



Edinburgh
Festivals
Innovation Lab

*Project Showreel
Summer 2010-2012*

The Edinburgh festivals will radically change this summer. Indeed, our experience of the festivals may never be the same again. And the origins of these changes, so far, have all happened a little but under the radar. But change is absolutely on the way, and, most importantly, these are changes for ticket buyers, performers, arts fans, and those many thousands who attend the festivals every year.... because of the excellent work of the Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab, the unit set up to explore the strange but often delightful new terrains of the digital age.

Phil Miller, The Herald

Document Summary

About the Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab

The Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab - also known as festivalslab for short - is the name given to the innovation programme of Festivals Edinburgh, the strategic umbrella organisation for the twelve major Edinburgh Festivals which leads on their joint strategic direction and maintain their global competitive edge.

Festivals Edinburgh co-ordinates a number of cross-festival working groups and in 2009 it commissioned an innovation audit. The audit recommended that given the capacity issues typical of most cultural organisations, to develop the festivals' innovation practice there would be great potential in establishing a programme of work through the existing collaborative structure tasked with identifying and developing innovation opportunities across the festival community.

This was the basis of festivalslab and the first two years' activities were made possible thanks to a grant from Creative Scotland's Ambition Scotland programme. festivalslab is managed through the core Festivals Edinburgh team together with a specialist innovation producer and overseen by the cross-festival Innovation Working Group.

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What festivalslab has done

As a Festivals Edinburgh and therefore cross-festival initiative, festivalslab's remit has been to develop and deliver activity which is complementary and additional to the work already undertaken by the individual Festivals. Therefore while the Festivals have different levels of resources, activities were curated which all Festivals had the opportunity to participate in dependent on their capacity and interest.

The programme of work over the last two years has been both diverse and progressive. This document outlines twelve of the most significant elements of the programme:

Festival Listings API	Creative Brokerage	Geek In Residence
Culture Hack Scotland 2011	Smart Tourism	Communications & learning
EF Ideas Challenge	ProjectLab	Sync
Festival Design DNA	Capacity Building	What didn't quite work

While these activities differ in their detail and emphasis, all the festivalslab components share three core ideas:

- 1. Open innovation.** How can the Festivals work with different groups such as developers, universities, media, technology companies and the public in such a way where risk and reward are both shared?
- 2. Not-business-as-usual.** How can the Festivals explore innovation practice that supports new ways of working rather than that which assumes the *status quo*?
- 3. Platforming.** How can activities be designed so that they are replicable processes that can be built upon rather than one-off projects?

What festivalslab has learnt

As its suffix implies, experimentation and learning is central to festivalslab. In its first two years its remit was to identify and implement high potential ideas and approaches which had not been demonstrated in the cultural sector in Scotland. festivalslab provided a platform for risk-taking and like all experimental programmes, not all activities delivered immediate tangible outcomes for every stakeholder in every case. But as with all laboratories, the main success metric is learning which can act as the basis for further and more refined development and with this regard the programme was prolific.

This document can only provide an overview of the first two years of the programme. More specific detail about individual projects can be found at the festivalslab website and a good summary of the core thinking and approaches underpinning the work can be found in the guide called [How To Create Your Own Innovation Lab](#).

festivalslab defines innovation as the practice of taking new ways of thinking and doing the work necessary to move past the ideas stage to realise the resultant benefits. Digital technology is often the medium or enabler for innovation but is not synonymous with it. Innovation can either be incremental – supporting existing models, or radical – defining new models, and it requires practitioners to understand how much change and risk they are willing to experience in pursuit of the benefits. All of which means that in contemporary innovation practice in the cultural sector, it is necessary to recognise and support not only the technological and business elements of innovation but also the human one.

festivalslab as testbed for the sector

For decades the Edinburgh Festivals have been a vital environment for generations of creative practitioners and companies from across the world to trial work, develop their talent and inspire audiences and fellow creatives. In an organisational analogue to that tradition, Festivals Edinburgh is enabling activities in domains such as environment and innovation which use the collaborative structures among the twelve Festivals to trial approaches on behalf of the cultural sector.

Therefore as well as the benefits for the Festivals themselves, festivalslab's activities have inspired a number of important results outside of the festival community. These include:

- Culture Hack Scotland inspiring new connections between several Scottish cultural organisations and digital talents well as directly advising similar events in Leeds, Liverpool and Newcastle
- the Festival Listings API recognised as an exemplar of the value of open data in the arts
- the Festival Design DNA toolkit being used by festivals across the UK
- the programme of learning events and materials shared with the sector through Ambition
- festivalslab played a central part in establishment of the Smart Tourism programme which connects six Scottish universities with cultural tourism organisations
- The new national innovation programme called Sync, one of the core elements of Creative Scotland's digital development strategy in 2012-13 is directly based the approaches developed through festivalslab
- festivalslab being invited to speak as an example of cultural innovation best practice at several events both in the UK and internationally



Twelve festivalslab highlights

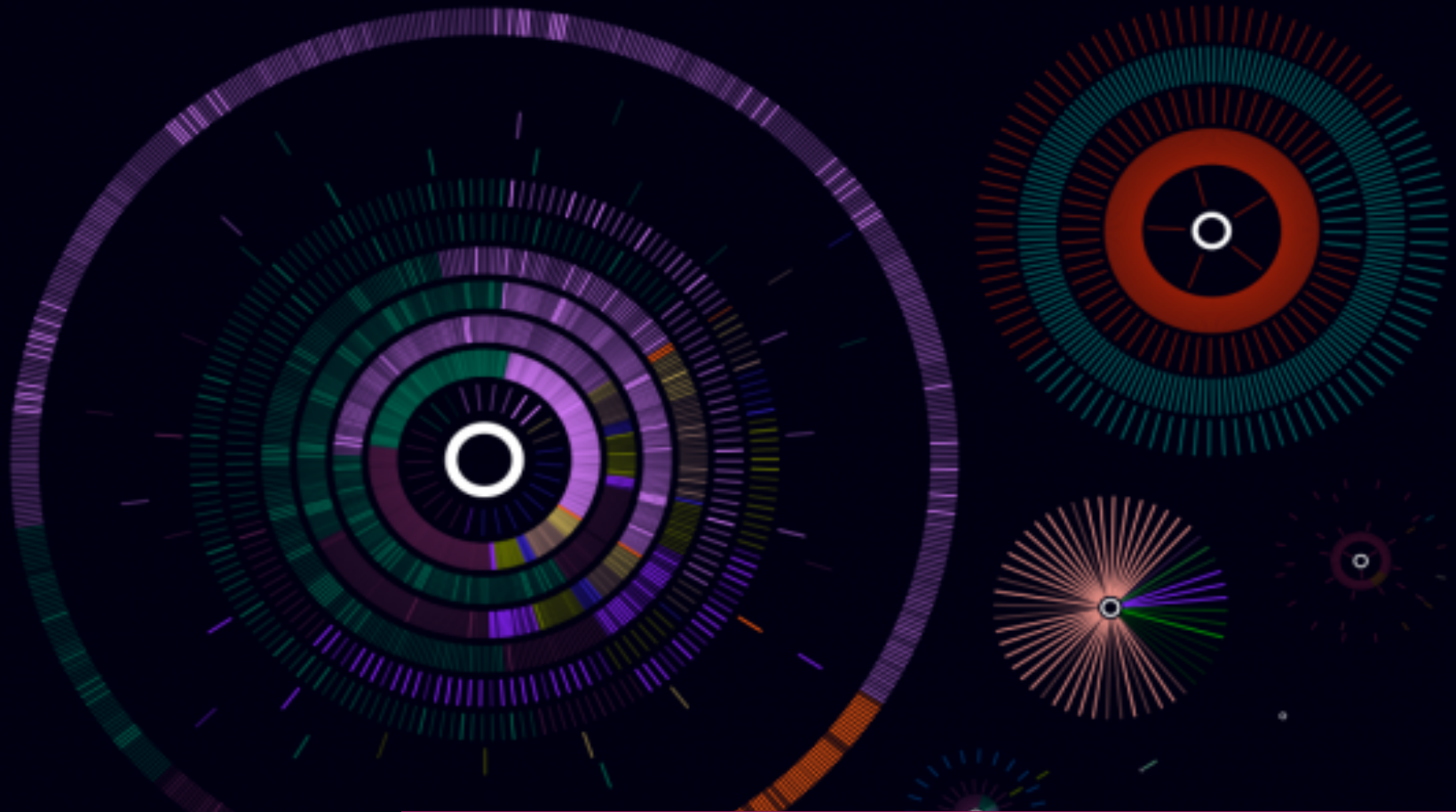
*Festival Listings
Data API*

|< << || >> >|

HELP ABOUT

13:58:35

8 AUGUST



The dynamic visualisation called festivalclock.com by Justin Quillinan and Stef Posavec was perhaps the most beautiful usage of the Festivals Listings API in 2011

Thank you for the API. It has worked beautifully this year.

Richard Stamp, entrepreneur & API user

Opening up your data for shared value

An Application Programming Interface or API is a technology by which one data source makes itself available to being used as the input for services by outside parties. During the 2011 summer festival period, for the first time an API providing Edinburgh Festivals' listings were openly available to anyone who wanted to do something useful with them.

There are two types of user of the Festivals listings API: press/media users and developer users. Press/media users such as newspapers and magazines are able to take the listings and reproduce them through their own channels and third party developers are able to use the listings as inputs or as the basis for new apps and services. In 2011, the API served ten press/media users and over twenty third-party developers who used the API to power services like Festafriend, Festivals Review and data visualisations.

Users access the API through a secure registration system with the data updated regularly to ensure quality and the data is provided under specific license terms to ensure users keep their applications up to date.

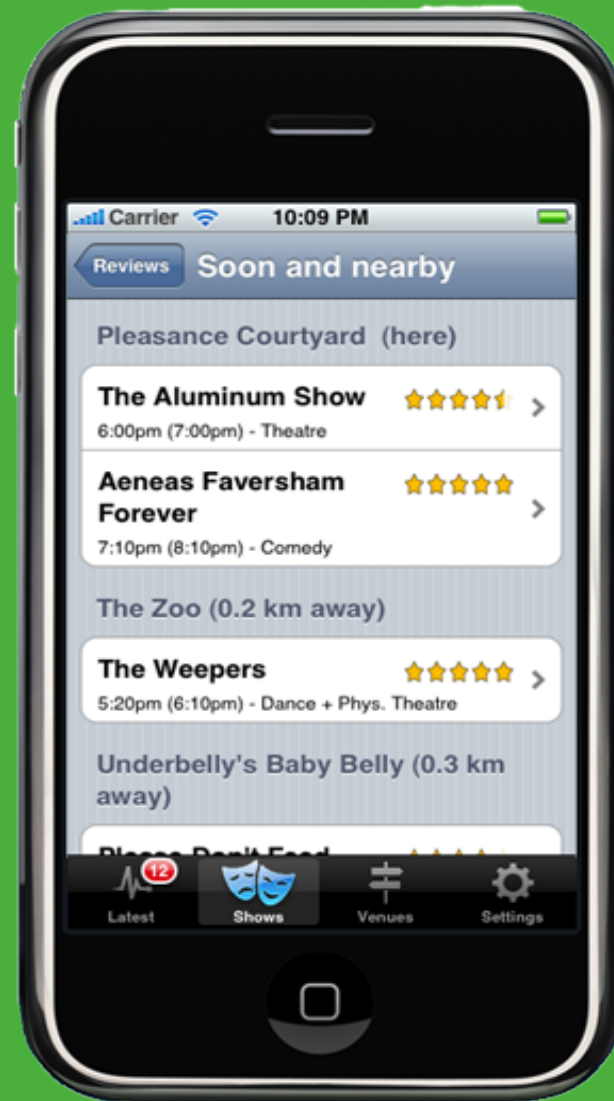
The Festivals listings API initiative is the largest of its kind in the world. In its first year it included seven summer Festivals and in 2012 included all twelve member Festivals of Festivals Edinburgh.

Why the Listings API is important

Putting all the techno-babble to one side there are two main reasons why the Listings API project is important.

Firstly, it provides an automated system by which any press or media outlet in the world can have access to individual or collective festival listings - thereby raising the reach of event information. Prior to the API, Festivals would manually provide customised listings files to a select group of press/media partners - a task that was labour-intensive and provided static information despite the dynamic nature of listings changed. The API automates this process and allows a simple way for the number of press/media partners to scale.

Arts organisations typically publicly provide their listings either through a printed programme or their own website. However by providing the listings also through an API, the Festivals allow third party developers and entrepreneurs to create useful new apps and services that the Festivals would not have the capacity or interest in building themselves. The scale of Edinburgh Festivals and their audiences mean that there is a lot of interest in this kind of activity and the API enables the potential creation of new services that are useful for audiences, performers and local businesses. These can then be supported informally or formally by the Festivals themselves depending on what they do.



In 2011 the Fringe made the business decision to allow iFringe, its biggest mobile app competitor use their data via the API

iFringe is an independent mobile app run by Fringeguru and the Festival Media Network which contains Fringe listings and reviews. Growing in popularity, iFringe is essentially a major competitor to the official mobile app managed by the Fringe itself. However rather than act in such a way so as to discourage it, in 2011 the Fringe's biggest competitor in the mobile space was powered by the Fringe's official data courtesy of the API. This was a brilliant business decision since it ensured that iFringe would have the best quality data and given that part of the API license agreement was that all ticketing links had to go via edfringe.com, it ensured that the Fringe was able to use iFringe to help maintain and grow its ticketing revenue market share.

*Culture Hack
Scotland 2011*

The first Culture Hack Scotland in Edinburgh May 2011 went onto inspire and inform similar events in Liverpool, Leeds, Newcastle, Atlanta, Egypt, Kenya & South Africa



*Hanging with the techie geeks
at Culture Hack Scotland...
mind expanding stuff!*

Jonathan Rowbotham
Edinburgh International Festival

A radical new event for the arts in Scotland

Culture Hack Scotland was a hack day that ran for 24 hours from Friday May 6 - Saturday May 7 2011 at Inspace and the Informatics Forum in Edinburgh. 50 developers and designers from Scotland and the North of England attended alongside 50 cultural professionals. A hack day is an event where developers, designers and people with ideas gather to build new digital prototypes in a short time. Culture Hack Scotland was the first time such an event had been held in Scotland.

While hosted by festivalslab, the event was open to the wider sector. Therefore as well as a number of cultural workshop participants and other attendees, a large number of Scottish cultural organisations openly released data alongside the Festivals - many for the first time. These included National Museums of Scotland, National Galleries of Scotland, City of Edinburgh Council, The List, The Skinny, ARIKA, Glasgow Film and NVA. This data was then used as the basis and inspiration for the projects

In the 24 hours, 30 new projects were made which ranged from visualisations to audience services to mobile games. Following the event 8 of those projects were developed further into full production. It was an extremely popular event with one experienced technologist who had attended many such hack days before considering it the most productive hackday he had ever seen.

Why Culture Hack Scotland is important

Culture Hack Scotland showed four important new ways for cultural organisations to make more out of what they were doing with regards digital innovation. Firstly it validated the business case for open data, showing that if organisations are able to release previously proprietary data, that otherwise latent asset can be used as the basis for useful new products & services that the data owner either would never have thought of or would not have the capacity to develop and deliver.

Secondly it demonstrated the importance of prototyping as a way to accelerate one's innovation practice. Many organisations rarely have tangible results in proportion to the amount of time spent on discussing digital strategies. By creating actual prototypes very quickly, although they will inevitably be only proofs-of-concept, allows for a much more efficient innovation process.

Thirdly, events like CHS help move organisations beyond a transactional relationship to digital talent. Instead it showcases digital talent as creative professionals rather than simple service providers which open up new possibilities.

Finally and perhaps most importantly they help organisations create a network of digital talent that they would perhaps not otherwise have access to which can be used as an ongoing resource of advice, support and inspiration.

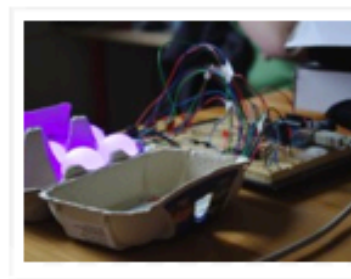
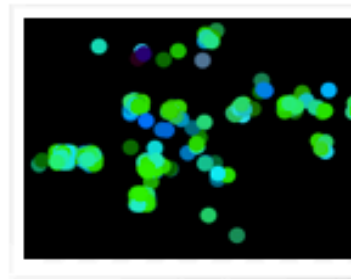
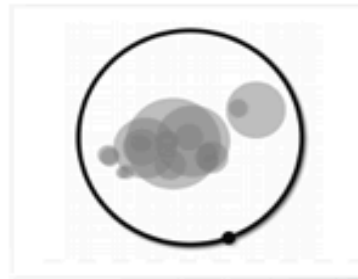
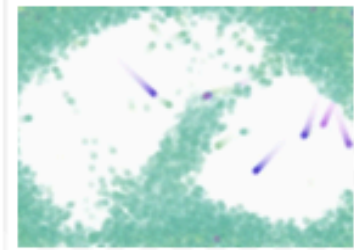
50 developers & designers. 50 arts professionals.
20 datasets. 24 hours. 30 amazing projects.

CONNECT



#chs11 took place on May 6/7 and was presented by the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

All the projects created at Culture Hack Scotland 2011 were well showcased online which resulted in the event having widespread attention





The world-class mobile site of the Edinburgh International Book Festival started as a Culture Hack Scotland project

Jim Newbery is Edinburgh-based freelance developer and having only recently moved to Scotland he attended Culture Hack Scotland to engage more the Scottish digital community. Having recently been at a party where he had been speaking to Ian Rankin but hadn't realised it until afterwards, he decided to take the Edinburgh International Book Festival's (EIBF) listings and make a mobile site which tied a lot more information to each event - such as bibliographies, press mentions and of course photos - so he'd know what every author looked like should he ever meet them at a party. Andrew Coulton, EIBF's Admin Director saw the great potential of the hack that Jim was able to make in 24 hours and working together it developed into the full official mobile site of the festival in 2011 and 2012. All of which costed EIBF significantly less than what an agency would have cost for the same project. And in the spirit of openness that festivalslab represents, all the code for the mobile site is available free and open source for any organisation in the world to modify and use so that they may have their very own world-class mobile site based on the work that Jim & Andrew did.

Culture Hack Scotland was a great advert for how open innovation can transform access to culture.

Rachel Coldicutt, Caper

Blown away by Culture Hack Scotland. Probably the most productive hackday that I've ever seen. Well done Scotland

Tom Scott, hackday veteran

EF Ideas Challenge

The Challenge

The Edinburgh Festivals are challenging you to share suggestions for how to make the festivals even more amazing.

What if:



You

Where in the world are you?

SUBMIT

SUBMISSIONS

Search...

SEARCH

Category All

Sort Most recent

VOTE

✓ 1

What if Edinburgh festival had a collecting box for Book Aid at every venue

0 comments | Submitted about 3 hours ago to General/Other by Ros W.

VOTE

✓ 1

What if you create a 'Deal of the Day' website/app that festival goers can subscribe to that provides offers on Accommodation, Events and Transport?

0 comments | Submitted 4 days ago to Apps & Technology by Ross C.

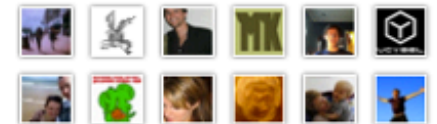
VOTE

✓ 1

What if you provided free wi...

1 comment | Submitted 4 days ago to Apps & Technology by Ross C.

RECENT FOLLOWERS



VIEW ALL FOLLOWERS >

SHARE

207

44

The Edinburgh Festivals Ideas Challenge inspired a large-scale public conversation about festival innovation

PRIZES



Top 5 Ideas - as voted by

The Edinburgh Festivals Ideas Challenge, like the best of the Edinburgh Festivals themselves, has taken great little ideas and championed them towards big success. It provides a stellar example of how social media can reap practical suggestions from big, open discussions.

I'm thrilled that my little idea, concocted over a pint and composed in just 140 characters, could genuinely affect the Edinburgh Festivals for the better.

Will Sawney, participant

Looking for inspiration from everyone

Summer 2011 saw the launch of the Edinburgh Festivals Ideas Challenge, the first ever large scale public ideas competition which invited anyone with a connection to the Festivals to suggest an idea of how to make them even more amazing.

The challenge ran for three months and received three hundred ideas, large-scale social media engagement and many of the ideas were followed by long discussions debating related issues.

The platform was managed and run by ChallengePost, a New York based company whose client list for equivalent challenges include the City of New York and the Obama administration. The system included a public voting system and the top twenty five entries as voted by the public won prizes. A second higher level of prize was won by the five ideas rated most highly by a panel of judges which comprised Sue Bruce (City of Edinburgh Council), Faith Liddell (Festivals Edinburgh), Will Gompertz (BBC), Bill Thompson (technology commentator) and Lyn Gardner (Guardian).

More than just a suggestions box, the Ideas Challenge was an engaging way to have a large-scale conversation about making the Festivals better and demonstrated the public interest in topics such as accessibility, the environment, ticketing, technology and parent-friendly services.

Search Shows | Search by access | Get Directions

Search

Select genre: All Genres ▼

Select festival: All Genres ▼

Price range: From ▼ To ▼

Date range: 20/06 02/09

Distance: All ▼

SUBMIT

Feedback

About the project

Articles

Instructions

Welcome to the Edinburgh Festivals Accessibility Search Project

It allows you to search the listings of summer festivals around the needs of deaf, hard of hearing, visually impaired and physically disabled audiences.

This is a prototype project from the Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab developed by Alienation Digital with input from Artlink and support from the Open Innovation project. The idea for the project came from a member of the public and your feedback is encouraged so that together we can make it better.



Thanks to support from the Open Innovation Project for the most popular idea, a prototype listings website based around users with accessibility needs was made for summer 2012

Accessibility Search Project

Of the 300 ideas submitted through the Ideas Challenge, the most popular idea according to both the public and the judges' vote was related to providing more visible accessibility information.

Thanks to a unique collaboration with the Open Innovation Project in which The City of Edinburgh Council is lead partner, festivalslab was able to take that idea and develop a summer Festivals listings service for audiences with physical and sensory access requirements. This website was developed with ERDF funding through the Interreg NWE programme's Open Innovation Project - working with business, academia and communities from North West Europe to promote collaborative approaches to innovation. Website design and development was by Alienation Digital and the input to the project was been provided by Artlink - an Edinburgh-based organisation which has worked in the field of Arts and Disability for over 25 years.

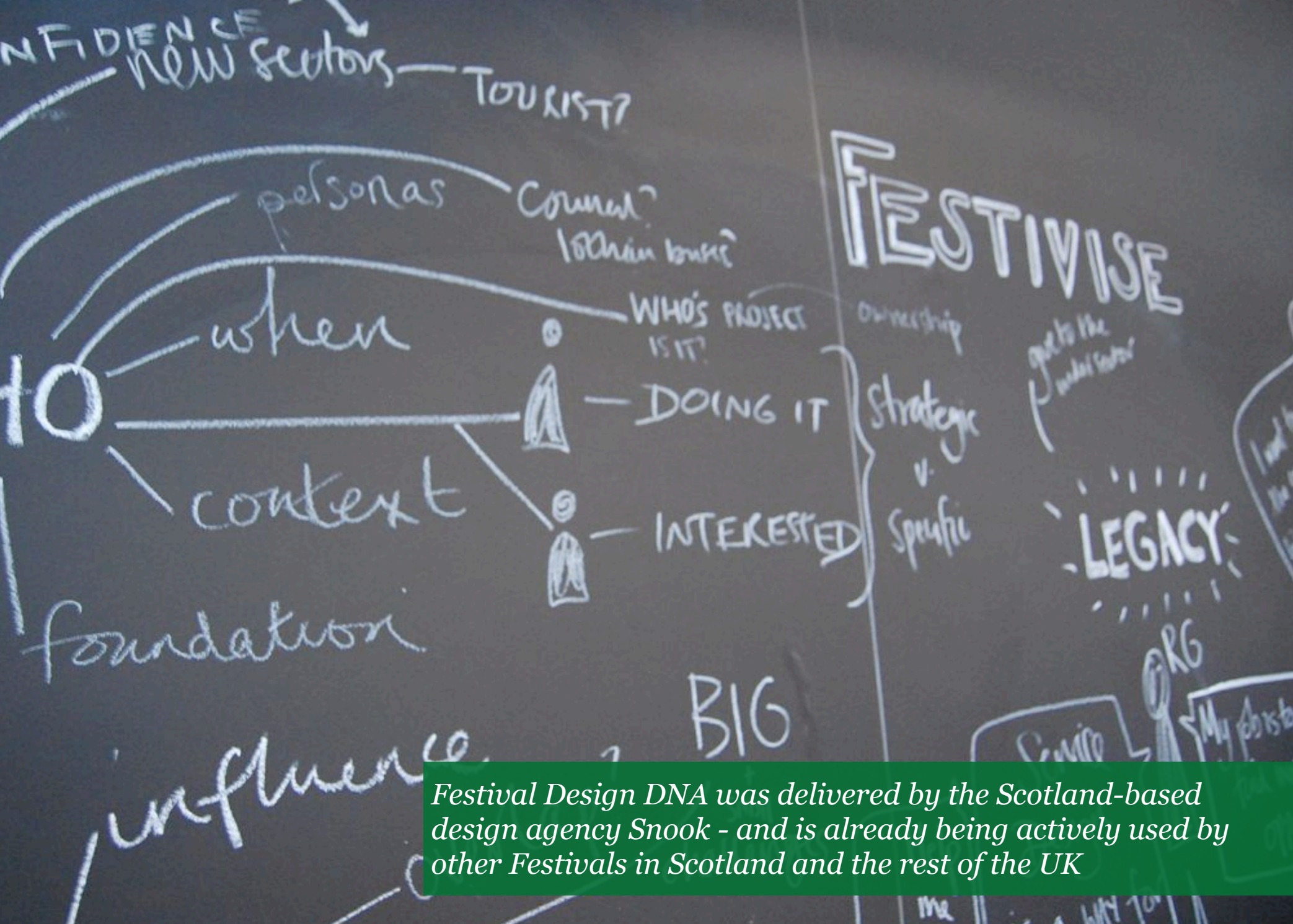
The website is a prototype and feedback captured from the service will be used to help the Festivals understand a) how to provide more sophisticated services for visitors with accessibility needs and b) how to provide more personalised search services in general. It is also being explored how this learning and platform can be developed with accessibility and other partners for the benefit of the wider cultural sector.

festivalslab highlight #4

Festival Design DNA



A close-up from our extensive practical toolkit on festival innovation from a design perspective. The full methodology & materials are freely available at design.festivalslab.com



Festival Design DNA was delivered by the Scotland-based design agency Snook - and is already being actively used by other Festivals in Scotland and the rest of the UK

Innovation through the design lens

Recognising that innovation is often erroneously conflated with technology in the arts, festivalslab again looked at social innovation for innovation processing and thinking that worked. One that stood out was the discipline of service design - which is being used increasingly by local government and the voluntary sector to create effective, value-for-money public services that are not only people-oriented but designed with and by them.

With the aim of practical outputs that anyone in across the Festivals could use festivalslab commissioned Scottish design agency **Snook** to create a set of practical tools and methods for the festival community the results of which is collectively called Festival Design DNA with all materials available at design.festivalslab.com. Festival Design DNA contains a full end-to-end methodology of how to use design thinking and design tools all the way from coming up with ideas for innovation projects all the way to delivery and embedding them within your organisation.

Development of Festival Design DNA was supported with input from the **Edinburgh International Science Festival**. Given that the outputs are also valuable for arts organisations outwith the Edinburgh Festivals all the materials are freely available through Creative Commons licenses and formed the basis of two sector-wide events in partnership with **Ambition** (Edinburgh in December 2011 and Glasgow in May 2012).

Why Festival Design DNA is important

One of festivalslab's primary target outcomes is to encourage a culture of innovation across the festival community. As with most arts organisations while there is innovation practice on an ad hoc basis, there are no formal innovation processes or methodologies that were established across the Edinburgh Festivals. Festival Design DNA therefore provides a platform asset which the Festivals can use in the future at an individual, a small-team, a festival or a cross-festival level to discover, define, design and deliver innovation projects and thereby further support a culture of innovation.

Although service design is already being by some major cultural organisations, this is the first open-to-all practical service design project in the arts. And in a climate of reduced public funding across the arts in general in the UK and Europe, organisations need resource-effective and people-centred ways of presenting and improving the experience they provide for audiences and the design thinking outlined in this project points to a potential way to realise that.

If a festival or any arts organisation is seriously interested in innovation in any type and empowering its staff and its stakeholders in the design and production of innovation projects then they will need a process to do that effectively and the Festival Design DNA project outlines a potential methodology to be customised to suit an individual organisation.

More details on the potential of service design in the arts can be found at [this popular article](#) which festivalslab wrote for the Guardian Cultural Professionals Network.

*Creative
Brokerage*



The Labyrinth in St Giles was one of four new commissions involving Scottish artists as part of the New Year Games. Image courtesy of Hide&Seek.

festivalslab as creative broker

While the majority of festivalslab work is not directly related to programming, there have been two examples of when festivalslab ideation and brokerage have led to new creative festival commissions. The Festivals involved were Edinburgh Art Festival and Edinburgh's Hogmanay.

Following a festivalslab-brokered introduction to Trigger in 2011, the **Edinburgh Art Festival** commissioned Trigger to produce Detours and Watch The Water. The Detours series of cross-festival events saw popular Fringe performers interpreting EAF exhibitions and galleries in new ways and Watch The Water was an iPhone-led audio experience which revealed hidden stories as visitors moved from one gallery to another.

For **Edinburgh's Hogmanay**, an introduction between the festival and innovative game design studio Hide&Seek resulted in the inaugural New Year Games on January 1st 2012. The New Year Games saw between 10,000 and 12,000 play a series of games including four new commissions involving Scottish artists and a large-scale finale in the Grassmarket.

Another example of brokerage is that between the **Fringe** and **Soundcloud**. Following an introduction in 2011, the relationship developed so that in 2012 Soundcloud is being integrated into the Fringe website to allow performers and companies to upload audio and help create a new sustainable channel to promote their show.

Why Creative Brokerage is important

Apart from the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, all the Edinburgh Festivals are programmers and/or commissioners of content and therefore constantly looking out for new formats, talent and ideas with which to populate their event programmes. While each programming team has incredible expertise in their own domains, it can be of great value to have access to creative practitioners whose work is on the edges of those domains especially nowadays when art-form definitions are not as straightforward as they used to be.

Thanks to the diversity of both its activities and its team's background, festivalslab has access to a wide network of practitioners who have relevant production and creative skills to augment and enhance the Festivals in new ways. As well as the examples outlined above, festivalslab has also supported the **Edinburgh International Science Festival** in grow its understanding of maker/hacker culture and has provided ad hoc programme-related connections to the **Edinburgh International Book Festival**.

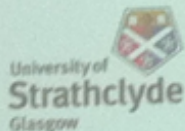
Smart Tourism

sicsa*

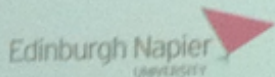


Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

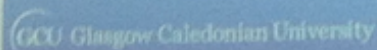
Smart Tourism



UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING



University of Glasgow



Smart Tourism represents a new way by which the Festivals can develop valuable relationships with leading Scottish academic communities.

Engaging with academic communities

Smart Tourism is a **Scottish Funding Council**-supported programmes in which academic departments work with cultural and tourist organisations to deploy technology solutions which improve the tourist experience. Smart Tourism's participating universities are the **SICSA** group - several computer science and informatics departments from across Scotland which include University of Edinburgh, Glasgow University, University of St Andrews and Robert Gordon University. The cultural/tourism partners are Festivals Edinburgh, Historic Scotland and Glasgow Museums.

Project opportunities are developed in collaboration between a SICSA member and a cultural/tourism partner and designed so that there will be both direct learning for the cultural partner as well as for the wider sector.

Smart Tourism represents a practical way of building working relationships with relevant research groups across Scotland so that mature research can be instantiated in the Festival environment in such a way that is of benefit for audiences, the festivals and the academic partners. As well as a general piece of scoping research, one Smart Tourism project currently in development is a collaboration between **Glasgow University** and the Edinburgh International Festival. This is a product which allows audiences to curate digital scrapbooks of their festival experiences which are both valuable as souvenirs as well as being used by the Festivals to suggest highly personalised event recommendations.

festivalslab highlight #7

ProjectLab

Future Everything 2012 Conference

FUTURE
SONIC
101

Festival staff who were successful in ProjectLab were also rewarded with a professional development place at an innovation conference such as Future Everything

Encouraging and supporting staff ideas

ProjectLab is an internal competition which encouraged staff from across the twelve Festivals to submit innovation project proposals, with successful applicants able to win up to £5k towards the delivery of their project. There have been two rounds in which six successful projects were selected by the Innovation Working Group, with another three to be selected in Autumn 2011.

ProjectLab has seen a high level of engagement from across the Festivals and allowed festivalslab to engage with new members of the community than it had otherwise done before.

Successful ProjectLab projects include the 2012 mobile website for the Jazz&Blues festival, an internal staff management tool for the Book festival, an industry-facing data capture system for the Fringe and interactive voting kits for the Science festival.

Recognising the need to support and celebrate innovators within the Festivals, successful applicants were also invited to be part of a small festival delegation to an ideas/innovation conference in the UK. The first delegation was to [Future Everything](#) in Manchester with two more conferences due in the second half of 2012.

Capacity Building

Serving core infrastructure needs

While much of the festivalslab programme emerged through research and experimentation, there were a series of infrastructural projects with individual Festivals which were included as part of the programme scope. These were pre-identified by the individual Festivals and small grants were provided via festivalslab to deliver them.

They included the following projects:

- Edinburgh Mela, core hardware provision
- Edinburgh Art Festival, festival database development
- Edinburgh International Storytelling Festival, box office integration
- Edinburgh International Science Festival, box office integration
- Edinburgh Festival Fringe, festival database development
- Edinburgh International Festival, digital distribution research & contracting

These projects were important since they serviced core technological needs which were also in scope of the original remit of Creative Scotland's Ambition programme. Furthermore, while it is not essential that cultural organisations have a specific baseline of technological infrastructure before explore innovation, it is clearly an advantage for the more foundational requirements to be in place.

Geek-In-Residence

exciting



Ben Werdmuller welcoming participants at the launch of Culture Hack Scotland 2011

Empowering technologists as coaches

In autumn 2010, Ben Werdmuller was appointed the inaugural Edinburgh Festivals Geek-in-Residence. Ben has a background as a technologist and entrepreneur and as a passionate fan of the Festivals he was available to the various Festivals teams to explore innovation ideas and provide high-level guidance.

Given the relatively small time allocation he was unable to spend as much time as he would have liked with each individual festival. However it was at a cross-festival level where he proved to be most effective, playing an integral role in the setting up of Culture Hack Scotland and the Listings API project. His extensive technology credentials also enabled him to play a vital role in engaging the local developer community with the festivalslab programme of work.

The motivation behind the Geek-in-Residence was that like many arts organisations, the Festivals tended to engage with digital talent only through agencies or other parties in a client/service relationship. Having Ben as part of the festivalslab team meant that he was able to provide creative advice and inspiration with no commercial agenda.

While doing such a role across twelve Festivals on a relatively small time allocation was challenging, it did demonstrate the value of the intervention and Ben's initial experience provided the inspiration for the Sync Geeks-in-Residence programme that is described later in this document.

*Communication,
sharing & advocacy*

Mainland
SXSW INTERACTIVE

Gunatillake
SXSW INTERACTIVE

Edinburgh, Austin & the
Future of Festivals
#edfests

The Edinburgh Festivals have held sessions at South By South West Interactive for the last two years discussing festival innovation based on festival lab learning



Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab

Social Staff:



❖ BLOG ❖ ABOUT ❖ 101 ❖ HOW-TO ❖ SHOWCASE ❖ #CHS11 ❖ API ❖ IDEAS ❖ DESIGN ❖ TALK TO US

API PROJECT FESTIVAL OF BLOGGING

Aug 9, 2011 Rohan No Comments

Two Great Mapping Projects for 2011

There have always been good maps associated with the Festivals but this year we see two new exciting projects – one of which uses our API – to help people discover new performances at the Fringe

Giggle Maps from realise.com | www.gigglemaps.co.uk



festivalslab is a unique programme of work which identifies and develops ways to improve the world's festival city - for audiences, for artists, for partners and for the festival organisations themselves

lab@festivalsedinburgh.com
[@festivalslab](https://twitter.com/festivalslab)



HAVE YOU SEEN THE CLOCK YET?



As well as other social media channels, festivalslab.com has an active blog which openly shares thinking as well as acting as a popular hub for public materials for the various projects

How to create your own innovation lab

Thinking & approaches from festivalslab

As well as publishing material through its own channels, festivalslab has created written and video materials for sector-wide partners such as Ambition Scotland and the Guardian

a work-in-progress guide written by



Edinburgh
Festivals
Innovation Lab

and written for

Amb:IT:ion
scotland

culture professionals network

guardianprofessional

Creative thinking, advice and best practice from and for your community

Previous

Blog home

Next

Why service design is the next big thing in cultural innovation

The lead producer of festivalslab Rohan Gunatillake gives four reasons why new thinking and tools can produce better experiences

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Posted by Rohan Gunatillake Thursday 8 December 2011 07.30 GMT Guardian Professional Comments (0)



Article history

Culture professionals network Communications

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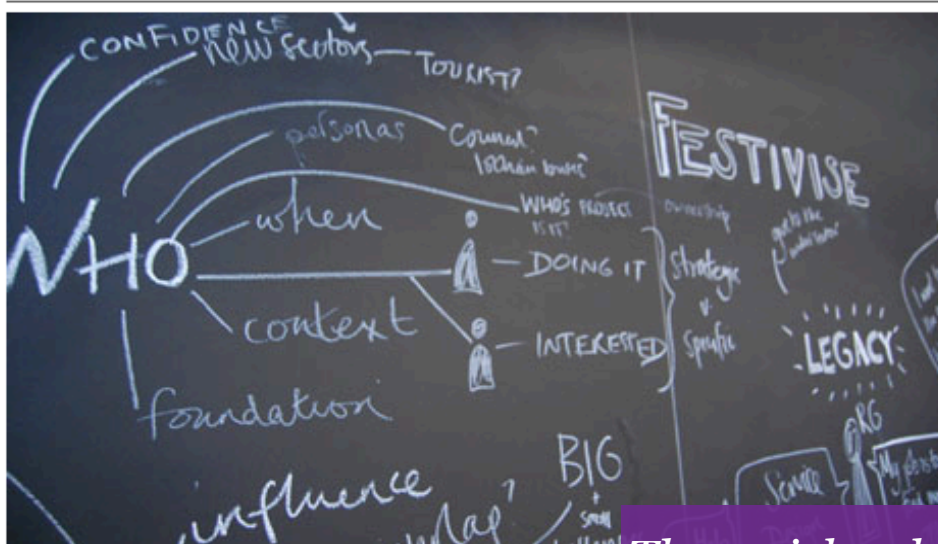
Jobs of the week

University of Oxford online courses, in association with theguardian



Hubs

- » Audiences
- » Arts education
- » Communications
- » Development
- » Finance
- » Leadership



Working together with Snook, we've created a set of practical tools that organisations improve the experiences they produce, says Snook

Here at the Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab,

The article which launching the Festival Design DNA project was the most shared piece of Guardian Culture Professionals content through social media channels in 2011

Representing the Festivals through innovation

In the last two years, the festivalslab team have spoken at and represented the Festivals and their innovation programme at several influential national and international events about innovation in the cultural sector. This has included:

UK

Arts Marketing Association Conference (2011 & 2012)

Showcase Northern Ireland

Glasgow School of Art Graduate Seminar series

Culture Hack North

Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium

Shift Happens (York)

International

South By SouthWest Interactive (2011 & 2012)

Dutch Ministry of Culture Inaugural Conference

British Council Global Arts Meeting, Berlin

British Council Cultural Leadership International, Istanbul

This combined with the digital materials through its own and partner channels have led to the Edinburgh Festivals being recognised as leaders in cultural innovation exemplified by it being the only Scottish example in 19 best practice case studies in a [recent report](#) by the Dutch Ministry of Culture.

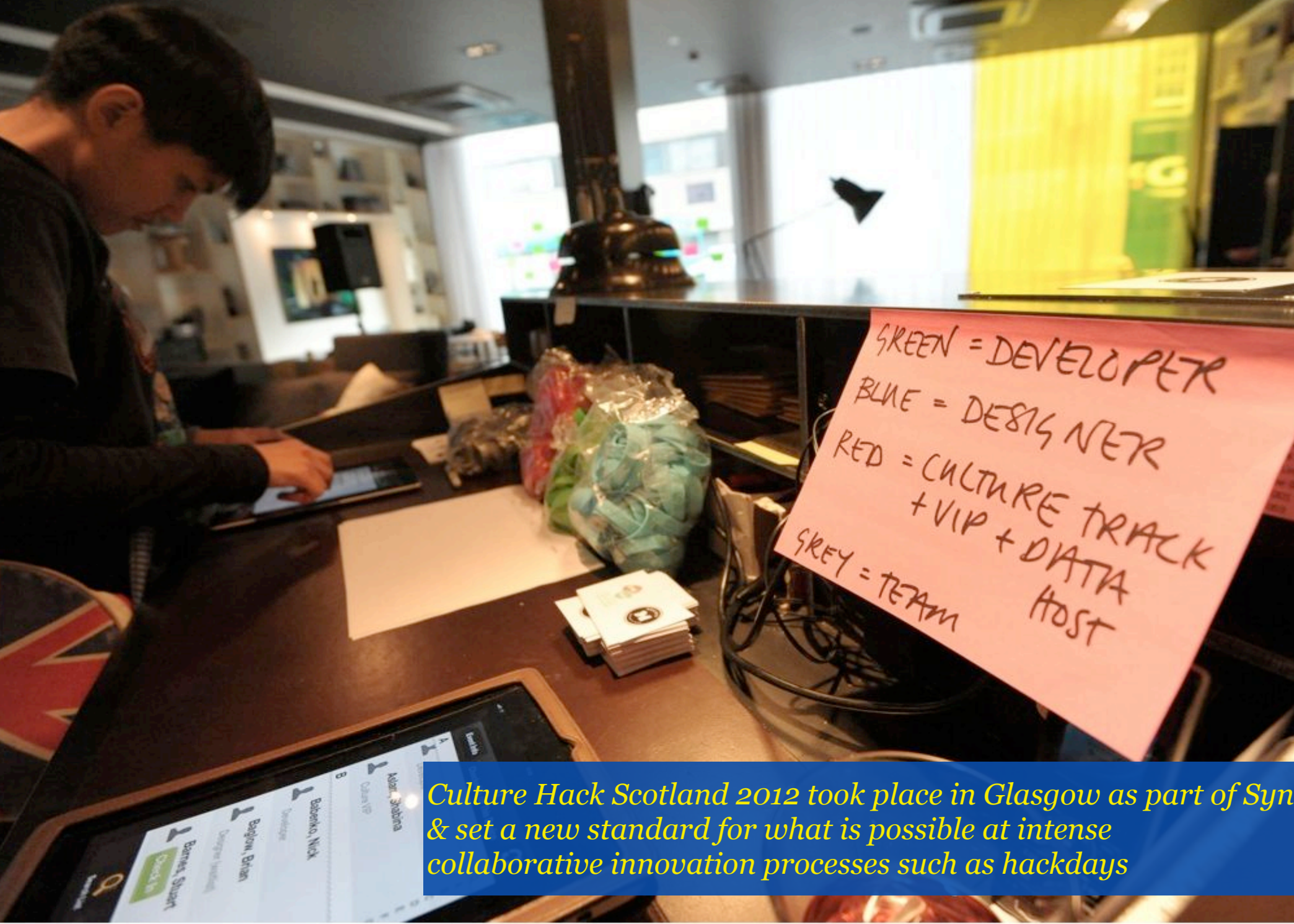


Together with Ambition Scotland, festivalslab hosted four well-attended events on core themes such as Open Innovation and Service Design. Image courtesy of getAmbition



Following popular demand, the Designing Better Festivals event was repeated in Glasgow for a general cultural audience. Image courtesy of getAmbition

*Scaling learning
through Sync*



GREEN = DEVELOPER
BLUE = DESIGNER
RED = CULTURE TRACK
+ VIP + DATA
GREY = TEAM HOST

Culture Hack Scotland 2012 took place in Glasgow as part of Syn & set a new standard for what is possible at intense collaborative innovation processes such as hackdays

Taking festivalslab approaches to national scale

Following the success of festivalslab, in late 2011 Creative Scotland invited its lead producer to propose a programme which took the approaches and thinking of festivalslab and delivered them beyond the Festivals and to national scale. That programme is called Sync and together with Ambition Scotland and the Nesta R&D programme comprises Creative Scotland's digital organisational development programme.

Sync has four main elements of its two-year programme:

1. Culture Hack Scotland - running and evolving the landmark innovation event
2. Geeks-in-Residence - five cultural hosts matched with a developer and/or designer to work on a valuable prototype project with coaching elements. One of Edinburgh's Festivals to be included each year
3. SyncTank - online magazine showcasing the best and next practice at the intersection of culture, design and technology
4. Commissioning - small scale project commissioning of elements emerging from the rest of the programme

Sync is managed by the festivalslab lead producer, Rohan Gunatillake together with Suzy Glass, Erin Maguire and Devon Walshe who were all actively involved in the success of the inaugural Culture Hack Scotland in 2011.

*Not everything
worked perfectly*

Experimentation isn't always about success

As with any programme that is looking to be genuinely innovative and break new ground, not everything that the Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab has done has resulted in direct success. The most instructive failed experiments include:

Corporate connections. festivalslab brought the new idea of positioning the festival city as a unique large-scale, ideal demographic testing environment for showcasing new products and brand positioning. Conversations developed with the leadership of both multinational technology companies as well as smaller UK and international technology companies but other than the in-kind relationship between the Fringe and SoundCloud, none of these materialised.

What was learnt: any future shared risk/shared reward partnerships will be structured in a very different way to traditional transactional corporate sponsorship arrangements

Scope of geek engagement. Despite the success of the inaugural geek-in-residence in catalysing cross-Festivals projects such as the listings API and Culture Hack Scotland projects, having a relatively small time allocation mean that they were unable to provide detailed support to as many of the twelve Festivals as they would have liked to.

What was learnt: the Sync geeks-in-residence aligned with the festivals is being allocated to one organisation only

Innovation positioning. In some instances, positioning opportunities primarily as isolated innovation projects rather than being clearly connected to core domains (e.g. ticketing, marketing, programming) resulted in the occasional inability to allocate sufficient delivery capacity.

What was learnt: future cross-festival projects to be analysed to see if there is an appropriate innovation component so that innovation is positioned as integral to all activities rather than separate

festivalslab exposed me to a wide spectrum of the geek and digital culture of Scotland. I knew it was there, but festivalslab created an environment, a hub and events that allowed it to be much more readily accessible and demonstrated (sometimes by dragging us along) how the worlds of 'digital' and 'the arts' are really one and the same. It facilitated a very necessary, and exciting conversation.

Erin McElhinney, ARIKA

It has been instructive to see how the programme has developed – in an open, inclusive manner, encouraging participation and documenting much of their work in the public domain.

But what I most admire is how the projects have generally been effective at both a practical and a conceptual level, and exactly what the Edinburgh Festivals should be working together to achieve.

David Jarman, Napier University

What is festivalaslab? It's a catalyst, a producer, a leader, a broker, a convener, a conversation, a collaboration. It is a success and a failure and a lot of learning. Most importantly of all it is an experimental space to take risks and try new things, and the more supported spaces the cultural sector has like that the better.

Rohan Gunatillake, festivalaslab producer

festivalslab
Legacy

Ongoing legacy within the festivals and without

While Festivals Edinburgh's innovation activities continue, the first two years of festivalslab provide a clear legacy both inside and outside the festival community:

Edinburgh Festivals (outputs)

Listings API platform

*Festival Design
DNA methodology*

*ProjectLab
projects*

*Capacity building
projects*

*Accessibility
project*

*Geeks In
Residence 2012/13*

Edinburgh Festivals (outcomes)

*Access to new
talent networks*

*Academic
collaborations*

*Creative
brokerage*

*Innovation
Working Group*

*Strategic insight into
development areas*

*Increased profile as
innovation leader*

Cultural Sector

*Culture Hack Scotland
model*

*Overall Sync
programme*

*Festival Design
DNA toolkit*

*Other learning
materials*

*Open source code
for projects*

*Inspiration and
direction*

And finally...

*The importance
of experimentation*

The importance of experimental spaces

This document evidences the diversity and ambition of the activities which the Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab has produced in its first two years. festivalslab has demonstrated both the challenges and opportunities of innovation which looks to develop new models of practice. Within the Festivals community it has initiated a more progressive understanding of what innovation means and through the brokering of new relationships, the championing of new areas of work and the creation of practical tools it has also provided a legacy for the wider cultural sector in Scotland is exemplified by the Sync programme.

Innovation can be classified into two types: that which supports existing ways of working and that which explores and implements new ways of working. Spaces for experimentation such as festivalslab help explore the latter more progressive *not* business-as-usual side of innovation. And in times of considerable change where there is motivation for organisations in all sectors to develop different and more agile ways of working in order to thrive, what tends to hold back practical action in the face of challenge and opportunity is not the *Why* and the *When* but the *What* and the *How*. Spaces where experimentation is allowed and risk-taking welcomed can be an important part of filling the gap and answering those two questions.

Thank you to everyone who has played a part in the first two years of festivalslab. To find out more visit festivalslab.com or contact us at lab@festivalsedinburgh.com and [@festivalslab](https://twitter.com/festivalslab)



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ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL