

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Culture at our fingertips: new research on digital arts engagement

New research released by the Australia Council for the Arts examines how we engage with the arts using digital technology and what this means for the cultural sector, now and into the future.

Digital engagement with the arts has been increasing over the past two decades and has accelerated with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[In Real Life: Mapping digital cultural engagement in the first decades of the 21st century](#) provides timely insights into how audiences use digital technology to engage with the arts.

The Sydney Opera House's digital season, the Melbourne Digital Concert Hall and the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair are examples of how creative workers and institutions have adapted to present their work to audiences during pandemic restrictions.

As the report highlights, the rapid digital shift poses significant policy and commercial challenges.

Australia Council CEO Adrian Collette AM said:

“We now have literally at our fingertips almost infinite possibilities to discover, connect, engage and create culture online. We have seen, particularly throughout the pandemic, how digital technologies have enabled more people to access the arts and cultural experiences.

We also know these changes – that were already occurring and have been accelerated by the pandemic – have deep ramifications for the creative sector. There is a need to discuss and respond to key challenges – from creating sustainable business models to ensuring all Australians, particularly those with disability, older Australians and those in regional and remote communities, are able to access and benefit from creative participation,” Mr Collette said.

Conducted in partnership between the Australia Council for the Arts and the National Arts Council Singapore, the research will inform both councils' research and strategies.

In Real Life adds to the Australia Council's growing body of work on digital engagement, including the [Audience Outlook Monitor research](#) which is tracking audience sentiment and behaviour through the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as previous research on [professional artists](#), [arts participation](#), [blockchain](#) and [music exports](#).

## Key highlights:

- **Australians are increasingly engaging with the arts online** – and the line between ‘artist’ and ‘audience’ is increasingly blurred due to the rise of participatory digital technologies.
- **Audience expectations are changing** and now often include: **the ability to insert oneself into the story**, an artwork or an art experience; **access to multiple lines of communication** – with performers, audience members, and other participants.
- **For many people, the live experience is no longer just about ‘in-person’ attendance.** It can mean experiencing art simultaneously with others and watching events unfold in real time.
- **Audience expectations now also include significant access to arts and culture for minimal cost.** Digital technology has made it harder for copyright holders to exert control over artworks, but has also led to an expansion of options for sharing and remixing artistic content. New business models and consideration of copyright are required to secure remuneration for artists and creatives.
- Digital technology provides potential for a **wider range of people to participate in a greater variety of creative activities. But that doesn’t mean that everyone has equal access.** Connectivity is unevenly distributed across socioeconomic groups, ages and geographic locations. And there are other barriers to online participation for some groups. The Australia Council has further work underway on access and inclusion in the digital sphere.

The research comes ahead of the release of the Australia Council’s Digital Cultural Strategy and the upcoming [Arts Going Digital](#) forum being held on July 12.

The full report can be found on our [website](#).

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