

miles ahead

ARTS MARKETING THAT WORKS IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

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foreword

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The following collection of stories is just one result of a trawl across regional Australia searching for inspiring examples of arts marketing. The information gathered through this very important research project will feed into other Australia Council initiatives, particularly in regional arts audience development.

Miles ahead: arts marketing that works in regional Australia aims both to promote the high level and very specialised type of marketing that is required to reach regional audiences, and to share these stories among the arts community right across Australia.

This publication might be read as a travelogue covering the sometimes rocky terrain of regional arts marketing in Australia. It might be read as a set of case studies documenting good practice for promotional purposes. It could also be interpreted as a compendium of handy examples of ways to approach marketing from a regional perspective. *Miles ahead* has the potential to open the way for greater networking and shared problem solving in the arts at a regional level and I hope that every reader gains some useful insight from the stories within.

It is hoped that inspiration can be gleaned through the following glimpses into the ways the various companies profiled in *miles ahead* have dealt with their specific marketing issues. It is also hoped that those working in Australia's capital cities will recognise the innovation and creativity that is essential when marketing in often difficult, but always interesting, circumstances - where issues such as distance, local networks, competition from community, sporting and social activities; low population density, high unemployment and lack of access to resources and marketing expertise can dictate the shape an organisation's marketing program can take.

The Australia Council owes a debt of gratitude to the organisations and individuals who participated in the *miles ahead* research process. While there is not enough space for everyone's story to be told, those that follow have been selected for their relevance and strength and for the potential they have as case studies illustrating innovative practice.

The Australia Council would like to thank Su Hodge and her team, Judith James and Amanda Lawson, who travelled far and wide to gather this collection.

I hope you find the *miles ahead* stories illuminating and inspiring.

Margaret Seares
Chair
Australia Council
September 1998

fuel for thought

Fuel for thought

An important key to improving marketing practice for arts organisations lies in sharing information: Circulating examples of innovation and good practice is a significant and effective form of information sharing. The Audience Development & Advocacy Division program (AD&A) has produced a number of publications and initiatives to facilitate this, including guides on specific marketing practices such as audience research; developing effective marketing strategies; developing marketing plans; effective advertising, publicity and promotion; and the development of a range of Australian arts marketing and audience development case studies.

Fuel for arts marketing is an on-line arts marketing skills development and networking program currently in progress. The user test of this Australia Council web site in late 1997 included the first on-line regional arts marketing case study.

On-screen, the following appeared:

Arts marketing is more than publicity or promotion, more than profit or populism. It's an approach - a way of bringing together a product and an audience. It's about knowing the product and the audience thoroughly, so you can identify the attraction between them. Essentially, it's about building bridges.

There are many elements to this process, knowing the points of connection, finding an effective approach, forming alliances, accessing the right tools - only then can the bridge be constructed and maintained (beyond the freak wave of publicity!).

Development and production of artistic works is an intrinsic part of marketing by virtue of this link to the audience - the visitor, the reader, the viewer, the listener. Increasing "sales" is not the only goal of arts marketing. Rather it's about nurturing an appreciation and understanding amongst existing and potential audiences.

Often, it feels hard to integrate marketing in an arts context. **fuel** brings marketing to you. It offers opportunities to develop your skills and to build meaningful networks with peers and colleagues.

Other AD&A publications and initiatives include:

Research into audience development and marketing issues and practices.

Brisbane-based arts and cultural strategist Anna Grega is carrying out detailed research into current audience development activity, trends and issues in Australia and overseas. From her research, a set of key issues in arts audience development and marketing will be developed.

Internet and Arts Marketing Seminars

Arts Marketing on the Net seminars were held in 1997 in Perth by Arts WA with Imago Multimedia Centre, and in Sydney and Melbourne in association with the Australian Institute of Arts Management.

Who's My Market? A guide to researching audiences and visitors in the arts

On behalf of AD&A, Donovan Research and CloseUp Strategic Management have developed a comprehensive practical reference guide to arts audience and market research, including detailed case studies, for Australian arts and cultural organisations across artforms.

Arts Marketing Case Studies

Deakin University is collecting Australian arts marketing case studies for commercial publication and for promotional and professional development purposes. The case studies will cover community cultural development, literature, music, dance, theatre, visual arts, craft, new media and Indigenous arts, and will be published by Allen & Unwin in 1999.

Access All Areas: Marketing the arts to people with disabilities.

A guide for arts organisations on marketing to audiences with a disability is now being produced in collaboration with DADAA (Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts Australia).

Marketing Strategies for Arts Organisations Guide and Workshops

A guide to developing effective marketing strategies in arts organisations has been developed for the arts community by Dr Peter Steidl, and workshops and presentations delivered in each capital city and several regional centres since November 1997.

Marketing Planning Guide

Planning is underway for the development of a guide for arts organisations on marketing planning.

Arts Marketing: The Pocket Guide

In partnership with AD&A, the Centre for Professional Development has developed a pocket-sized guide to arts marketing, releasing it in December 1997.

The World is Your Audience: Case studies in audience development and cultural diversity

Council, through its Strategy and Policy Division, has released *The World is Your Audience*. AD&A will have a role in its follow-up.

miles ahead: arts marketing that works in regional Australia

Regional arts audience development case studies project consultants Su Hodge, Amanda Lawson and Judith James have been working on *miles ahead: arts marketing that works in regional Australia* to identify, for promotional and professional development purposes, examples of innovative and effective practice in regional arts audience development in Australia. The following pages present some of the discoveries of the *miles ahead team*.

Overview

DISCOVERING WHAT MAKES ARTS MARKETING AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT TICK IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA TOOK THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL'S AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT & ADVOCACY DIVISION'S MILES AHEAD PROJECT TEAM ACROSS THE COUNTRY BY PHONE, FAX, E-MAIL, ROAD AND AIR. THIS PUBLICATION CONTAINS ONLY A SMALL SAMPLE OF THE MANY SUCCESSFUL EVENTS AND ORGANISATIONS THAT MARKET THEMSELVES THROUGHOUT THE REGIONS OF AUSTRALIA.

In a country covering many thousands of kilometres with regional population centres widespread and the arts very much alive in many communities, the *miles ahead* project team could not possibly survey every regional arts organisation. It looked at how to develop an inspirational and informative resource - drawing on and adding value to other AD&A arts initiatives that could acknowledge the breath of regional activity in arts marketing and audience development through a sampling of real life experiences.

As every region is distinctive, artists and organisations around the country are taking different approaches and showing great determination in strengthening their position within their own communities and extending their market profile as far afield as possible.

Throughout the states and territories, Australia's arts communities are addressing issues that impact on development and survival. Geographical size of states; low population density; limited access to marketing expertise and resources; media options; competition from sport, social activities and television; natural disasters; limited access to quality facilities; relatively lower rates of employment and disposable income; inexperience in planning and implementing marketing/audience development strategies; lack of funds; and difficulties in raising alternative forms of income to government grants are just a few of the issues found facing arts organisations in the regions. Add to this overworked volunteers and staff, and marketing and audience development actions become essential for the future.

Marketing is a very powerful activity and sometimes not exploited to its full potential by companies and organisations, from micro to large, arts to non-arts. The blending of a strong intent to create and maintain audiences with a marketing philosophy that encourages public involvement can go a long way towards increasing the appeal of the arts.

The *miles ahead* team found many organisations making inroads through planning processes and strategies involving themselves, artists, communities and strategic partners. Its exploration not only reveals the extent of activity being conducted involving marketing practice that is innovative and effective, but also the efforts involved to make a greater impact with available resources. Like small businesses, these arts organisations face daily issues of limitations in staff, time and other resources. It is their non-stop drive that leads to successful marketing and larger audiences, and realises results that can sustain a future for their organisation or project.

Giving valuable time, many arts professionals and volunteers across Australia have shared their knowledge and experiences to make available these *miles ahead* discoveries. Their stories reflect the motivation of smaller communities and the benefits of working together strategically.

The miles ahead team

Team leader and project manager Su Hodge worked with Judith James and Amanda Lawson over six months, researching, travelling and documenting findings around the country. Liaising closely with AD&A staff and other consultants, they worked towards gathering information. Through contacts with state arts offices, arts councils and peak arts industry organisations, they then planned a series of trips to visit some of the organisations that were considered shining examples of leaders in regional arts marketing.

For over twenty years, Su Hodge has been active professionally in administration, management, marketing and public relations in the fields of the arts, community cultural development, retail and tourism, both in the United States and Australia. Working with different levels of government, numerous arts organisations and individual artists, craftspeople and designer-makers, Su's consultancy specialisation includes arts marketing, cultural promotion and enterprise development.

Su Hodge travelled to parts of Queensland, the Northern Territory, and Western Australia, and made a stop in at Arts Victoria in Melbourne. She also attended the First Australian Regional Galleries Summit in Cairns.

Judith James, with more than twenty years in arts marketing, is one of Australia's most experienced marketers in the performing arts. Her employment history spans four countries and includes managing the marketing departments of leading institutions in England and Australia. As a consultant, she works strategically with a range of clients in the arts and entertainment industry, undertaking business and marketing plans. She has also devised and implemented many specific campaigns, large and small.

Judith travelled to parts of South Australia and New South Wales, and attended the Association of Performing Arts Centres' conference in Hobart, the Mid-North Coast Regional Development Board's Cultural Futures '97 Conference in Taree and a marketing forum held at the Mildura Regional Arts Centre in Victoria.

Amanda Lawson is an experienced arts administrator and manager with a background in cultural enterprise development and the management of craft centres, working in both organisations and government agencies. Amanda's consultancy specialisation is in strategic planning, adaptive re-use of buildings, arts-industry relationships and marketing. Amanda travelled to parts of Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales.