

# ADUK RESOURCE

## A GUIDE TO DESK RESEARCHING AUDIENCES & VISITOR DATA

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## Introduction

If you want to persuade someone to do something (like attending an event at an arts organisation), the more you know about them the better your chances of success.

You can make sure, for example, that you tell them about something that interests them, or that you use their favoured means of communication (do you need to phone them rather than sending them more spam?), or even that you don't antagonise them by telling them about something that they're definitely not interested in, in a way which is guaranteed to upset them (are you just adding to their 'junk mail'?).

Successful marketing communications depend on your ability to understand your customers in order to be able to respond appropriately to their wants and needs.

This guide offers an overview of some of the most useful, readily available secondary sources of information on audiences that will help you towards this understanding. Rather than explaining everything in detail, you'll get a taste of what's on offer and be pointed towards where this information can be accessed. The guide will also explore how these sources might provide more information on your audiences to support your business or marketing planning.

Whilst this guide tries to keep it quick and simple, be mindful of marketing guru Malcolm McDonald's<sup>1</sup> warning that successfully planned and targeted marketing "is the product of a detailed understanding of your market and will therefore take time". In other words, there's no quick fix - you will get out what you put in.

To help make the process as manageable as possible it can be helpful to divide the process of undertaking desk research about audiences into two distinct activities:

- Activity 1. Seeking information which helps you to learn more about the people who already engage with your organisation
- Activity 2. Seeking information which helps you to learn more about the wider population of potential arts attenders (whether or not they currently engage with your organisation).

Once you've gathered and analysed your information in this way, you can then either use what you've learned about your own audiences in order to devise informed strategies aimed at encouraging them to come more often, or you can apply that knowledge to what you've learned about the wider population in order to encourage more of them to attend your organisation.

The first three sections of this guide deal chiefly with the first activity and the last two sections deal chiefly with the second.

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<sup>1</sup> **McDonald, M. & Dunbar, I.;** *Market Segmentation: How To Do It, How To Profit From It*, 1998, Macmillan Press Ltd., Basingstoke & London.

## How can I learn more about the attendance habits of my audiences?

For 'ticketed' arts organisations the richest source of information about their audiences is usually the box office system. Modern systems allow organisations to learn more about their **attenders** by understanding their **booking** behaviour. So, for example, your system will help you learn who the most frequent **bookers** are and how often they book. What type of **events** do they book for? How many of your **bookers** only ever book once? What did they book for? Have you encouraged them to book again? Who takes advantage of special offers? Who only ever books the most expensive seats?

The ability to distinguish clusters of **bookers** based on these sorts of **booking** habits (a process known as **segmentation**) can help you to make sure that you not only target the right people, with the most appropriate messages at the right time, but can also provide key information for the business or audience development planning processes. (The ADUK Online Guide to Interpreting Audience Data presents a helpful case study to illustrate this kind of use of the data).

Although written in 1993, **Roger Tomlinson's *Boxing Clever*** still offers a comprehensive guide on how this sort of information can be provided by box office systems to develop marketing within arts organisations. It can be downloaded in two parts from the AMA website.

Alternatively, an updated version of ***Boxing Clever*** was commissioned by the Arts Council of New Zealand and Australia Council for the Arts. The brand new version, called ***Full House: Turning Data Into Audiences*** also addresses relatively newer issues like: CRM, privacy, online marketing and online ticketing. This can be ordered online from Arts Australia.

(Methods of data collection amongst non-ticketed organisations are continually developing and improving. For a best practice guide to **visitor** survey techniques in non-ticketed organisations see the ADUK online Guide to Data Collection for Non-ticketed Organisations.)

## How can I find out what sort of people my audiences are so that I can target more people like them?

An alternative to distinguishing between clusters of your database based on their **booking** habits is to use **geo-demographic profiling** as a means to segment your **bookers**. This method works by looking at what people are like, rather than how they behave as **bookers**.

There are two **geo-demographic profiling** tools commonly used in the arts and cultural sectors: **ACORN (A Classification Of Residential Neighbourhoods)** which is produced by CACI , and **Mosaic** which is produced by Experian.

Both of these systems classify the entire population of the UK into different Types of people who share attributes based on key census variables and selected lifestyle characteristics. So, for example, you can distinguish between the Mosaic Type, "New Urban Colonists":

*Younger, high-achieving professionals, enjoying a Cosmopolitan lifestyle in a gentrified urban environment.*

and the Mosaic Type, “Golden Empty Nesters”:

*Families in later lifestages, many retired following Successful careers, in select neighbourhoods.*

As both systems use postcodes to classify people within the various different ACORN and Mosaic Types, you can identify the ACORN or Mosaic Type for anyone on your database for whom you hold a postcode. In this way you can learn which are the most predominant Types on your database, and which are less well represented. Once you know which Types predominate your database you can go about finding more people like them, and as both systems are based on postcodes this can help identify geographical areas for audience development.

Profiles can be accompanied by a wealth of supporting material richly describing the characteristics and consumer behaviour of each Type. This information can help you target marketing activities and communications to specific ACORN and Mosaic Types that interest you. This information includes newspaper readership, television and radio consumption habits, predisposition to certain leisure activities, and whether particular groups are likely to respond to ‘discounted’ promotions or ‘value added’ initiatives.

To get your database profiled you can go directly to Experian or CACI, or you might find that your local audience development agency can direct you to more competitively priced profiling from within the Network agencies that offer these services.

For a more detailed insight into the ways in which profiling can prove valuable for communicating effectively with audiences see the ADUK Online Guide to using Profiling and Segmenting Audiences / Visitors.

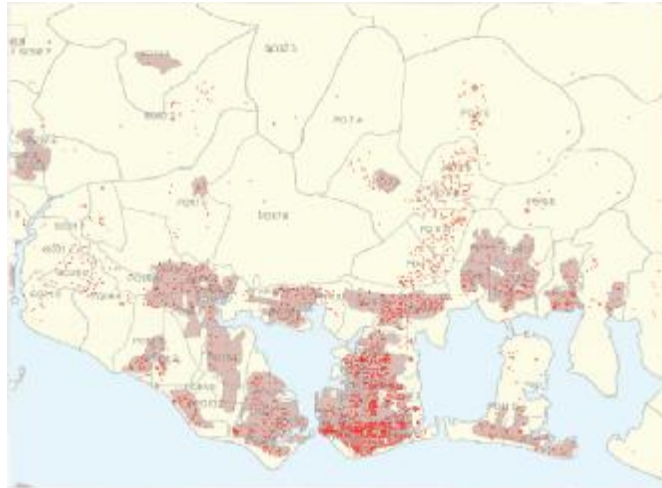
## How can I find out where my audiences are coming from?

Knowing where your current audience come from is one of the essential elements in the process of understanding your current audiences and planning your audience development strategy. Once you understand where your audience comes from you might then also use geography as a means to usefully segment your database.

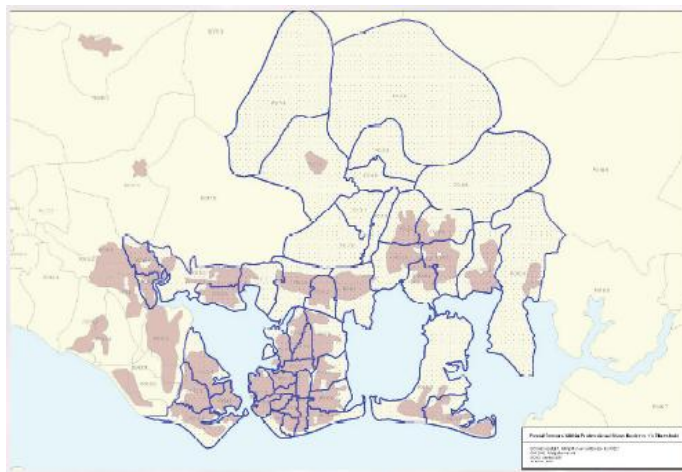
### Mapping

One of the best ways to analyse the distribution of your audience database is to have it mapped using GIS software. Using postcodes from your audience database mapping software can show precisely where your audiences are located, as well as calculating and presenting **catchment areas** and illustrating where **potential audiences** are located and the extent to which your database penetrates into them. This way you can visualise and identify ‘**hotspots**’ and areas for development. Mapping services are offered by some of the Network audience development agencies as well as some audience development consultants.

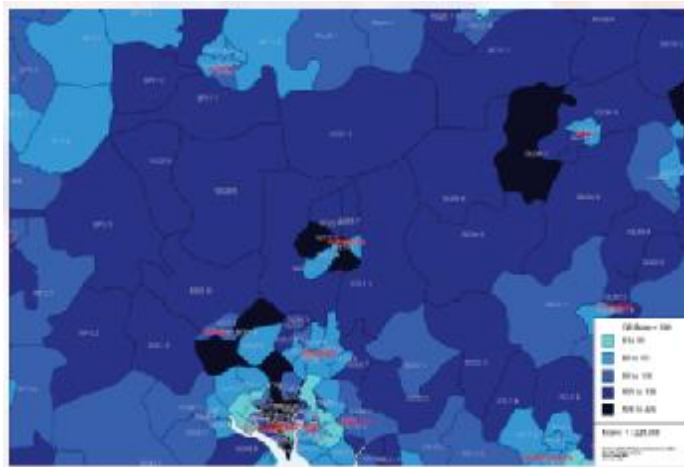
- **Dot Mapping** - Is used to show the geographical distribution of audiences. In this example each red dot represents one **booker** to an arts facility. Postcode sector boundaries have been overlaid, to show which sectors are strongly represented and those which aren't.



- **Catchment Area Mapping** – an organisation's **catchment area** is defined by establishing which postal sectors contain the core proportion of the audience database. (The *A-to-Z* suggests that your catchment area is made up of those significantly represented sectors containing the core 80% of all your **attenders**. For a step-by-step explanation of how **catchment areas** can be calculated, see the ADUK Case Study on Catchment Areas.) In those instances where an organisation has little or no customer data from which to calculate a **catchment area**, the *A-to-Z* suggests a “regular distance” radius around the organisation be used or a “**drivetime isochrone**”. The map below shows those postal sectors included in the **catchment area** shaded blue.



- **Mapping Potential Audiences & Penetration** - the **penetration** of your **attenders** into the population of postal sectors in and around your **catchment area** can be mapped to assess the potential for further development. This method can also be used in conjunction with estimates on the size of **potential audiences** (or indeed any information relating to population characteristics such as age, ethnicity, etc.) from data sources such as the Target Group Index, to produce a visual representation of both **potential audiences** and population **penetration**. In the map below showing **audience potential**, areas estimated as having the greatest potentials are coloured in darker shades, and those with least in lighter shades. To see more detailed examples of how data can be used to show **audience potential**, and how **penetration** can be measured see the ADUK case studies on Audience Potential and Hotspots.



### **‘Do It Yourself’ Geographical Analysis**

Whilst maps provide a neat visual means to analyse where your audiences come from, you don't have to invest in mapping to get at this type of information. Most (if not all) box office systems incorporate postcode reporting features which rank postal geography boundaries (areas / districts / sectors) by the number of your organisation's **bookers** within each. Alternatively, it is possible to conduct this type of analysis on data from your audience database using software such as Microsoft Excel or Microsoft Access. If you then wish to get a visual representation of the information you produce, you can buy laminated postal geography maps, which can be used again and again, from companies such as Geoplan.

### **How can I find out about the population of my catchment area?**

Your catchment area, then, can either be calculated from the distribution of your audience database, or if you don't have any significant data about your own audiences, it could be based on a 30-minute drivetime around your organisation, for example, or a ten-mile radius. But how can you find out more about the population of your catchment area, (or the market in which you operate)?

## **ACORN & Mosaic Profiling**

As we've seen, the ACORN and Mosaic systems work by classifying people into distinct Types based on shared characteristics. As well as profiling your audience database, a Mosaic or ACORN profile will also tell you how many of each of the different Types there are in your catchment area. So, once you've identified which Types are most and least represented on your database you can then decide whether or not to target particular Types for special attention dependent on how well they are represented in the catchment area. The profile will also give you a good impression of the character of the population of your catchment area.

## **Area Profile Reports**

Area Profile Reports contain a rich depth of information describing the population of a defined area. This area can match your catchment area, be based on drivetime or distance radius, or match local or district authority boundaries.

Included in the reports is the population size, and a wealth of other demographic information including gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic grade, higher qualifications and households with dependent children. Also included are estimates of the numbers of potential arts or museum attenders. The reports give this information about the area as a whole, and then for each postal sector within that area. In this way it's possible to identify any postal sectors that are particularly well (or poorly) represented in terms of any of these demographics. So for example, you might find it useful when planning around Family Friendly work to identify those postal sectors within your catchment area that contain particularly high concentrations of households with dependent children.

The reports are available to not-for-profit organisations operating in the arts and cultural sector or to venues receiving work from funded clients of Arts Council England or the Scottish Arts Council or Arts Council Wales. They are also available to the organisations in England for which MLA (Museums Libraries Archives) is responsible. To request an Area Profile Report, organisations in England should contact either amh, Audiences Yorkshire, Arts About Manchester or Arts Council England. Those in Scotland should contact the Scottish Arts Council and those in Wales to Arts Council Wales. There is a charge of £25.00 plus vat per report to all applicants except for arts organisations in England.

## **ONS Website**

The Office for National Statistics website provides a facility to access a wealth of largely census-based information. Access is free to all, but you need to register to use certain elements of the site, such as the mapping facility. Probably the most useful section of the website is the Neighbourhood Statistics pages, which again provide detailed information on the population characteristics of a defined area. There are various different ways to define the area for which you wish to access information; for example, by ward, local authority or by output areas. One drawback is that it is not possible to access information presented according to postal geography. In addition to the types of demographic information presented in Area Profile Reports the Neighbourhood Statistics pages also include information on health, deprivation, housing and crime.

As an example of how this sort of information might prove useful, an arts organisation wished to implement a programme of outreach work in primary schools in the most deprived localities within its catchment area. Using the ONS site it was possible to produce a map (below) which identified the most deprived areas (by their rank score according to indices of multiple deprivation) and the schools located within them (marked with turquoise circles). There is a real wealth of information at the ONS site which is constantly being added to and updated. If possible, some of your time could be very well invested in acquainting yourself with the site and its contents.

### **UpMyStreet**

UpMyStreet offers freely accessible, but quite basic information on neighbourhoods. It's possible to find out the ACORN profile of any postcode, and to get a street map of the area. For non-ticketed arts organisations who capture modest numbers of audience postcodes it would therefore be possible build-up an ACORN profile of audiences at no cost, by looking-up the ACORN Type and recording it alongside postcodes in the audience database.

## **How can I find out where to target people most likely to attend arts events?**

### **Area Profile Reports**

Arts Council England's Area Profile Reports contain estimates of the number of current attenders to various artforms living in any defined area, and for each postal sector within that area. Index figures and percentages are also included to indicate whether the proportion of arts attenders in any postal sector is high or low in comparison with the rest of the catchment area. The artforms include: plays, opera, ballet, contemporary dance, classical music, jazz, art galleries and exhibitions, theatre, rock & pop and cinema. Also included are estimates on the numbers of current visitors to museums. The information is estimated based on responses to the Target Group Index Survey, which is modelled to reflect likely responses from the whole population.

This information can be useful for planning either provision of the arts or programming as it gives an indication of the size of the local market for the various artforms. The data presented at postal sector level can help you to identify localities within your catchment area that might be potentially rich areas from which to attract audiences for the arts, or those areas that might be suitable for targeting outreach or education work. This can help you to maximise the effectiveness of your marketing communications by enabling you to direct them towards the most appropriate prospects.

You can also use this information to identify any gaps or areas for potential development within your own catchment area by comparing the spread of your own audiences (see Mapping section) with the Area Profile Report's estimates of current attenders to the arts. So, for example, you might identify sectors that have high estimated numbers of current attenders but in which you have a relatively modest proportion of your own audiences. Other information from

the Area Profile Reports can then help you to understand why this might be the case: is the ACORN profile of that sector different from that of your core audience?; is the sector made up of an age group or ethnic group which doesn't match your organisation's current audience profile? This sort of analysis can lead your continued investigations in the right direction.

To find out more about the practical applications of the information on current attenders to the arts contained in Arts Council England's Area Profile Reports see the ADUK Online Guide to using Area Profile Reports.