



DM@X/Digital Media at the Crossroads
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Interoperability: The Benefits and the Challenges

What are the challenges in increasing interoperability in the arts sector, to the benefit of creators and audiences? Should there be federal standards? What creator tools are available? How can one enhance the user experience?

INTRODUCTION

slides 3-4

Plan for this presentation...

Good morning, everyone. This topic is programmed for DM@X not just because of recent anxiety along the lines of "What do I do now? My TikTok content will vanish!", but also because audiences really like to have obstacle-free user experiences and a lack of interoperability gets in the way of that.

I'll start by noting what interoperability is and why we should care. Then I'll look at some answers & ideas from, Canada, other countries & other industries. For instance, because recent government mandates regarding health data are on the table and coming into force, I've been trying out ways to use "replacement vocabulary" from the health data sector in order to craft persuasive calls-to-action for the digital media industry.

As you'll see, I've designed the slides as a resource for you to come back to on your own. There are report highlights and sometimes lots of text. The slides will be available to you. In my comments now, I'll point out key content in the slides and focus on decision starting-points for the digital media industry as we set out to do interoperability advocacy work together.

GO Transit train photo of Don River: a visible junction

This photo shows a visible junction of road, river, rail, hydro power lines. This is connected infrastructure that is visible, some of which (such as electricity) powers infrastructure that is invisible. At its best and most effective, digital interoperability is invisible.

DEFINITIONS, BENEFITS & REACTIONS

slides 6-14

What is interoperability?

"the ability of two or more systems or components to exchange information and to use the information that has been exchanged."

Interoperability helps

Digital media creators build assets and put them into different digital environments

Digital media companies do business throughout their supply chain using a range of platforms

Digital media audiences smoothly transition across platforms without prohibitive switching costs

Since neither digital media creators nor audience members build the systems that they use, it's up to digital media **companies** to build systems that are interoperable. But, for various reasons, they are often not inclined to do so. And that's where regulation comes in.

The arts sector -- along with the wider digital media and culture sectors -- need to band together and make decisions about how to advocate to achieve either internal industry self-regulation or external mandatory government regulation to foster a high level of interoperability.

My focus today is on how to carve a path to get that advocacy under way.

We now move into some of the slides with report excerpts and lots of text. Remember, I'll make the slides available to you.

Water & Music Roblox/Fortnite

Metaverse experience are currently not interoperable with each other. This example is about virtual audiences not being able to transfer between "metaverse" environments such as Roblox and Fortnite, and has a tip for independent musicians.

World Bank identifies a range of benefits

- Promoting technology and vendor neutrality
- Improving the integrity of identity data
- Creating administrative efficiencies
- Reducing fraud and improving targeting
- Improving end-user experience
- Enabling innovation and new use cases

.... and the World Bank notes that "Despite these benefits, the data exchange and links between systems that interoperability facilitates can create risks to privacy and data security."

WIPO on interoperability

Recent reports and events from the WIPO about interoperability not only cover legal, security, and technical challenges, but also recognize less tangible benefits of interoperability such as: trust, ethics, inclusivity..... and fun.

G7 Italia 2024: Culture Ministers' Declaration

In this Declaration, culture ministers in the G7 (which is Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the USA) describe how interoperability is a central piece of their "day-to-day fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property". They also recognize the importance of capacity building and cooperation across law enforcement, the judiciary, and cultural areas.

Tik-Tok creator anxiety

A snapshot of creator concerns, questions, and solutions.

Why there can be company resistance to regulation of interoperability

The EU's Digital Markets Act is now in force, and Apple has argued that Meta's interoperability requests for access to Apple technology is over-reach. For Apple many of these requests appear to be "completely unrelated to the actual use of Meta external devices, such as Meta smart glasses and Meta Quests".

This slide is a bridge to our next section, with regulatory examples.

REGULATORY EXAMPLES

slides 16-17

EU/European Union: Digital Markets Act

This Act designates certain large companies, including Apple and Meta, as "gatekeeper platforms", and obliges those platforms -- who act as **distributors** for the digital media industries -- to do certain things, including "enabling interoperability with third-party tech".

We now move into slides about the health information sector, a sector where there is a lot of momentum and detail in interoperability policy.

Canada: Health information tech sector

I believe we should consider how the digital media sector can follow in the policy "slipstream" that's been created by regulation in the health data industry, in Canada and elsewhere.

Bill C-72, known as the "Connected Care For Canadians Act", puts interoperability at the centre. The full name of the Act is "An Act respecting the interoperability of health information technology and to prohibit data blocking by health information technology vendors"

- first reading: June 6, 2024

LEARNING FROM OTHER INDUSTRIES

slides 19-30

Learning from other industries means

breaking out from our own pasture
exploring widely by free association
travelling in new directions
noting when something resonates
being inspired
finding a persuasive message that you can adapt

Why healthcare?

- Governments are moving forward with regulation in this sector so there are models to adapt.
- Benefit to patients is easy to understand and a goal that all parties in a sector can get behind.
- It's up to us to decide what each of our digital media sector's equivalent is to "patient".
- The creative and digital media industries contribute to physical and mental health.

To show you what my replacement-vocabulary experiments look like, I use this report, "G7 Open standards and Interoperability".

G7 Open standards example = Healthcare Sector + Healthcare Sector: Industry Words + Digital Media Sector: Parallel Vocabulary + Digital Media Sector: Call-to-Action x 2

In reading this report I was inspired by this commitment made by G7 health ministers.

We recognise the importance of digital health solutions in transforming healthcare including but not limited to in response to pandemics. In order to derive maximum benefit from advances in digital health, we need to have data governance, system security, privacy, regulatory and data protection standards in place according to national and regional contexts. This includes ensuring that digital health solutions are inclusive, comprehensive and equitable.

I then identify industry words..... insert parallel vocabulary..... and use the results.

Here's the next paragraph, adapted in a similar way.

In the province of Alberta, the Health Data Interoperability Working Group doesn't mince words in the title of their October 2023 report: "Interoperability Saves Lives".

Report from Alberta Virtual Care: "Interoperability Saves Lives"

Tim Murphy, chair of the working group that authored this report, provides us with a fine example of call-to-action vocabulary.

I've included my own parallel vocabulary substitutions, notably leaving one of the "health" references because it also applies to the digital arts sector. Here are the first two sentences:

After reading *Interoperability Saves Lives*, the only conclusion one can come to is that maintaining the status quo is NOT an option. Our prior ineffectual approach to health digital media data interoperability is an obstacle to everything from individual patient care and inclusive access to the advancement in our understanding of the complex relationship between health the arts, wellbeing, and the social determinants of health.

Canada Health Infoway: "Digital Health Interoperability Task Force Report"

In March 2024, the Canadian Medical Association (CMA), Canada Health Infoway (Infoway), the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (Royal College) created the Digital Health Interoperability Task Force (the Task Force).

The goals of the task force are listed in their report, published three months ago.

WHAT'S NEXT

slides 32-38

Actions: Decision starting-points

- Consider ways to apply health data interoperability advocacy methods to demonstrate value.
- For instance, identify technologies, seek out political champions, learn what words have meaning for them, and tell user stories.
- Communicating the value of a policy is a process, and continues to develop over time.
- We are all part of the work to advocate for the value of digital media.

As we set out to do the work

- pinpoint why interoperability matters to companies, creators, and audiences in your sector
- identify challenges in increasing interoperability in the arts sector
- determine which digital media industry sectors can join together in advocacy
- plan how digital media industry sectors can advocate

In conclusion: an invitation

I invite you to break out from your pasture.

I'm eager to learn about more interoperability examples, and – especially – your re-interpretation of their parallel vocabulary.

Let's inform ourselves about the word "interoperability" and be ready to work to make it happen. That leads into the importance of media literacy, and our next presenter today.

As the arts, culture, and media sector raises its collective voice to communicate its value to government and the private sector, one aspect of its value will always be intangible. Part of what is intangible is the sector's health benefits, whether it's music that helps us grieve or binge-watching that makes us laugh.

Vocabulary from the healthcare sector regarding interoperability can be a model for us & a source of inspiration. So let's take that inspiration, breathe it in, and make it work.

Thank you.

References & Resources