

‘Turning Social Media into a Creative Conversation’

IJAD Infinite Reach Project

Research Report

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cucr
20 years
1994-2004

Funded by Creativeworks

CONTENTS	PAGE
1. Introduction	3
2. Project Description and Chronology	4
3. Context	14
4. Research Methodology and Approach	17
4.1 Research Methodology	
5. Key Findings from the Social Media Data	19
6. Conclusions	22
6.1 Content Generation	
6.2 Who is Following?	
6.3 Working on Paper	
6.4 Performance	
7. Recommendations	26
7.1 Recommendations for Performances Using Twitter	
7.2 Toolkit	
Appendix	30
1.i) Online questionnaire	
1.ii) Paper questionnaire	



Image taken at 'Infinite' Performance at The Vaults

1. Introduction

This report is the final output of the 'Turning Social Media into a Creative Conversation' Creativeworks project, which involves a partnership between IJAD Dance Company and the Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR)¹, Goldsmiths. CUCR are the research partner and this report is designed to give an overview of the data and qualitative feedback collated and how the project evolved throughout the process both in content collation and the creative responses to that content.

The In-Finite events were used as live creative laboratories which were simultaneously an object of study and a form of research and exploration. CUCR have a portfolio of work with creative organisations and practitioners through which they have developed expertise in participative action research (PAR) which is embedded into project processes and delivery. The In-Finite project sought to establish new audiences and to interact directly with them via new media, primarily Twitter, but also Facebook, Vine and Pinterest. The project organisers and research team sought on every level to be responsive and to adapt their approaches reactively through close monitoring of audience feedback both online and through interviews and materials offered.

This research was contiguous with IJAD's values which they summarise as:

- We desire an inclusive communication, everyone has the right and ease to access dance
- it is important for people to have the opportunity, to discover and express their creativity
- We value ongoing relationships with our audiences and invite them into the creative process for longer than the evenings of each performance
- Transparency from inception to delivery allowing inclusion throughout.
- The traditional dance stage can form a barrier – performances must adapt to the behaviour of the audience that goes to the theatre. Allowing them to constantly have and use their smart phone in their hand and to use them to interact with the performance.
- We believe the artist, audience divide or hierarchy needs to be reduced.

Part of the evaluation team's approach needed to consider why it is important to create new audiences. Apart from the business part of creating a sustainable dance organisation and assuring its longevity, there are interesting questions around different types of audiences and access to the arts. The Boalean conception of power sharing: allowing horizontal lines of creative power to flow between the audience and the performers finds resonance here. The internet and social media are often cited as being a source of empowerment: user generated content, guerrilla reporting, citizen journalism are all phrases used in this context.

1 For more information see - <http://www.gold.ac.uk/cucr/>

IJAD's approach focuses on how creative output can be affected / controlled by those who are not experts, participating in processes usually closed them. This addresses concerns, which not only point to the concept of reaching new audiences, but of social exclusion.

Social media and the creative process are also important. Are audiences more likely to get involved in the creative process if they have previous experience of using their creativity on social media? Does social media and its role in society and the life of an individual, mean audiences want more input into the performances they attend? Will they come to expect this level of engagement? Can social media break down barriers and the 'fourth wall'? Can social media allow for more meaningful relationships between artistic practitioners and their audiences?

Part of the project's overall aim is to unlock the creative process and make it more transparent so that audiences feel part of it and accordingly the evaluation research needed to examine how audiences interact with this type of performance and what principles could be extracted for application in further iterations of this project, but also other performances.

2. Project Description and Chronology

Over the research period there were several performances which took place in different venues and one workshop. These are detailed below.

I. Brunel University: Turning Social Media into Creative Media

Focus:

- How can the digital world help the arts break physical boundaries?
- Exploring connecting places and people with creative expression.

Theme: Space

The workshop was geared towards three objectives:

- 1) How can Twitter become a creative space
- 2) Creating a form of performance on Twitter
- 3) How to be continually present on Twitter

The tools we used: Twitter and Vine

There were three different activities/outcomes:

- One group created 'The Wasteland' on Twitter

- One group created few tweets based on sound and movement
- One group created tweets around the topic of 'where does the sky end?'

II. The Science Museum 'Lates'

The first performance was at the Science Museum and occurred three times over one evening on 30th October 2013 and was free to attend. It was part of a Science Museum 'Lates' programme² and also included in the Nour Festival³ programme.

The methods chosen for the science museum were to run the project over 8 weeks. The first four weeks were research/pre-production phase to attract audiences and to interact with them by tweeting using film, text and images. The following four weeks were rehearsal, where the artistic team used the theme and the communication received through Twitter to create the performance and we kept our audiences informed of our progress by responding to the tweets through Vine.

The performance created based on the tweets received prior to the performance as well as the ones received during the performance. The audiences were able to see the tweet communication thanks to a media projection created specifically for this project.

III. Camden Stables performance

This was followed by a one off performance at Camden Stables on 19th November. This was a paying performance and many of the audience had a connection to the organisation. In this performance the objective was to look at the immediate interaction with the audiences that were present using the idea 'You tweet we perform'. The performers were reading the tweets received and improvising in response to them.

IV. The Vaults Performances

There was the final run of performances over a week at The Vaults at Waterloo between 5th and 8th March 2014. Nightly performances were part of the annual Vault Festival which runs from January to March and spans 60 venues⁴. There was a final performance at an invitation only event organised by AHRC on 12th March which brought together many of the processes which had been trialled throughout the research period.

Through successive performances the methodology was developed. Adaptations and methods proven to be effective included:

2 http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitmuseum/plan_your_visit/lates.aspx

3 <http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/subsites/nour.aspx>

4 <https://www.thevaultfestival.com>

- Approaching artists that were not within IJAD's circle to interact on the subject of space prior to the performance.
- Creating methods to support the performers interpretations and improvisations
- Developing the rationale for inviting audiences to be catalysts to the creative processes and performance.
- Using the tweets to inform the artistic logic and flow of the piece
- Clearly and immediately projecting the Twitter feed so that audiences could literally see their input.

Over the lifetime of the project the team experimented with different ways of using social media for example the journey from Twitter via projection to the dance, and in the ways the Twitter handle @IJADdance could be used. In the early history of Twitter, it was possible to see every feed, from every member. Now Twitter is too expansive for this level of monitoring and members don't feel they own their feed as much as Facebook for example. Even though Facebook has made changes recently to privacy settings, it is largely accepted that the platform is reserved for sharing amongst other users that are already known. Twitter, however allows for communication and encourages an environment where strangers can connect. As few as 12% of Twitter users have private accounts, meaning the majority have the possibility to interact with anyone.

IJAD wanted to gather input from different types of audience, particularly at the beginning when they were starting to build up an audience for this project. The Twitter feed activity accordingly took the form of a question, answer and moderation cycle.

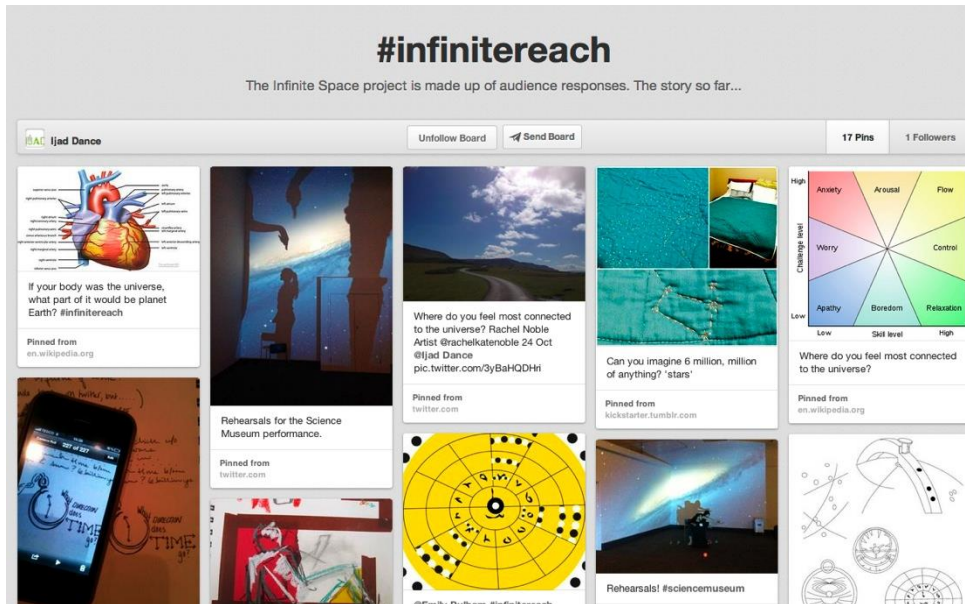
From one month before the Science Museum Lates⁵ performance, questions were posed online through Twitter. These included:

- *Where does the sky end for you?*
- *Can you imagine 6 million, million of anything*
- *If your body was the universe, what part of it would be planet Earth?*
- *What direction does time go?*
- *Where do you feel most connected to the universe?*
- *What does the word universe make you think of?*

These questions were initially sent to 'friends' of IJAD and then targeted at new followers with messages. Responses requested could be in text, image or video form. This type of cycle required being very vigilant; keeping track of new followers and then personally contacting them and encouraging them to get

⁵ http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitmuseum/plan_your_visit/lates.aspx

involved which was extremely labour intensive. There was also follow up where respondents were shown both their responses and how dancers were using these ideas through vine posts on the blog and were collaged on a Pinterest board.



IJAD Pinterest board

The social media researcher, in conjunction with IJAD staff identified and reached out privately to a group of willing artists for engagement with the content themes; the results of those interactions were shown in rehearsal being translated into movements and posted on Twitter for their contributors to see.

The broadest termed questions (such as those above) were used to maximise responses. These were also directed at complete strangers with success. The non-artist community were willing to be involved. Responses did vary, although much was text based, however some were more 'artistically' informed.



IJAD Twitter follower responses October 2013.

While labour intensive, it seemed that this was the most fruitful way of expanding the Twitter network, for example one respondent commented:

'When I'm engaged personally, such as being included in a tweet, I'm mostly likely to engage.' Online participant.

Part of the run up period included a workshop at Brunel University, run by Joumana Mourad (IJAD Artistic Director) and hosted by Professor Johannes Birringer, Chair in Drama and Performance Technologies. The workshop was attended by dance/theatre students and academics and the session culminated in a performance which was streamed online and alongside had a 'Twitter performance' happening in parallel with the hashtag #performtwit. There was some interaction online with those not in the room, but the main outputs were a sense of performance achieved within a short space of time, which worked online as well as in the space itself.

"I took part in a Twitter experimental performance of the 'Wasteland.' It was really a bit of fun and I'm not sure if I would call it a performance as such since I am not sure it would be interesting for someone watching in the role of the audience. However as a form of participant creative work it was interesting. It would have been better if everyone in the group had had a dedicated account so that we could all collectively produce the text and it would have been better to have a smaller text so that it was more like a sung round." Brunel workshop participant.

What resulted from that session was a sense of Twitter being a performance space in its own right. The social media researcher monitored the @IJADdance

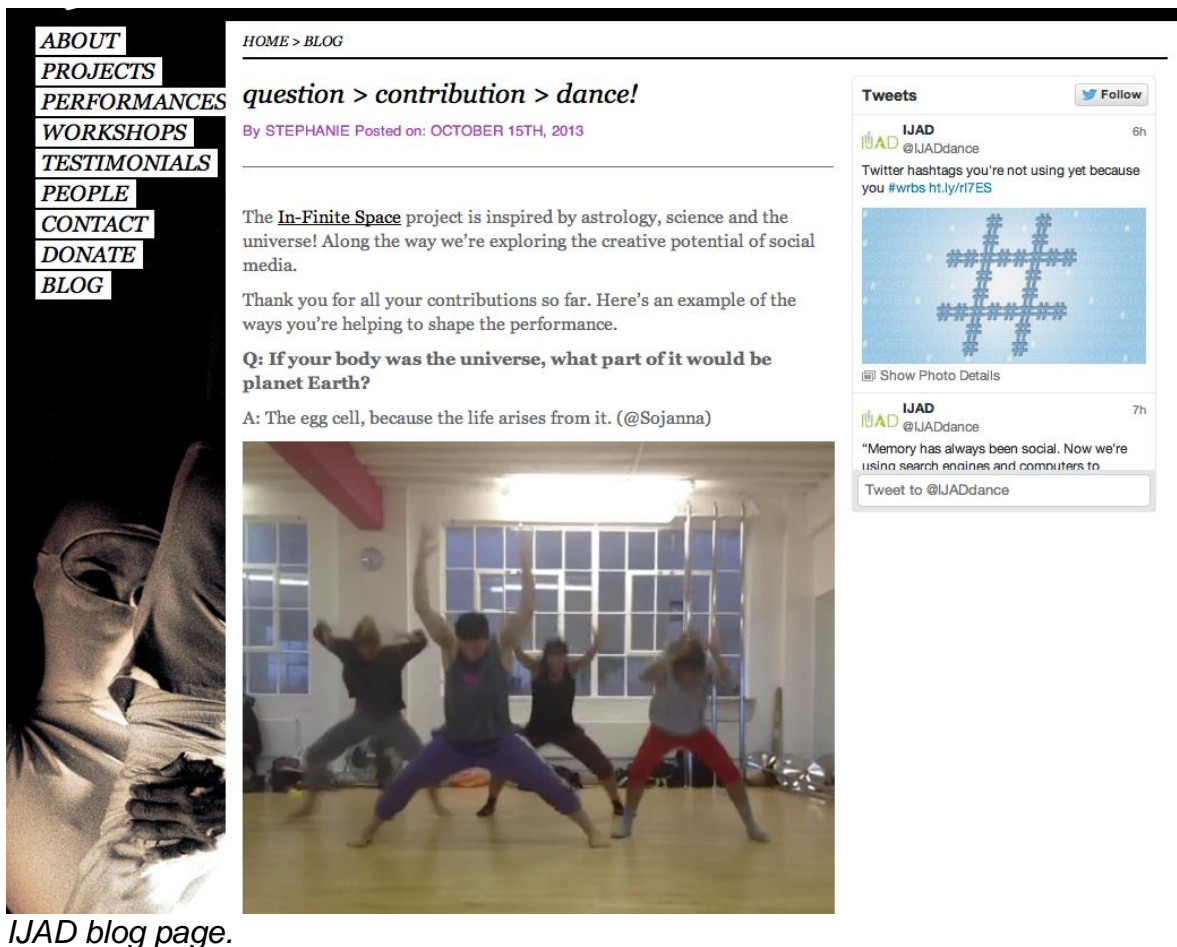
feed remotely, while watching the live stream, while the ethnographic researcher was present as a participant in the room. Awareness of the Twitter performance was minimal as the ethnographic researcher was engrossed in the action within the workshop, while the social media researcher had a fuller understanding of how the streaming and social media feed were working together or in parallel. This perhaps pointed to a future evolution of the IJAD online interface and how it could work with online audiences in a more 'whole' sense than for those sitting in the room as a live audience.

The Science Museum Lates performance took place in the context of a programme of performances amidst the exhibits, not to mention speed dating and socialising by participants. There were obvious benefits of being part of a bigger festival and the reach the Science Museum has in its advertising. The performance was also part of the Kensington and Chelsea organised 'Nour Festival of Arts'⁶, which incorporated art and performance from the Middle East and North Africa. IJAD has origins in North Africa and the Middle East and by straddling differing agendas gained access to two different marketing schemes and a much wider potential audience.

During the rehearsal period the circular nature of the process was communicated, via the Twitter feed, Facebook page and via the IJAD blog, which has a page on the IJAD website.⁷

6 <http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/subsites/nour.aspx>

7 <http://ijaddancecompany.com/blog/>



IJAD blog page.

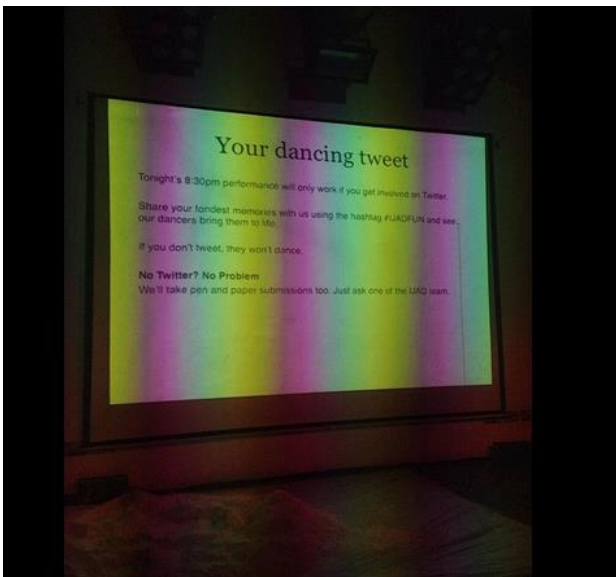
At a subsequent performance at the Stables in Camden there was a distinct change in approach in terms of involving the onsite audience. This was a showcase for Trustees of the company and 'friends' and arguably there was less work involved to collaborate with this 'friendly' audience. There was a much more direct and responsive use of the participant input which was clearer for the audience members involved. Participants from the audience could come in and write out their 'tweet's by hand or suggest online using the hashtag #InfiniteFun.

The main part of the performance followed a format whereby a Tweet was read aloud by a dancer, from their smart phone and improvised to a small group of audience members. The performance was set up as an installation that the audience moved around. There was a clear sense of the effect of the Tweet, but this was an immediate, of the moment type of interaction.

Images from the Stables performance



IJAD @IJADdance · Nov 19
"@YianniPelekanos: Bed at 11am, giggles shared between friends, attempted quiet through thin walls. #ijadfun"
pic.twitter.com/RuJYQbzzX5
Reply Delete Favorite HootSuite Flag media



IJAD @IJADdance · Nov 19
Got a tweet for us? #ijadfun pic.twitter.com/GYzc91j8v8
Reply Delete Favorite HootSuite Flag media

The final set of performances at The Vaults, near Waterloo station brought approaches which built on past experiences and also engendered new ways of

working. Throughout the performance and build-up period, the social media researcher and IJAD staff kept a list of people who tweeted for engagement. Whoever was manning the feed (mainly the social media researcher) tweeted to audiences to welcome them into the space / project. There was a far greater control over what the feed featured, as the social media researcher curated the tweets for the format of the performance.

The approach was adapted through the series of performances. For example, on the first night the output on Twitter was mostly to document and publicise the performance going on in the studio utilising a traditional approach to Twitter and performance. Our own tweets were kept to a minimum. Audience members could also write down their tweets as at The Stables and the space was small and offered an intimate setting.

In the research phase before the performance, tweets were collected over a number of weeks and sometimes re-used through the course of the performance. The rate at which tweets were projected during the performance was adapted in order to measure the level of audience interaction.

The rehearsal process involved the choreographer working with the dancers on the concept of the piece using the theory of relativity, the string theory and the ten dimensions. These theories informed the choreographic approach and allowed improvisation sections to be rich in tasks. These were based on ideas being tweeted by the online audience and rehearsal sections, which as before, were filmed in Vine and displayed on Twitter and the blog. What evolved at this stage from rehearsal was finding ways to overcome the difficulty for the dancers to improvise with each other:



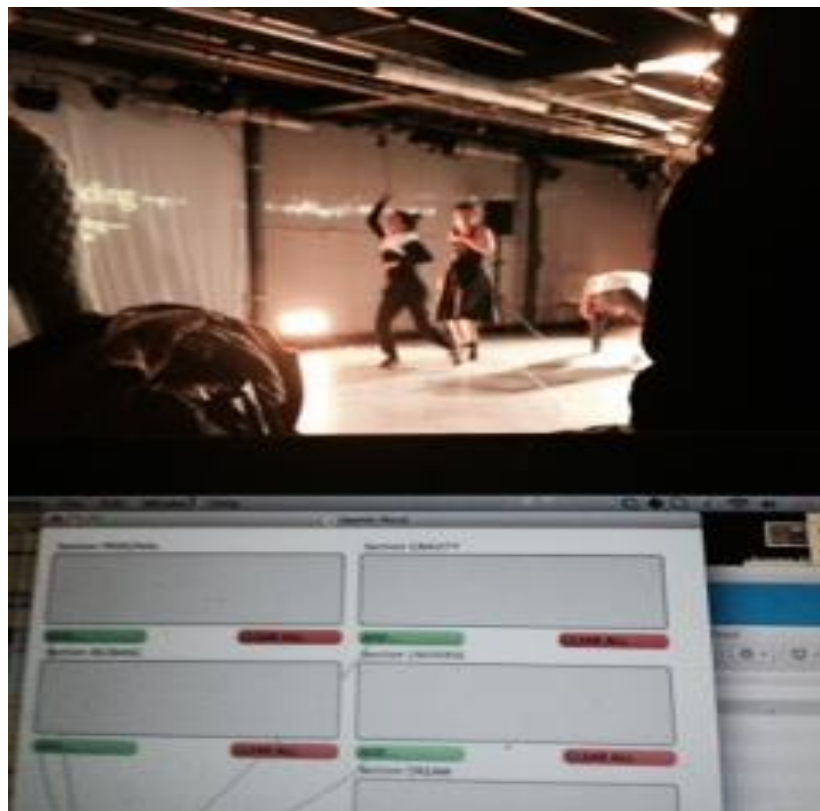
"At the beginning we were reading the tweets and tried to improv together but because we didn't know each other; my intention could be different, to what

other dancer wanted to do, so we tried to set rules as what kind of quality you give to movement, related to tweet". Dancer.

This framework related to categories of tweet and how the dancers might interpret them. These were summarised as:

- Personal space – cheeky, funny
- Big bang – sharpness, explosion, big
- Universe – circles, using space.
- Gravity – pulling, punching, thinking about crowd reaction
- Dreams - being in a dream – magical.

During this performance week, the social media researcher, working with the multi-media artist who programmed the Twitter feed displays, created a piece of curation software which allowed them to categorize tweets, using colour coding which related to the categories above. This resultant framework offered the dancers short-cut clues to interpreting the dance and working together.



Twitter feed projection interface

The shows each night were different as the tweets used for the improvised sections changed. Audience members were invited to wander around the performance space on arrival and could get close to the performers who were all

'in character'. This set the tone for a very close interaction with the live audience. Dancers took care to look directly at the audience during their performance and the proximity to the performance space made it feel very 'raw'. One audience member observed in the feedback form: *"Vibrant, exciting, great choreography, dancers really engaged with each other and the audience directly. Synchronised dance perfect."*

For the dancers this close contact with the audience had differing uses:

"For me it was quite funny – I took it as trying to see which one the tweet was coming from. Made them feel more comfortable and more involved. More connection with them. Not just audience, but part of the show." Dancer.

For the performer a transformation has taken place - the audience has become part of the show.



Ijad performance at The Vaults

3 Context

IJAD have been working with the concept of dance and performance and the potentials of social media within performance since the beginning of 2013. They held a performance in March 2013 which used online user generated content and streamed it live online. This was a performance that started with an installation and finished with a performance streamed internationally. The event allowed audience members to move through the space and leave and revisit as they wished. This section aims to outline how IJAD's work fits in within the wider context of the dance and performance scene working with social media, and with their desire to challenge traditional artist / audience relationships.

User generated content is not new to the dance world. There are interactive events involving participant generated content being held by organisations such

as Sadler's Wells. These incorporate workshop events for community members to participate in writing sessions and image production, which feed into choreography, animations and live projections through the performance.⁸ Community members were also invited to be the performers. The difference in approach largely seems to be in IJAD's focus on encouraging audience participants to take a larger role in content curation and IJAD's exploration of live response to social media engagement.

Other examples of performance involving social media have used different approaches which have meant, like IJAD that performances will vary on the night, depending on the audience. In the same week as the Vaults performance, Battersea Arts Centre was host to a play entitled 'I Wish I Was Lonely'³ which encouraged the audience to leave their mobiles switched on and at points, the actors would phone audience members as part of the performance. Like IJAD this interaction had a direct impact on the performance and required a commitment from the audience to be active in the performance process. The implication being that without their input, the performance would fail. There is a question about what this type of participation creates for an audience member. Is it too much pressure? Do audiences want to participate in this way?

The dance community is active online, although the Arts have generally been slow to embrace the potential of social media. There are portals such as LondonDance.com, which include reviews and news and also classes. This addresses all types of dance interest and is run by Sadler's Wells. But it should be noted that it is informational and for the public generally, rather than inviting any kind of online interaction.

"Online is how I find out about auditions and reviews and videos and YouTube. All of that. I would say there is a massive source there which is alive and being used and growing in the media as far as contemporary dance is concerned." Dancer

There are also resources for the dance community online (as the above quote illustrates), particularly for auditions.⁹ Other projects exist which are concerned with innovations in technology and the performance world. SHPLive¹⁰ focuses on live streaming and other performances have been designed to use social media to intervene in the traditional audience experience. While at Brunel University, Johannes Birringer's Design and Performance Lab project¹¹ looks at interactivity through technology and movement and streaming. The In-Finite project in some ways addresses a combination of the two; that is information and interactivity,

8 <http://www.sadlerswells.com/whats-on/2011/Sum-of-Parts/> accessed 06.05.14

9 http://www.dancerspro.com/uk/?affid=8039&utm_source=affiliate&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=affiliate8039&gclid=COy73eP6tLsCFRSWtAodNTcAHQ

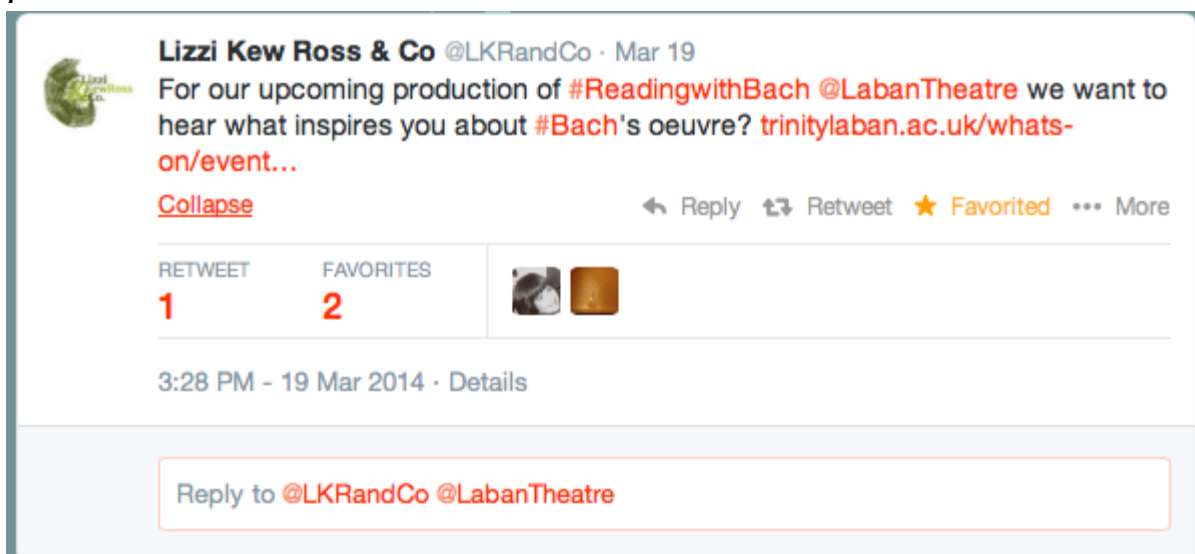
10 <http://shplive.tv> accessed 06.05.14

11 <http://people.brunel.ac.uk/dap/>

alongside an explorative approach to social media and its uses within performance.

Aside from academic research, the tech industry has also produced some interesting and intuitive programmes that integrate with social media. Twubs for instance offers a way of aggregating all your hashtag followers onto a page where they can see other information related to your hashtag topic. Or Crowdscreen which allows a live, moderated projection of a twitter feed at an event. While others allow you to use the reach of your followers or friends to spread a message, or Wordeo, a phone app which moves on from Vimeo and which allows you to make and post simple videos onto social media sites.

Around the same time the Deptford based Laban Dance Centre was also tweeting its audiences, asking for input for an upcoming performance entitled *Reading with Bach* (see image below).



At the beginning of the *Infinite* project IJAD felt this a new way of interacting with their audiences and needed a sea change to make it more the norm.

"It's such a new process of work. There was a need for adjustment on all levels." Artistic Director, IJAD

But even in the course of a year this type of interaction with the public has become more common-place. One respondent remarked:

"I thought I've been to a lot of pieces when content is being made in the moment: it's not that unique. I've have seen other performances using it."

But what might the implications of this be? Technology allows a closer interaction with an audience but does it also throw into question the act of the choreographer/artist? Sonntag's mediation *On Photography* focuses on the evolution of technology (in this case the camera) as aiding the conception of photography as art - the proliferation of the kit enabled '*social uses for the operations of the photographer, so the reaction against these uses reinforced the self-consciousness of the photography as-art.*'¹² The self referential nature of the process might inhibit the artist. For IJAD questions at the forefront of this work were how to incorporate the content generated by audiences within a project which still had a choreographer at its artistic helm? At what level and to what degree does audience generated content inhabit the space of the dancer? How does this affect the act of creating the work and at what point?

4. Research Methodology and Approach

The research aimed to test out the use of interactive technologies which will enable any performance art organisation to use social media to engage audiences from around the world in performance work. It asked what can the arts and the social sciences learn from each other through these live creative laboratories which are simultaneously an object of study and a form of research. Do interactive technologies and social media produce dialogical, interactive dance and its forms of connectivity? What are the opportunities for audience diversification?

Key areas of investigation were as follows:

- Engaging audiences via social media and live performance.
- Online engagement which involves creative content generation rather than just commentary.
- Exploring how much online audiences are willing to participate in a creative process. Identifying those audiences who do engage and analysing whether their participation differs depending on differing audience profiles.
- Creating new audiences for IJAD.
- Retaining a growing user base and utilising it as a resource in the future.
- Building an online community.

¹² Sonntag, S. 8: 1977

- Translating creative content into dance practice and communicating that process back to the user group.

The research evaluation aims were to analyse the processes used to enlist and retain new audiences both off and online, Using ethnographic and digital data provide qualitative evidence; and to create a toolkit which will help to provide a framework for future projects.

4.1 Research Methodology

The research approach was one which set out to both record and reflect on the processes used to reach out to and interact with new audiences of IJAD during the research period. Methods included interview, observation of performance, and questionnaires aimed at audiences both in the physical spaces and online. This was an iterative process whereby the research team reflected on our own practice and how we were engaging with the creative teams and audiences both on and offline and also used regular meetings and tools to feedback ideas and progress with the creative team at IJAD.

Key research questions included:

- How can creative organisations use social media to attract new audiences and retain them?
- Do interactive technologies and social media produce dialogical, interactive dance and its forms of connectivity?
- What are the opportunities for audience diversification?

It was important for both parties that this collaboration allowed for close work, in a practical sense as well as an analytical one.

Part of IJAD's aims as stated at the commissioning stage of the project were:

“to be able to stimulate an audience, not to talk back, but to dance back. How do we stimulate people to want to use twitter in a creative manner, to record themselves and their ideas in response to an artists question and to be an active part in the thinking and creation of a piece. But their approach was to be broad and to experiment: We seek to discover a range of methodologies which will enable any performance art organisation to use social media to involve their audiences from around the world in performance work.”

In turn the Goldsmiths team was implicated in that research process. This embedded research is a resource which offers a project such as IJAD's, a means of reflecting during experimental processes. To support these two distinct research roles were identified with one researcher focusing on social media

development and the second on ethnographic methods and qualitative processes.

The Goldsmiths social media researcher formed an integral part of the trial and error process, essentially running the Twitter feed and monitoring interaction with new audiences. The social media researcher worked closely with the Artistic Director and the team to reach out to potential sources of content through social media. The ethnographic researcher spent time meeting with and talking to team members and observing the feed, she also acted as an audience participant – offering content and engaging in the audience experience online and offline. This two-fold approach allowed a greater degree of reactivity as new avenues were explored and responses logged. New respondents were interacted with by the social media researcher and later for some more in-depth question and answer by the ethnographic researcher. Using online and offline questionnaires both formal and informal questioning processes, the Goldsmiths team also needed to experiment in finding and collating data, in parallel with the dance creation and performance process. Using data mining methods, measuring responses and frequency and identifying types of user, we also used a visual ethnography to document both the online interactions and physical performances.

The evaluation needed to consider audience ‘types’ in order to analyse IJAD's project to find and engage them in participating in the creation of dance performances. This required the consideration of different definitions of audience. Degrees or levels of audience engagement were also explored during the life of the project. Some people ‘lurk’ on social media and observe, whilst others take an active role in adding content to their feed. According to Twitter, 40% of users are ‘listeners’ rather than active participants. IJAD wants to attract online audiences who participate but also who come, or want to come, to live shows. The evaluation not only identified audience traits but took these into account in building and testing new strategies for engagement. For example, it was established early on was that there was little interaction between audience members online, instead the interaction largely took place between IJAD and its followers.

5. Key Findings from the Social Media Data

The period and number of performances generated a significant number of interactions between IJAD and its audience/s, providing differing levels of engagement through content generation, general publicity and acquiring new followers as well as engagement in the performance itself. We have divided the data into two parts: one which covers Science Museum Lates and The Stables performances and the second which concentrates on The Vaults performance. These were seen at 2 distinct phases of the on-going research, divided by our own feedback schedule and also the way the project evolved.

Performance 1

Measurable	30 Sept - 30 Oct
Number of tweets	755 (average 24.35 a day)
Mentions by users	270 (0.40)
Retweets (others RTing IJAD)	75 (9.93% of all tweets)
Retweets (IJAD RTing others)	266 (35% of all tweets)

End of September - end of October 2013

Performance 2

Measurable	2nd Feb - 10th March
Number of tweets	424 (average 11.46 a day)
Mentions by users	168 (0.40)
Retweets (others RTing IJAD)	63 (14.86% of all tweets)
Retweets (IJAD RTing others)	153 (36% of all tweets)

To compare the two overall periods:

The average number of mentions per tweet stayed consistently at 0.40. While the average number of tweets a day almost halved for the second performance, the number of those tweets that got retweeted is higher - suggesting a more engaging, quality twitter feed.

A consistently high percentage of RTs making up the IJAD feed shows a good level of interaction with other users.

For the second performance we also decided to break down the 2 phases - the content generation period (phase 1) and the performance period (phase 2) in order to further investigate the success of the experiments.

Measurable	Phase 1 (2nd Feb - 3rd March)	Phase 2 (4th - 10th March)
Number of tweets	236 (average 8 a day)	79 (average 11 a day)
Replies	119 (average 4 a day)	57 (average 8 a day)
Retweets	46 (average 1.5 a day)	23 (average 3 a day)

Other second performance stats include:

- 23 people clicked to give feedback through an online survey.
- 240 uses of the hashtag (does not include the paper tweets, does include our own use)

What is most striking is that the audience was more engaged in phase 2, in terms of interactivity with IJAD's feed.

During the first phase, the majority of tweets (approx. 90%) on this hashtag are what we might call 'creative' tweets rather than 'natural' tweets. For example, people were more likely to tweet an idea, phrase or message as instructions suggested rather than a tweet informing their followers that they were there etc. Lots of similar themes were used for the tweets – many were attempts to interpret the word 'space' (as asked on the programme) and mostly spoke about the space the audience member imagined being in.

In the second phase, there was a focus on specific themes in the run-up to the performance, but the majority of interaction from the twitter feed followers/on site audience was required during the live performances themselves. The audience were in the space of the performance and were personally invited to take part through social media. This context is clearly more conducive to a responsive audience. It is also true that targeting a smaller group (the 50 or so performance attendees rather than 1000 Twitter followers) is more likely to get responses.

There are some other marked differences between these audience types that we should highlight. At the Vaults and The Stables, an audience member has paid to attend which should mean more investment into the themes of the performance and through being personally invited to 'join in' will feel that in order to get the most of that investment (both time and financial), they should do so. At the SM 'Lates', the live audience attended for free, some came deliberately and some attended 'by chance'.

The value exchange here is also more likely to give the audience time to grasp what the performance is asking of its audience. You have an audience that have already given their permission, through buying a ticket, to be 'performed to' and shown willing to engage, in the context of the festival. Permission on this level is much harder to gain on social media and while a 'follow', or an 'RT' or a reply goes some way to ensure your interaction is a conversation rather than a one way speech, it does not go beyond ensuring you have a listener who will partake in that conversation.

If we also consider that this performance asks for some degree of understanding of themes, it needs time to educate the audience in its aims, even very briefly. In a performance space this exchange is very personal and hard to ignore and in the context of social media, where each tweet has a very short lifecycle, if unresponded to. The life of a tweet is now just 24 minutes, 2 years ago it was over 2 hours¹³.

13 Comufy, London

A further concern in relation to context is the idea of subverting habitual behaviours. In both performances IJAD in some way looked to disrupt an accepted habit: by breaking the fourth wall in the performance space or asking Twitter users to tweet in a different way to the one they're used to. So generating content and asking people to tweet before rather than during a performance, rather than using the tool to publicise, promote and engage audiences of an event disrupts the more accepted ways that people like to use Twitter. Both these kinds of disruptions require a lot from the audience. Disrupting the traditional performance is a familiar theme to arts audiences, it may not be so to those using Twitter.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion there are a number of recommendations and findings which have emerged from this rich research process. The responsiveness and collaboration of the team involved allowed for a broad range of approaches, which could be adapted and tested through a sequence of performance opportunities. So the work was essentially developmental and exploratory, requiring both commitment and flexibility from all of those involved in the process.

This has been a highly productive project, whereby experimental approaches have been tested and recorded through a variety of means. This has also been a learning process in terms of research: reaching audiences which are simultaneously physical and online is not always straight-forward. Respondents like to retain anonymity or at least control how much contact they have with a research team. There also appeared to be far greater interest in the research from a fee-paying audience from those who attended the free performances. We were dealing with differing types of audience, some paying, some not, some in the room, some online. Different types of audience, perhaps inevitably seemed to react to the performances in different ways. Thus the research needed to be iterative, responding accordingly to their changing nature.

Some notable moments within this project happened when the dancers were able to respond in real time. We need to consider that a social media audience will engage on their own terms, and expect immediate responses. Studio time and resource limitations meant that more of these moments were difficult to cultivate. Arguably, (and through our observations) Twitter is an additional component to the usual processes of the rehearsal studio. But resources have an impact on how the Twitter feed can reflect the studio process: A lot of content wasn't shared as the selection of what was featured on the feed through retweets and responded to was limited to providing artistic 'inspiration'.

#poem #poetry
@IJADdance pic.twitter.com/sDG6boXrrh

↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ... More

The Edge

walking between the planes
in a dialect of hidden existence
we rise with the morning sun

to leave behind the inspiration
of moon-crazed nights
that dance in the muddy lanes of desire

and we are free in the warmth of love
to share a kiss at the edge
where all the colors of light reflect in mist

Frank Watson

6.1 Content Generation

Commissioning content had a big impact on retweets, furthering the life of the event, even after it had finished. Questions and demands were targeted at specific audience members with requests for specific types of content.

The poem above was commissioned by @IJADdance feed in February 2014 before the Vaults performance. It had 21 retweets and 18 favourites and was still being retweeted 1 month after the end of the performance. So the content lives on beyond the life of the show, highlighting the performance potential of the medium.

6.2 Who is Following?

Top keywords ?

dance	451	company	86		
contemporary	85	theatre	83		
based	69	director	58	creative	57
london	47	artist	45	tweets	43



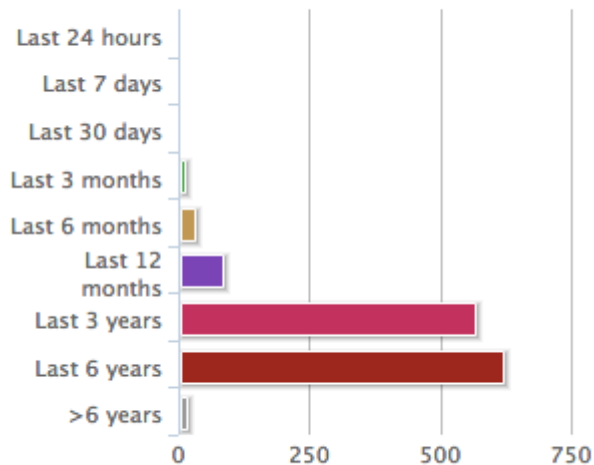
IJAD

IJAD's community on Twitter:
Potential Twitter Reach: 14,646 304

Keywords shown here give us an indication of the type of audience interests.

IJAD's audience demographics (all time, not just the performance) are located in UK (79%), with a large proportion based in London (48%). Of that total, 10% described themselves as being interested in art, while 9% said they were interested in dance. This does show that a large proportion who came to the IJAD performances or the content generation phases were 'new' to the genre.

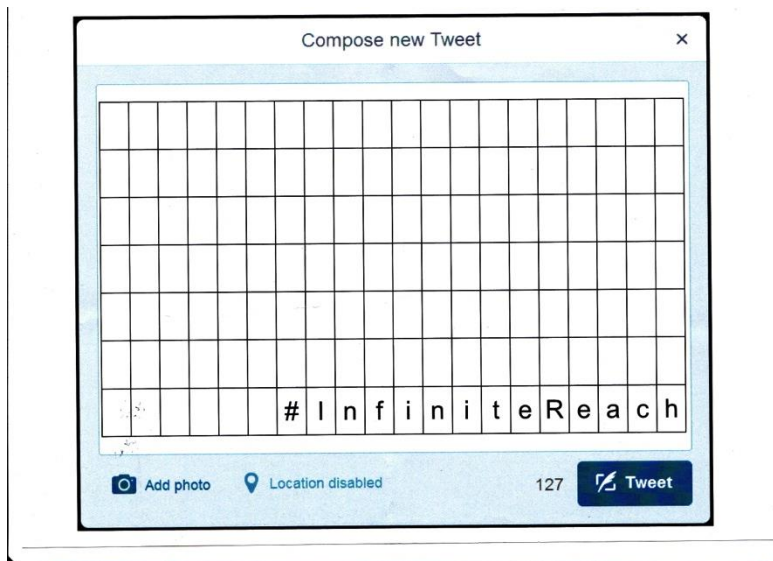
Account Age ?



Most of the contributors were from a very small community (friends of IJAD, etc). The age of the Twitter accounts within the community indicate that most are familiar with Twitter.

Most followers through the research phase are new followers rather than re-engaging from a previous performance. This could partly be a reflection on the nature of Twitter which encourages a transient audience which comes and goes. There were issues with keeping and sustaining audiences because it is so labour intensive. There is a question about whether it was asking too much of people in order to provide content. At the beginning of the rehearsal phase for each new show, the Twitter handle did ask previous content providers to generate content again and most didn't want to. One member of the team thought:

"Too many things were asked of audience over the period. Too many questions. Unclear. Purity of message needed. We needed to be more gentle: Have a Q&A after one evening to see if people have things to say."



6.3 Working on Paper

While the multifarious approach may have been onerous or confusing for some, IJAD and Goldsmiths also decided to work on paper alongside online methods in terms of interacting with the on-site audience, with positive effect. IJAD created a 'tweet form' which was distributed at the beginning of each performance at the Vaults.

The decision to add paper tweets to the experience was because of problems with internet connectivity in the venue. Audience feedback showed some frustration with the lack of signal. IJAD received 67 paper tweets over the length of the Vaults performance period. There seemed to be no correlation between the numbers of audience members and the number of tweets/paper tweets sent out.

The content of the paper tweets was remarkably different to the creative tweets received online. For example, many wrote one word only, while others ignored the format of traditional tweets and put a list of words in bullet points. Paper forms were formatted like Tweet boxes, but many ignored this. This suggests the confinement of 140 characters isn't always conducive to feedback, or at least if someone has the opportunity to give a fuller answer, they will take it.

Alongside this experience, the Goldsmiths team found that an online feedback form collated few responses through the SM Lates and Stables performances. Being on-site and asking questions to audience members enabled a greater level of feedback of course, but also the introduction of a paper-based short feedback form generated much more active responses. After the SM Lates there were only 4 online respondents, while via the paper feedback forms we had 25 forms completed after The Vaults show. There were 23 'click-through's to the online form during the latter period, but respondents didn't fill out the more complex online form. It might be that too much was asked of respondents in this online

format and a simpler, 'in the moment' form was more palatable. As with much online research, the challenge is not only about surveying and understanding why people respond, but also accessing those who don't and finding out why they don't.

6.4 Performance

There was also an evolution in terms of the way the choreography of the dancers reflected the content. At the Camden Stables event, which was a first attempt at dancing 'live' to tweets, there were difficulties in including some elements suggested by an audience who doesn't understand choreographic processes. One suggestion to interpret 'heart' as a response from an audience member was rejected by the dance troupe, as not fitting with their own vision:

'Obviously when anyone asks a question, you have your own answer. For a dancer I think in this respect it's difficult to take away what you personally feel.' Dancer.

The improvisation at Camden was challenging for the dancers but kept the process 'fresh' and brings forward many ideas beyond that of the dance troupe. The practice of improvisation changed how dancers responded. And latterly the formulated approach allowed for a more measured response, while retaining that live sensation for the audience.

Allowing people to write their tweets down on paper was important for those who want to remain anonymous or don't have Twitter; smaller audiences located closer to the dancers in a type of installation is more conducive to interaction ; having a period of time set aside for the audience to tweet is important to ensure content.

One note needs to be added: former performances of IJAD outside this research period were live streamed which allowed a greater sense of interaction from audiences away from the site. This was not possible during the research project performances due to financing and lack of infrastructure, but should be considered if appropriate for future projects.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations for performances using Twitter

The performance:

- Sync the experience on twitter to the experience in the space, *i.e.* tweets on screen link to tweets on Twitter
- Include a live stream, making the performance more accessible to online audiences we have built up over time

- Allow a more fluid approach to Twitter/people tweeting (more people tweeted during the performance itself, once they saw the formula, than in the set 'tweeting time')
- More time for dancing tweets as opposed to dancing pre-choreographed sections: we know we can get the interaction, let's use it.
- Offer a more succinct message in terms of the themes. 'Space' was treated as a general topic and although certain aspects of it (5 variations including 'the Big Bang', 'personal', 'universe', 'gravity' and 'dreams') were used in the performance itself, it is still a very wide set of ideas to convey over social media.
- Continue to offer interpretations once the event is over to continue the relationship and convert a one-time participant into a fan/follower of the company.
- Consider splitting marketing and content creation across more than one handle. For example having a dedicated ticket sales strategy for social media may deem it worthwhile maintaining a handle for promotion only.

Content Platforms:

- Separate some of the artistic, explorative aims from the marketing aims (e.g. running a campaign from a different account)
- Look into our aims: can we call tweets on paper 'tweets' at all? How do we make this more integrated?
- Train and monitor all stakeholders involved in the project including dancers to use social media regularly. This would encourage a broader presence online of the company and encourage further interaction before performances.
- Have dedicated 'studio/Twitter workshops' leading up to the performance which allow for better focus on content generation, much like the Brunel workshop.
- Create more content. The exchange with the audience is largely based on the content generated by them. More content from IJAD's side (videos, blogs etc) may help to promote a more lasting relationship with audiences and engage those who haven't been so far.
- The Twitter account was dedicated to the audience within the space and did not provide a narrative that could be followed. This is something we have not progressed since previous performances when Twitter and online streams have worked together to provide a digital alternative to being a live audience member. Can we condense social/artistic aims of the performance and find a single message to promote?

Moving towards the future, it seems important that an archive of the material collated thus far should be kept as it could be useful for future performances, not least as a record of who has been interacting and how. We have been documenting the engagement through Storify:

Phase 1 - <https://storify.com/IJADdance/the-infinite-possibilities-of-infinitespace>

7.2 Toolkit

In terms of a toolkit, there are certain discoveries and methodologies which could be applied to further IJAD projects, but also to other online performances in either similar or different genres. In terms of software development, using a format to classify the live tweet feed and to organise the tweets for the dancers is a distinct approach which could be used as an adaptable template for other performances, not only dance. It is about classifying a flow of information coming into the performance space and managing it so that it can be interpreted by performers.

The decision to use Twitter allowed for a much wider interaction with 'strangers' than Facebook would have afforded for example. More strangers interact on Twitter than anywhere else: the format encourages people to do so. So this in some ways is a good way to reach out to new audiences. However, what also was clear was that audience retention was low. Each time there was a new performance scheduled, IJAD's feed almost had to start from scratch to reach out to people and gain content from them. Even when the social media researcher approached content providers from a previous performance, the main source of content was from 'new' people. This is the flipside of using a transient, short form means of communication.

Equally, using more sparing types of evaluation tools, (for example short form paper questionnaires on the night), were far more successful than online more complex questions which audience members were directed to after performances. Following up with audience members directly via email or face to face at the venue generated the most fruitful sources of ethnographic data.

It would also be essential that any toolkit integrates with other social media platforms. While using one form of social media has offered many options to reaching audiences, a broader span of social media forms will also allow the creative organisation the chance to spread their message and their audience reach. The transient nature of Twitter and the way it is traditionally used means that the chances of finding new audiences is great, but that audience is refreshed each time a performance is staged. This does fulfil the intention set out in the original planning document, but in order to build a lasting, committed audience other means of communication are additionally needed. This type of audience engagement also requires concerted levels of focus and interaction, supported by a collaborative team.

In terms of progressing this experimental work in the future and in a sustained way, it would be vital to have a member of the team to look after the online audience and to maintain relationships with them. Within this small project, a lot was achieved, however to take it forwards it would need further resources and more time spent in building and sustaining the user base. This pilot phase has

enabled a great amount of testing and experimentation and it would be a logical sequel to the project to work on retaining audiences and facilitating further interactions and content creation with them.

Appendix i) Online questionnaire



Please fill the questionnaire below.

This is part of some research evaluation being carried out on the IJAD In-Finite project by the Centre for Urban and Community Research, Goldsmiths College.

<http://www.gold.ac.uk/cucr/about/>

As part of this interactive project – where dance company IJAD asks members of the public to help inspire and create a dance performance using social media, Goldsmiths are doing some research on what you think.

This work is a continuation of CUCR's critical evaluation and research in the field of socially engaged and participative arts, examining the dynamic, potentials and paradoxes of these processes in today's urban cultural economy.

Your feedback will help to shape IJAD's work on technology and dance for a new performance in the spring.

For more information contact : claire@clairelevy.co.uk

Name:

Twitter name :

Email :

Age :

How did you find out about the In-Finite project?	
What made you want to get involved?	
Did you send ideas/images to inspire the dance project?	
If so what?	
How were your ideas used?	
How do you use social media?	
If so, what for?	
Have you posted images/ideas before online?	
If so what?	
How often?	
Do you watch dance online and/or live?	
Would you offer ideas again?	
What would encourage you to return to the Ijad project and get involved again?	

Any further suggestions or comments?	
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Appendix ii) Paper Questionnaire



The Vaults – IJAD Infinite Space #2 Feedback



Goldsmiths are carrying out some research evaluation on IJAD and how it works with audiences. We'd be grateful if you could respond to the questions below about tonight's performance :

Name
Age
Contact email/Twitter handle :

(This is confidential and won't be passed onto 3rd parties. We may contact you for further information on your responses.)

How did you hear about the performance?

Complement – what did you like about the performance or anything connected to the online activity around the performance?

Criticise – what would have changed about the performance or anything connected to the online activity around the performance?

Comment – anything else you'd like to share?

Please hand this to an IJAD staff member when you have finished. Thanks for sharing.

If you have questions contact Goldsmiths researcher : claire@clairelevy.co.uk