The power of audio: presenting archives via podcasts

Dr. Bruce Ryan, Marianne Wilson, Prof. Hazel Hall & Prof. Iain McGregor
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://malvernuseum.co.uk/lorna-lloyds-diary-of-the-war](https://malvernuseum.co.uk/lorna-lloyds-diary-of-the-war)
- [https://hazelhall.org/](https://hazelhall.org/)
- b.ryan@napier.ac.uk
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:
- Podcast AND [archivist OR museum OR curator]
- LISTA, USA selected collections, web
- > 2017
- Peer Reviewed

Keywords: >1000

Collections: 535

Limits: 33

Refine:
- Author bios
- References
- General reviews
- Libraries, Archives, Museums & Academia
- Production focused

Incidental hits: 33

Relevance: 33

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* Libraries, Archives, Museums & Academia
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

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<tr>
<th>Main Purpose</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Affiliated institution</th>
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<td><strong>Public engagement</strong></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Collection-focused</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
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<td>Hosted exhibition</td>
<td>Collection-focused</td>
<td>Network of local museums</td>
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<td>Roundtable and interviews</td>
<td>Collection and storytelling</td>
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<td><strong>Showcasing collection</strong></td>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Collection-focused</td>
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<td>Narrative / storytelling</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td>Hosted exhibition</td>
<td>Collection-focused</td>
<td>National institution</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Heritage Practice</strong></td>
<td>Mixed/other</td>
<td>CHI practice &amp; Storytelling</td>
<td>Local heritage organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
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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
- ‘It’s 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’
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<th>Collaboration &amp; Community</th>
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<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• ‘People think they're friends with podcast presenters’</td>
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<td>• Contribute content</td>
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<td><strong>Colleagues</strong></td>
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<td>• Reflect on past work</td>
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<td>• Make new connections</td>
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<td><strong>Podcaster</strong></td>
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<td>• ‘I want to know your memory ... we care about your stories.’</td>
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<td>• ‘we're all living and learning together’</td>
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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
Thank you!

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