

Arts Datathon: Knowledge

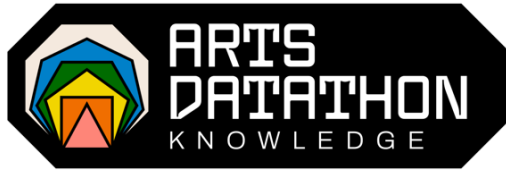
Notes from the closing plenary session

[Arts Datathon: Knowledge](#) focused on how we can maintain and build knowledge in a time when facts and reality are under attack. Six afternoon breakout sessions each took a different approach to addressing this issue. In the closing plenary session, participants and facilitators were asked to report back to the group on what they did and what they learned during their breakout sessions. This is a summary of what they told us.

Guerrilla Data Lab

Description: In this two-hour crash course, you'll learn how to turn everyday numbers into street-level conversation starters. After a brief primer on our [Data Vandals](#) civic interventions, you'll sprint through a hands-on poster lab where participants pair up, grab markers, and prototype bold, participatory data visuals that can be tested live in the room. You'll not just leave inspired, but with concrete tactics for transforming cold stats into public dialogue for implementation in your workplaces, classrooms, or neighborhoods.

- We learned how to make data fun!
 - It was inspiring to consider approaches to making data fun for high school students and to share ways to engage students' interests while also collecting data
- We also explored approaches to data metrics: How do you start a conversation through data? Start with a single (little) question, then ask follow-up questions.
- Some great opening questions people brainstormed in the session were:
 - When's the last time you cried?
 - When was the last time you went to the library?
 - Do you know where your local dump is?



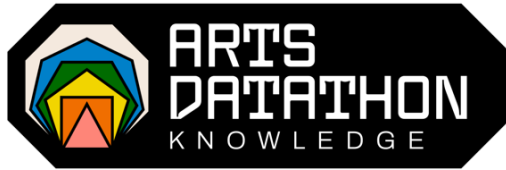
Arts at Work: Protecting Government Data Together

Description: *Are you interested in how government data is being preserved and how this work connects with the arts and cultural record? Join staff from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) as they share how their [DataLumos](#) archive protects and maintains valuable government datasets. This session will provide insight into data archiving as an important part of preserving histories and stories that can inform art, research, and public understanding. Following a brief overview, attendees will take part in a practical data rescue activity, working together to help preserve at-risk datasets for future use.*

- There are huge amounts of government data collected, but no rules or guidelines about retaining it or making it available to the public. In the first weeks alone of the new Trump administration, [more than 8,000 pages](#) were taken down from federal websites.
- This raises important questions: Doesn't government have the responsibility to retain public data sets, which belong to people and are for the public good?
- Each of us can contribute to the work of preserving government data sets. You can upload data to [DataLumos](#). ([Instructions for saving datasets](#).)

No Numbers Without a Story: Case-Making When Trust Is Fragile

Description: *We're living in a moment when facts are under attack. For arts and culture leaders, that makes case-making harder than ever. We're asked to use data, even as trust in numbers is fragile and stories travel faster than evidence. This hands-on session is not about becoming a data expert or defending every statistic. It's about building and using knowledge that decision-makers and communities trust and find relevant. Participants will focus on a real case they are facing—funding, policy, participation, or public support—and clarify the data needed to strengthen it. Guided by three core questions—What's the message? Who gets the message? Who delivers the message?—we'll apply a simple rule: no numbers without a story, and no stories without a number. Drawing on both facilitator insight and participant experience, we'll test what resonates, where messages break down, and how case-making shifts across communities. Participants will leave with a sharper*



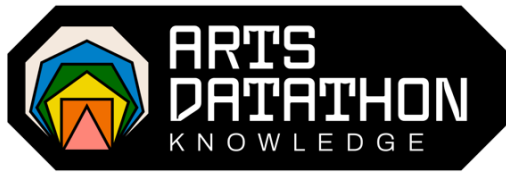
research goal, a draft message frame, and practical ways to pair evidence and storytelling for real-world impact.

- Introducing the metaphor of a building a “case-making sandwich:”
 - **Data** – the foundation, like a slice of bread, onto which we add
 - **Meaning** – the nutrition and flavor, like peanut butter
 - **Relevance** – additional nutrition and flavor, like jelly
 - **Action Items** – cap it off with another slice of bread
- Remember the data Golden Rule: No number without a story and no story without data!
- We left with the mantra: practice, practice, practice – making the sandwich!
- Visit the [Arts Impact Explorer](#) for information and ideas about cross-sector messaging.

Data Embodied: Building Knowledge Through Hands-on Techniques

***Description:** Technology seems to facilitate data collection, but it can quickly become outmoded and unretrievable. Consider the current situation we are in where we rely heavily on search engines, digital apps, and smart phone pics to ensnare memory. Long-lasting and alternative methods based on tactile and sensory methods can help us interpret our daily lives and engender memory. In this session, participants will engage in a series of hands-on techniques and artful thinking exercises to encourage the physical as a means for comprehension. You'll also hear from the presenters about their own work in building knowledge through community engagement.*

- We used play and exploration to help find knowledge in unexpected ways
- People learn and process information in a variety of unique and unexpected ways. Receiving and exploring data through our hands (making/creating) and in community with others can provide entry points and engagement strategies to work with data and information.
- Data can be reflected in words and reports, but also through artifacts, images, and art-making.



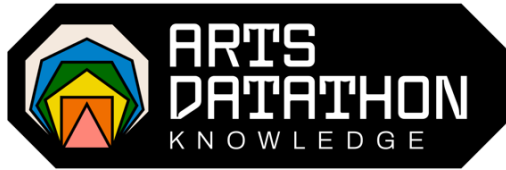
Filling Archival Silences

Description: *Information dissemination has been a point of contention throughout history. Communities have long evaded censorship and historical erasure through creative self-publishing. In this session, members of the Wende Museum Collections department will provide recent historical perspective through their archival holdings from the Soviet era containing samizdat. In Russian, samizdat is a portmanteau of self (sam-) and publish (-izdat). This word is used to signify unofficial self-made publications. Samizdat provided a means for communities to tell hidden stories and to control their output and creative expression. Working from this collection as inspiration, participants will create their own digital samizdat by using the Internet Archive, files from the Wende collection, and other sources, to try to overcome public information gaps.*

- We explored historical examples of archival silences, including censorship and vandalism, false data, AI created images (e.g. removing political rivals)
 - While we can see it happening today, this is not a new concern or challenge. People have been falsifying evidence and faking data for years.
- We considered the ethics of preserving data, including
 - Who is doing the archiving? There should be diversity of folks archiving.
 - Who has access to the archives, and how are they accessed?
 - We also discussed the perception of things like vandalism, e.g., who decides or defines it?
- Developing a zine
 - We identified the work of folks, groups of people, who are not typically archived, are omitted or erased

Connections as Data: Strengthening Your Social Networks

Description: *Your connections with people and the information you share with each other in your networks and communities is important in sustaining and protecting knowledge. This interactive session invites participants to reflect on and visualize the social networks that shape their work as an artist, arts educator, or arts administrator. Who are the influencers and connectors in your networks? Are there gaps in your networks that could be strengthened? How does information flow in your network? Participants will be introduced*



to the core concepts of Social Network Analysis (SNA), a research method and analytical tool that can help you understand the structure of your social networks. This session will help you create new connections (or renew existing ones) among participants. Findings from a recent social network analysis project about the participants gathered by the LA County Arts Ed Collective, the Department of Arts and Culture's arts education initiative, will also be presented.

- We looked at how networks of social interactions and relationships can help researchers and practitioners understand the flow of knowledge, expertise and resources within a group or community
- We identified and played with good networking prompts, intentional networking approaches to help us understand that our connections are also data:
 - For example, a sample network comprised of key people in the Michael B Jordan and Ryan Coogler film universe was used to describe the key components of social network data and analysis
 - The opening questions from the Guerilla Data Lab session would also be great networking prompts!
- We also previewed a social network analysis of the LA County Arts Ed Collective, which reveals the potentially influential people and organizations that participate in the Arts Ed Collective's convenings and gatherings.
- The Arts Datathon is a great networking event, since it brings people together across a variety of contexts and interests.