



Historic Royal Palaces is the charity that looks after:

Tower of London
Hampton Court Palace
Banqueting House
Kensington Palace
Kew Palace
Hillsborough Castle

We help everyone explore the story of how monarchs and people have shaped society, in some of the greatest palaces ever built.

We raise all our own funds and depend on the support of our visitors, members, donors, sponsors and volunteers.

(En)gauging audience data & research within museums and heritage

Thursday 26th September 2019, 3-9pm, Tower of London

This half-day symposium will consider the current research environment of the Independent Research Organisation (IRO), particularly how this sits within individual IRO organisational structures. Its primary intention is to prompt an insightful multi-sector conversation around working practice within IRO research cultures, with particular reference to research on IRO audiences. The symposium arises from work on the AHRC-funded [Lest we Forget](#) project at Historic Royal Palaces, led by Dr Megan Gooch.

Context:

Over the last decade, the work of Independent Research Organisations has generated a wealth of innovative, valuable interdisciplinary research on a range of historical, archaeological, art historical and other subject-specific domains. Beyond fostering content for public programming, designated IRO status stands as recognition of the distinctive research cultures across various institutions, channelled both in house and via collaboration. Furthermore, Higher Education and cultural institutions are responding to impact and public engagements agendas in increasingly similar ways.

This aligning of strategic objectives raises key interrelated issues;

- Determining the extent to which IRO knowledge is distinctive – or even unique – as opposed to HEIs, and how this fits within the boundaries of contemporary organisational research.
- How to recontextualise front-end research into audiences. In defining ‘audience’ within academic research, there appears to be a perceived gap (or perhaps growing lack of distinction) between the boundaries of ‘audience research’ and ‘market research’.

Many heritage and cultural institutions undertake audience research across departments, both as part of IRO-driven research, and to understand audiences for programming, marketing and other business-driven aims. However, the need to balance academic rigour with evidencing practical, tangible recommendations can hamper communication flow across different sectors within an organisation (particularly when research projects facilitate findings that concern only certain areas of departmental practice). Existing structural constraints often limit, rather than enhance, the involvement of wider stakeholder learning – thus significantly reducing the potential of diffusing this knowledge across departments, as a driver for changing practice and empowering professionals.



Themes for discussion

Contributor-specific themes will focus on:

- ‘Audience’ – Linking up IRO research and organisational research
- ‘Politics and Anxieties’ – including dealing with positionality, when retrospectively ‘digging’ within one’s own organisation
- ‘Capacity & Solutions’ in terms of knowledge domains and disciplinary structures

Each will be critically explored through co-creative approaches, including short practitioner-led project presentations and a roundtable session. This participatory format is designed to inspire discussion, establish knowledge-exchange and facilitate networking – fostering new cross-institutional partnerships, through identifying sustainable opportunities for joined-up thinking across IRO-stakeholder organisations. A commissioned summary document, capturing overall proceedings, will latterly be published via the Historic Royal Palaces website.



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