

In the know

Heather Maitland advises you to think about what you want to know – it may be that someone has already done the work for you.

The point of marketing planning is to make informed decisions about what will get your organisation from where it is now to where it wants to go. So where can you get the information to support those decisions?

Wait before you reach for that questionnaire, because someone has probably done the work for you. There is such a lot of readily available information about audiences (by audiences, I mean readers, visitors, participants – whoever it is you want to engage with). The abundance of information has its down side; if you are not to drown in paper, you need to decide in advance what you need to know, why you want to know it and what you will do with the information.

Your shopping list will include two sorts of information: about organisations and audiences similar enough to yours for you to make parallels; and about the wider communities your organisation seeks to serve.

Information about organisations and audiences

Arts Research Digest at www.arts-research-digest.com is a journal that summarises research findings. It's worth subscribing because these abstracts save you reading lots of reports that turn out not to be relevant to your particular needs. Subscribers can also access a searchable online archive. Hosted on the same site is an electronic library of the research funded by Arts Council England (ACE) over the past 15 years or so. This is searchable by keyword. ACE's own site, www.artscouncil.org.uk, features a range of relatively recent publications to download. ACE has placed a treasure trove of publications, project reports and evaluation studies by independent researchers from the five years of its New Audiences Programme at www.newaudiences.org.uk

The team at the Australian agency Fuel4Arts must spend countless hours ferreting out up-to-date and relevant

information about audiences from around the English-speaking world. You can find the resulting mix of research, arts marketing case studies, articles, trend reports and marketing and audience development tools at www.fuel4arts.com. Access is free but you have to register as a member. The site has a sophisticated search function set up by someone with an eye for the keywords we marketers really use. Sign up for their What's New service and every month they will e-mail you the editor's top five pick of new resources. Their marketing e-journal *Gas Quarterly* is free if you register.

The Scottish Arts Council has assembled a useful research resource at www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/information including Taking Part 2006, which gives levels of attendance and participation in the arts among the population in Scotland, and Peter Verwey's paper on marketing planning, downloadable from www.scottisharts.org.uk/DownloadPublication.aspx?pub=994.



Arts Council Wales also offers a range of research and statistics at www.artswales.org.uk/publicationscheme.asp?pubcatid=67.

Many of the audience development agencies offer downloadable research reports on their websites. You can link to individual agency sites through their umbrella organisation's website at www.audiencedevelopment.org.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's site at www.mla.gov.uk is packed with research and advice but the exceedingly long list of publications is only searchable by date or title so finding what you want is time consuming.

Research and statistics about domestic and overseas tourists are available at www.visitbritain.org/ukindustry and www.visitscotland.org/research_and_statistics.htm.

Other websites worth a look are Arts Research Monitor at www.artsresearchmonitor.com and National Endowment for the Arts (USA) at www.arts.gov/pub.

Don't forget the Arts Marketing Association's own site at www.a-m-a.co.uk. The reports from conferences, away days and seminars are packed with useful information.

Much research commissioned before the mid-1990s can still offer useful insights but is only available on paper. Several of the longer-established audience development agencies have libraries which their members or clients can consult by

appointment. Hi-Arts in Scotland even offers a loan service by post. Most of these agencies have some kind of online catalogue. Find your regional agency at www.audiencedevelopment.org.

Information about communities

The government has made demographic statistics, mainly from the censuses, available by region, local authority district, ward and sometimes even smaller areas at <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk>. Statistics about Northern Ireland's economy, population and demographics at national and local level are downloadable at www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk and statistics about neighbourhoods in Scotland are at www.sns.gov.uk. You can find data on national social and economic trends at www.statistics.gov.uk.

Area Profile Reports give demographic information about a catchment area defined by you, broken down by postal sector. They also include projections for the number of people likely to attend a range of different cultural activities, again broken down by postal sector. Start by reading Peter Verwey's paper on Area Profile Reports and Catchment Area Analysis which you can download at www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/information/publications/1003111.aspx. If you are based in Scotland, you can get an area profile

report using the order form at the back. If you are based in England or Wales, you will need to get an order form by e-mailing areaprofiles@artscouncil.org.uk or by writing to Philip Cave, director of audience and market development, Arts Council England, 14 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 3NQ. Area Profile Reports for Northern Ireland include similar information but not the projections for arts attendance and are available to members of Audiences Northern Ireland only.

Finally, several audience development agencies will, usually for a fee, analyse both your existing audiences and the population in your catchment area using a geodemographic profiling tool such as ACORN or Mosaic. These tools give each individual postcode in the UK a classification based on a range of data sources. This classification indicates lifestyle as well as family stage, income, type of housing etc. You can find out the ACORN type of a postcode at www.upmystreet.com. ■



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