

## Endnotes

1. Interview by Jon Thomson with Susan Howe in *Free Verse: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*, issue 9, 2005, available at <[http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/freerverse/Archives/Winter\\_2005/interviews/S\\_Howe.html](http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/freerverse/Archives/Winter_2005/interviews/S_Howe.html)>, accessed 6 April 2015.
2. Interview by Jon Thomson with Susan Howe in *Free Verse*.
3. Howe has published a number of works on Emily Dickinson, including *My Emily Dickinson*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, CA, 1985. She also provided the preface to Marta Werner and Jen Bervin's *Emily Dickinson: The Gorgeous Nothings*, Christine Burgin/New Directions, New York, 2013, which I reviewed in *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2014, pp. 102–4.
4. Jon Rimmer, Claire Warwick, Ann Blandford, Jeremy Gow and George Buchanan, 'An Examination of the Physical and the Digital Qualities of Humanities Research', *Information Processing and Management*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2008, p. 1378.
5. William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, New Directions, New York, 1963.
6. Rimmer et al., p. 1384.

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**T Mansfield, C Winter, C Griffith, A Dockerty and T Brown**, *Innovation Study: Challenges and Opportunities for Australia's Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums*, Australian Centre for Broadband Innovation, CSIRO and Smart Services Co-operative Research Centre, Sydney, 2014. viii + 87 pp. ([http://museumsaustralia.org.au/userfiles/file/GLAM\\_Innovation\\_Study\\_September2014-Report\\_Final\\_accessible.pdf](http://museumsaustralia.org.au/userfiles/file/GLAM_Innovation_Study_September2014-Report_Final_accessible.pdf))

Increased collaboration between galleries, libraries, archives and museums – here called the GLAM sector – has been an ongoing subject of discussion for close to 20 years. In the second half of 2014 an *Innovation Study* report was released by the Australian Centre for Broadband Innovation, CSIRO and Smart Services CRC, adding an up-to-date Australian perspective to the existing literature.

Conducted between February and June 2014, the study involved consultation with senior staff from the GLAM sector, a two-day 'futures workshop' in Sydney and the gathering of additional feedback on the results of that workshop from those unable to attend. The stated aim: to examine 'the key transformations this sector needs to make to thrive in the emerging digital environment of the next two decades' (p. vi), and to encourage all institutions to fully embrace the digital.

There is value here for people unfamiliar with recent developments. Parts of the body of the report provide short, accessible summaries of key debates in the sector, and Appendix B includes a useful overview of innovative research being conducted by Mitchell Whitelaw, Sarah Kenderdine, Daniel Johnson and others. There are also strong contributions from sector leaders such as Alex Byrne and Seb Chan. And the resulting recommendations – around public and community engagement, reuse, development of new funding sources, and the need for a national collaboration framework and national leadership and collaboration forum – while not adventurous, are sound.

Unfortunately, for GLAM professionals, the body of the report lacks the focus and rigour required to make a significant contribution to the debate.

Many of the familiar touch points are present. The report mentions Trove, the Atlas of Living Australia, crowd-sourcing, federated search, open access, location-based discovery and more, along with potential issues (or ‘elephants’) such as copyright, a changing funding environment, institutional competition and patchy collection documentation. Also flagged are big-ticket social and cultural changes: from consumer expectations in the digital age, to environmental change, to globalisation and ‘the Asian Century’. But with such a broad brush there is no room for depth and the result is a lack of analysis as to how these areas could and should shape the activities and priorities of the GLAM sector.

There are other limitations. The list of interviewees in Appendix A shows only one representative each from the archival and gallery domains (David Fricker and Simon Wright, respectively). As a result, museum and library perspectives are noticeably dominant and issues like long-term digital preservation receive only a cursory mention compared with, for example, exhibition design and 3D modelling. The exclusion of university libraries, semi-public organisational archives and others because they do not aim for ‘universal public access’ (p. 3) is also a missed opportunity, resulting in an over-reliance on familiar ‘big players’ in the sector at the expense of new or marginalised perspectives.

The result is a report which uncritically repeats many pre-existing ideas with little clear purpose. The GLAM domains are defined conservatively, missing an opportunity to ask what an ‘archive’ or a ‘gallery’ is (or could be) as the century enters its late teens. Despite emphasising the importance of communities, society and public engagement, there is no sign of these perspectives being included. And the central ideas – the disruptive effect of the digital on professional boundaries, notions of institutional authority, user expectations and institutional information silos – have been around since the mid- to late-1990s when W Boyd Rayward, David Bearman, Jennifer Trant and others first started discussing the implications of electronic records and the web for the GLAM sector.

One concept, however, is missing. Though artificially separated domains, cross-domain similarities, limited funding, shared infrastructure and the public’s purported desire for ‘seamless’ collections all get a mention, the idea of ‘convergence’ does not. Yet, in the broader literature these topics often go hand in hand. The omission of convergence – even as something to then be discounted – is notable, and may reflect a hesitancy following sector concern about issues such as the merging of GLAM ‘back office’ functions in Canberra and the proposed merger of State Records with the State Library of South Australia.

Such hesitancy does not help foster debate. Seb Chan, quoted in the report, believes the public are saying to institutions, ‘Make choices that provoke me! Don’t make choices that placate me’ (p. 23). The GLAM innovation study report is a missed opportunity to provoke, question key definitions and values, critically analyse existing practice and challenge the sector’s actual and potential place in contemporary society. As a result, those working in the sector are unlikely to find anything new, and those outside it will wonder what it all means. Given the nature of the study, a good proportion of the responsibility for this does not

lie with the authors and compilers of the report. It lies with the GLAM sector itself.

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