Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust
Brighton & Hove

Digital Policy
Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust
2021-22

1. Introduction and scope

This policy frames the way in which RPMT uses digital technology in support of its mission. It outlines guiding principles for its practical use so that the trust may make optimal use of the opportunities presented by rapidly evolving technology, while being prepared to negotiate its challenges.

Although digital technology is used to support all of RPMT's business activities in some form, its impact can be best understood by considering digital as **tool**, **medium**, and **culture**.

- Digital **tools** help RPMT solve problems and empower our staff and visitors, through software and services such as online ticketing and collection management systems.
- Digital **media** enables us to communicate with audiences across the world in rich and engaging ways, whether through online content or in-gallery interpretation.
- Digital **culture** shapes our audiences' expectations and provides an opportunity to explore new creative relationships, such as encouraging visitors to share photos of a visit or encouraging re-use of its digitised collections.

2. Current situation

Over the last ten years, Royal Pavilion & Museums has developed an international reputation for digital innovation, particularly in low-cost approaches scaled to the affordances of a civic museum service. It has also acted as key partner in several major research projects, including One by One and Gift. During the pandemic it has focused on not only providing more online engagement but also developing the digital skills of its staff.

While this activity indicates a digitally literate organisation, it masks a previous lack of investment and a reduced capacity to innovate. Uncertainty over the organisation's governance during its last years under local authority control meant that much of its ICT equipment was long out of date and there has been a hesitancy to make major changes in practice. As a result, the service's use of digital has been inconsistent and often unable to capitalise on insights from audience data and its more experimental work.

As an independent charitable trust, RPMT now has the confidence and agility to invest in digital technology and apply it in creative ways that will improve its visitor offer and make its business more resilient. A draft digital strategy has informed its new business plan and will be finalised over a series of organisational reviews over the course of 2021.

3. Digital vision

Our broad vision for digital will be focused on:

- Introducing new **tools** to improve business functionality, such as introducing a customer relationship management system and redeveloping its online retail offer.
- Communicate and engage more effectively with digital **media** through a refreshed website, more 'bring your own device' interpretation and an innovative digital fundraising campaign.
- Develop a more inclusive and polyvocal approach to digital content production, reflecting a **culture** of co-production.
- Working with technologists and creative media producers in the 'Greater Brighton' area.

Details of our aims be found in our Digital Plan 2021-22.

4. Digital principles

The following principles should be used to guide RPMT's digital practice.

i. **Visitor-focused**. Never start any conversation about digital engagement with the technology. Understand the audience's motivations and behaviours first.

ii. **Data-literate.** We should learn from the valuable insights we can glean from our visitor data, while respecting the legal and ethical restrictions on collecting personal data. Decision making should be evidence based, while being aware of the limitations in what data can tell us.

iii. **Open and shareable.** As circulation becomes more important than distribution in online behaviour, RPMT can reach more visitors by creating open and shareable content and experiences. Social sharing is the new 'word of mouth' and will always be more effective than our own platforms.

iv. **Evergreen rather the ephemeral.** Our online content should be discoverable over the long-term

v. **Presume to publish.** The collection data and digital assets RPMT produces are managed for the public good; these assets should only remain unpublished in the long-term if there are ethical or legal restrictions for doing so.

vi. **Experiment and iterate.** We should accept managed risks in digital innovation and use failure as a means of informing future progress. Digital products should always be considered in 'permanent beta': capable of ongoing refinement or producing ideas and assets that can be repurposed elsewhere.

vii. **Sustainable through open source.** Recognised open-source software can provide cheaper and more sustainable tools for developing digital content and avoid proprietary lock-in.

viii. **Ethical.** Our visitors should never have to subscribe to third party services beyond our control to access our content. Even where we use commercial providers to disseminate content, we should ensure alternatives are available on platforms that are managed or owned by RPMT.