The O-ACE Project - how can online museum content be beneficial for mental health?

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#UMGPackedLunch | November 2021
Aim

Research and test innovative approaches to improve mental health and wellbeing beyond medication and traditional therapies.

COVID-19 circumstances:

• Closure of museums and increase in online content
• Worsening mental health impact and reduction in services
Background

University of Oxford COVID-19 Research Response Fund (April 2020) - £40k
## Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>#</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systematic Review</td>
<td>13,000 studies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sector Scrape</td>
<td>10 case studies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baseline Survey</td>
<td>1,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-on Survey</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-2-1 Interviews</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Core components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Co-design groups</th>
<th>31</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiment (randomised control trial)</td>
<td>413</td>
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</table>
Established arts lovers used OCC more during COVID-19 and saw greater MH benefits.

Young people 16-24 smallest respondent group but:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Young people</th>
<th>Rest of sample</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosed MH issue/treatment</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-diagnosed MH issue (K10)</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashmolean web first-timers</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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</table>
1. **Immersion** helps shift attention away from self (mindfulness isn’t for everyone).

2. Sought comfort and strength in **human connections**, shared experiences and **stories of resilience**.

3. **Importance of flipping the narrative**, giving a platform for those who didn’t fit in or marginalized by history:

   “I find it difficult to look at Western art and only see people who look like me in the background or not even there.”

4. **Wanted to hear other people’s perspectives** to encourage empathy and reduce black-and-white thinking.
Welcome
Zoom in to explore

Walkthrough: https://youtu.be/mQLFL4Tm-v8
Want to share your viewpoint?

If you would like to, please tell us your viewpoint on the art or stories you see here – did it help give you perspective? Did you feel connected or reflected? Were you inspired? You will also be able to let us know if and how you want your viewpoint to be shared.

Walkthrough: https://youtu.be/mQLFL4Tm-v8
MUSEUMS ONLINE & MENTAL HEALTH
CALL FOR YOUNG PARTICIPANTS

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CALL FOR YOUNG PARTICIPANTS

Emotional intensities

0% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Anger
Disgust
Fear
Happiness
Sadness
Surprise
Findings from randomised control trial

1. Engaging with online cultural content does not affect positive mood, but reduces negative mood (= helpful as a coping strategy).
2. Effect is more marked the intervention, and in males and those from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

“It was noticeable that I felt more inspired to go and do things and more motivated for a few hours after engaging with the content.”
Outputs/Outcomes

**New web tool** ‘Ways of Being’. 11 Human Centred Narratives, 50,000 words.

**Rich data:** 1200 surveys, 30 hrs interviews, focus groups and user testing

**413 participants** 16-24 in Randomized Control Trial with high retention, 90% would take part in research again.

**Rise of wellbeing measures** to evaluate impact of participatory cultural activities (e.g. UCL’s excellent Wellbeing Umbrella)

**‘Wellbeing’** adopted as pillar of GLAM Strategy 2021-23

**4 peer-reviewed papers** in open-access psychiatry journals

**Co-producers** want to be part of follow-on studies

**Sector awareness:**
Presented at OxGLAM, UCL, MuseWeb MW21, Kids in Museums, Centre for Creative Brain, University Museums Group, British Library
1. Working with other academic departments in your own university to bring a rigorous and interdisciplinary lens to ‘user research’.

2. Regular users of culture (online and offline) get the most mental health benefits. Museums can engage audiences at a young age as part of lifelong self-care.

3. Co-production – intensive but worthwhile. Do research with people, not to them.
https://glam.web.ox.ac.uk/oace-project

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