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**#08** AUTUMN  
2024

# THE ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY, WHAT'S NEXT FOR FUNDRAISING?



Produced by  
arts  
fundraising &  
philanthropy

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*The art challenges  
the technology, and  
the technology  
inspires the art.*

**John Lasseter**

# THE ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY, WHAT'S NEXT FOR FUNDRAISING?

Of course, technology is all around us, and every organisation is under pressure to explore, develop and invest in technology. However, given the pace of change and the high costs of adopting new ways of working, it can be particularly challenging for arts organisations to respond to this agenda, along with all the other urgent needs and day to day pressures of delivering artistic programmes.

So what are arts organisations doing in the fields of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR)? And how can such technologies support our fundraising strategies?

The chapters below are the result of desk research, case studies and interviews with arts organisations. It is intended to be a snapshot of ideas to spark interest and thinking amongst those working in arts fundraising, and to give some ideas about where and how fundraising teams might invest.

Hopefully, some of the narrative will support organisations to take steps to consider broader engagement with technology and to think ahead to which areas might support the needs and curiosity of future audiences and donors.

If you have case studies or ideas in the field of arts and technology and would be interested in contributing an article to a future issue, please send us an email to [artsfundraising@cause4.co.uk](mailto:artsfundraising@cause4.co.uk) and we'll be in touch!

Thank you for reading!

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BY MICHELLE WRIGHT, DIRECTOR OF  
ARTS FUNDRAISING & PHILANTHROPY

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# Interview with digital expert Zoe Amar



The Cause4 team talked to Zoe to get her perspective on the context that charities are working within in relation to digital technology adoption



## Can you tell us about your work and how you support the sector with digital change and digital fundraising?

I head up the digital consultancy [Zoe Amar Digital](#). We help charities and other non-profits develop inclusive digital strategies, design and implement digital transformation programmes and grow their digital fundraising.

I also co-author an annual barometer of charities' digital adoption, goals, skills and attitudes called [The Charity Digital Skills Report](#). And I'm the co-host of the podcast [Starts At The Top](#), which features social sector leaders who are leading differently.



Charity Digital Skills Report 2024



## What do you think the main trends will be when it comes to digital developments within the charity sector over the coming years?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is already taking off in charities. In the latest [Charity Digital Skills Report](#), 78% of charities agreed that AI is relevant to their charity and could transform it.

Yet 73% of charities don't feel prepared to respond to the opportunities and challenges of AI. 35% are already using AI for certain tasks, and 52% want to look into the technology more but are constrained by a lack of time, resources and skills, whilst 42% are trying to get colleagues to engage. For every charity I speak to that is using AI to create content for campaigns, improve fundraising and develop their strategies, there are many more that are struggling to move forward.

The barriers aren't just about the technologies. Charities are being held back by similar issues across many other areas of their digital transformation. A lack of funding, not having the right skills on the team and not getting buy-in for digital plans are perennial problems. We need funders to better resource digital for charities; this has become even more imperative during the

cost of living crisis. Charities also need to look at how they can grow their teams' skills and create consistent support across teams for their shared digital vision.

We will also see more charities making efforts to develop an inclusive approach to digital. This will include designing their online products, services and campaigns to reach more marginalised groups. In last year's [Charity Digital Skills Report](#), we saw that there was a case for dedicated and tailored digital funding and support for organisations led by specific marginalised groups, including black-led charities and those with a core purpose to support survivors of domestic violence and abuse. As digital adoption grows across the sector, those providing digital funding, training or services need to review how the digital needs of different groups are evolving and adapt the support they offer accordingly.

Q

## What are the biggest challenges the arts and cultural sector is facing at the moment when it comes to adapting to digital?

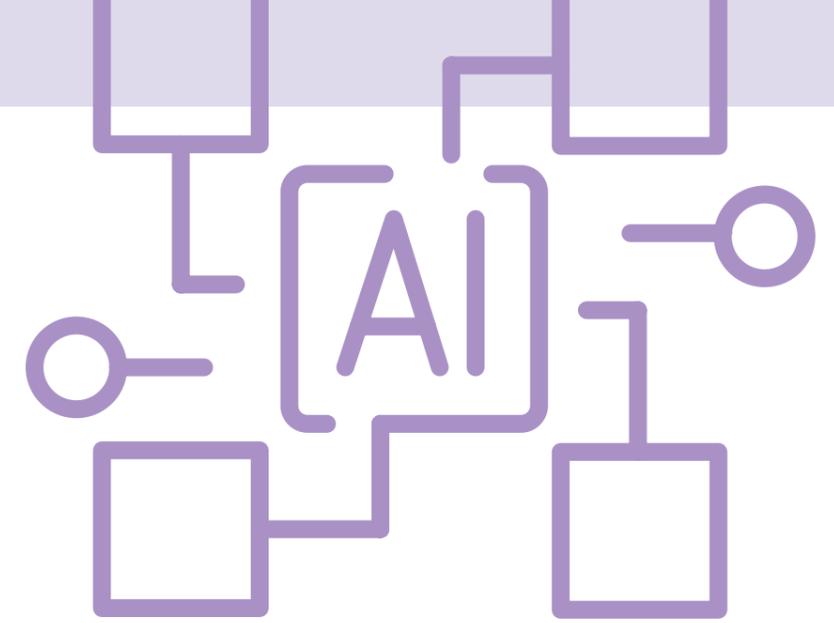
Digital funding is obviously a significant challenge for charities and non-profits of all kinds. However, for arts organisations and from the work I do with Cause4 training arts and culture organisations in how to develop their digital fundraising, a key problem that surfaces is how to adapt to a hybrid environment. Whilst lockdown is old news, it does seem to have made an impact on arts and culture supporters' behaviour, such as being more used to consuming culture in digital formats.

Q

## What advice would you give to organisations hoping to address these challenges and adapt to digital?

A lack of digital and arts funding may not change anytime soon. So the best thing to do is focus on growing your digital fundraising. Make sure you communicate a good case for support across your digital channels and make it as easy as possible to give. Your case for support needs to demonstrate your impact, so telling the story of what you have achieved is vital.

In terms of hybrid, deciding whether an event should be offline, online or both, has implications for cost as well as engagement. These decisions need to be informed by insights from your supporters, so staying in close touch with them, regularly speaking to them to stay on top of how they are using digital to interact with, support and donate to the arts is key. This can be achieved by speaking to a small number of supporters regularly, as well as using tools such as online surveys. Taken together, these will help you build a picture and an evidence base, to inform what supporters want from your digital offering.



Q

## How can small charities compete with larger institutions that are achieving so much in digital change?

We work with small as well as large charities, and I'm really conscious that it is impossible for small organisations to compete in terms of people and resources. Yet there are still tons of things that small charities can do to give themselves the best chance of success.

The first thing is that you need to have a really clear idea of where you want to get to with digital, and this vision needs to be created in such a way that it helps you to increase your impact. For example, if you run a textiles museum based in Birmingham, you may want to use digital to help more people experience and support your museum. You then need to decide how you are going to achieve this vision. For example, digital could help you achieve this by increasing visitor numbers through digital marketing, give far flung supporters ways to experience your offer

(e.g. through online events) and acquire new donors.

Once you have your strategy, this should help you to cherry pick where you will focus your efforts. I find that small charities are often incredibly disciplined about resources, meaning that they often get more value from what they are investing in digital.

Finally, I recommend speaking to your supporters regularly. This will help you generate ideas about new ways you can use digital to engage them and grow fundraising, for example, through ideas for new fundraising campaigns. I've worked with some amazing small charities which are in the habit of regularly testing out new digital fundraising ideas, inspired by their insights from supporters, which helps them rapidly identify the campaigns which best generate income.



Q

**Is the rise of AI something that all organisations (from micro to large-scale) should be developing a strategy to respond to?**

**Y**ou certainly need an idea of what AI can help you to achieve and what you need to focus on to do it! If your charity is just getting started with AI, I'd start by trying out tools, such as Chat GPT. Then share learnings across your teams about how you are using these tools and what has and hasn't worked. You will also need to develop parameters for staff about how they can and can't use these tools, for example, on what data.

If your charity is getting started with, or needs to review its approach to AI, we have developed a [free AI checklist for charity leaders and trustees](#).

Q

**At what point will digital no longer be seen as a separate or additional consideration, but as a core activity like fundraising or finance?**

I think we reached this point a few years ago! The pandemic merely sped up the pace. If I was interviewing a charity leader or trustee for a job tomorrow, I would expect them to have a good understanding of digital, and ambitious ideas for how the organisation that they're joining should use digital to increase its impact.

Q

**Where might we see skills develop to properly support digital? Will charities be able to attract the best skills in data science for example?**

It is a challenge, as charities can't compete with private sector salaries. Yet I've seen charities of all sizes be really clever about bringing in pro bono support, freelancers and agencies to plug the gaps, creating a 'team around your team'. Training up your staff is also key, as digital never stands still, and also offering professional development opportunities will motivate them and help them have even more impact in their role.



# What are the key trends in the use of digital and technology to support fundraising in the cultural sector?



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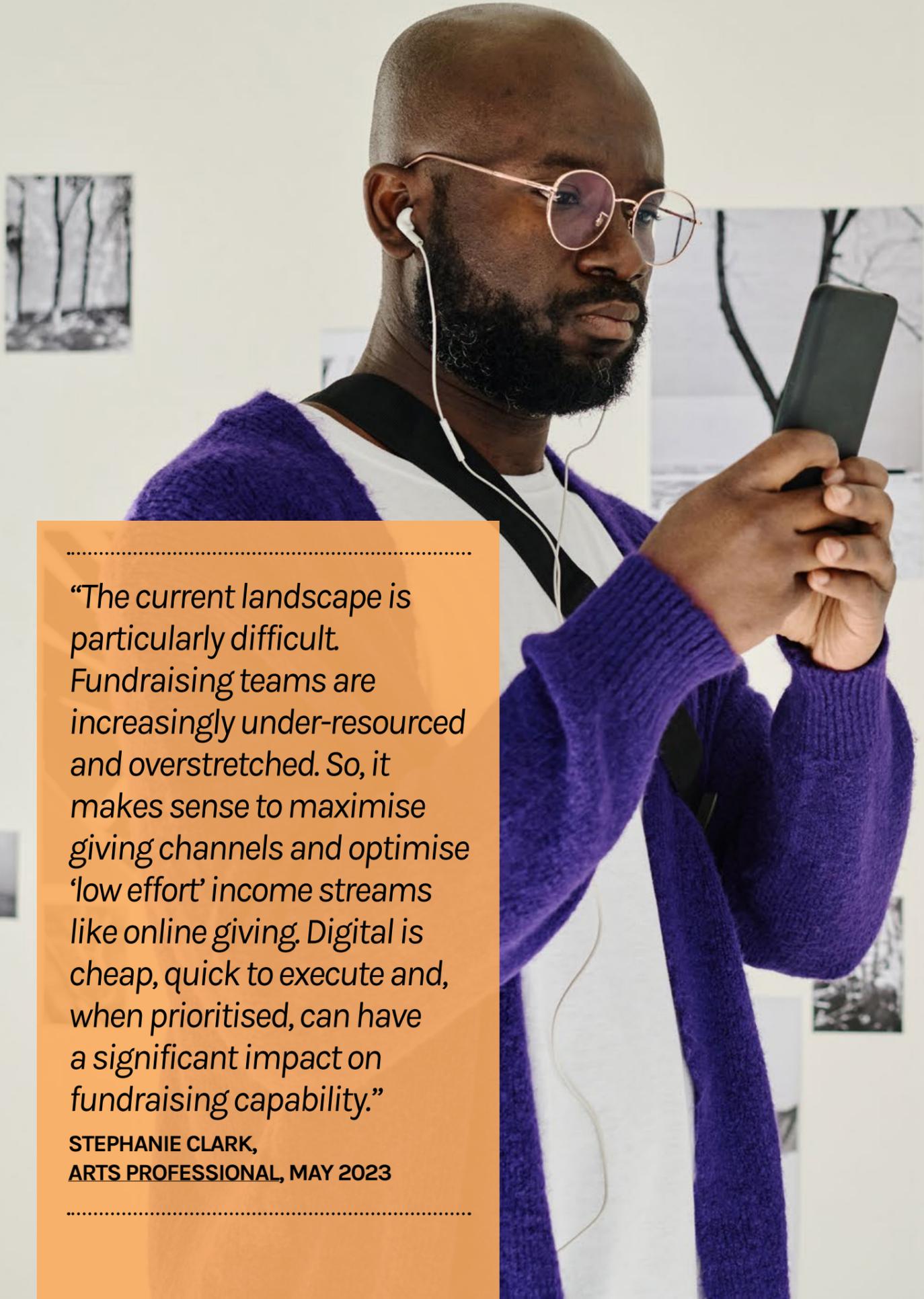
BY REBECCA WARD,  
PROGRAMMES AND DEVELOPMENT  
MANAGER, CAUSE4

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Keeping up with changes and advancements in technology is a key concern for most charities, with 78% of charities saying that digital is becoming more of a priority for their organisations.

Technology can offer solutions that allow charities to lower overall costs and increase fundraising opportunities. As such, in times of austerity, it is no surprise that these solutions come sharply into focus. This may explain why almost two thirds (59%) of charities cited that they want to improve their online fundraising in 2023, up from 49% in 2022, and 29% in 2021.



“The current landscape is particularly difficult. Fundraising teams are increasingly under-resourced and overstretched. So, it makes sense to maximise giving channels and optimise ‘low effort’ income streams like online giving. Digital is cheap, quick to execute and, when prioritised, can have a significant impact on fundraising capability.”

STEPHANIE CLARK,  
ARTS PROFESSIONAL, MAY 2023

## THE RISE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

AI is now the present reality for many charities. The use of AI to improve fundraising is a key theme, with AI promising to enhance productivity, personalise donor engagement, support with data-driven philanthropy, and more.

For arts organisations, there are interesting questions to ask around accessibility. Could artificial intelligence help arts organisations to more efficiently craft funding proposals and secure bigger pots of funding, allowing them more time to focus on the ‘art itself’? It may be that this thinking is too simplistic (and arguably undermines the skills of

fundraising professionals) – but it does reveal bigger questions around how AI could be applied to grant-making as a whole, and whether current grant-making practices put arts organisations at a disadvantage.

Given that the technology is still emerging, the way in which AI is adopted across the arts will likely differ significantly according to size and resource. For large, internationally-renowned organisations, they will have the resources to use AI in technically impressive ways – but for smaller arts organisations, the focus is likely to be on ‘quick-wins’ and cost saving methods.

“Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been with us for decades, but recently it feels like it’s arrived in a much bigger, more significant, way. This is thanks to the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022. With 1 million users in just 5 days, it was the fastest adoption of a software in history. Generative AI has arrived, and the hype is huge; there’s a lot happening and it’s happening fast.”

HECTOR EDWARDS, NEW PHILANTHROPY CAPITAL

*“Our findings about AI and emerging technologies show that charities are very interested in the potential of these tools but are not ready to respond. Charities will need to grow their digital skills across boards and staff teams to make the most of these opportunities, as well as improve how they collect and analyse data.”*

ZOE AMAR AND NISSA RAMSAY,  
CHARITY DIGITAL SKILLS REPORT, 2023

## SOCIAL MEDIA IS BECOMING STREAMLINED

In November 2022, The Atlantic predicted that *The Age of Social Media Is Ending*, citing the vast business losses incurred by Facebook and Twitter. Whilst it's unlikely that social media platforms will drop off overnight, it does look as though charities are choosing to scale back or change priorities, and are focused on how to generate maximum return on investment with minimal resources.

For the short term, social media will still be a priority for most charities and perhaps more so for arts organisations – Capacity Interactive's 2021 report *Performing Arts Ticket Buyer Media Usage Study* found that younger audiences tend to first become aware of an event or an organisation's mission and impact through its social media posts at higher rates than older audiences. However, audience engagement does not necessarily translate to higher donations, and understanding this relationship is critical for arts organisations when they are pushed on time and/or budget.

Video content seems to be a key area where social media provides the best return on investment (ROI), with popular visual platforms being Instagram and TikTok. Visuals are processed 60,000 times faster in the brain than text, and 90% of all human communication is visual – so it's no surprise that visual content generally performs well, with 89% of video marketers saying that video gives them a good ROI. The latest research suggests that around a third (34%) of charities are using TikTok and other video channels (2023).

Many arts organisations are already using video-based content to communicate key messaging, or to act as a visual impact report. Whilst video-based content is not new, the different platforms that are available to share this content and the way in which these platforms are used, is ever evolving – providing organisations with another area in which they need to invest in skills development.

## PERSONALISATION

Engagement with donors is becoming increasingly creative and personalised. Virtual reality is allowing donors to make a deeper and more genuine connection with the organisations they support and to witness the impact of their donations first-hand. Virtual reality can be used to enhance the visitor experience, to inspire feelings of awe and wonder – but also to educate and inform, and this can really enhance the relevance of any arts organisation.

Whilst arts organisations have always been aware of the challenges around donor acquisition, donor retention is now perhaps becoming equally challenging. According to the *Association of Fundraising Professionals Quarterly Fundraising Report (2023)*, donor retention in arts and culture organisations decreased by 4.6% between January and June 2022, even as they saw increased revenue from the previous year.

Flexible giving could be the answer. Flexible giving allows donors to alter their giving whenever it suits them. Therefore, allowing donors to 'skip' or 'pause' donations, is a key strategy to support donor retention.

*“Donors today are more empowered and seek greater control over their philanthropy. They desire choices, personalised giving options, and deeper connections with the causes that they support.”* THE GOOD GAP, AUGUST 2023





# Covid-19 and the drive for arts organisations to develop digital programmes

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BY LUCY PRATT,  
PROGRAMMES AND DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR, CAUSE4

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The dynamic, resourceful nature of the UK's arts, culture and heritage sector during the pandemic, paved the way for remarkable innovation from organisations of all sizes. Now, in a post-restriction era, it's encouraging to see so many organisations maintaining such strategies – not merely in response to pandemic exigencies, but as a blueprint for sustained success. In this unprecedented digital revolution, we explore some of the best digital innovations in today's sector.

# “Technology is a site of culture in itself.”

KAY WATSON, HEAD OF ARTSM TECHNOLOGIES, SERPENTINE GALLERIES



Stills from *The Keeper Council* on Roblox. Created by Arcade.

Some of the UK’s largest cultural monoliths, the National Gallery, the Royal Opera House, the National Archives and the Royal Shakespeare Company, have been noted by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport as sector leaders in areas including digitisation; providing opportunities for experimentation with new technologies; research and development; and innovation support for the sector:

- 1 **The National Gallery**, working with data partners like Nesta, have developed an **Innovation Lab** called **NGX**, to support cultural organisations, and in particular museums, to make best use of advanced digital technologies in enhancing visitor experience and creating content. They have also helped to develop best practice in collaborating with the technology and academic sectors.
- 2 **The Royal Opera House** has formed an **Audience Lab**, working with diverse talent, developing new skillsets and creating innovative content using emerging technologies.
- 3 **The Royal Shakespeare Company**, the **BBC** and the **Arts and Humanities Research Council** are sharing selected **Research & Development** prototypes and technical assets, as well as offering related capacity-building and innovation support to cultural partners of all sizes across the UK.



Royal Opera House

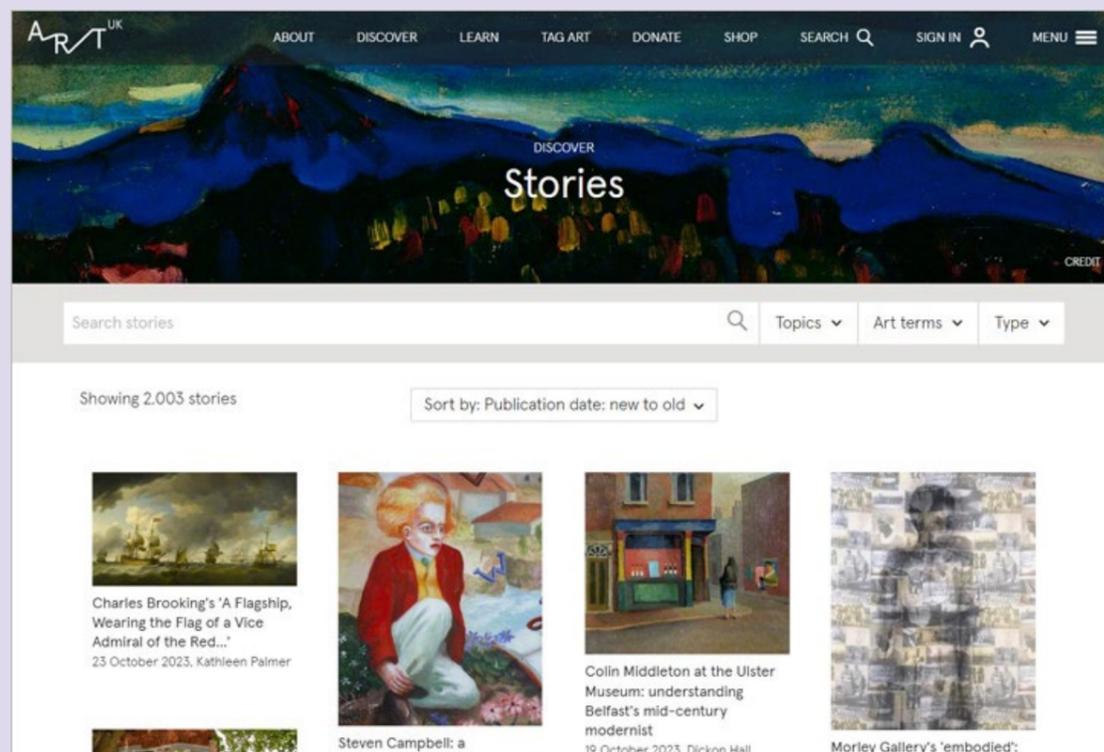
The aforementioned work is providing a promising support base for smaller, regional organisations to access the knowledge, skills and facilities to materialise ambitious digital projects. Indeed, there is already some exemplary work being undertaken in such organisations:

## 1 Curations, ArtUK

**Curations** helps museums and collections maintain their relationships with the public through digital means; in groups, on a timeline, or as an image-led 'showcase'. Through **Curations**, anyone can create and share digital exhibitions, allowing for unique ways of viewing art. The tool enhances user participation, broadens access to artworks, and enriches the national art collection. In October 2023, Art UK reached the impressive milestone of 2,000 **Curations**.

*“Art UK’s innovative combination of digitised collections (including many artworks not usually on view to the public) and crowdsourcing, transforms art history and history itself. If only the USA had such a thing.”*

**STEPHEN BURY, ANDREW W. MELLON CHIEF LIBRARIAN, FRICK ART REFERENCE LIBRARY NEW YORK**



Curations, Art UK.

## 2 BSO Digital Concerts Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO) has one of the most extensive and popular online concert programmes in the country. BSO began to broadcast its performances in 2020, as a way of engaging its community during the Covid-19 Pandemic. It also launched a series of BSO@Home discussions at the same time. With significant success, BSO Digital Concerts is now in its fifth season and has had considerable success.

In the pandemic period, BSO streamed over 60 concerts, sold over 77,100 digital tickets, and generated over £460,000 in revenue from digital streams.



The BSOs Digital Concert series has welcomed many guests, including its Artist in Residence 2021-23, horn player Felix Klieser. Photo by Mark Allan.



A socially distanced BSO began live broadcasting in autumn 2020. Photo by Mark Allan.

Initial surveys found that this programme was vital for those in the over 65 age bracket, as well as those identifying as d/Deaf and disabled and vulnerable.

For Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, this digital programme has been instrumental for both accessibility and income growth.

*“I wondered if viewing online would come anywhere near a live performance, but there were many compensations like the chat with the conductor beforehand and the fact that you could actually see him face on whilst conducting. You were also able to see orchestra members close up. The horn player was fascinating to watch.”*

**BSO DIGITAL CONCERT CUSTOMER**



3

### Digital Placemaking Fellows, Bristol & Bath Creative R&D

Devised through a unique partnership between Bristol and Bath's four Universities, **Bristol & Bath Creative R&D's** Digital Placemaking Fellows are working to consider how the civic infrastructure can utilise digital technology to build creative solutions to improve or enhance the public experience of place. The Fellows aim to answer the question: *'Where does culture feature in the new digital infrastructure?'*

The Digital Placemaking project has produced five prototypes exploring the intersection of digital and physical space and the role of culture.

*"Many of us already move seamlessly between digital and physical worlds in our day-to-day life. From Google Maps, to wearable technology, to playing Pokémon Go in the park; digital technology can make things easier, more enjoyable and more accessible. Of course, if it's not done right, digital technology can also make things more confusing, alienating or overwhelming."*

**BRISTOL & BATH CREATIVE R&D**

4

### YouTube Innovation, The Tank Museum

Dorset's Tank Museum currently boasts over 900,000 YouTube subscribers. The online engagement is particularly strong with groups that might not normally engage with the Museum sector; the YouTube channel primarily reaches 24-25 year old men.

The focus of the Tank Museum videos include the history of the vehicles in the museum, mini-documentaries, action from events, and videos featuring well known tank enthusiasts such as Comedian Al Murray and Historian James Holland. The channel has provided a new-found gateway to memberships, sponsorships and online merchandise sales. In November 2023, the Museum raised £20,000 from online supporters in just 24 hours for one of its restoration projects.

*"YouTube has allowed us to reach a global audience of tank enthusiasts - and it's as a direct result of this that we are now generating over a quarter of our annual turnover from non-visitors."*

**TANK MUSEUM HISTORIAN,  
DAVID FLETCHER**

In the future, arts organisations will inevitably become multi-platform content providers. Hybrid programming has proven effective for broader inclusion, accessibility and income goals.

However, to really flourish, the sector will need adequate funding and space for digital innovation, exploration and envisioning, as seen provided by **Bristol & Bath Creative R&D** and partners. With this, the arts can create a future in which access to culture and heritage is expansive, diverse and unrestricted.



# IMMERSIVE CULTURE:

## How immersive digital experiences can drive new forms of engagement and fundraising in arts & culture

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BY ALEX BOOK, CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER AT ARCADE, AN INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL EXPERIENCE PRACTICE, SPECIALISING IN AI AND XR TECHNOLOGIES

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Immersive technologies, including virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), have become powerful tools for transforming the arts and culture landscape. These technologies offer novel ways to engage audiences, providing immersive experiences that transcend traditional boundaries. Moreover, they have proven to be effective instruments for fundraising, offering new avenues for revenue generation in the arts sector.

The two areas of impact are clearly symbiotic; the more engaging the experience, the more impact it is likely to have on fundraising. But below are some examples of multifaceted roles of immersive technologies in the arts, examining how they enhance audience engagement and contribute to fundraising efforts.

## Transforming Audience Engagement

**Immersive technologies have revolutionised the way that audiences experience art. Traditional forms of engagement, such as visiting a museum or attending a live performance, are now complemented, or even replaced, by virtual and augmented experiences. For example:**

### Virtual Museums and Exhibitions:

Immersive technologies enable the creation of virtual museums and exhibitions, allowing users to explore art collections from the comfort of their homes, such as that developed by the [British Museum](#). Through various approaches including AR, VR or even 3D/360 websites, individuals can navigate digital replicas of renowned museums, interacting with artworks in ways not possible in the physical realm. This not only broadens access to art but also enhances the overall experience, as users can delve into detailed information about each piece, listen to audio guides, and even participate in interactive elements.

### Augmented Reality in Live Performances:

Augmented reality has found a place in live performances, enriching the audience's experience. For example, AR applications can overlay digital enhancements onto a dance performance or a theatrical production, adding layers of visual and auditory elements that transcend the limitations of traditional stages. This creates a dynamic and interactive environment, immersing the audience in the narrative or the aesthetic of the performance. A good example is Elton John's collaboration with Vodaphone to celebrate the work of NHS workers during the pandemic.

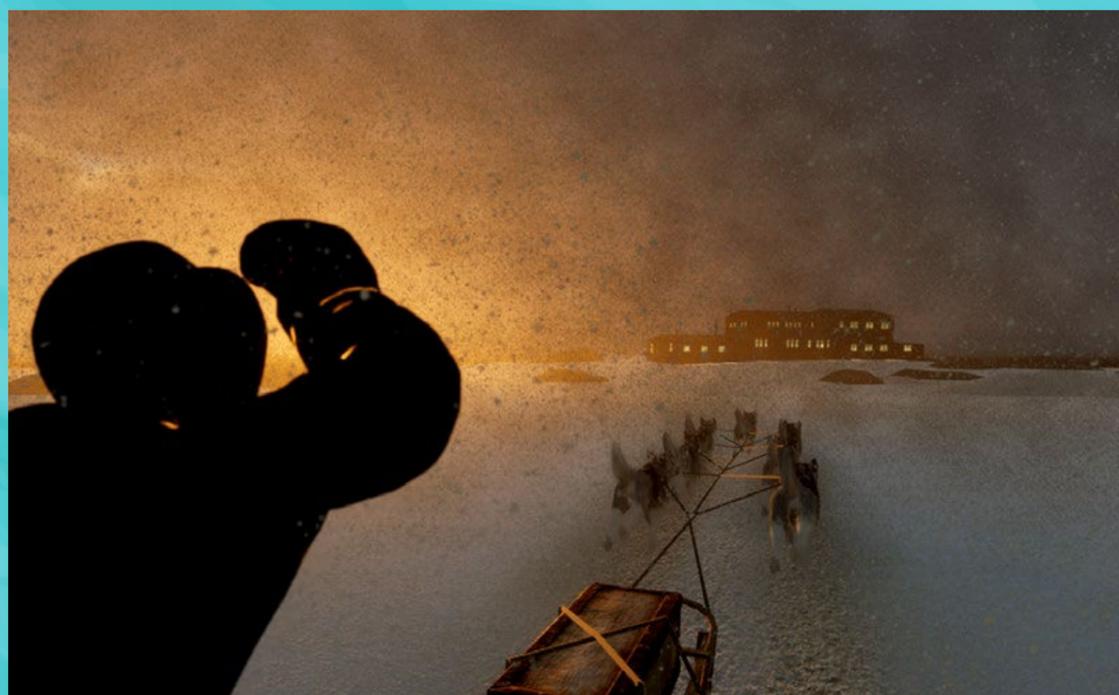
### Immersive Storytelling:

Immersive technologies have redefined storytelling in cultural spaces, for example the National Theatre's Immersive Story Telling Studio. AR experiences allow users to bring stories to life, animating the inanimate, giving objects or even the walls themselves a voice, revealing rich histories and vibrant narratives that might otherwise be restricted to an interpretation panel or audio guide. These 'spatial' technologies invite audiences to step into the narrative, experiencing stories from within; the audience becomes an active participant rather than a passive observer. The emotional impact of a story is heightened when individuals feel immersed in the narrative, forging a deeper connection with the content.



# Fundraising through Immersive Technologies

By creating and offering these innovative ways to experience art and culture like never before, the sector is discovering a new frontier for fundraising. There are many obvious ways that the types of experience described above can directly impact on revenue generation, from offering them as paid-for experiences, to inviting donations within the experience itself. But they can also be used more directly as fundraising tools, leveraging the innovative and inherently playful form of the medium as a way of motivating charitable giving:



UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, UKAHT.

## Virtual Galas and Events:

Immersive technologies enable the creation of virtual galas and fundraising events that break free from the constraints of physical spaces. Supporters and cultural enthusiasts from around the world can participate in fundraising activities, such as auctions or interactive experiences, through digital platforms. This not only expands the reach of fundraising campaigns but also reduces the logistical challenges associated with organising physical events. A good example is Culturally Art Collective's virtual Gala, where visual artists from around the world can display their work and take part in panels and interviews about its creation.

## Closer to the Cause:

AR and VR can be powerful tools for creating impactful fundraising experiences. For example, in celebration of its 30 year anniversary, virtual reality enabled the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust to open up its sites to users all over the world.

We have already described their impact as a new medium for storytelling, and this can be used to transport users to the heart of a cultural project, allowing them to witness the impact of their contributions first-hand. Whether it's supporting a theatre production, a visual arts project or a cultural preservation initiative, immersive experiences can take audiences closer to the cause, evoking a sense of connection and ownership, offering both empirical and emotional motivation to donate.

## Augmented Reality Artwork Sales:

Augmented reality can transform the way artworks are sold, see the platform at Artivive as an example.

Through AR applications, potential buyers can visualise how a piece of art would look in their own space before making a purchase. This enhances the online art buying experience, making it more interactive and personalised. Auction houses and galleries can leverage AR to create virtual exhibitions, attracting a global audience and increasing the visibility of artists.

## Blockchain and Virtual Collectibles:

The integration of blockchain technology with immersive experiences opens up possibilities for creating virtual collectibles and art assets, such as the Cryptopunks collection. Artists and organisations can tokenise artworks, turning them into unique digital assets that can be bought, sold, and traded securely. This not only provides a new revenue stream but also fosters a sense of exclusivity and ownership among supporters.



## Challenges and Considerations

**Whilst looking at all of the potential benefits that immersive experiences can bring to arts & culture audiences and in driving new fundraising avenues, it is also important to recognise the challenges that exist and must be addressed:**

### Accessibility and Inclusivity:

Ensuring that immersive experiences are accessible to a diverse audience is crucial. Organisations must consider factors such as the affordability of devices, the development of inclusive content, and the accessibility of virtual spaces for individuals with disabilities.

### Technical Barriers:

High-powered phones and tablets are ubiquitous in today's world, but even mobile AR experiences can require relatively recent, expensive devices – and other technologies such as VR tend to require specialised hardware and software. As such, ensuring that audiences have access to the necessary technology poses a challenge, typically addressed either by designing explicitly for low tech accessibility, or exploring partnerships, subsidies, or alternative delivery methods.



### Balancing Technology and Authenticity:

Striking a balance between leveraging technology and preserving the authenticity of artistic experiences is essential. Immersive technologies should enhance, not overshadow, the artistic, cultural or educational intent. Artists, curators and educators must carefully consider how technology complements their work without compromising its essence.

Immersive technologies have ushered in a new era for arts, cultural and heritage organisations, transforming the way audiences engage and providing innovative avenues for fundraising. From virtual museums and augmented reality performances to virtual galas and blockchain-enabled art sales, these technologies open up a world of possibilities for organisations and supporters alike. As the sector continues to embrace immersive technologies, the boundaries between physical and virtual experiences blur, creating a dynamic and interconnected ecosystem that promises to shape the future of the cultural landscape.




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**Alex Book** is Co-Founder and Chief Strategy Officer at ARCADE, an international digital experience practice specialising in AI and XR technologies for a variety of sectors including brands & marketing, sports & entertainment, and arts & culture.

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# IMMERSIVE ART EXPERIENCES: The Future of Fundraising?

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BY THOMAS WILLIAMS, DEVELOPMENT  
AND PROGRAMMES MANAGER, CAUSE4

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We live in an increasingly digitalised and interactive world. Across the arts sector, exhibitions are being enhanced by a range of technologies from Virtual Reality (VR) to elaborate audio-visual experiences. However, what impact can this have on fundraising? Are immersive art experiences revolutionising the fundraising landscape and can we say goodbye to the written case for support?

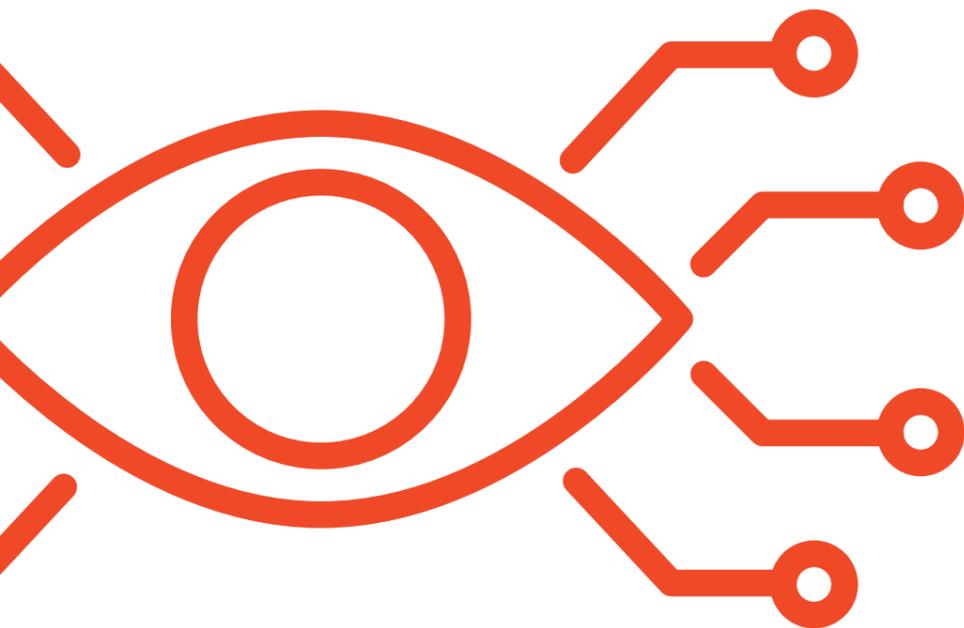
### What are immersive art experiences?

Many immersive experiences employ forms of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR). But what's the difference?

### How to know your augmented from your virtual

Unlike VR, AR enhances a real-world setting. A user controls their presence in the real world, such as walking between rooms in an art gallery, and uses AR to complement their experience.

AR is commonly utilised through an app or website. The National Gallery's Keeper of the Paintings demonstrates this, with users following a story in the app to move through the gallery, scanning artworks that reveal clues, puzzles and questions. Designed for children but engaging for all ages, the app turns observers and visitors into clue-finders and explorers. AR can also utilise touch, like in Exeter Library's EnchanTales, or sound – seen in the 'Echo Horn' at Bodiam Castle.

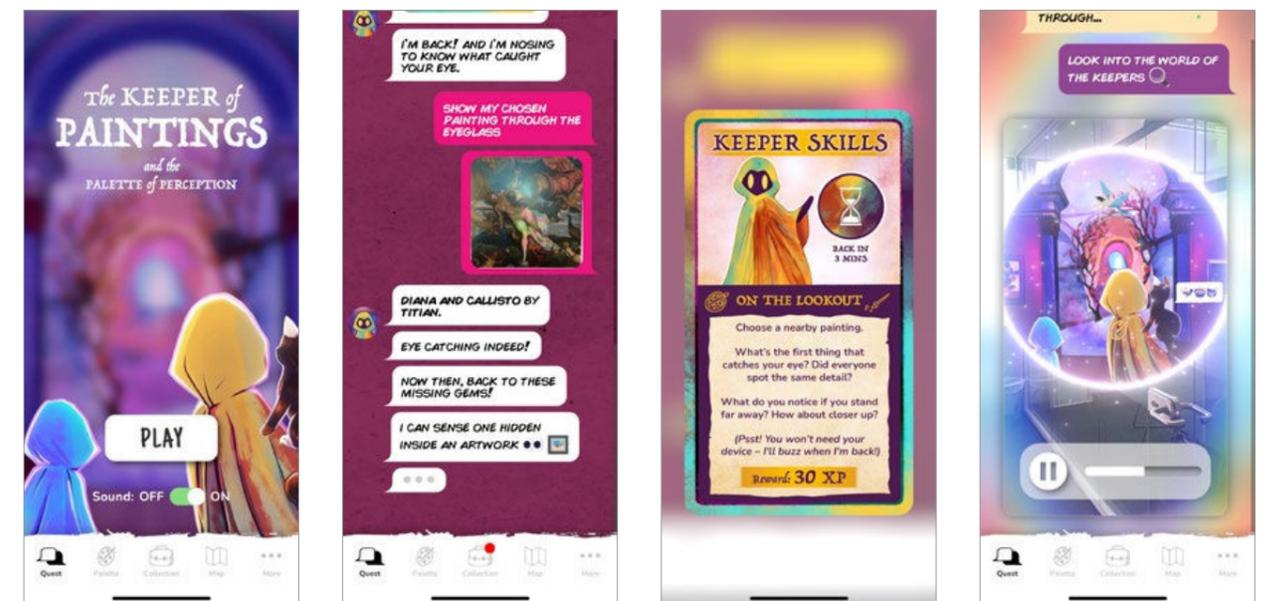


On the other hand, Virtual Reality (VR) requires a headset – although a smartphone and Google Cardboard will suffice – and immerses the user into another world entirely.

Like AR, VR is a powerful tool for the arts sector, whether it be through a Curious Game of Croquet in the Alice in Wonderland exhibition at the V&A, or the opportunity to go Beyond the Glass of the Mona Lisa in the Louvre. Through VR's total immersion, both experiences transport visitors into another dimension before returning them to gallery. VR can also effectively draw attention to a mission or project, allowing individuals to engage with a cause irrespective of their location. Alzheimer's Research UK, for example, developed a VR app to help individuals understand dementia and the psychological and emotional challenges of everyday life for those affected.



Alice in Wonderland exhibition, V&A



Keeper of the Paintings, The National Gallery.



## AUDIO-VISUAL EXPERIENCES

Immersive experiences do not need to rely on AR or VR. Many exhibitions, like [Van Gogh London](#), transform visitor experience through light, sound and touch. Visitors are placed within the paintings themselves, exploring them as they move around the exhibition. [Meow Wolf](#) go even further, making interactivity a core component of their art. They specialise in interactive art experiences, combining stories of interstellar travel with inventive soundscapes and interactive objects to transport the visitor into another realm.



## What does this mean for fundraising?

Several studies, predominantly focused on VR, have found that stories conveyed by immersive technology illicit heightened emotional responses within viewers, in comparison to via 2D screens (computers, phones, etc.). VR, dubbed ‘empathy machines’ by [Li and Qiu \(2023\)](#), more effectively connects the viewer with the story or character. [Gugenishvili et al \(2023\)](#), examining emotional responses to stories of war-induced tragedy, reported that ‘users feel more empathetic towards the protagonist in a VR story (in our case the victim of war) ... compared to a desktop computer’. A study by [Radu et al \(2021\)](#), on increasing empathy for children amongst adults, reached a similar conclusion, noting that ‘increased positive caregiver attitudes towards struggling readers’ were found amongst those who engaged with the material via VR. This ability to provoke greater emotional responses offers huge possibilities to the arts sector.

Storytelling and emotionally connecting with a donor are commonly accepted as central to successful fundraising campaigns. These studies show that immersive technologies can help us do this more effectively and consistently.

Whether it be a trust, foundation, business, or individual, potential donors want to see what impact their money will have. Using these immersive experiences proves to a donor that your exhibition or project has the power to engage and inspire. Indeed, an investigation by Axios in 2021 found investors are already pouring millions of pounds into immersive gallery and museum experiences, because of their ability to connect with and attract audiences.

Immersive technology’s ability to engage audiences more effectively is thus an exciting prospect for organisations looking to raise funds and garner support. For museums and galleries, adding an AR point at the exit of an exhibition which details the importance of public donations to the survival of the gallery, could open new possibilities for on-site fundraising. From simply scanning a QR code to fashioning your own ‘Echo Horn’, this technology is accessible for organisations of any size and, when used alongside innovative uses of [contactless payment](#) – like Blue Cross’ team of ‘Tap Dogs’ – can effectively convey the importance of public support and offer novel ways of immediately donating.

Even if your organisation doesn’t have a physical space, immersive experiences can spur people to support your cause. Using AR apps to spread your message or VR programmes to engage your audience, will help capture attention. Virtual reality also allows organisations to take their story to the funder.

## So, is it goodbye to the written case for support?

Not quite. Whilst digital cases for support are on the rise – [research](#) from Enthuse shows that 34% of charities are using TikTok and other video platforms, with VR and AR just another tool in this digital arsenal – this should not come at the expense of tried and tested fundraising techniques.

Why? Because, whilst [Sooter and Ugazio \(2023\)](#) found a correlation between the increased emotional response provoked by VR and an ‘increase in incentivised donations and a larger reported propensity to become regular donors’, not all studies reached the same conclusion. [Gugenishvili et al \(2023\)](#) and [Radu et al \(2021\)](#) concluded that, although VR undoubtedly provoked more emotional responses in viewers, this did not consistently translate into more or larger donations. A blended approach of digital and written material is needed until more light can be shed on this negative correlation. Indeed, it may be that it is still the fundraiser that determines whether a donation is made, rather than the technological tools that they use to tell their story. Therefore, whilst the arts sector should harness immersive technology in imaginative ways, we should remind ourselves that it is a tool and not a panacea.

# CROWDFUNDING: *connecting* ————— *your crowd*

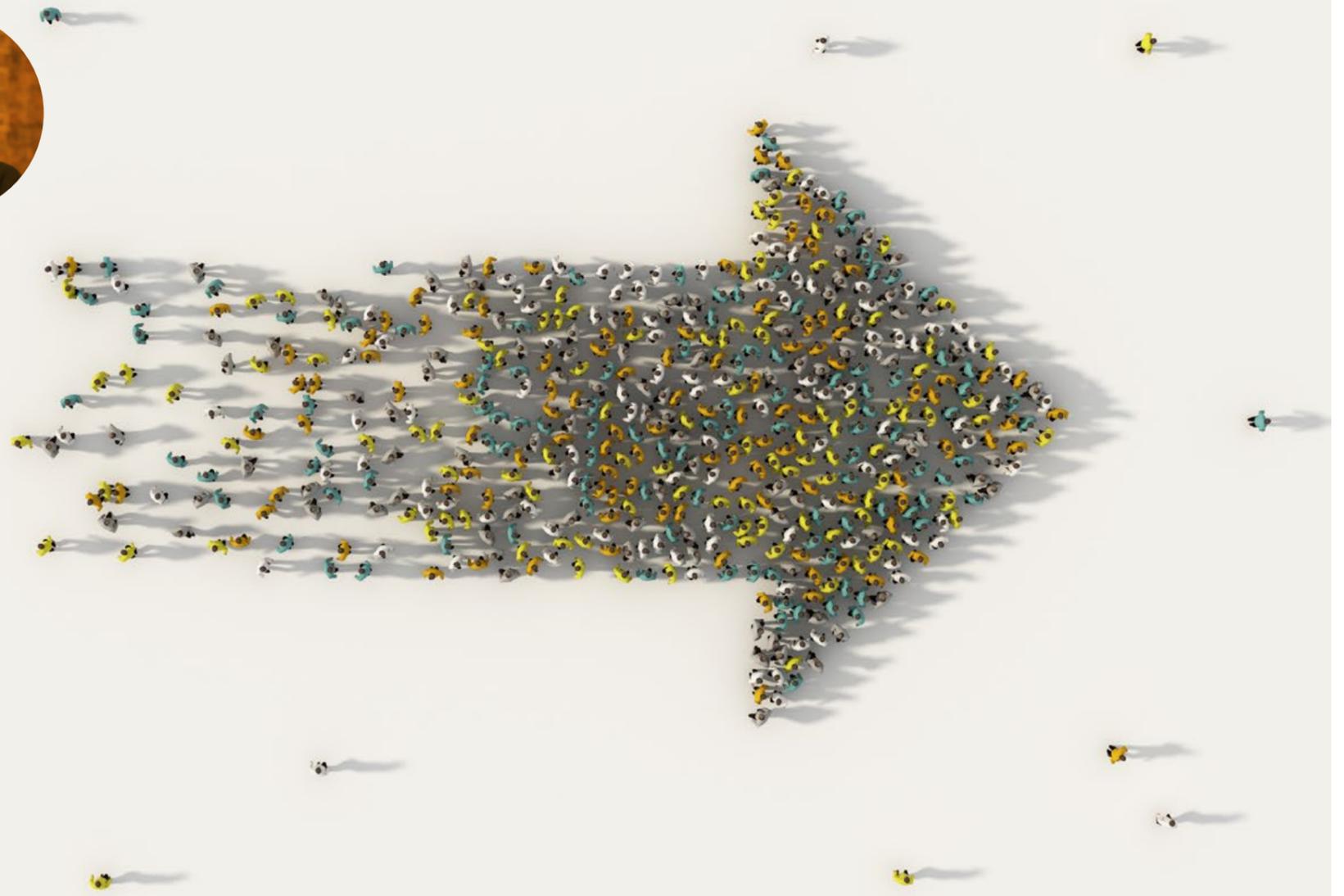
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BY JO BREEZE, CROWDFUNDING CONSULTANT AND  
ARTS FUNDRAISING & PHILANTHROPY TRAINER

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**Crowdfunding can be an incredibly powerful tool for arts and cultural organisations – not only because of the funds raised, but (perhaps even more importantly!) for the chance to build a highly engaged and enthusiastic donor community with shared values.**



## What is crowdfunding?

Crowdfunding is a way of raising money from a large number of people, all contributing towards the same goal. It allows an institution to tap into a diverse group of supporters, all of whom feel a personal connection to the cause.

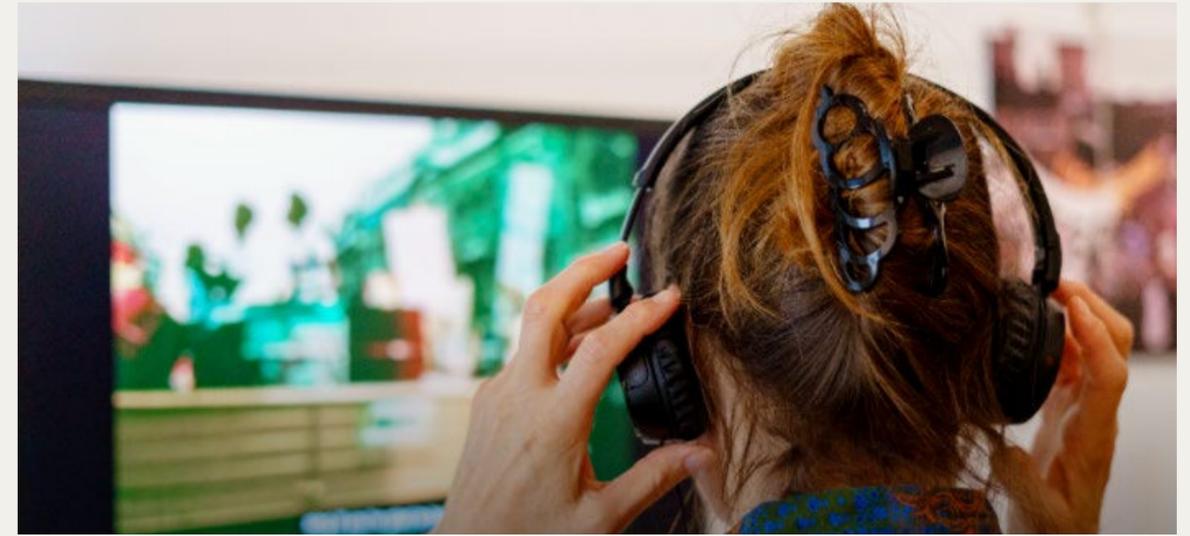
There are a few different types of crowdfunding, but the type most familiar to the arts and culture sector is rewards-based crowdfunding – in which backers of the campaign get something in return for their support. It could be as simple as their name in the programme, or a tote bag or poster, or an invitation to a VIP drinks event or backstage tour. Rewards work especially well when they're unusual, or unique to the crowdfunding campaign – such as [Queer Britain's](#) offer of a handpicked selection of books from their shop, along with a personal note from a staff member explaining why they chose those particular titles for you.

Crowdfunding can have a transformative impact on cultural institutions, but it's not free money. Indeed, some of those I've worked with have said that their crowdfunding campaign was more work than their Arts Council England funding bid! So if you need funds, why spend so much extra time on a crowdfunding campaign (which might fail, and – even scarier – publicly) rather than pursuing funding applications?

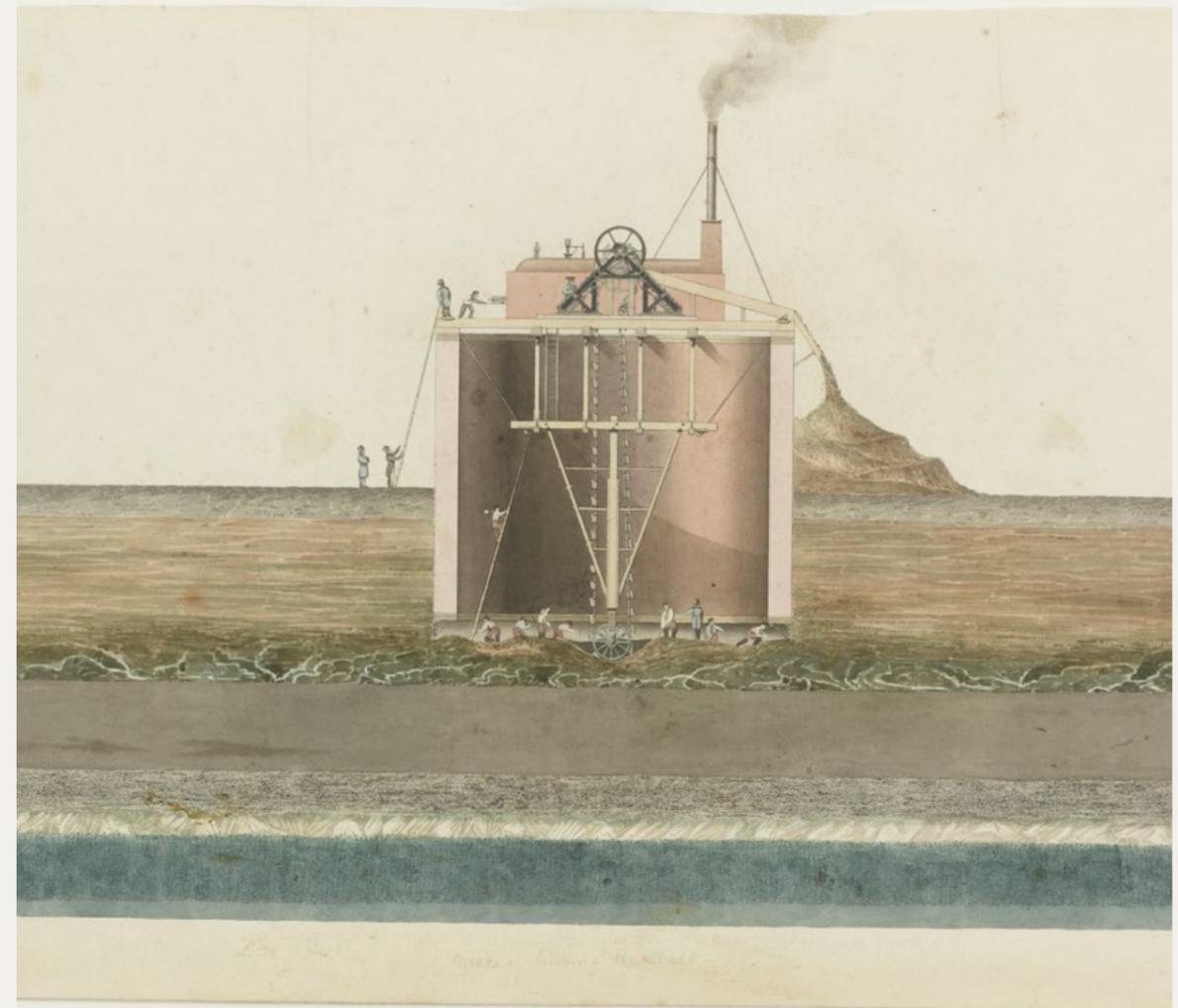
## Donor engagement

It comes down to engagement and community. A good crowdfunding campaign offers backers the chance to feel like they, personally, are making a difference to something that they feel strongly about. And when it goes really well, they can transform into advocates. Backers feel empowered to speak about the campaign as if it's their own – because it is! They're the ones who make it possible. And a good campaign gives them that sense of empowerment, as well as offering the chance to connect with perhaps hundreds of others who share the same values.

For development professionals, this may be a newer way of engaging with donors – but it's not new for marketing teams. When working with more traditional donors, it's possible to allow abundant time to build personal relationships with each of them, on the assumption that any one donor may make a significant difference. But with donors to a crowdfunding campaign, you may suddenly be looking at hundreds of people. You can't build those relationships in the same way – these aren't donors you can call up to check in with. You need a way to communicate with them that doesn't cost you money as an organisation, that allows you to send mass communications, but also lets them respond.



Queer Britain. Photo by Rahil Ahmad.



Brunel Museum

## Getting social

Any organisation running a crowdfunding campaign needs to prioritise fast and effective communication. After all, these can be fast-moving projects, and the message may need to evolve significantly from one day to the next. Naturally, this lends itself to social media; most, if not all, crowdfunding campaigns rely heavily on regular and varied social media communications.

Non-profits Source found in their research that social media is an incredibly motivating channel – 55% of people who engage with non-profits on social media end up taking some sort of action, and 59% of those people donate money.

But to get it right, any organisation needs to use its social communications to be... well, social. Social media can be very cost-effective, but generating and planning content is what can really take up time. So it's understandable that the temptation to use social media as just a broadcast channel is strong.

To really build a community, though, you can't just talk at them. You have to talk *with* them. You have to listen – as the [Brunel Museum](#) did in preparation for their crowdfunding campaign on *The Art Of Engineering*. They conducted audience research both in-person and online, asking people what they most wanted to see in the museum, what would most motivate them to help, and what their priorities were, then used those findings to inform the aim of their crowdfunding campaign.

## Nurturing donor relationships

This is where uniting development and marketing professionals is essential. Marketing may understand how to plan out the right content for the right time, and maximise reach and engagement. But Development understands the importance of nurturing the relationship with a donor, and making sure that they feel valued and heard. The big difference with crowdfunding is that nurturing those relationships doesn't just apply to a short list of names – you're now trying to build a community of hundreds.

To do that, you need to know who you're talking to and what motivates them. [The Vagina Museum's](#) urgent fundraising campaign for their own premises is a great example of a well-targeted and well-explained campaign and it makes excellent use of quotes from museum visitors to show the impact of their work – letting supporters feel part of that same community.

Building a genuine and personal connection with this many people can feel overwhelming – so it's no wonder that many organisations are looking at using AI to ease the load. Whether to generate campaign page copy, to help with social media content planning, or brainstorm potential rewards, a large language model can help generate the basics. But it can't replace your organisation's genuine voice. Nor can it convey your opinions, your values, or your humanity. This is an opportunity to create a unique type of connection with your audiences, and AI can't do that for you – yet!

## What's in it for them?

An organisation thinking about a crowdfunding campaign already knows its organisational benefits. But why would backers support it? Sometimes it comes from self-interest – perhaps you're planning an event they want to be at, or accessibility improvements they'll benefit from, or you're simply (like [Pollocks Toy Museum](#) and so many others) are trying to stay open through dramatically-changing times.

But more often, the most engaged supporters are there because you're making the change they want to see in the world. You're having an impact in ways they care about, your values are their values, and – short of starting an institution of their own! – this is a great way for them to feel like they're actually making a difference.

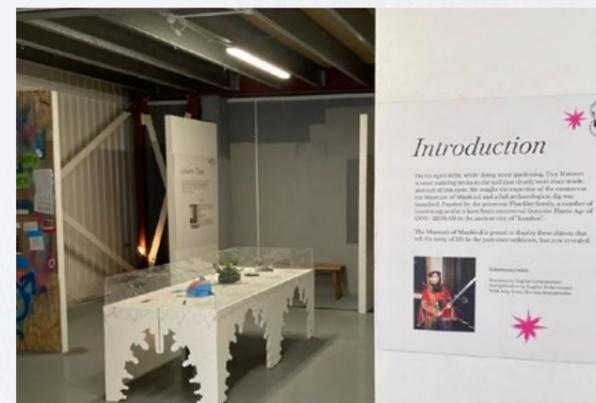
A great crowdfunding campaign makes it easy for donors to see why they should get involved. A clear outcome and impact gives you the foundation to share the underlying values driving the project. And a long-term plan with a focus on communications means that you can keep that engaged and enthusiastic community of donors connected for months – even years – after a crowdfunding campaign closes.



The iconic shop, Vagina Museum, 2024.



Glampon by Sam Dawood Vagina Museum, 2024.



Museum of Mankind exhibition Vagina Museum, 2024.

# COMMENT: Artificial Intelligence – A Fundraising Threat or Opportunity for the Cultural Sector?

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BY BEN WILSON, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY  
AND ENTERPRISE, CAUSE4

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Recently, I wrote an [article](#) for Arts Professional on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the future of arts fundraising, with a little confession...I used AI (in this case Chat GPT) to help me write the article. This was not only to test its power, but also to understand a bit more about how – as fundraisers – we could use the latest ‘tech-trend.’

The process was certainly enlightening. Chat GPT allowed me to immediately and quickly source and develop coherent arguments without having to scour the Internet to gather data from a variety of different sources. It also produced text which, with a little editing and tweaking, was ready to publish. Many would say utilising it in this manner was a ‘win-win’ – it saved time, provided accurate information and mirrored my voice to an extent that many who read the piece may not have noticed the difference. BUT....

At the same time, it left me feeling a little hollow, a little superficial, a little shallow. The skill of being a fundraiser is in crafting clear and compelling communications – highlighting the plight of those less fortunate than us to a wide range of different audiences. Like authors, we are storytellers – and there is an art and skill to our craft. Would the leading authors of our time have been fulfilled by typing five words into a computer and producing an AI drafted masterpiece? The same could be said about our musicians, artists or composers.

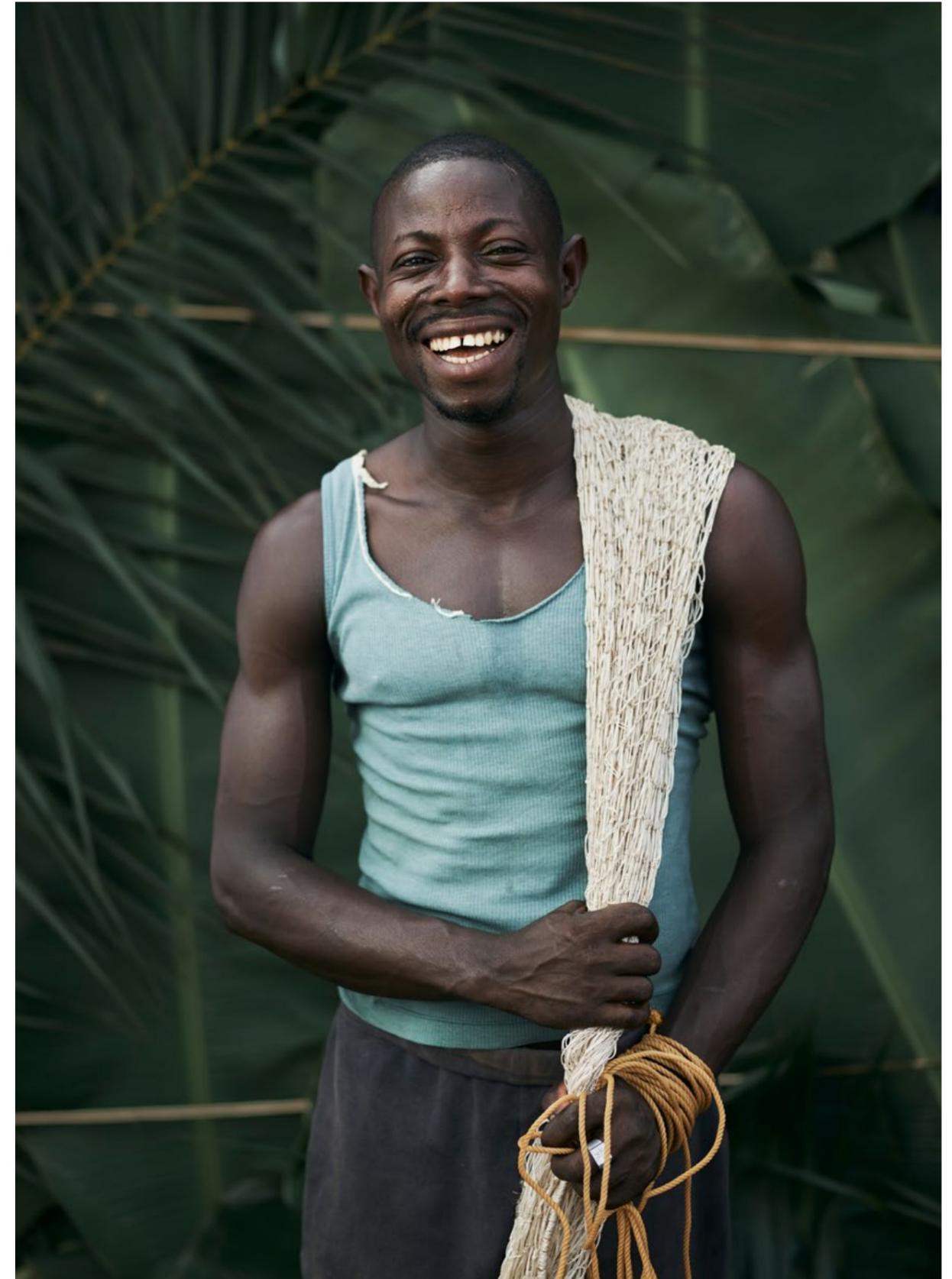
Yes, the argument is there that AI – used in this manner – will level the playing field for smaller organisations that lack the resources to engage dedicated fundraisers.

It is also possible that this technology will usher in a new generation of bid writers. It could help those who, despite having the necessary strategic thinking and knowledge, struggle to write well. For people with dyslexia, for example, or with poor literacy skills, might ChatGPT be a possible means of increasing social diversity in this field of the arts?

This is balanced against the ethical considerations. Is it ethical for arts fundraisers to use ChatGPT to craft funding bids? Or is it cheating? There is also the human element to fundraising which is lost through the use of such technology – human interaction, empathy, and connection remain crucial in fundraising, especially when dealing with individual donors who value personal relationships and emotional connections.

It is not just in bid-writing that AI is being used to support the fundraising journey. We know that organisations are already using such technology to support donor segmentation, ensuring that well-crafted communications are targeted at those who are most likely to donate. We also know that organisations, far and wide, are using AI technology to support the communication process – AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants are helping to interact with donors in a personalised and scalable manner.

For example, Water Aid’s Talk to Sellu campaign. This is just one example of how charities are embedding and utilising such technology.



WaterAid – Joey Lawrence.

## CASE STUDY: WaterAid, Talk to Sellu

**In February 2018, WaterAid launched a ChatBot that aimed to better connect supporters with the people that they are helping through the charity.**

The charity worked with Facebook-approved developer, [The Bot Platform](#), and Sellu, a farmer and fisherman from the remote village of Tombohuaun in Sierra Leone's eastern province, to create the ChatBot called 'Talk to Sellu', which launched on Facebook Messenger in December 2018.

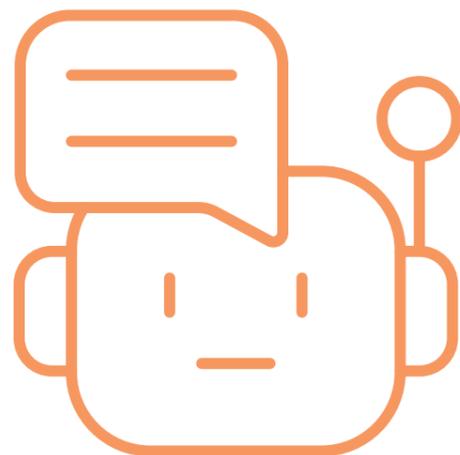
The ChatBot gave potential donors the opportunity to 'walk' around Tombohuaun, Sierra Leone, and see how donations would benefit the village:

"Through a series of messages, photos and video content, Sellu takes users on a guided tour of his home, introduces them to his wife Fatu and daughter Nancy and even teaches them how to say 'hello' in the local language, 'Mende'. There are also updates on the new water and sanitation infrastructures being built with help from WaterAid supporters. Users will ultimately be asked if they would like to donate towards WaterAid's Untapped appeal to help bring clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene to communities like Sellu's ([UK Fundraising, February 2018](#)).

The campaign was also match-funded by the government. The [campaign raised £8.2 million](#), with 76% of donations made after just one visit to the Untapped website.

So, what does AI hold for the future of fundraising? My own personal experience is that whilst such technology is likely to complement my craft, it is unlikely to replace it, and that perhaps is the biggest takeaway.

Organisations need to be educated, informed and ready to take advantage of AI and its possibilities, but at the same time recognise the skill of fundraising and that activating this technology will be the next great challenge. Talented fundraisers will remain at the centre of high-quality organisations, and those individuals that understand how AI can help to complement – and not replace – their skills will be in even greater demand moving forward.



*“At the moment, the predominant use of chatbots is for service handling, with bots trained to learn answers to basic FAQs, or use machine learning to comb the internet for content. We decided to take a different approach, and work within the limitations of the technology to create some good, old-fashioned storytelling; immersing our digital audiences in the life of Sellu – a farmer, fisherman father-of-three from Tombohuaun, Sierra Leone. The ability to continuously interact with large cohorts of engaged digital users makes the chatbot a powerful tool for awareness, activation and retention all in one and we hope people will be encouraged to donate to our winter fundraising appeal, Untapped.”*

**DAN GRAY, DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT MANAGER, WATERAID**



# Ensuring inclusivity and accessibility when using new technologies

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BY ANNIE JARVIS, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND PROGRAMMES, CAUSE4

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The need to improve access in the arts has been a key driver for the cultural sector over the last few years, with key regulators and funders such as the Charity Commission, Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (to name just a few) all seeking to ensure that the arts, culture and heritage organisations that they support, authentically embed accessibility, diversity and inclusion.

But with the rise of Artificial Intelligence and the increased use of new technologies such as Augmented or Virtual Reality, it's important to consider whether our move into the future is and will be truly inclusive. In using sophisticated tools and platforms, there is a real risk that charities might end up alienating specific groups of people.

So, who is already paving the way for digital inclusion in the sector and how can we ensure that we maintain inclusivity and accessibility when embedding new digital technologies?

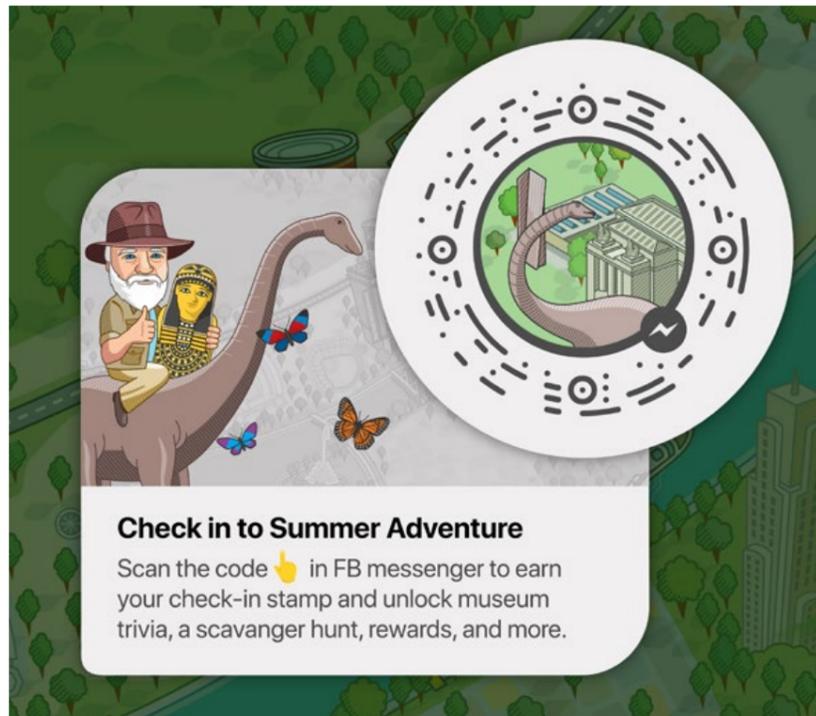
## Accessible AI and VR

Artificial Intelligence is already entrenched into our daily lives, whether we ask Google a question, get Alexa to play our favourite song, or try to find the fastest route home from work. More recently though, it has also become embedded in the cultural sector, with artists, museums, galleries and other cultural institutions making the most of technological advances to support their programmes, audience development and fundraising activities.

Looking internationally, the Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh created a gamified chat bot to encourage visitors to 'collect digital stamps' as they move through the collections, and the Smithsonian in Washington created 'Pepper' – a humanoid robot that can talk to visitors in 21 languages.

In the UK, organisations such as the V&A and the Natural History Museum are using Virtual Reality to enhance their cultural offers and reach a wider audience. At the V&A, the team partnered with HTC Vive Arts to create an immersive exhibition called 'Curious Alice', whilst the Natural History Museum is using virtual reality to: *provide unprecedented access to the Museum's most precious specimens.*"

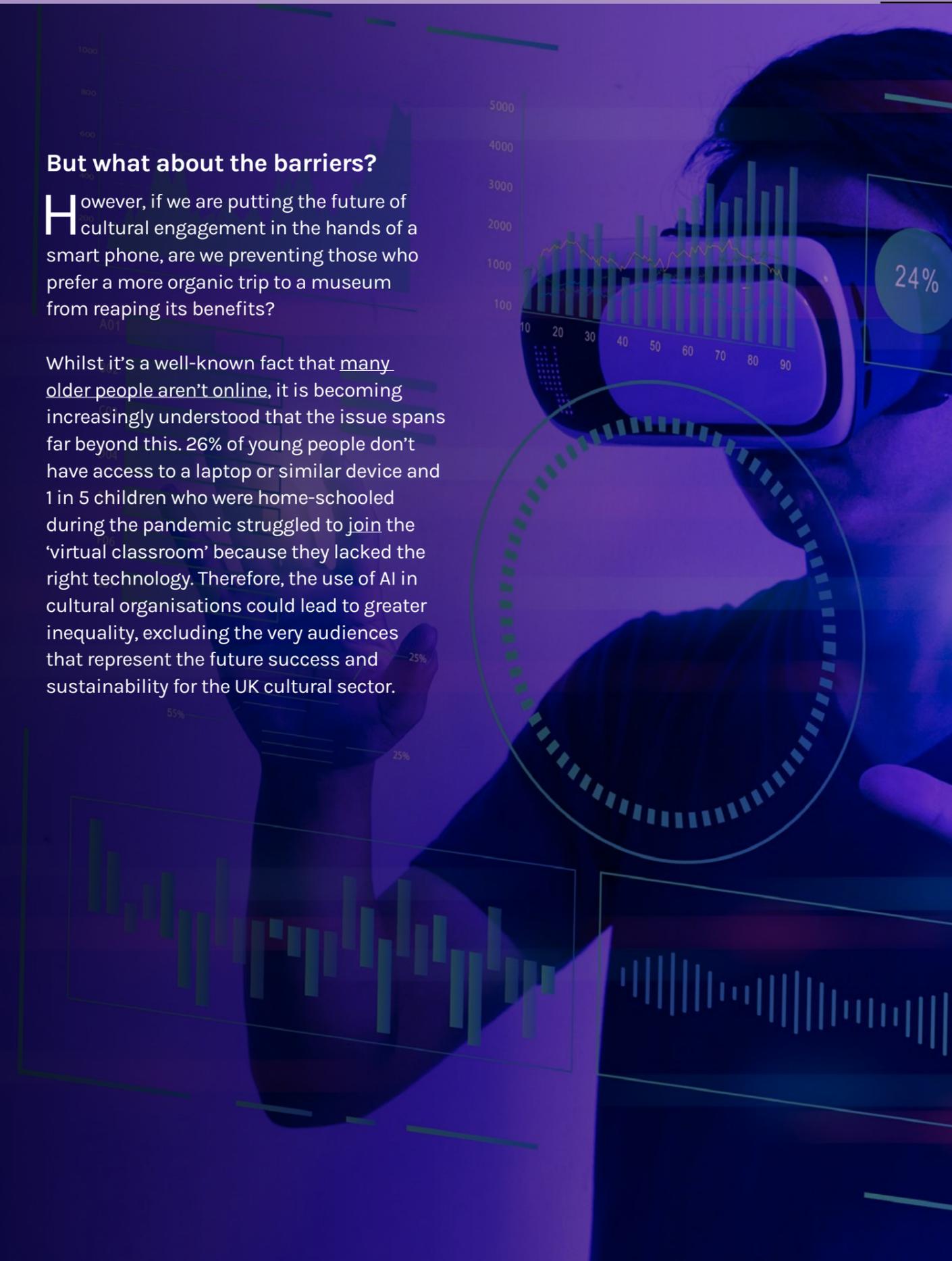
Each of these examples showcase organisations that have sought to make the visitor experience more inclusive and immersive by widening access to their experiences. When many people often view museums as 'stuffy, traditional spaces' integrating these new technologies can offer innovation and excitement.



## But what about the barriers?

However, if we are putting the future of cultural engagement in the hands of a smart phone, are we preventing those who prefer a more organic trip to a museum from reaping its benefits?

Whilst it's a well-known fact that many older people aren't online, it is becoming increasingly understood that the issue spans far beyond this. 26% of young people don't have access to a laptop or similar device and 1 in 5 children who were home-schooled during the pandemic struggled to join the 'virtual classroom' because they lacked the right technology. Therefore, the use of AI in cultural organisations could lead to greater inequality, excluding the very audiences that represent the future success and sustainability for the UK cultural sector.



## So how can we ensure inclusivity when using new technologies?



**Ensure Authenticity** – the use of technology should enhance creative output and an organisation’s relationships with its audiences, rather than overshadow them. We need to ensure that we maintain direct, human connections, and we don’t want to compromise our creativity as a result. Therefore, consider where the use of AI or other technologies can complement your existing work, whilst maintaining and developing direct human connection in other areas.



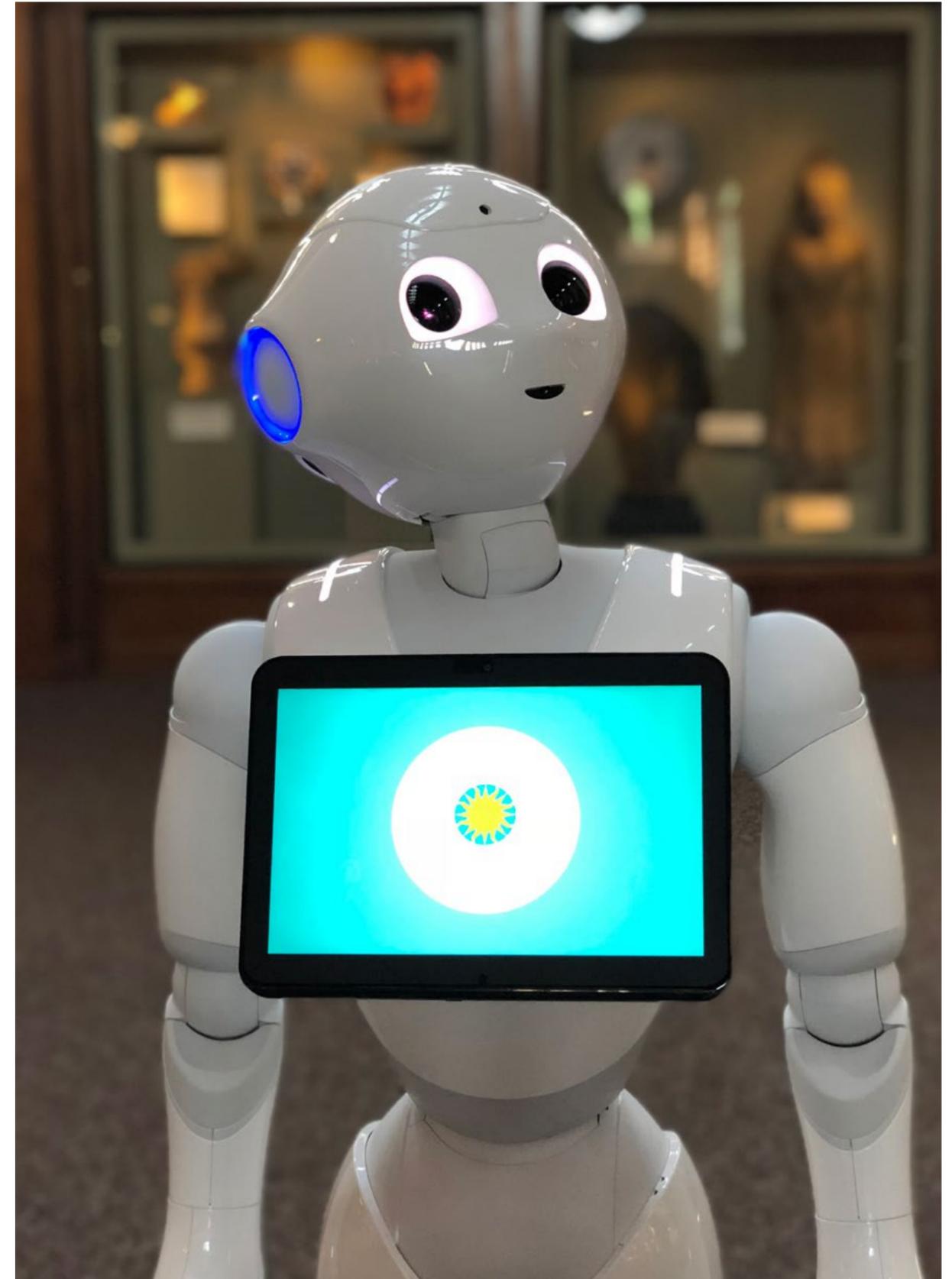
**Consult with Your Communities** – before investing in digital, it is essential to speak to your existing audiences to understand if embedding digital will be of value to them. By discussing the opportunities with your communities, or even working with them to test the model first, you will be able to review all possible barriers to inclusion and develop a plan to ensure accessibility.



**Consider Your Audience** – ask yourself who you typically engage and who do you want to engage? If either answer involves a diverse audience that comprises individuals from different wealth levels, different ages or different abilities, then consider how your use of technology might impact them and how you will need to consult and adapt to include all key audiences.



**Consider AI for accessible means** – if you want to use the latest technologies, consider looking at how the technology could enhance your inclusive practice. Sites such as [Sign Speak](#) and [signapse.ai](#) utilise AI to translate sign language into spoken word, whilst tools such as [Runway](#) and [EagleEyes](#) can be used to help artists with physical disabilities to create work more easily. Other platforms, such as the [Google Arts and Culture App](#) can help bring exhibitions and experiences to those not able to visit a space in-person, making the art more physically accessible for all.



Smithsonian Pepper robot. Photo by Sarah Sulick.

# What is the potential for arts organisations to use blockchain technology to support with fundraising?

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BY REBECCA WARD, PROGRAMMES  
AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

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Blockchain first emerged in 2008, after a [White Paper](#) penned by Satoshi Nakamoto advocated this form of technology as a way to eliminate the need for a bank to mediate between buyers and sellers.

Charities have been using cryptocurrency or blockchain technology to support with fundraising for several years. The American Red Cross [started accepting bitcoin](#) in 2014, UNICEF maintains a [crypto fund](#), and international organisations such as the [Rainforest Foundation](#), the [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#) and [Save The Children](#), all accept cryptocurrency as ways for donors to support their mission.

The technology is still gathering momentum: according to [Fundraising UK](#), more than 1,000 non-profit organisations joined the crypto and stock giving platform, The Giving Block, in 2022 – and this included UK charities such as Compassion UK, Animal Free Research UK and Sands.

So what about the arts? Whilst some are [accusing the arts of being slow](#) to adopt this new technology, others are [highlighting examples](#) of where arts organisations and museums have used cryptocurrency to educate the public, create new revenue streams and engage their audiences. One UK example is the British Museum: in September 2021 [the Museum co-produced a collection of c.200 digital postcards](#) to be sold to coincide with the opening of its *Hokusai, The Great Picture Book of Everything* exhibition. Another example is the [Whitworth Art Gallery](#) in Manchester which, in collaboration with [Vastari Labs](#), recently [minted William Blake's The Ancient of Days](#), raising over £30,000 to support local community organisations.

But what is cryptocurrency, and how does it work? **Stephen Dobson**, Associate Professor in Creativity and Enterprise at the University of Leeds, [explains](#):

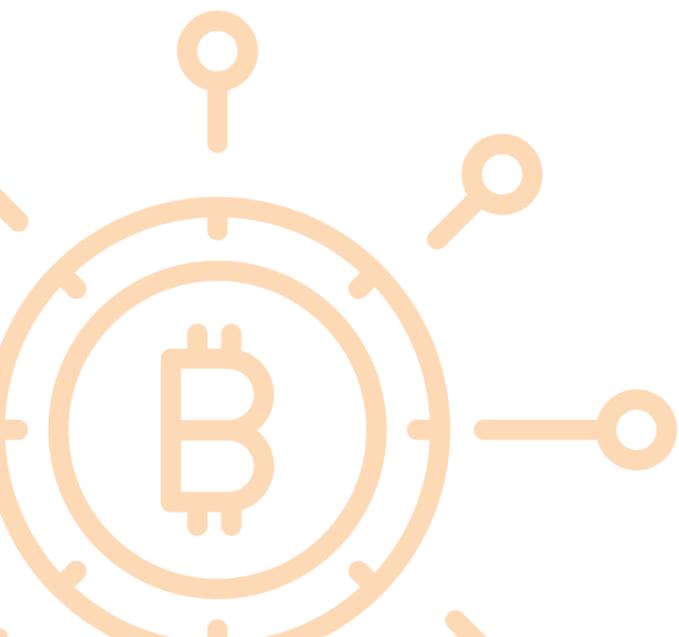


Stephen Dobson

*“A cryptocurrency is essentially computer code which may be converted into legal tender through transactions recorded on a publicly visible online ledger. This ledger is called a blockchain and all transactions are verified between its users through a process called distributed ledger technology. The first established cryptocurrency was Bitcoin. Initially, it was not widely used, but by 2022, Bitcoin was regarded as the ninth most valuable asset with a market capitalisation of \$872.81 billion. There are now many other popular cryptocurrencies such as Ethereum, XRP, Litecoin, Polkadot, Stellar, Binance coin and Doge.”*

An NFT or “Non-fungible token” is a type of cryptocurrency that is unique and cannot be replaced by something else, and these primarily exist on the Ethereum blockchain. This is the most common way in which the arts and cultural sector is embracing cryptocurrency – with at least [21 museums and cultural organisations adopting the technology in 2021](#) and advocates suggesting that NFTs offer a revolution in how digital art is commodified, traded, conserved and consumed in an increasingly digital world.

So, it is clear that cryptocurrency is not entirely new to the arts and cultural sector. However, the data shows that most charities seem to be slow or reticent in adopting this technology for fundraising. According to the [Charity Pulse Report 2023](#), 3% of charities are using crypto for donations and 11% are trialling it – with 50% not even considering adopting it.



For arts organisations that are curious to know how to use this technology to support fundraising, here are some key things that you need to know:

1

Cryptocurrency eliminates the middleman. The middleman in this context is the bank. The primary benefit of this is that it means no bank or third-party financial firm transaction fees, and cheaper international transactions, as there are no foreign exchange or transfer fees. The downside is that this means that the market is largely unregulated, and the value of assets is highly volatile. Additionally, just like online banking, the cryptocurrency market has also been vulnerable to fraud and/or scams. Unlike online banking, however, the bank is not there to support you if you do become a victim of crime. For these reasons, the Charity Commission recently [issued a warning](#) to charities regarding using cryptocurrencies to fundraise.

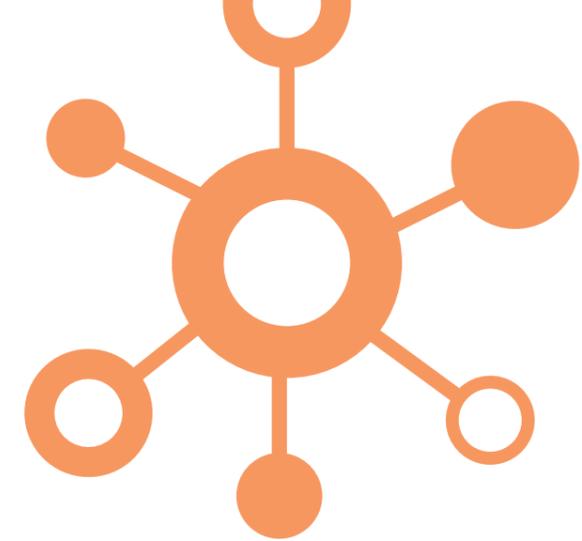
2

Organisations and individuals will need to start by becoming fluent with the technology. As a new form of currency, early adopters of the technology will need to spend a bit of time getting to grips with how it works before you can begin to think about accepting donations. The most common way of buying cryptocurrency is via crypto exchange. Anyone who holds cryptocurrency has a public address (this is like your bank account number) and a private key (this is like your banking password). You'll also need to open a wallet with a wallet provider. These are just a few [key points](#) about how to get started, but you'll also need to think about how to trade or convert crypto tokens, how to convert crypto into hard cash, and the tax implications.

3

It's not just about the technology, but also the psychology. Many organisations and individuals feel reticent about adopting this technology, and this will most likely apply to your manager, staff, trustees and donors too. Successful fundraising via cryptocurrency will require fundraising professionals to be familiar with the psychological motivations and barriers to giving. A motivator might be the exclusivity of the NFT, but a barrier might be the risks associated with the technology. Another attractive aspect of the technology for donors is that they are able to track precisely how the charity spends their specific donation (this is all related to the fact that cryptocurrency tokens are unique, identifiable and traceable).

For a more detailed overview of how cryptocurrency could be applied to philanthropy, see CAF's guide, '[Giving a Bit\(coin\)](#)'.



In summary, it's important to be aware of all the pros and cons before you craft your fundraising proposition, so that you can reassure and incentivise your donors successfully. You may feel that it's appropriate to test the proposition with trustees to see if they would donate in this way.

Despite the risks and the uncertainty, there is no doubt that cryptocurrency technology offers exciting new fundraising opportunities for arts organisations. Crypto markets are [reported](#) to be popular with those who are younger and male, and this demographic may not be engaging with your organisation. Cryptocurrency is a new source of wealth representing a whole new donor community. This was certainly behind the motivations of the then Development Director, Luke Purser at English Heritage, who [partnered with the Giftcoin platform in 2018](#):

**"We're keen to explore innovative ways of engaging with the broadest audience of donors possible, and to build relationships with donors based on trust and transparency – Giftcoin might be one way of helping us to do this."**



# Showcasing innovation in arts and technology



## 3 case studies

.....  
THE MUSEUM of MODERN ART  
.....

HEAR ME OUT  
.....

SAVING THE BRONTË BIRTHPLACE  
.....

# Case study 1

## THE MUSEUM of MODERN ART:

SOURCE 1:  
[XTZ.news](#)

SOURCE 2:  
[MoMA Website](#)



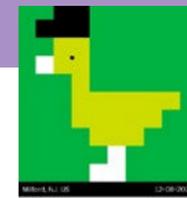
MoMA. Photo by Nick Fewings on Unsplash.

# MoMA

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) recently launched an interesting and exciting way of harnessing creativity, fostering collaboration, and curating art using digital NFT and Blockchain technology. These technologies are effective ways of recording authenticity, ownership, and the Intellectual Property (IP) of a digital asset, in this instance, Art!

This project, named [The Postcard Project](#), is an ongoing global experiment in collaborative and collective creativity. The idea is based around co-created postcards, made up of 15 individually designed 'stamps' which are designed by 15 different artists. It is like a physical postcard, only in digital form, and it travels from one artist to another until all 15 stamps have been filled, creating a digital-art and blockchain journey.

The project is presented by MoMA and uses the 'Feral File' app as its digital art platform. It also uses Tezos Blockchain technology to keep records of the authenticity and ownership of the created pieces.



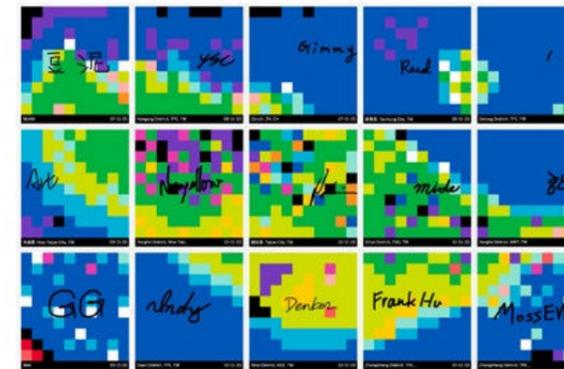
### Here's how it works:

**Step 1: An artist** downloads the 'Feral File' app and follows the set-up instructions.

**Step 2: Designing the stamp.** Using MoMA's colour palette, artists create a pixel-art stamp.

**Step 3: Stamp the postcard.** This is when an artist's stamp is recorded into the Blockchain, enabling them to send the postcard to someone else.

**Step 4: Send your postcard.** Users can invite whoever they'd like to co-create with.



To launch the experiment, MoMA curated a special collection, "[The First Fifteen](#)". This involved the creation of 15 postcards, featuring work from 15 separate artists in different locations. Each artist began with a blank postcard, then created the first stamp before passing the postcard on to the other artists around the world, one artist to the next, until all stamps were filled and all 15 postcards were complete. This process meant that, collectively, the pieces were not only co-designed, but were also co-owned.

The artists making up the 'First 15' were those working at the 'intersection of art and technology'. The artists included: **Anna Lucia; Casey Reas; Dmitri Cherniak; Grant Yun; IX Shells; Kim Asendorf; Linda Dounia; LoVid; Operator; Osinachi; p1xelfool; Peter Burr; Sarah Friend; Sasha Stiles; and ykxotkx.**

Reaching 35 Cities, 11 countries and 5 continents, [The Museum of Modern Art](#) says that:

*"The "MoMA First 15" is an act of borderless collaborative creativity, whose parts are as unique as they are equal to the whole', MoMA hopes that the wider experiment will "inspire connections in the world of digital art".*

# Case study 2

## HEAR ME OUT

SOURCE 1:  
[‘Sofil’](#)

SOURCE 2:  
[Hear Me Out Website](#)



Every year, 28,000 people are locked in UK immigration detention centres whilst authorities deliberate on their future. **‘Hear Me Out’** is a small UK-based charity providing music services and workshops for people held in detention.

*“We help people inside immigration detention centres to express their humanity through music – to air their losses and fears, their hopes, and their dreams. And we also help everyone outside to hear the music and understand the lives of people trapped inside. We are working for the day that all immigrants are treated with dignity”.*

HEAR ME OUT

*“At Hear Me Out, we have been working hard to embed co-creation across our whole organisation. But this is the first time we took it into our fundraising. We knew this way of working could remove the previous roles and ‘labels’ of staff and participants, or fundraisers and beneficiaries. Instead, our whole group took on shared roles of creatives and fundraisers.”*

HEAR ME OUT

In July 2023, ‘Hear Me Out’ launched a fundraising campaign, **‘More Than a Label’**. Co-created by the organisation and a group of people with lived experience of being held in immigration detention centres and asylum hotels, the campaign’s original aim was to raise £3,000 in donations, with the subsequent hope of increasing the number of regular givers to the charity as a result of the campaign.

After receiving training in fundraising and content creation, the fundraising team worked together to design and deliver the campaign.

The team participated in photography workshops, training sessions, and spent time with a film and animation agency, **‘The Saltways’**. This time was used to co-create videos for the campaign, along with the development of key messaging. This was an in-depth process, and it took approximately thirty to forty minutes of video footage to create one of the two and a half minute videos.

Although the campaign was launched by the co-creation team in just six months, it is important to remember that ‘Hear Me Out’ is a small charity with a budget to match. To keep costs low, the charity created an online landing page which it hoped would bring in new income and regular donors. It also used Facebook ads as a way of driving traffic to the landing page.

At the time of writing\*, the campaign is underway, and the Facebook ads have already returned their original investment. The charity has added nine new donors, translating to an additional income of £840 per year, plus Gift Aid. In addition, the charity has received 31 cash donations connected to the campaign, with an average gift of £18.

The campaign has also grown the charity’s outreach. The films have been viewed over 167,000 times on Facebook and over 20,000 times on Instagram. This, coupled with the tripling of its monthly website visitors\*\*, has led to a considerable raising of income and awareness for this small organisation.

\*Original publishing.

\*\*July-Aug, compared to the previous two months.

# Case study 3

## SAVING THE BRONTË BIRTHPLACE

SOURCE 1:  
[crowdfunder.co.uk](https://crowdfunder.co.uk)

SOURCE 2:  
[brontëbirthplace.com](https://brontëbirthplace.com)



Brontë Birthplace House.  
Photo by Matt Gibbons Photography.

The 'Brontë Birthplace' is a Grade II listed terraced house in Thornton, Bradford. The house was the birthplace and residence of the three iconic Brontë sisters – Charlotte, Emily and Anne – who are well known for their literary work during the 1800s, most notably through Charlotte Brontë's work *Jane Eyre*.

Although a Grade II building of historical significance, the building has an active purchase history, with ownership frequently changing hands. However, in recent years, poor upkeep has left the building empty for extended periods of time, resulting in leaking roofs and rotting windows.

In a movement to save The Brontë Birthplace – a [Blue Plaque Property](#) – from further dilapidation, a Community Benefit Society (Brontë Birthplace Limited) was set up with the specific aim of raising funds to purchase the building for community use.

Owning the building would enable the Society to offer paid holiday accommodation for tourists and offer community activities to locals, including writing workshops, activities for schools, and other activities with a Brontë and local heritage focus. The Community Benefit Society is not a charity, but it is not for profit and operates as a community business owned and run by the community, for the benefit of community.

“The Society will become a community-owned social enterprise and by subscribing for shares issued by the society in this share offer you will become a member of it and thus co-owner of the Brontë Birthplace. Unlike a standard limited company, a Community Benefit Society is not designed to generate private profit, but to deliver a community benefit. This model guarantees that the assets the Society will own will be used for the benefit of the community and cannot be disposed of for the private profit of the Management Committee or Society Members.”

### BRONTË BIRTHPLACE LIMITED

In support of its ambitions, the Society's management committee is made up of Brontë experts, community representatives, and businesspeople who have community backing.

To raise the agreed £300,000 to purchase the building, an initial [online Crowdfunder](#) was set-up via [crowdfunder.co.uk](https://crowdfunder.co.uk). The Crowdfunder was based on a shared ownership model and, rather than general donations, individuals were asked to make an investment, with each £1 invested equating to 1 ownership share in Brontë Birthplace Limited. The Crowdfunder was used to 'top-up' the £250,000 grant received from Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture.

After making a successful offer on the property, Brontë Birthplace focused its efforts on raising a further £355,000 for restoration work, aiming to complete the work before Bradford celebrates its UK City of Culture status in 2025. In order to achieve this, a [new round of Crowdfunding](#) was

announced and is ongoing, whilst the last round of Crowdfunding raised £117,398, via 625 investors across 69 days.

*"The former parsonage at Thornton, where the famous Brontë siblings were born, played a significant part in the family's story. The house is currently inaccessible to admirers of the Brontës and the general public alike. It feels important that it should be preserved and play a part in celebrating the legacy of the extraordinary Brontë family. The Brontë Society, which runs the Brontë Parsonage Museum, fully support this project to save the Brontë Birthplace for the community."*

**ANN DINSDALE, PRINCIPAL CURATOR,  
BRONTË PARSONAGE MUSEUM**

# START A DIALOGUE

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