



ROYAL  
OPERA  
HOUSE



CULTURE

CULTURE

HACK DAY

CULTURE

CULTURE

LONDON 2011

# OUR HIDDEN HERITAGE

There's a huge amount of cultural information – written word, photos, video – that's away from the public eye. Not because people don't want you to see it, but because it isn't in a format which is easily digestible, desirable or useful.

Culture Hack Day aimed to add layers of accessibility and human experience to data previously untouched. To give a few examples of what was offered up...

National Maritime Museum delved into its archives and pulled out warship histories, Royal Navy activity during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, an API of maritime memorials and a new collections website of 250,000 records

UK Film Council loaned a database listing of film screenings for 2,500 venues across the British Isles

Welsh National Opera gave us stage manager prompts for their 10 performing venues, the Wales Millennium Centre technical schedule, and production programmes including details like cast list, plot summary, synopsis, interviews with the creative team, biographies and orchestra and chorus lists

Crafts Council showed us archives of 50,000 craft objects by around 1000 artists and "Craft Matters" location-based data including comments about why craft matters to the general public

Culture Grid brought 1.2million museum collection records, covering a huge range of collections, topics and periods

BBC Archive pointed us towards RadioTimes data and iPlayer subtitle data

Royal Opera House gave material about opera and ballet, including broadcast recordings, set designs, costumes, press pictures, stage manager's score, lighting plan, surtitles and programmes

This newspaper gives an overview of the Culture Hack weekend and showcases some of the things that were made with this data.

## Data supplied by:

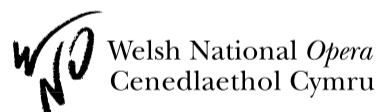


WATERSHED

NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM



MUTE



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BBC

theguardian



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CULTURE HACK DAY CULTURE

# INTRO

Culture Hack Day was an event that took place over the weekend of 15-16 January 2011, bringing together cultural organisations with software developers and creative technologists to make interesting new things.

The aim of the event was to see what lessons the cultural sector could learn from the fast, iterative world of software development, while also investigating the hidden potential of cultural datasets. A side effect of this was large-scale, cross-sector collaboration across 12 cultural organisations, one software company, three media organisations, two funding bodies, eight inspiring speakers and 69 developers, which resulted in two intensive days of creative thinking and making.

## People responded well:

90% attendees would come to a future Culture Hack Day

#chd11 was a Twitter trending topic for London on Saturday 15th January

Data providers from the cultural organisations were “very pleased with the whole event” and would like to see another

Creative technologist and Music Hack Day/Rewired State co-founder James Darling tweeted that “Culture Hack Day was one of the best Hack Days I ever saw”

We’ve even inspired a Northern Irish version of the event – the upcoming CulturehackIE

## We found that:

Bringing people together from commercial and cultural sectors enables different ways of working

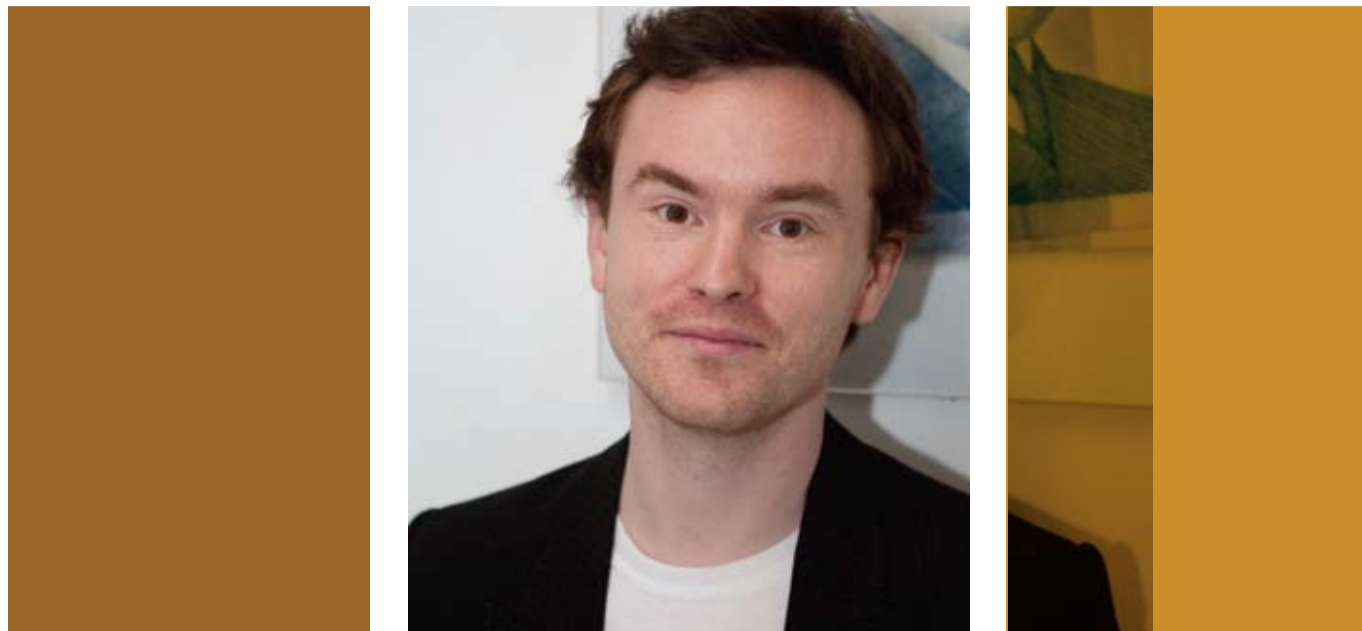
Accessible data allows new experiences to be created and new stories to be told – online, via applications and in games

There is enormous creative potential in working across sectors and skill sets

There is an untapped appetite for creative collaboration and skill sharing

Open data creates new opportunities for cultural organisations and allows innovation to happen more quickly





# CULTURE GRID HACK

I did a handful of hacks around CultureGrid. It's an aggregated search on 80+ UK cultural institutions' archives of cultural artefacts, so you can use it to search across museums for 1.2m things - paintings, drawings, photographs, objects, locations, and so on. Quite the treasure trove!

One of the things I created was a mobile application which helps you search through the collections very easily - it lets you browse the images and resources wherever you are. In keeping with the open data theme, I've released my code from the things that I built for others to take and use in the future.

What I've learnt from Culture Hack Day is that there's a huge amount of goodwill in the developer community to create stuff around culture. We're in a time where culture is getting the brunt of the cuts and there's fantastic opportunity to work more with web and mobile technology to help people to experience the arts and creativity in interesting ways.

Stef Lewandowski @stef  
<http://stef.io/>



# PEPYS' SHOWS

## Pepys' Shows, via [Theatricalia](#) — [freshen anew](#) Tweet

In reference to a production of *'Tis Pity She's A Whore* on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1661, Samuel Pepys noted:

"Thence to Salisbury Court play house, where was acted the first time "'Tis pity Shee's a Whore," a simple play and ill acted, only it was my fortune to sit by a most pretty and most ingenious lady, which pleased me much."



### Latest musings

- I bought "The Mayden Queene," a play newly printed, of Mr. Dryden's, which he himself, seems to brag of, and indeed is a good play. — 15.12, 18 January 1668
- Carried my wife, Betty Turner and Deb. to the 'Change, where they bought some things. — 14.12, 18 January 1668
- At the office all the morning busy sitting. — 12.12, 18 January 1668

A [Culture Hack Day](#) production by [Matthew Somerville](#) and [Clare Lovell](#), using [Theatricalia](#). [Samuel Pepys](#) appears courtesy of [Phil Gyford](#). Name thanks to [Chris Unitt](#).

I've followed Phil Gyford's blogging of Samuel Pepys diary for a while now (<http://www.pepysdiary.com>), and more recently Samuel's own Twitter feed (@samuelpepys), containing the choicest bits of his day.

I noticed that Sam (as we are now on first name terms) seemed, amidst the politics and womanising, to visit the theatre quite a lot - indeed he made vows to try and curtail his theatre-going in order to save money.

Doing something with this information at Culture Hack Day

seemed like a good idea, especially if I could work it into my theatre database site Theatricalia (<http://theatricalia.com>), as it would join up some previously disjointed things and show a different side to what everyone knows about Pepys - along with historical information about an exciting period in theatre history, just after the Restoration. Things crystallised when the name Pepys' Shows was mentioned, a pun too good to ignore.

Roping in Clare Lovell from the Birmingham Rep to help, we set up an account for Sam on Theatricalia - he would post his observations

and reviews on productions he'd seen there and then our stand-alone site would pull them in for display. Thankfully, people had already categorised the entries of the diary in great detail, so finding the ones mentioning plays was quite straightforward. Sadly, picking the relevant bit that was the review still needed human input each time, and that set us far into the night. Then it was simply registering a domain, throwing some bits and pieces together very simply, and putting it on show at <http://pepysshows.co.uk/>

Matthew Somerville @dracos  
(with Clare Lovell @clarelovell)



*Theatricalia* Plays People Places Search:

Hello and welcome to Theatricalia, a database of past and future theatre productions.

Theatricalia knows about 62,400 people being cast and crew in 264,037 roles. In 19,581 productions of 10,543 plays at 1,592 places.

**Features**

- Anyone can [add a production](#) if it's not on the site, or fix mistakes.
- Each place, person, and play has an RSS feed or email alert, so you can keep up to date with what something or someone is doing.
- Search for a person, play, place, or part, or search for a location to find things near you.

**For example...**

David Tennant played the title role in the [Royal Shakespeare Company's production of Hamlet](#) by [William Shakespeare](#) at the [Courtyard Theatre](#).

David also appeared in a [production of As You Like It](#), alongside [Colin Firth](#) and [Joseph Fiennes](#).

**Site news**

**Multiple companies:** Productions on Theatricalia can now be associated with multiple production companies, which means e.g. [last year's production of the...](#) [More](#) →

**Most recent...**

**...addition:** [Dangerous Corner](#) at [The Lyceum](#), 25<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> September 2007. Press night was 25<sup>th</sup> September 2007. Added by [Frank Ellis](#).

**...observation:** On 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011 at 12:01 a.m., [Frank Ellis](#) noted, about a [production of The Real Inspector Hound](#): This was half of a Double Bill with [Black Comedy](#) ... [More](#) →

# THE WIDER DEBATE



*"We're very good at organising and collecting data now – one thing we're not terribly good at yet is re-presenting and humanising data, turning it into narratives and stories"*

Tom Uglow @tomux  
Creative Director, Google and YouTube, Europe



*"If all the data was open and shared, I wouldn't end up missing any theatre productions because the details would be aggregated in one place – and it would be great!"*

Matthew Somerville @dracos  
Founder, Theatricalia



*"Delivering the right thing at the right moment is key, rather than being bombarded by constant messages and media"*

Clare Reddington @clarered  
Director, iShed and Pervasive Media Studio



*"Through digital, I'd like to pull the walls of the gallery or museum away – so you could see the works on display and decide whether you wanted to enter, removing any threat that it might not be for you"*

Chris Thorpe @jaggeree  
Founder, ArtFinder

*“You have a responsibility – code for the change that you want in the world. Build the tools that enable cultural institutions to continue to exist and be relevant”*

Nick Harkaway @harkaway  
Author and blogger for FutureBook



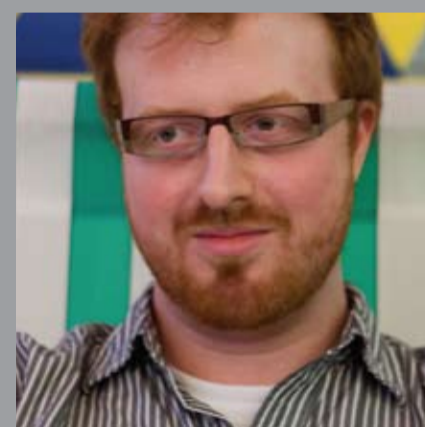
*“Everything is playful and fun, it’s just depends on how you look at it. Our digital footprints that we leave everywhere are exactly what we should be playing with”*

Leila Johnston @finalbullet  
Author, blogger & comedy writer



*“More important than consuming culture or remixing culture is actually making culture. Culture isn’t something you spectate – it’s something you are part of. Why not hack on making art?”*

Tom Armitage @infovore  
Creative Technologist, BERG



*“If when a new film was released, the studio also released a data set, you could easily access all the details and metadata for remixing and recutting”*

Tom Dunbar @willyouhelp  
Producer, Hut V





# WHEN SHOULD I VISIT?

I was inspired by a tweet from @beng asking when the best day to visit the Natural History Museum would be. I thought I would gather data from Foursquare logins to allow people to see which were the less busy days to visit a museum.

Foursquare is designed to show the most popular trending places or where your friends are. I instead used it for the opposite reason!

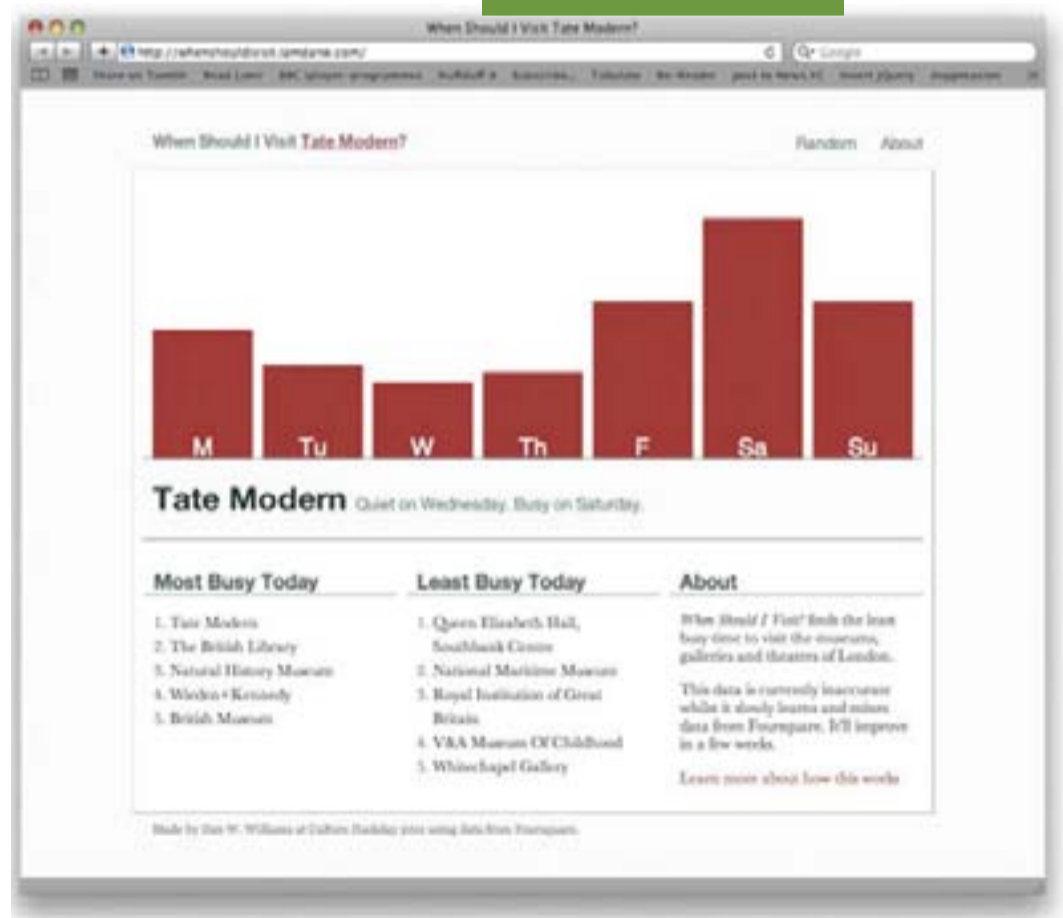
When Should I Visit? finds the least busy time to visit the museums, galleries and theatres of London. It states the quietest day and provides a glanceable graph to judge the relative popularity of different days. The site is intended to show the data in the simplest possible way with no unnecessary detail.

The advantage of using foursquare is that it is not tied to the institutions listed. New places can be

added and removed – even non-cultural organisations. However, foursquare users represent only a certain demographic of attendees. I'd like to get hold of admissions data from some of the museums I used to verify how accurate When Should I Visit? is. To make it more accurate in future I could also layer over data from Gowalla and facebook or allow self reporting from venues.

In the future, it would be interesting to look at attendance changes due to school term, time of year, weather and other factors. But it's worth noting that you can still phone the museum and ask a human. They're already good at spotting patterns!

Dan Williams  
@iamdanw



# CRAFT MATTERS

My hack used the data made available by Crafts Council UK. Just before the last general election, they created a website asking the public "Why does craft matter to you?" and provided a space for people to submit their answers. While some of this data is exposed on the website, a lot of it is not. There's been over 1000 submissions, so I wanted to create a new way to explore these responses that focused on the content rather than additional

data such as the location of the person making the submission.

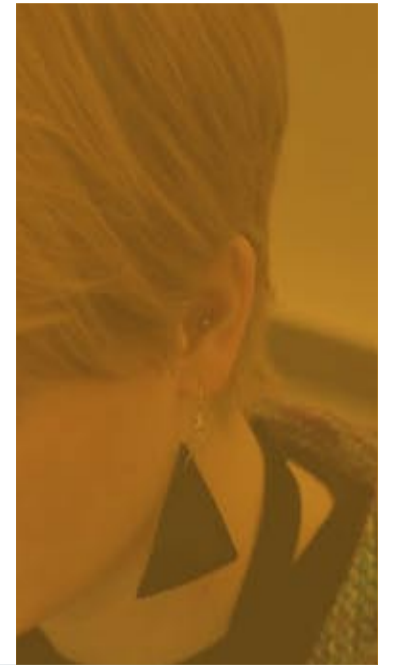
I created a website that shows quotes from people talking about why craft matters to them. You can click on any word in the quote shown and a new quote will appear which also uses that word.

I've been to a number of other hack days which vary in size and focus and, for me, the event

showed the value of exposing data through APIs or other web building application formats - it's a really good idea for organisations to prepare data in a way that can be accessible to developers.

I certainly hope there are more Culture Hack Days in the future as the format for collaboration is a brilliant one.

Becky Stewart @theleadingzero



# WHAT DIGITAL CULTURE CAN LEARN FROM THE CULTURE OF HACKS

Rachel Coldicutt, Culture Hack Day organiser and Head of Digital Media at the Royal Opera House

HackDays are exciting, collaborative events that bring people, data and ideas together to create new things and make connections. For people who work at the point where the arts meet digital, that should sound familiar. But sometimes digital activity in cultural organisations gets a little lost in the fray, struggling between the necessary day-to-day activities of providing information and selling tickets, and the big-picture thinking of radical new digital strategies. And the iterative, risk-taking approaches that might, for instance, be found on a stage or in a rehearsal room can be forgotten about when web sites or applications are discussed and commissioned.

Oscar Wilde's remark that "We are all in the gutter but some of us are looking at the stars" might sound familiar to some digital managers. The pang of regret that you feel as you record yet another episode of a continuing podcast that has run out of steam or read through the

paperwork for a consortium project that has begun to lose its way becomes even sharper when you remember the projects that could have been – the fantasies of using augmented reality or the dream of creating an open API that just can't be justified in this year's budget. But why do these things seem so impossible? Why can't digital activity be spontaneous, creative and audience focussed?

Matthew Somerville's site Theatricalia (<http://theatricalia.com/>) is "a database of past and future productions" that anyone can add to: a memory-bank of theatre experiences that allows audience members to annotate each performance. It reminds me of a big, consortium-driven user-generated content project that I worked on a few years ago, which – despite lots of hard work and good intentions – never really came together. While my project had been specified to death (murder by box ticking),

Matthew's was very much alive and kicking. More to the point, he'd just gone away and made it because he felt it was a good idea – and he was right: it works and people use it. Matthew made it because he loves theatre. My project got made because a government agency wanted to fund something innovative. Tellingly, my project is no longer live.

The developers and creative technologists who attend Hack Days are leading by example, doing the exact same things that arts organisations can and should do more of: collaborating, experimenting, and taking risks; having a go and seeing if things work. Moreover, they are also having fun, making playful exciting things that bring data into the real world and help people to use and understand information in a range of different ways.

Transferring the culture of Hack Days to the cultural sector poses

lots of questions about rights, artistic integrity and quality, but it also returns a feeling of experimentation and creativity to the world of digital culture, reminding us of possibilities in data, the enthusiasm of audiences and the opportunities to make interesting accessible tools that open up the arts in ways we haven't yet dreamed. The process of Agile software development is not that different to workshopping a play, and while there may be more Post-It notes and Sharpies involved in one than the other, the aim is the same – to refine through iteration and collaboration.

As digital technology is asked to deliver ever more to arts and culture – new audiences, new revenue streams, new opportunities – innovation has never been more important. By learning lessons from the culture of hacking, we can start to hack culture – and create genuinely new ways of bringing great art into peoples' every day lives.





Culture Hack Day 2011 was produced by the Royal Opera House. As part of Wieden + Kennedy Inspire, Wieden + Kennedy London provided the space, and the event was supported by Google, Arts Council England and the Creative Industries Knowledge Transfer Network.

**Thanks to:**

Matthew Somerville, Kim Plowright and Chris Thorpe

All of our speakers

Donna, Dan, Sam & Gavin from W&K

Kevin from Barcamp London

Our very helpful helpers – Alison Coward, Paul Spear, Vanessa Proudman

Hackers!, The Wrap Paper, Plan B Studio, ArtFinder, Crafts Council, Welsh National Opera, ROH, Proboscis, The Guardian, Hide&Seek and Elgato for prizes and goodie bag donations

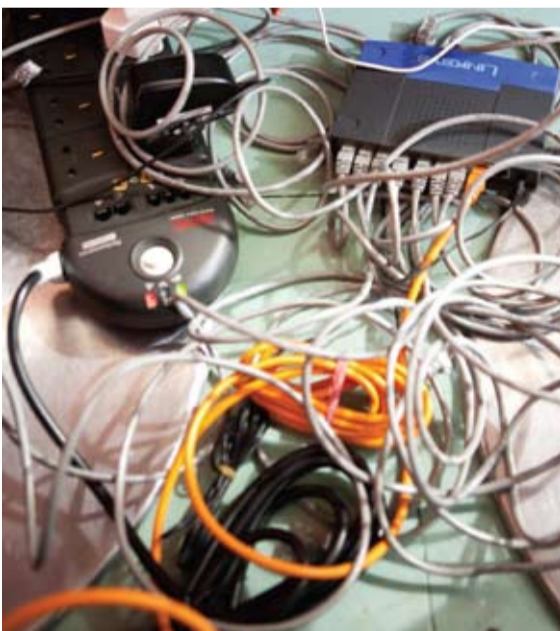
Brewdog for donating the beer

QED Productions for loaning us the PA equipment for free

deanvipond.com for the logo

Everyone who has spared time to help shape, support and encourage the event

The Culture Hack production team >> Rachel Coldicutt, Erin Maguire, Katy Beale.



## IF YOU WANT TO HEAR MORE ABOUT FUTURE CULTURE HACK DAYS...

Email us:  
[hello@culturehackday.org.uk](mailto:hello@culturehackday.org.uk)

Sign up to our mailing list on the  
website: <http://culturehackday.org.uk/>

Follow us on twitter: [@culturehackday](https://twitter.com/culturehackday) #chd11  
Find us on Flickr: [#chd11](https://www.flickr.com/photos/culturehackday/)

## CULTURE HACK DAY – THE STATS:

**69 DEVELOPERS**

**8 INSPIRING SPEAKERS**

**12 CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS**

**1 SOFTWARE COMPANY**

**3 MEDIA ORGANISATIONS**

**2 FUNDING BODIES**

**80 PEOPLE WHO WERE INTERESTED ENOUGH  
TO TURN UP AND JOIN IN WITH THE DEBATE**

**276 TWEETS FROM @CULTUREHACKDAY**

**15 GIANT BEAN BAGS**

**82 PIZZAS**

**11 CRATES OF BEER**

**100 GOODIE BAGS FULL OF USB STICKS,  
DVDS, STORYCUBES, MAGAZINES...**