

Film and Video Umbrella

Assessment Meeting, December 8, 1988.

Attended by:

Mike O'Pray
Jeremy Welsh
Lyn Gathercole (Finance)
Rodney Wilson
David Curtis

Summary

- 1) The Umbrella is beginning to perform well in its expanded role.
- 2) Closer analysis of finance and work-load is needed at the planning stage of all projects: e.g. programmes, services, tours abroad. This is to be reflected in a project by project breakdown in future reports, allowing subsequent comparison with actual figures.
- 3) Targets for growth are to be included in the next report.
- 4) Proportion of British and Ethnic Minority Arts work is to be presented in statistical form in future reports.
- 5) Progress on establishing a collaborative relationship with galleries will be reported within six months.
- 6) Written guidelines are required to cover the divide between (1) 'personal' work and Umbrella services (2) 'free' advice and paid consultancy (by end of February 1989).
- 7) Next report (first full-year report) to be submitted by the end of May 89.

The meeting was based on the report of Dec 4th submitted by the Umbrella, supplemented by notes on JW's survey of galleries submitted earlier.

Current Projects

The Arts Council would be appointing advisors to attend and report on Umbrella projects. DC expressed concern at the format of the 'Observatory' (Edge 88); restricted viewing facilities made it difficult to take advantage of the library of work available.

Developments

1. Information: DC was concerned that maintaining a database should not divert resources. JW said that the service would be limited to a mailout to a small number of magazines. In the longer term a subscription service for direct computer access was a possibility. RW suggested that a record of enquiries should be maintained.

2. Printed Matter: The Media Installation catalogue was progressing only slowly. DC suggested the need to give income/expenditure projected figures for such projects at planning stage. JW said that the net cost would be c. £1,000, partly recoverable.

3. Promoting Video Nationally: The Liverpool seminar was being targetted at exhibition organisers, with a maximum of fifty participants.

4. Future Projects: RW suggested that David Boulton of Granada might be a useful contact in relation to developments in Manchester.

5. (i) Distribution: No up-front costs were anticipated for the limited number of titles the Umbrella might handle directly. RW suggested the the Umbrella should talk to the Arts Council's Film Education Officer about the sale of video 'packages' to public libraries for home distribution.

(ii) International Collaboration: MOP said there was considerable interest in Umbrella packages from abroad. Larger fees could be charged and this was a money making exercise: JW might tour the USA with Electric Eyes as a money making venture.

6. Finance: JW was still reviewing the question of how production costs deriving from joint initiatives with galleries should be reflected in fees charged. The 'Suitcase' package was likely to be offered at £800-1200 per venue.

7. Expansion of Touring: DC pointed out that the report didn't address the question of how much the market for Umbrella packages and services could be expanded; and at what cost? Specific targets for growth should be included in the next report. MOP reported that promotional material was now sent to a much-extended mailing list. The problem with extending the length of tours was the reluctance of distributors to agree more than six-month bookings of films. RW urged the Umbrella to consider the possibility of purchasing distribution rights - including TV rights - if cost analysis suggested this would be economic. This might be an area appropriate for incentive funding.

8. Collaboration with Galleries: DC expressed dissatisfaction at the apparent lack of progress in terms of joint ventures with galleries. JW pointed to inertia among curators (viz a viz f/v), and stressed that the strategy was to provide ready-made product in order not to go to galleries empty-handed. The Liverpool seminar (3) would focus on collaboration. progress was to be reported within six months.

9. Proportion of British and Ethnic Minority Arts work. DC asked for data to be presented in statistical form in future reports.

10. Umbrella Services: Clarification was sought on what basis the Umbrella decided to charge for programming/curatorial services rather than offer free advice? Also in what circumstances it was appropriate for MOP/JW to offer their services privately for fees, rather than through the Umbrella? Written guidelines were requested.

The Umbrella was urged to seek ways of increasing its earning power: the Arts Council was unlikely to object to a budget in which greater workload and improved earnings were reflected in higher wages.

David Curtis
Film and Video Officer
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