

Museums and Data COVID-19 Research Proposal
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Context:

The CoVID-19 pandemic has forced museums and cultural institutions around the globe to shut their doors to the general public and to most staff.

The museum space has therefore become an inaccessible containment for its collections, and encounters between visitors and physical objects are put on hold. The absence of actual visits to the museums prompted institutions, professionals and visitors to shift to the digital realm. Museums have opened up their 'digital storages' and allowed access to content in an unprecedented way, through existing, traditional channels, but also through new means of engagement and online campaigns.

Rationale:

As museums are less accessible now, data practices may have changed due to CoVID-19 and it is important to investigate this disruptive moment to gather information from an institutional perspective, and to create a foundation on which future research can build on. This research investigates the 'digital first-response frameworks' that have been installed and questions current data handling and usage in museums.

Hypothesis:

CoVID-19 influences the way data in museums is used, perceived and handled. The pandemic has driven forward the use of digital collections, has increased online usage of the institutions' offers and changed the attitude towards 'the digital'.

RQs:

How did the CoVID-19 pandemic impact museums in regards to their data?

What measures were taken to cope with the current situation on an institutional level and what future implications might these have?

Expectations:

Gather valuable information about how the CoVID-19 pandemic has influenced data usage and access in the museum sphere. It is expected that opinions around collection data and the 'datafied' bodies of objects have been changing and that online traffic has increased. This research will highlight the importance of digital collections and of digitisation projects in the cultural sector.

Topic Guide:

Exploratory approach through researching people's data practice and experiences before and during the pandemic. Interviewees were chosen according to their professional capacities, but as this topic might be emotive or personal to some, interviews will take the form of a guided and openly framed setting. Participants are expected to answer questions to the best of their knowledge, but as this is an ongoing situation that can't be fully evaluated yet, interview content will be a snapshot of current, subjective experiences. The interview setup doesn't

anticipate strong order effects and interviewees will receive stimuli and prompts after enough time to reflect and to summarise the answers given.

Research goals:

- How is the current situation perceived and how did institutions react to CoVID-19?
- Has the current situation impacted data handling and usage in a positive or negative way, or not at all?
- Has the value of data changed due to this pandemic?
- Are there any issues that could have been avoided or that should have been mitigated for earlier on?
- Do institutions have an assessed data management plan and is this plan implemented in your institution's risk and business contingency framework?
- What impacts and consequences does this situation have on collection data and digitisation projects?
- Did data and/or digital assets become more important now? How will this influence the future?

a) *Introduction, overview of the research:*

Incl. instructions and outlook, PIS and consent form;
this research is conducted to investigate the impact of CoVID-19 on museum (collection) data and we are therefore interviewing people in relevant positions; this research aims to gather information in a casual interview format and is loosely guided: **you can tell us about your experiences; how your job role was impacted by the pandemic; where there were problems or opportunities; you can also tell us about things you've realised or that are your personal opinion.**

According to the points mentioned, the researcher will go into further details: What exactly is meant with... (clarify)? Is this just happening now or will this impact the future/ kept for future (timing)? Resources needed/ allocated/ used and size of data we're talking about – analytics (quantities)?

b) *Further detail about data practices:*

The second part of the interview is tighter framed and prompts the interviewee to answer specific questions, if possible;

You have told us many interesting things and we would like to go into further detail and ask some direct questions in relation to data and digital:

What do you understand under data in a museum context?

Do you think that CoVID-19 changed how data is perceived in your institution?

Has data gained more value or importance?

Has your digital offering changed? The use of digital technologies?

What has your institution done to accommodate this new situation?

Can you give some insights on your colleagues' opinions or institutions who reacted either in the same way, did nothing or reacted in an, in your view, negatively impacting manner?

Did you use data in ways you haven't used it before? (i.e. release of normally not accessible data, new productions etc.)

c) *Metrics and analytics:*

This is the third part of the interview and asks about specific numbers in form of analytical data and metrics;

**If already available, did your institution's metrics change in a significant way?
For example, did your website traffic increase or did you get more requests?**

d) Conclusion:

The last part of the interview concludes with wrapping up the interview and thank the interviewee;

How did you feel during this interview and did it prompt you to think about things you haven't thought of before or from a different perspective?

Is there anything you want to add or talk about?

Please feel free to contact us with any additional comments, worries or issues.

Many thanks for participating in this study!

Remark again, that participants have the right to withdraw from the study, and if they do so, explain that their data will be destroyed and not used further.

Highlight that data (or parts of it) can't be removed after a cool-off period of 14 days.