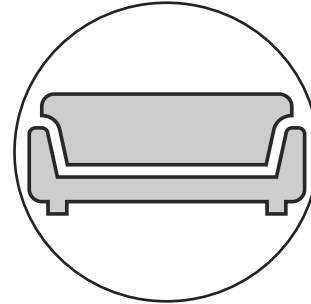
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Recording Editing & Publishing

- 'It's not challenging it's just being able to sit down and take the time'
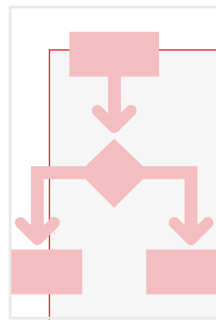- 'it's all googleable'

- 'painfully self taught'
- 'a bit of a slog'
- 'I can't do that, I'm not sure how to do that'

- 'natural and open conversations'
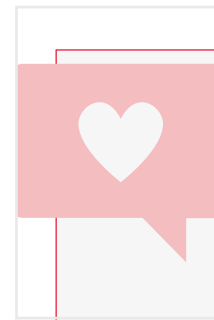- 'you get the sound effects in the background, you get a sense of being there'

'it's not forced and it's not created and it's not made'

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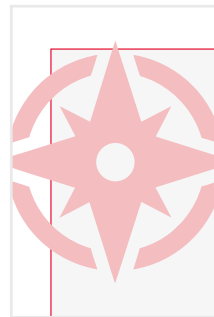
Content & Formats

Pragmatism
- Availability
- Efficiency

Professional Interests
- Reflection
- Personal favourites

Ideological
- 'create a more human sized approach where it's a conversation'
- Intangible cultural heritage

Accessibility & Representation

Access

- 'Being able to share that with people who don't have the means to be able to get into the libraries or they wouldn't know where to start'

Storytelling

- 'Telling that story ...the people that know the story best...If that's at the heart of it, then you should have a good listenership and be able to tell your story with some respect and do it justice.'

Connection

- 'If we can tap into that person telling the story, there's a real special connection there to the object that will hopefully connect with the audience and inspire them to come and visit it at some point as well'

Representation

- 'heritage that can't be summed by simply an object or an item in a collection. It's something that's passed on through generational knowledge'

Collaboration & Community

Audience
- 'People think they're friends with podcast presenters'
- Contribute content

Colleagues
- Reflect on past work
- Make new connections

Podcaster
- 'I want to know your memory ... we care about your stories'.
- 'we're all living and learning together'

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Research Directions

- Audience engagement with cultural heritage podcasts
  - Who & how
  - Sector benchmarks
  - Comparison with other CH activities
- Content analysis:
  - Influence of practitioners / institutions / audiences
  - 'Untold Stories' - representation compared to other CH modalities
  - Intangible Cultural Heritage
- The 'distinct textual practices' of podcasts – dialogues and narratives
  - Effect on listeners / podcasters connections to collections
  - Building connections between collections
- Podcasts as Artefacts
  - Participatory archiving – collection, curation and dissemination
  - Archiving and preservation of born digital audio

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Thank you!

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