

NOTES FOR PLENARY

OZECULTURE 2005 – MAGIC MONEY AND MYTH

From Lois Randall

Regional Arts Development Officer, Northern Rivers

Malcolm Long flagged the issues raised throughout the conference in his opening address:

- * Business needs to understand the “intangibles” – arts and IP (I would add that government could better understand these too!)
- * Sustainability – getting away from lurching from project to project and building an industry that can afford R&D.
- * Breaking down the silos – industries are more cross platform than the people in them.
- * Need to think globally, both in terms of creativity and business

As a Regional Arts Development Officer it is interesting to me to see that the issues that face us in this region are the very same issues that we are face with nationally.

The NZ session provided inspiration for us all. Key themes for us to bring back to Australia are:

Dame Cheryl Sotheran discussed establishing competitiveness and distinctiveness in global markets; leadership through government policy and strategy and a radical repositioning in global markets through creativity and innovation.

Paul Voigt talked about brand identity. It lead me to wonder what is Australia's brand identity, our points of difference and our positioning in a global market? Do we need a shift of perception?

Paul Brewer emphasised the importance of investing in market research and data collection. This was echoed throughout the conference and raised again in the 2020 Foresight session by Patricia Gillard and Lynley Marshall. Brewer also shifted my perception by talking about collections in terms of story telling and experience.

I was inspired by the passion with which Dame Cheryl approached what Malcolm Long called the “conversion process”, and the important distinction she made of taking both a “niche” and

“enabling” approach to creative industry development and to valuing creative industries, rather than a GDP approach.

Other key points which were echoed throughout the conference were:

- * importance of developing a sustainable and integrated industry;
- * importance of measuring and investing in statistics – research and economic analysis;
- * being regional but thinking global with an export focus; and
- * self confidence!!

Other points of inspiration came from many of the case studies, and for me from the regional stories, such as the ANKAA web projects, the on line heritage sessions, and great new media developments from the ABC broadband to –empyre- on line community. We hope our new creative launch last night was also inspiring.

Challenges and Issues particularly related to Financing Creativity and the vexing issues of IP ownership:

- * the rate of return for investors generally does not match the level of risk;
- * there is a need for centralised and accessible data and analysis – the clearing house – David Court’s bottom line is that no data = no investment.
- * the issue of a multiplicity of voices. Malcolm Long called for a Screen Council for lobbying and strategy and policy development in regards to content creation.

It seems there is a need for key players to work together – to brainstorm business models, IP and revenue streams then reassess government policies. Kim Dalton raised the need to look at overseas models, getting business investments through private funds, tax incentives, r & d concessions.

It is interesting that Paul Voigt responded that such a council – the NZ Screen Council – has just been established in NZ to look at trade, capability and finance.

Some finance options raised were subscriptions (penny or micro payments as fee for service) and revenue sharing.

Clearly there is a need to be creative about financing as well as content.

So where is the joy?

The panel on financing creativity came back to television and content for mobiles as the best options for investment in content creation, along with blended content and services, education and business applications.

Where are we going?

- * Mobile complimentary media
- * Rage on your mobile – forget the ipod!
- * real time multi player games on mobiles
- * PVRs
- * range from micro content, and Steve Bellman's telescopic commercials, to maxi content – dense broadband and interactive content
- * productive audiences, user uploads
- * The 2020 foresight session raised the need for “agility” to keep up with markets and trends and the changing time frames of media consumer experience, and the changed relationships between content creators, distributors and audiences.

So to sum up, where is the Magic, where is the Money and where is the Myth?

Sadly the “myth” could also be described as the hype- that there is a positive environment for content developers and creative industry development generally in Australia. Don't you believe it. This conference certainly raised more challenges than solutions.

The “money” is the main challenge – developing sustainable business models for digital content development, production and creative industry development.

The “magic” is in the creativity, the content, the art, the stories, the projects, the inspiration – we have seen some wonderful examples during this conference – and in the people! As was pointed out in the DVD which Kim Dalton presented – the main assets of the creative industries are its people.

And there is magic in conferences like this one which provide such an important opportunity for networking, learning, and for shared consideration of the future outlook for our sector.

Thank you DCITA for bringing the conference to Byron – I have had great feedback from the local delegates for this unique opportunity to participate in a national discussion – and congratulations to Christabel Wright, Rupert Hewison and Jane Fleming, and the OzeCulture team for a successful conference.