



Media – where do museums fit in?

SPEAKER: Marc Sands, Marketing Director, Guardian (UK)
Marc Sands joined the board at Guardian Newspapers Ltd in July 2000. During his time, the Guardian and Guardian Unlimited have been awarded the Marketing Week Effectiveness Award and the Media Brand of the Year Award for the Observer by Media Week.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk>

CHAIR: Gail Dextor Lord, President of Lord Culture Resources
With over 30 years experience in the cultural sector, Gail Lord is committed to assisting institutions, communities, and their leaders worldwide, develop their cultural resources. Projects include: Louvre at Lens, Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, Tate Modern and Tate Britain, The World Trade Center Memorial Museum and the International Center of Photography, New York.

<http://www.lord.ca>

CASE STUDY NOTES:

Marc Sand's presentation and the ensuing wider discussion focused on three main questions:

1. How does the Guardian choose its cultural partners?
2. What makes a partnership really successful?
3. How might these partnerships change in the future?

How does the Guardian choose its cultural partners?

Marc said that Guardian readers tend to be 'art-obsessed'. In choosing cultural partners, a number of criteria come into play for decision-makers at the Guardian:

- The event/exhibition must 'feel Guardian,' that is, its subject must fit with the paper's liberal ethos. It must be 'fascinating,' have an 'edge.'
- There should be some element of editorial exclusivity offered to the Guardian, for example, partnership with the Turner Prize includes the first interview with the winner. There was some discussion around this issue as museums tended to be interested in the broadest possible coverage and therefore saw exclusivity as disadvantageous to their interests.
- There should be some benefit to Guardian partners and/or readers, for example, entertaining opportunities, exclusive access to exhibitions, ticket discounts.

Marc said that the Guardian was open to diversifying the range of its partnerships, to include international partnerships, if the subject were interesting enough.

What makes a partnership really successful?

Marc briefly described the range of the Guardian's cultural partnerships, for example with the [British Museum](#), [Turner Prize](#), [Hay Festival](#), and [Glastonbury](#). The key to success is exploiting the partnership to deliver mutual benefit:

- The Guardian - British Museum partnership involved four hour-long debates, linking history with contemporary issues. The debates were chaired by Jon Snow, the face of Channel 4 News since 1989, and included a range of expert panellists. In this way, the partnership imaginatively exploited well-known media faces and the museum's intellectual resource.
- In the partnerships with the Hay Festival and Glastonbury, Marc described how the Guardian uses blogs, podcasts, and other streamed media to widen access and maximise impact. Guardian journalists also host debates and interviews at the Hay Festival.

A successful partnership was not about unqualified support of an event/exhibition. Journalists gave their opinions honestly, whether positive or negative, and it was this that audiences valued.

How might partnerships change in the future?

One conference delegate suggested that in the future, museums would increasingly market themselves directly using media tools, rather than rely on newspapers, leading to fewer media-cultural partnerships?

Marc disagreed, saying that there would continue to be an important role for media-cultural partnerships, albeit a changing one that incorporated more on-line tools. These partnerships would continue because:

- On-line versions of newspapers were in an excellent position to exploit digital tools for the benefit of partners.
- Audiences trusted editorial comment by non-biased journalists more than they trusted direct advertising and promotion.
- Loyal media audiences could be persuaded by good editorials to go to events/exhibitions that they might not otherwise consider.