



Community Media 2.0: A Report from the ‘Co-Creative Communities’ Forum

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ABSTRACT

Participatory digital culture presents major challenges to all traditional media outlets, but it presents very direct challenges to the community broadcast sector, which was established from the outset as local, community-driven and participatory. These and other issues were the focus of a recent forum at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne (*Co-Creative Communities*, 8–9 November 2012). The forum was part of a national research project, which has been exploring how Australian community arts and media organisations are responding to participatory digital culture, social media and user-led innovation. Focusing on the organisations that presented at the symposium, the paper examines how community-interest media is making the most of new and social media platforms. It considers examples of participatory digital media that have emerged from the community broadcast sector, but it also considers local, collaborative, community-interest media projects developed by public broadcasters and organisations involved in arts, social justice and development. Drawing on forum transcripts and follow-up research the essay describes some of the key trends shaping how community-interest media organisations and independent producers are working with participatory digital culture, and with what success.

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Introduction

Held in late 2012, *Co-Creative Communities: Storytelling Futures for Community Arts and Media* (Melbourne, 8–9 November) was a public forum exploring the critical issues and innovations shaping community-interest media. It formed part of a large national research project, which has been exploring how Australian community arts and media organisations are responding to participatory digital culture. 160 people attended the forum, with representatives from: community broadcasting, public broadcasting, Indigenous media, social justice organisations, community arts and cultural development organisations, screen arts and cultural heritage institutions, industry peak bodies and funding agencies. There were also a number of creative practitioners present at the forum – storytellers, documentary makers, radio producers, media artists and so on. One of the main aims of the forum was to be pragmatic and solutions-focused, by showcasing new examples of participatory community media currently in production. Another aim was to foster an exchange of ideas across sectors. To this end, the symposium invited national and international speakers from across community broadcasting, public broadcasting, community arts, cultural development, cultural heritage and social justice, to talk about their approaches to producing, distributing, and building audiences for community-driven co-creative media.

The full program, transcripts and videos of panel sessions are available from the Queensland University of Technology, Digital Storytelling website.² I’ve used the transcripts of the day (and follow-up research) as a starting point to consider some of the themes that emerged at *Co-Creative Communities*. In keeping with the spirit of the forum, this paper aims to be pragmatic and solutions-focused. In the following paragraphs I outline some of key concepts that are shaping how community-interest media is transitioning to an era of participatory digital culture, as described by those who spoke at the forum. Although they came from different sectors, their approaches to generating community-driven, participatory media often shared in common a number of traits. In particular, the speakers emphasised the importance of ‘going outside’ and bringing media production into public spaces; turning audiences into participants and turning communities into audiences; collaborating across like-minded sectors; supporting a new kind of convergent ‘ninja’ media producer; and finding new uses for existing assets.

² Digital Storytelling at the Queensland University of Technology website is available at: <http://digitalstorytelling.ci.qut.edu.au/>

1. Go Outside

...our mantra for this work is 'go outside.' Go outside your mindset, go outside your traditional approaches to craft, and physically go outside into the street.³

Sue Schardt, Association for Independents in Radio

A recurring theme for the conference was the importance of place. Producers take to the streets of their neighbourhoods; they bring the studio into public spaces; they record programs in theatres, arts spaces, pubs, and opera houses; and the stories produced are geo-tagged and hyper-local.⁴ In addition to broadcast, digital and social media platforms, geographic place has become another important platform to enlist. This approach forms a key part of *Localore*, the public media innovation initiative run by the US-based Association for Independents in Radio (AIR), which Executive Director Sue Schardt was invited to discuss. The nine diverse projects developed through the *Localore*⁵ initiative are experimenting with using participatory digital media to better connect local radio stations with their audiences. For example, *Curious City*⁶ tries to provide answers to the many questions Chicago residents have about their city. *iSeeChange*⁷ gathers observations of climate change and extreme weather events in the Western Colorado region. *Reinvention Stories*⁸ documents difficult life stories from the people of Dayton, Ohio (dubbed one of America's 'fastest-dying cities' by *Forbes* magazine in May 2008).

The subjects of the *Localore* projects are framed as residents of a geographic community. They talk in detail about their street, their neighbourhood, their town, what it's like to live there and how the area has changed, for better or worse. Opportunities for participation are directed at local residents more than a general audience (they focus on topics—such as weather, traffic, local facilities and community events— which are difficult for non-locals to engage with). According to the producers of *Reinvention Stories*, the project is 'by, for, and about Dayton—only' (Reichert & Bognar 2013). In other words, although all the projects have a substantial online presence accessible from almost anywhere, they are made for the constituents of the local radio stations to which they're attached, and this is largely dictated by the reach of a station's terrestrial broadcast. Finally, many of the stories and user-created contributions are geo-tagged to online maps, so that finding new content involves the online navigation of an offline world. As producer Steve Bognar says of the *Reinvention Stories* website and the process of making it, 'it's a virtual Dayton, we got there by walking the literal Dayton. ... We spent the summer walking our town' (Reichert & Bognar 2013).

³ All quotes are taken from transcripts of the *Co-Creative Communities* forum, unless otherwise noted. The transcripts and video of the panels are available at: <http://digitalstorytelling.ci.qut.edu.au/index.php/events>

⁴ Away from broadcasters, the importance of hyper-local and geo-tagged storytelling could be seen in various community arts and cultural development projects discussed at the forum, most noticeably Feral Arts' *PlaceStories* platform <<http://placestories.com/>> a global, map-based community storytelling database.

⁵ *Localore* is available at: <http://localore.net/>

⁶ *Curious City* is available at: <http://curiouscity.wbez.org/>

⁷ *iSeeChange* is available at: <http://thealmanac.org/year.php>

⁸ *Reinvention Stories* is available at: <http://reinventionstories.org/#1/intro/1>

In a recent article, Schardt (2012) describes AIR's 'go outside' philosophy in more detail. One of the aims of *Localore*, she writes, was to explore 'full spectrum storytelling' that combines broadcast, digital and 'street platforms':

The latter—'street'—platform is especially key since it represents public media makers moving beyond the traditional approach of going out into the community with a microphone or camera to capture a story, edit it into shape, and send it into distribution. This is where producers are providing new, often intimate points of access for public media in the physical space of the community—portable booths, installations, moving onto porches and into backyards and haunts familiar to people living in a neighbourhood—as a way of extending our base of operations beyond broadcast and allowing citizens to become documentarians of their own lives (Schardt 2012).

Kath Letch (at the time the General Manager of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia) described similar activities in the Australian community broadcasting sector. Letch discussed *Earth Matters*, a nationally distributed environmental show produced locally at 3CR. *Earth Matters* had done a series of on-air segments and podcasts 'from up a tree in Tasmania', said Letch, referring to reports posted by forest activist Miranda Gibson. Two other examples Letch mentioned were *Radio with Pictures* and *Hearing Voices*. The former was a live event held in November 2012 in which radio makers from Sydney community radio station FBi partnered with writers, graphic artists and illustrators to produce an evening of live, spoken-word radio.⁹ The sold-out event took place at the Sydney Opera House and was broadcast on FBi's digital channel. For *Hearing Voices*, six new Australian radio plays were performed live at a local theatre as part of the Sydney Fringe festival. It was the culmination of a six-month radio playwriting mentorship run by community radio station Skid Row (in partnership with Playwriting Australia and Sidetrack Performance Group). *Hearing Voices* and *Radio with Pictures* fit with a broader trend towards one-off, spoken-word radio events that bring radio programs out of the studio and into local theatres, pubs, galleries, and even opera houses.

A 'go outside' approach could be seen in the work of Broome-based Indigenous media company Goolarri Media Enterprises. Goolarri Media began as a radio station but has expanded to include television, music, digital media and high-profile public event production (which in turn is a source of additional media content). At the forum Michael Torres (New Media Manager at Goolarri) described *Kimberley Girl*, a professional development and leadership opportunity (masquerading as a beauty pageant) for young Indigenous women from the Kimberley region. The heats and final are hugely popular events with serious community 'buy-in' (according to Rennie 2012, 'in its target demographic, *Kimberley Girl* is proportionally bigger than *Australian Idol*'). Edited videos of the events are later broadcast on Goolarri's television station (GTV) and YouTube channel. *Kimberley Girl* represents a move outside in a variety of ways: outside of Broome and the Goolarri studios into a range of physical venues and remote communities, and outside of Goolarri's core activities (running round-the-clock television and radio stations).

⁹ A second *Radio with Pictures* was held in October 2013. The stories can be heard/seen on the *Radio with Pictures* website: <http://radiowithpictures.com.au/>.

The Australian Broadcasting Commission's participatory media initiative *ABC Open* also demonstrates a 'go outside' strategy. Launched in 2010, *ABC Open* is a multi-platform project that distributes user-generated stories created by regional Australians across ABC web, radio and television networks. It aims to build digital media capacity in regional communities by partnering residents with professional media producers and running regular media and storytelling workshops. According to Project Co-Director Cath Dwyer, *ABC Open* aims to bring Australians together around a story—discursively but also physically. Community events—exhibitions, screenings, live storytelling and creative workshops—are a major part of *ABC Open* activities.¹⁰ At the forum Dwyer described *Separated*¹¹, a recent *ABC Open* project about stories of forced adoption from around Australia. The stories were curated online, but they were also presented offline in the form of a gallery exhibition. According to Dwyer:

One of the things that we've also really found is that while a lot of the work we do is gathered online... people love to see stuff in a physical space. So digital media doesn't just have to be on a screen. That can be a way of bringing stories together, but in fact if you're bringing communities together doing stuff in a room it's also really fantastic.

As a government broadcaster with a national agenda and distribution, *ABC Open* is very different to the community broadcasting examples that Letch and Torres described, and the local American public radio stations that Schardt described. Nonetheless, generating hyper-local, place-based stories, interfacing with audiences in real geographic spaces, and creating opportunities to bring communities physically together, have all become an integral part of how *ABC Open* operates.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, scholars and industry alike described a global trend in radio broadcasting towards concentrated ownership and homogenised radio programming, with 'local' reporting often generated far from the community itself (see Fairchild 1999; Hardyk, Loges & Ball-Rokeach 2005; Nieckarz 2002; Thompson 1999). According to Fairchild (1999: 549), industry deregulation in the US has 'served to "deterritorialize" radio, that is, remove any necessary connection between a radio station and its local community, a remarkable achievement given radio's long-standing status as a uniquely local medium.' Writing about Australian contexts, Thompson (1999: 26) argues that community broadcasting's ability 'to provide a truly local service in a world where commercial and national broadcasters have abandoned localism for satellite-delivered networking', was going to be the CB sector's strength but that it could come at a cost to audience size.

'Generalist' community stations licensed to serve a specific geographic community have an obligation to provide access to the many interest groups which comprise that community. But program formats which allow for a wide diversity of topics, program styles and presenters of varied experience and quality are an anathema for stations interested in maximising their audiences (Thompson 1999: 26).

In contrast to these observations, the projects profiled at the *Co-Creative Communities* forum reflect a renewed interest in local community storytelling. *ABC Open* represents a national

¹⁰ You can see more of the range of events they conduct here: <https://open.abc.net.au/events>

¹¹ View the *Separated* project here: <https://open.abc.net.au/projects/separated-01du6ze#/about>

public broadcaster re-focusing on community-oriented, place-based storytelling which runs against wider trends towards centralised production. Meanwhile the other examples discussed, which originate with local and community broadcasters, demonstrate a greatly expanded understanding of what ‘local media’ or ‘local content’ might look like; one which includes not just stories produced locally and about local issues, but also user-generated stories made by residents themselves, event-based storytelling that takes place in local venues, and stories which may not be explicitly about a local issue, but which are embedded with a profound sense of place.

2. Collaborating with Communities; Collaborating with Audiences

... the question is not so much how the sector responds to user-generated content and participatory media, since those concepts are embedded in the nature of the sector, but more how community broadcasting embraces new technologies and online media...

Kath Letch, CBAA

Community broadcasting is framed as an inherently participatory model, motivated by a communication rights agenda that seeks to remedy the systemic imbalances—in terms of access, production and representation—that characterise mainstream media. The CBAA’s Kath Letch emphasised this point in her presentation, noting that community broadcasting in Australia has always supported community access and participation across the breadth of station operations. In Letch’s opinion, then, the key issue for community media makers is not the relative merits of participatory content but instead how to best leverage participatory digital media in alignment with established practices:

The community broadcasting sector was formed and is based on a participatory model. In that sense the question is not so much how the sector responds to user-generated content and participatory media, since those concepts are embedded in the nature of the sector, but more how community broadcasting embraces new technologies and online media; or how community broadcasters take up newer or broader ways to connect with their communities. Online media extends those connections and makes possible a presence beyond and as well as broadcasting. Like all traditional media, community broadcasters are engaged with the process of convergence and utilising digital media platforms.

Viewed in this light, recent forms of participatory digital culture should be understood as new access points through which stations can extend the core principles that underpin the community broadcasting sector. Station websites need to do more than just offer on-demand content, and social media needs to be used for more than brand building, promoting station activities, or directing listeners to online content. Another speaker at the forum was Jesse Cox, a creative audio producer formerly involved with Sydney community radio station FBi and its storytelling program *All The Best*. Cox agreed that online platforms and social media networks had huge creative and collaborative potential for community broadcasters, but acknowledged that at present this was still largely under-developed. ‘I think a lot of the time, people just repurpose their content on a bunch of things,’ he said, and the challenge for community media producers is to think creatively about how best to use social networks and online media, ‘and not just say, *hey we’re here* or *here’s a link to this video*’. Specifically, he

said creative producers need to experiment with using social networks and web platforms to build ‘deep layers’ for engaging audiences. From the Australian community broadcasting representatives at the forum, there was considerably more discussion of the potential of participatory media and the aspirations of the sector with regards to it, but less evidence of real world applications.

Since mid-2012, the *Localore* projects that Sue Schardt discussed have put many of these ideas into practice. They use a variety of online media to augment stories with transcripts, photos, short videos, extended interviews, behind the scenes material and so on. They also make clever use of established third party social media platforms, helping small, cash-strapped radio stations experiment with more dynamic ways of interacting with listeners. Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Facebook, Tumblr, Google Maps and other social media platforms are used to enable audiences help determine story topics, join in the reporting process, contribute their own media, and generate crowd-sourced community resources. The *Localore* projects engage with the full spectrum of participatory media trends – choice, conversation, curation, creation and collaboration – which have changed how now people expect to engage with media (Clark & Aufderheide 2009: 6-7). What’s interesting is that although the *Localore* projects are participatory–sometimes involving deep collaboration with an individual or community–their primary agenda is not to build community media capacity or to train future media producers (although happily, that might be one outcome). Instead the *Localore* projects are principally audience development experiments, tasked with finding new ways to grow local public radio audiences, engage audiences more deeply, and strengthen connections between stations and listeners. Or perhaps more accurately, the *Localore* projects are experimenting with the *craft of participation* and how it might be used by creative producers to build and engage audiences for local public radio.

By comparison, the ABC isn’t underpinned by the same ‘participatory model’ that shapes community broadcasting. Early on, said Cath Dwyer, the *ABC Open* team had to figure out how the national broadcaster could support audience-created content in a way that was different to community media. Dwyer argued that supporting user-made content and building digital media capacity within communities–like *ABC Open* aims to do–is part of the wider ABC charter:

...the ABC does have a real role in bringing communities together and it's part of our charter. ...our charter says that we promote national identity and diversity and they're things that maybe not everyone always thinks that media does but it's actually part of our role. So I think working with audience fits really, really well with what the ABC was set up to do.

In addition, said Dwyer, the ABC has a responsibility to educate Australian audiences about user-generated and co-created content–and a drastically different 21st century media landscape more generally:

...if you said to me three or four years ago that a story made by an 11-year-old kid in Wagga that used one photo and was about his dead grandpa would go on an ABC TV channel, no one would have believed you. And yet that's been placed on ABC 24 quite a few times and people love it. ...I think it is our role to actually start to challenge some of those traditional ways that media expects stories – that audience expect

stories to work too. Because stories like that – I haven't found one person who hasn't thought that's a great story and yet it's not what you would normally expect to see on the TV.

In other words, the ABC's media legacies—its national broadcast network and its gatekeeper status—are being used to build audiences and create a serious discursive context for user-made media content and co-creative production models.

Panellists described how community and public broadcasters were experimenting with content and production models that leverage participatory digital culture. However it was clear from the discussion that concepts of 'participation', 'co-creation' and 'collaboration' captured a wide range of practices, and where the different organisations sat on that spectrum didn't necessarily follow established ideological or production paradigms.

The ABC is embracing co-creative, 'amateur' media, helping non-professionals to produce content for distribution across its national networks. At the same time, the ABC is also using its legacy media status and assets to legitimise and promote non-professional content. Community broadcasters argued that theirs is an inherently participatory model, not radically altered by the growth of participatory digital media. However, there are major limits to the kinds of media participation which they actively support.

Opportunities for commenting, liking, sharing and control over scheduling were commonplace, but support for participatory media rarely extended to those more intensive and audience-driven forms of media participation, such as curation, collaboration, crowd-sourcing, remixing or original user-made contributions.

One reason Australian community broadcasters are slow to adopt *certain* forms of media participation is because, compared with a maintaining a Facebook page, blog or Twitter profile, those particular forms of interaction tend to be costlier, more labour intensive, more technologically complex and therefore demand additional resources (staff, money, equipment, specialist skill) from a sector which is historically resource-poor and volunteer driven. But another important reason is because more innovative forms of media participation, which encourage audience collaboration or are user-led, risk undermining an audience-producer divide which the sector has been newly cultivating.

At the forum, community broadcasting representatives acknowledged that new platforms were mostly being used to support promotional activities, not to extend community access or collaboration. And of the projects that *were* leveraging digital affordances in more genuinely collaborative ways, these were still largely understood in terms of audience development and craft. This is in keeping with a relatively recent trend within the community broadcasting sector towards taking questions of ratings and reach much more seriously. These questions have long been neglected in community media theory because traditionally 'the audience is secondary to production, or subsumed within it by the overcoming of the audience-producer divide' (Rennie, Berkeley & Murphet 2010: 14). All of which means that at the same time as wider media industries, including national broadcasters like the ABC, are actively embracing participatory culture, many community broadcasters are embracing their status as broadcasters.

3. Collaborating Across Sectors

...the more people know how to do stuff, the more they'll do stuff. And whether they do stuff with us or other people doesn't really matter in the end because when people start to create I think then they go on to create.

Cath Dwyer, *ABC Open*

Another recurring theme for the forum was the necessity of cross-sector convergence and hybridity.¹² The Association for Independents in Radio, once a member organisation advancing the interests of independent radio producers, now regularly incorporates documentarians, filmmakers, print journalists, educators, technologists—more than 60 job titles in total. In thinking about these changes Sue Schardt said ‘the metaphor that’s helpful that I use is that we have become a star in a broader constellation. ...So we begin to see emerge other patterns and other partners, collaborators, et cetera in this new universe.’ New alliances have formed which have less to do with medium or sector specificity and more to do with ‘shared vision’—be it in relation to communication and technology rights, social justice, community development or public service. At the symposium, Schardt went on to say that in terms of developing new collaborations for her organisation, ‘...our vision is really simple and very clear. It’s that what our work is about is to use technology for a purpose. Not just technology for technology’s sake. Digital, whatever it might be, is meaningless unless it has a human purpose.’

For Indu Balachandran (Manager-Creative Enterprise, Information and Cultural Exchange) cross-sector collaborations can be about ‘shared interests’ as much as ‘shared vision’. At the *Co-Creative Communities* forum Balachandran described *Chatterbox TV*, a television show produced by Western Sydney-based community arts organisation Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE). *Chatterbox TV* is a magazine arts program that promotes, distributes and discusses community art and activities from around the country. The program airs monthly on Aurora, a not-for-profit community television station available only on Australian pay TV. ICE was approached by Aurora, and offered a small amount of funding to produce a monthly program. Since Aurora is only available to pay TV subscribers, Balachandran said ICE was naturally concerned about issues of access. However, she said Aurora ‘have been very open to the content going anywhere. So it’s gone to community TV in Perth (West TV Perth). It’s gone to community TV in the UK ... and New Zealand’s recently approached us to air the shows. And they’re quite okay with us putting it online.’ As a result, Balachandran said the question of whether screening on subscription pay TV would restrict access ‘becomes defunct’. And perhaps more importantly, the partnership has helped *Chatterbox TV*—and the artists and stories that appear on it—to reach a much bigger audience than they might have otherwise. According to Balachandran, ‘the relationship has meant our audience has gone from our first month at 400 people and our tenth month has 80,000 across the world. So the stories are being heard and does it [the question of access] really matter? It does on one level, but for us it’s worked.’

Another observation made by several forum participants was that changed work cultures have seen the emergence of a more flexible, technologically savvy, independent community media

¹² For more on this topic see the recent special issue of *Media International Australia*, ‘Investigating Public Service Media as Hybrid Arrangements’ (Burns & Hawkins 2013).

producer who can move between sectors and art forms. According to Sue Schardt, in an increasingly convergent and technologically driven environment ‘our talent is really a lot more than that. They’re independent. They’re adaptive by nature. They’re entrepreneurial. They’re hackers. They figure stuff out ... ninja talent is how we view it.’ An independent audio producer who works closely with community radio, Jesse Cox argued that independent media makers needed better recognition in Australia. ‘Our contributors, our musicians, our sound designers, technical producers all do it for the love, which is awesome, but...there needs to be a point when emerging storytellers are able to actually find ways of funding that,’ he said. Mentioning the Community Broadcasting Foundation (which ties content grants to stations), and the Australia Council for the Arts (which funds individual artists but not those working in broadcast media), Cox said that creative independent producers tend to fall outside the scope of these agencies, ‘we need to work together to look at how we can grow an independent sector.’ For Schardt, independent producers are vital because they drive innovation, undertaking the necessary play and experimentation that small stations are unable to: ‘We recognise that the stations are really busy doing the day-to-day operation...and they have little capacity to do the research and development that these times demand.’

4. Conclusion: Value the Assets You Already Have (In New Ways)

None of the recurring themes I’ve outlined here are altogether new for community broadcasters (or community-interest media more broadly). They can all be understood as part of an attempt to reassert the value of existing assets (and rediscover assets long overlooked). The philosophy of ‘going outside’ and maximising ‘street platforms’ can already be observed in many of the routine activities that community stations take part in (such as broadcasting live from community events, hosting gigs, festivals, fundraisers and so on). And we would do well to think of stations in a similar way; as important, physical hubs that offer ‘street-level’ points of access for a broad cross-section of the community, not just station staff and volunteers. These physical spaces and interactions have always been important for community broadcasting, but in an era of online networks they have increased (not diminished) value. As Ned Rossiter (2006: 205) writes, ‘it would be a mistake to overlook the importance of face-to-face meetings... Such occasions are crucial if the network is to maintain momentum, revitalize energy, consolidate old friendships and discover new ones, recast ideas, undertake further planning activities, and so on’. A recent study of future themes for media storytelling argued that ‘real world’ integration and impact—where story worlds are mapped onto the real world, and where mediated and geographic spaces are blurred—were going to be key trends in the coming years (Latitude 2012: 5). If that’s the case, then local, community broadcasters are uniquely placed to take advantage of this (re)turn to place-based storytelling.

Community broadcasting is based on a collaborative and participatory model that has sought, with varying degrees of success, to overcome traditional audience-producer divides. At the forum, however, community broadcasting representatives repeatedly emphasised the importance of audiences, audience reach, broadcasting, and professional content curation and creation, *even as they were describing attempts to incorporate increased user-generated content and participatory social media tools*. ‘I think it’s important to remember the mass scale and in-depth scope of the broadcast medium and what that offers to communities of

people,' said Kath Letch, reflecting a more recent tendency within the sector to address questions of audiences, consumption and 'the right to be heard'.

Sue Schardt said local public radio stations need to take advantage of their role as 'trusted intermediaries' (even though one of the catchphrases of the day was 'disintermediation'). Meanwhile radio producer Jesse Cox argued that it's important to recognise the difference between active audiences producing user-generated content and community media producers (who may distribute their content for free, who may volunteer at community stations, who may receive little or no income, but who are nonetheless talented, professional media makers). 'I think there's a discussion that we need to have within this community as well as within Australia about who is the user and who is the media maker,' Cox said at the forum, 'The user and the audience getting engaged is one thing and that's awesome, but the media makers—they're not really UGC.' Although historically it has aimed to disrupt or do away with an audience-producer media divide, in a 'broadcast yourself' era, community broadcasters are, it seems, re-discovering or re-evaluating the importance of terrestrial broadcasting, creative producers and mass audiences.

This attitude was also evident in responses from public broadcasters and community arts organisations. According to *ABC Open*'s Cath Dwyer, 'When we first set up we were thinking, what distinguishes us from YouTube? We're all in this world where anyone can create and upload, but what's the role of the ABC?' The answer was context and reach. The ABC provides a legitimising and 'safe' context for sharing non-professional media platforms. As Dwyer said at the forum:

...the ABC does provide a space for a certain kind of story. It is, we think, a safe space for people to express themselves. We have not only a lot of moderation of content and of comments but what we're trying to set up, I guess, is for Australians to come together and share their stories in a in a meaningful way and to curate that so that it's meaningful for audience.

Something else the ABC can do for UGC or co-created content that YouTube (usually) can't, is get them seen: 'We have not just websites but we have TV channels and we have a network of radio stations and we operate on a lot of third party platforms.' This was also a factor behind ICE's decision to partner with pay TV channel Aurora for the distribution of *Chatterbox TV*; access might have been marginally more restricted, but there were many more eyeballs overall.

The themes I've mentioned here represent only a small portion of the day's conversation. Other recurring trends shaping participatory, community-driven media projects included data (how to protect it, how to authenticate it, how to use it to develop stories); impact and evaluation (how to achieve change, how to measure the success of a project with social good agendas); sharing and archiving (how do you store content in appropriate, accessible, discoverable ways). What linked all the themes together was the recognition that participatory digital media doesn't radically change the role or relevance of community-driven media. There are, after all, still major obstacles to population-wide access to the means of media production. Instead, user-generated content, social media and the like challenge community-interest media makers to articulate *what they do better* and *what they do differently*. And based on the examples discussed by the participants of *Co-Creative Communities* that often

means re-assessing the value of existing (sometimes overlooked) assets: one-to-many broadcasting, audiences and consumption, creative talent, professionalism, curation and aggregation, legitimization and intermediation.

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