

Association of Cultural Enterprises (ACE)

14th Annual Convention and Trade show

Report by **Elise Naish, Collections Manager, Luton Culture**

I was lucky enough to get a **SHARE** bursary to attend to the **ACE** Convention in Birmingham in February 2013. The Association of Cultural Enterprises www.acenterprises.org.uk is a membership organisation that promotes commercial best practice in the cultural, heritage and visitor attraction sector by providing training and networking opportunities and facilitating the sharing of information and experience between its members.

There were three things I was aiming to get from the convention

- to look at how I could utilise the collections commercially, including looking for commercial opportunities to support our Wardown Park Museum redevelopment bid
- learning new ideas and solutions from the seminar programme
- to be able to meet a number suppliers under one roof

In respect of using the collections commercially the highlight for me of the **ACE** convention was the talk by Gina Fullerton, Head of Publishing and Natasha Waterson, Senior Producer from Royal Botanic Garden at Kew www.kew.org and Trevor Klein head of development from Somethin' Else. www.somethinelse.com

In '*Where are we going with apps?*' - Gina and Natasha outlined the apps, ibooks and digital magazines that they have been developing for the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew, since 2011. While it would be nice to have the budgets that they are able to utilise for this kind of software development, it was truly generous and incredibly useful that they shared the objectives, timescales, results and pitfalls so that the audience could evaluate whether apps etc might be the way to go in the future for them.

The first consideration as to whether you use this type of technology is to determine - what is your objective.

Is it a marketing or communication tool, is it designed to increase visitor numbers, for fundraising, is it designed to reduce or replace paper copies, help with reaching international audiences or provide interactive content a paper book just can not.

Some top tips from this seminar:

- Work with a company that knows the business – software and rules constantly change for example there are rules over what is an app as opposed to an ibook.

- If you have a lower budget – find an app you like and approach the designers. Having developed the software it might be cheaper for you to utilise it or they might be willing to share the costs, and therefore risk, for a share of the profits.
- More iPhone users will download apps than other smart phone users.
- Reuse content already on your website.
- App content can also be reused – for Kew they have reused theirs in their teacher education support programme.
- Think about how you will market your product – internal marketing may not be enough – it's more than just appearing in new and notable on iTunes, you still may have to use mainstream media.
- Look out for unexpected results - the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew - David Nash exhibition guide iPad app was also found to be used by the volunteers around the site to help aid visitors' interpretation.

It seems to me that you are unlikely to make money from this if you are doing all the development work, the exception being unless you can produce an international product. One of the iPad apps that has proved very successful that was mentioned is the Leonardo iPad App from the Royal Collection and Touch Press. Designed to support the 2012 exhibition Leonardo Da Vinci – Anatomist. The app has won two awards and has achieved significant downloads.

www.royalcollection.org.uk/exhibitions/leonardo-da-vinci-anatomist/buy-the-app

Learn a bit more about the app from the company who produced it here

www.touchpress.com/titles/leonardo-da-vinci-anatomy/

The convention started, after the Chairman's welcome, with an interesting summary of 2012 from Bernard Donoghue a Director from the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (www.alva.org.uk). These are the ones that generate over 1 million visitors at single or centrally managed sites and currently represent 44 members and over 2000 sites.

This was titled '*2012 it was the best of times and worst of times – now we're moving on*' and Bernard certainly gave the audience something to work on for their own organisations

Bernard summarised these things as what have we learnt from 2012:

- Brits love British Modern Art and influence
- Refurbished attractions are doing really well
- The weather had a serious effect on the visitor numbers of outdoor attractions over the past year, with 27 of 30 predominately outdoor members suffering double digit drops in visitor numbers.
- The Olympics had a significant, but time limited, drop for London museums

Their research shows why places did well:

- they had been refreshed and enticed visitors by creating a sense of ownership

- demonstrated an authentic sense of place – local procurement in food drink and retail – nostalgia is comforting in times of change
- told peoples stories - think Downton Abbey
- Staff not stuff - visitors memories are not about objects but the nice man on the desk
- Optimise your communications and marketing – keep updating, use cheaply made videos as a tool for engagement and they improve your search engine optimisation, mumsnet is a powerful ally, there is huge opportunity for joint working
- Excellent visitor experience - say hello and welcome your visitor and say goodbye – think about the personal stories that you tell

On the outlook for 2013, Bernard used some results from the ASDA mumdex where 62% think it will get worse before it gets better, but it was 77% in March 2011 (your.asda.com/mumdex - a useful survey tool free to use)

Levels of concern about personal finance remain high and may not change as quickly as you think. There may be more foreign trips in 2013 as people want better weather for their holidays and local people want to know the money they spend is staying in the local economy

You can read more about Domestic tourism results on the ALVA website (www.alva.org.uk).

Following are some key notes from the other seminars that I attended:

Marketing and Selling Books in the Visual Arts - Jonathan Earl Publishing Consultant

Three points to consider in the way forward

- Distribution, making a small margin on others relevant titles
- Partnerships, joint ventures or co-publishing sharing the cost and the risk but our brand may be lost
- Digital, 10% of book sales are ebooks, but this is way less than 1% of UK art books sold

You can't afford to discount Amazon as a sales outlet as it accounts for nearly a third of total UK book sales.

Engaging Digital Audiences - Alison Prince, Web Manager Bodleian Library

Social Media

- Treat it as a conversation and not a broadcast, informal and personal
- Users are in the driving seat

- Monitor your content and be responsive – even answering a negative comment can create trust in your audience
- Keep it manageable – only generate as much as you can respond to
- Don't ignore it

Solve the barriers

- Poor website design
- Illogical navigation
- Not meeting user expectations
- Not putting content into the right channels – know your audience
- Not optimising for mobile

Habits of a Modern Picture Buyer - Douglas McCarthy, Rights and Images Manager Royal Museums Greenwich

Douglas summarised some useful results for those of you who run or are thinking of running picture libraries. For the full report on What Buyers want from Photographers see www.photoshelter.com/doc/mkt/2012-buyers-survey.pdf

Some points to note

- 93% of those surveyed find images at the large stock agencies
- 40% use google to search
- Only 30% use independent photographer websites

There is legislation to consider when using images online and these include

EU Orphan Works Directive

ec.europa.eu/internal_market/copyright/orphan_works/index_en.htm

Currently there is a review underway on the use of EU Public Sector Information

ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/psi/revision_directive/index_en.htm

In the UK The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill is before the House of Lords

services.parliament.uk/bills/2012-13/enterpriseandregulatoryreform.html

and the JISC Open Access Policy

www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/topics/opentechnologies/openaccess/policies.aspx

and the new HLF Digital policy

www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/furtherresources/Pages/Newdigitalpolicyandrequirementsfordigitaloutputs.aspx

Publishing for Children - Jacky Collis Harvey, Publisher, Royal Collection

Ten top tips from Jacky on publishing for Children

Who are you publishing for and what do they want?

1. Talk to your retail department
2. Don't limit your ideas
3. Work with your learning partners (schools and in-house)
4. Don't ignore the evidence – buyers are adults
5. Don't let yourself get pulled off track
6. Talk to the kids and road test your product
7. Place your merchandise in the right site
8. Take time and find the things that are yours and unique
9. Waste not want not – reuse content where you can
10. Don't give up – learn from the experience

Making the Most of our Assets - Liz Horne, Managing Director, Royal Academy Enterprises

A simple win in publishing - Look at your publication archive – is there anything you can reuse?

- Establish clear contracts and keep good records
- Rights need protecting – be hot on enforcement
- Work to establish long term relationships – with people who create content or publishers
- Assert your quality standards
- Everything is negotiable
- Be careful with exclusivity – does it hurt or help our brand
- Define your boundaries clearly
- Be prepared to negotiate on price
- Understand your trading partners agenda (artists, publishers)
- Think about what the future will bring – new technology or other challenges

The **Overall Best Product of the Year** went to the National Theatre with their merchandise for War Horse – check it out here

<http://shop.nationaltheatre.org.uk/shopdisplayproducts.asp?id=34&cat=War+Horse>

The Trade Show, this was my opportunity to meet a number of heritage suppliers in one place without having to find them myself. It gave me the time to look for

- specific merchandising for exhibitions
 - Fox and Chave (www.foxandchave.co.uk) or Amet and Ladoue (joy.leese@btinternet.com) for bespoke printed scarves to match antique fabrics
 - King and McGaw (www.kingandmcgaw.com) for limited run printing including a fab small canvas print
- merchandise to support our development of Wardown Park Museum
 - Anna Faine Jewellery (www.annafaine.co.uk) or Alison Wiffern Ceramics (www.awceramics.co.uk) for bespoke jewellery
- Opportunities for joint merchandising in our region
 - JH Designpoint (www.jhdesignpoint.co.uk) or The Souvenir Mug Shop (www.souvenirmugs.co.uk)
- What we could do commercially to enhance our study days offer
 - Allsorted (www.allsorteduk.com) for relevant books
- A chance to think about Christmas, early enough to do something about it.
 - JH Designpoint (www.jhdesignpoint.co.uk) for a bespoke Christmas bauble

There were 70 suppliers in total at the show and these were just some of the one I talked to - for a full list see the associate members on the ACE website (www.acenterprises.org.uk/item.asp?ll=12)

Where to go from here:

From attending the show and talking to the ACE trustees, I can recommend that organisations should look at the benefits of joining **ACE**.

They are also hoping to work more with Association of Independent Museums (AIM), at opportunities for joint procurement and a heritage wide picture library. All the Trustees, who volunteer their time are friendly and approachable – and experts in their area. It's important in times of economic change and uncertainty to be able to rely on help when you need it.

You can join the SHARE Retail Forum by contacting Simon Floyd on 01603 638141, simon.floyd@norfolk.gov.uk