

WORLD CREATIVITY & INNOVATION WEEK April 15 – 21, 2016:

What Participants Think

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The roots of WCIW

“What if people celebrated their potential to contribute to making significant differences in their lives and the lives of others? It was this way of thinking that drove me to imagining then creating World Creativity and Innovation Week - April 15-21 (WCIW).” (Segal 2016)

These were the words chosen by Marci Segal to describe the origins of what has become an annual event, World Creativity and Innovation Week April 15-21. The first event was her response to a headline in 2001 suggesting that her homeland, Canada, was in ‘creativity crisis’. She took April 21st as World Creativity and Innovation Day, and extended the celebration of new ideas, new decisions and new actions to a week a few years later. As of 2006 Leonardo da Vinci’s birthday, April 15th marks the first day of this now annual observance of which over 50 countries world-wide take part.

Creative Academic’s involvement

In January 2015, Norman Jackson, Chrissi Nerantzi and Alison James founded Creative Academic (CA), a not-for-profit social enterprise whose aims were summarised thus:

Our purpose is to champion creativity, in all its manifestations, in higher education in the UK and the wider world.

Our goal is to become a global HUB for the production and curation of resources that are of value to the members of our community.

(Creative Academic 2015)

In addition to these objectives, CA publishes a magazine, Creative Academic Magazine (CAM), of which I am executive editor.

In the course of curating ideas and articles, we came upon publicity for WCIW 2016. After discussion, the team decided to put forward the following proposal for our involvement:

Creative Academic participated in this global event in 2016. Our contributions included:

1) Establishing a new conversational space. From December 2015 we will encourage the sharing of stories about personal creativity and innovation in everyday life through a new Google+ Community ‘Our Creative Life’.

<https://plus.google.com/communities/106367720977059375674>

2) During April 2016 we facilitated a Google+ community discussion on the theme of ‘Creativity & Innovation in Higher Education’. As well as exploring the theme the forum provided participants with a means of sharing their personal and institutional contributions to WCIW

3) In April 2016 we published Creative Academic Magazine #4 on the theme of 'Creativity in Development & Innovation'

<http://www.creativeacademic.uk/magazine.html>

4) We are also publishing a 'Guide to Encouraging Creativity in Higher Education Teaching and Learning'

Website: <http://www.creativeacademic.uk/>

Creative Academic, Global network and resources hub, United Kingdom

As I researched WCIW for CAM, I was surprised to see how long the event had been taking place and was interested to know who was participating and what their experiences were. I contacted Marci Segal and established that no research had yet been conducted on this, and was delighted to find her not only receptive to my surveying participants, but very supportive. So it was that, to complement the other activities of WCIW 2016, I carried out a short survey.

The survey of WCIW participants

In order to maintain absolute confidentiality, my initial plan to have a questionnaire in Word format which participants could complete and return to me was revised. Instead, we used an on-line Survey Monkey design, which Marci alone could access. She then sent me the anonymous responses. One person replied using the Word document, and 17 replied on-line. We are most grateful to everyone who took the time to take part in this survey.

The rest of this article summarises the responses given to a series of open-ended questions.

Q1 Please outline your contribution to WCIW 2016

Four broad, and sometimes overlapping forms of contribution emerged:

1 Workshops and talks in the workplace

This first activity involved presenting ideas and events to colleagues, which, as the second bullet point below indicates, is not a normal part of the organisation's practice. It seems that WCIW offered an opportunity to do something different.

- We made a week in Colombia of Creativity and Innovation of 6 days with sponsor talks, workshops and Innovation tours.
- Organisation of an Open Day in our company's installation (Mindshake House in Porto) to celebrate Leonardo's birthday with a full program of creative activities, such as 2 expositions, drink and food experiences, creative thinking exercises, a Mindshake game, a collective mind map, etc. During the following week the house also had the door open to visit the expositions and to do the games. We also offered for a special price some workshops in Design Thinking and Service Design. Normally we don't do public events in our installations, as we work only for companies.
- Presentation on Creative Thinking using Lego Serious Play at Learnography's - Brunchology event.

- At Creativity Salon used a variety of singing bowls as a healing meditation. Watched and discussed two live videos on creativity. Discovered ideas based on all 3 activities.

2 Public engagement activities

A second set of activities related to events held outside the organisation itself. As the examples demonstrate, these ranged from local to national, educational to social.

- We held various initiatives aimed at different levels of society - schools and university students. The general public was engaged through a nation-wide challenge
- My college level Drug Use & Abuse class wrote inspirational messages and the addiction treatment hotline # on suckers. They walked through out campus and Silent Flash Mobbed classes to distribute the suckers.
- Dinner & Drawing 20th April - a creative supper club. Additionally, spreading the word about WCIW16 via Your Art Life 18th April @ Camberwell Library in partnership with Camberwell Arts and Empowering artist network.
- Locally, organized April 15 event, Living Like Leonardo, with birthday cake, arts activities and science demonstrations for the Community; facilitated a community idea swap using the Angels Advocate; designed and organized a 4.5 hour workshop for the community called, Admit it. You're Creative. All these were free. Globally, maintained social networking through website, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn; wrote articles for blog posts, was interviewed by groups of students.

3 Use of on-line media

Some of the above activities mention the medium for delivery of events. On-line media appear to be particularly effective, as illustrated here:

- My organisation's contribution involved: 1) producing an online/downloadable magazine of the theme of Creativity in Development & Innovation, 2) establishing a new on-line forum for ongoing conversations about creativity 3) hosting/facilitating a week long online conversation called Imagineering in Higher Education
- Social media and podcasts
- Increased social media messaging on innovation and included #wciw hashtag

4 Formal teaching

As implied in some of the activities in the above groups, formal teaching was an important medium.

- Will be teaching facilitation skills @ upcoming state convention, and available to do individual coaching sessions for those who might be 'stuck'
- Students presented two Community Problem Solving Days to area participants.
- Creating an Innovative Leadership Symposium for a Community College. 6 local organizational leaders from large organizations sat on a panel describing and explaining creative leadership and breakout sessions for participants to experience their creativity.
- My Psychology of Creativity class created games in preparation. On the day, we invited some folks to come and play our games.

- Adult learning class used CPS (creative problem solving) system to plan a celebration. Settled on cupcake decorating and games played in a common area for others to join in.
- TEDx-talk about "Creativity Without Borders" at Stenden University in Holland; and also programleader at CREA conference in Italy, mentioning the importance of creativity and the WCIW...

Q2 Have you participated in WCIW before? Q3 If yes, please give brief details.

59% of participants had taken part previously, showing a strong loyalty to the event. Nevertheless, recruiting 41% new participants in 2016 is an encouraging achievement.

Ten respondents gave an explanation of their response, which can be grouped under the following headings

1 Repeating the same activity as before

This suggests that creativity may be limited, but by going out to different audiences, dissemination of ideas can be effected.

- 2015 in Bogotá we make the same event.
- In past have done the week through training others @ jobsites
- Same
- We hold similar events each year
- Dinner & Drawing - creative supper club 2015
- Local school celebrating Earth Day
- Been involved since its beginning in 2001

2 Different activities each year

Contrary to the last sub-group, some participants create a different activity each year.

- Always an adult learning group, use CPS, come up with different celebrations.
- Other events - changes every year.

3 Cultural focus

One respondent explained how the same principles were applied each year, but with a different context:

- Invited a Native American Shaman to teach us holy dancing and chanting

Q4 How did you learn of World Creativity and Innovation Week April 15-21?

Again, emergent themes are overlapping, and are helpful in indicating which form of publicity to use for future events.

1 Via social media, including Marci

The most common answer was that respondents had learnt through social media, often directly from Marci herself.

- From a post on Twitter

- From Marci's communication in FB and Linked In
- Online
- ICSC (International Center for Studies in Creativity)
- On your mailing list
- Marci's emails
- From Marci
- I know Marci S. :-)
- Through Marci Segal
- CPSI, Marci Segal, Facebook
- Created it!

2 Through workplace

A few respondents learnt through their places of work or study:

- Upon joining my place of work.
- SUNY Buff State, ICSC
- At MSc in Creativity, Buffalo 2010-2012

3 From previous involvement

It seems that those who have been involved previously may watch out for the next year's event:

- Through being involved in 2015

4 By chance

One respondent just chanced upon news of WCIW:

- Searching for creative activities for the class

5 Consistent with everyday organisational practice

This final comment indicates that the organisation is trying to apply the principles of creativity to its normal practice:

- We try to adapt the essence of the WCIW in our country making activities of sharing, ideas, experience and knowledge

Q5 How is WCIW related to your own work/area of interest?

One person replied simply that it is 'connected greatly.' Amongst the other responses, a number of common areas were found, which can be grouped as:

1 Work in an innovation/creative industry

The respondent works in a creative field:

- We are an Innovation consulting firm with experts in Creativity and Innovation. Also we work with a foundation to help social Innovation.
- My company Mindshake centres its work in training creative thinking in companies.
- I run a creative company that seeks to inspire everyday creativity in artists, creatives and those who work in the creative industries who think they are not creative.

2 Mission

Creativity is central to the individual or company's values:

- The idea of promoting awareness of the importance of creativity in education is an important part of our mission.
- Passion area, academic discipline, consultant who frees people's thinking to create new futures.

3 Teaching context

Creativity is felt to be essential to the respondents' teaching, which is across sectors:

- Creativity and innovation are key to leadership classes I teach.
- I incorporate creativity into my lesson plans
- Problem solving now more critical than ever for conflict resolution, getting others to have more than just 'one idea' and thinking it's 'done'
- I teach creativity, leadership, and other topics
- I lecture in the area of creativity and innovation
- Not only do students learn about engaged to take part in their own creative activities
- Teach CPS at a community college.

4 Consultant in area

The respondent is a consultant in the field of creativity or innovation:

- I am a fulltime creativity professional: trainer, facilitator, consultant, coach and speaker
- Innovation acceleration in organisations
- I do work as an innovation consultant with Innovation Culture Group
- I use creativity and innovation in my private therapy practice and my facilitation of small groups

Q6 Why did you choose to participate in WCIW 2016?

Responses to this question reveal a mix of idealistic and practical reasons.

1 To fill a perceived gap or spread awareness

- Because there was anyone doing nothing in Colombia
- It is in my blood. Living in a new community, want to bring it here.
- I was asked to deliver a TEDx-talk; the team was not aware of the date of April 21 (sic), so I told them!
- To give my students a creative experience

2 Valuable, altruistic

Related to the former sub-group, shared values are an important factor:

- We thought it was a worthwhile thing to do and also that we would be able to communicate with and connect to people that our work does not normally reach.
- I love creativity and want to share it
- The values behind WCIW are at heart as we strongly believe in the internal creative potential of each individual.
- To be involved in global series of events seeking to raise the profile of creativity and innovation
- Because it is important to recognize opportunities that value this work.
- Promote creative thinking and innovation
- Why not! It stimulates me and my community to create something different fun and exciting

3 Marketing value

I had anticipated from my review of submissions that many participants would be using the opportunity offered by WCIW to publicise themselves. In fact, only one cited this reason.

- To give a wider approach to our work and to offer something new to our clients. To spread the concept and principles of creativity in Porto, Portugal.

4 Accessible

One respondent took advantage of the accessibility of the event:

- Easy to access. Well done. Good communications.

5 Loyalty to Marci

Personal loyalty was significant for one participant who said:

- I like Marci

6 Why not?

Finally, one respondent quipped:

- Because it was there. ;-)

Q7 To date, what have been the most important outcomes of taking part in WCIW 2016?

15 of the 17 on-line respondents replied to this, despite my anticipation that it might be too soon for them to be aware of outcomes. There was a surprisingly wide range of perceived outcomes, and these generally correspond with objectives. One respondent observed that the event was 'not outcome-dependent.' Dominant themes were:

1 Spreading awareness

This included awareness both of the importance of creativity and innovation, and of the individual/group's work.

- Taking Creativity and Innovation to regions were nothing happens
- Exposure to a wider audience and raising awareness of WCIW of the existence of our organisation. Possibly new followers on social media and through our networks. We certainly attracted new people to our networks but it's hard to say whether these came via WCIW or our enhanced activity on social media during our online event.
- Increased awareness of what creativity can be in my students' lives.
- Publicity about the TEDx-talk, great part of my network have noticed my contribution
- Got to do an interactive workshop that helped people understand how they think
- Reawakening our creative spirits and increasing awareness of importance of innovation

2 Client reaction

One respondent records that there has already been positive feedback from others:

- The positive perception of the Open Day by our clients and friends.

3 Sense of community

WCIW was seen as bringing people together and creating a sense of unity:

- Our students felt part of a large community.
- Reminds me that we are part of a bigger picture of taking creativity to the world
- We learn a lot each year. We learn from different audiences and through the process in setting up the events.
- Being part of the network
- Other than the initiatives celebrating the week, don't believe others appreciated the essence as I. Not important in an area where creative is not encouraged.

4 Personal satisfaction

A sense of personal satisfaction was expressed by one respondent:

- Tremendous satisfaction at people engaging in promoting, encouraging and enabling others to unleash their natural creative urge.

5 Concrete outcome

In one case, there appears to have been creation of a new product:

- The students worked in two teams to create pretty innovative games

Q8 Please add any further comments you may have on WCIW and/or suggestions for future events

Twelve respondents added comments or suggestions, as detailed below. The comments reinforce previous answers.

Comments

- Maybe it will Organization can Make more press of different events around the world (sic)
- By committing our resources to making a contribution to WCIW we created a purpose that enabled us to pursue our own goals within the time frame required by the dates of WCIW
- This is a great program. Very well executed. Thank you.
- Students all took part in this activity

Suggestions

The suggestions give ideas for improving the WCIW website information and sharing individual action, financing of the event and increasing participation.

- Introduce in the website of WCIW a map with a signal of all places/partners who participate in the WCIW.
- I'd like better sets of promo to be designed that reflect the wide nature of the annual programme I find the graphic quite corporate and fairly limiting. I'd also like to have more of a sense of community being built through and by WCIW I.e. Intros to other country specific organisations or a planned global Skype conference/webinar to build links to the global communitiy
- Looking for ways to make it easier to participate and report.
- I would have like easy/straightforward options for adding images of our project to the site
- Ask people at conferences for contributions; send them emails in an early phase
- Great if we could get a MAJOR sponsor to increase visibility
- More ideas of other things that can be done
- Keep it up. Share online diverse ways others celebrate.

Q9 Organisers and email contact(s)

Although the survey was anonymous, respondents were able to add their contact details if they wished to be sent a copy of the survey report. This will be sent to them individually, as well as offered to Marci Segal for inclusion on the WCIW website. Once again, we are most grateful to all for their insights and suggestions.

JW May 2016

References

Creative Academic (2015) Terms of reference: <http://www.creativeacademic.uk/>
 Creative Academic Magazine www.creativeacademic.uk
 Segal, M. (2016) 'Celebrating the Creativity in all of us' in Creative Academic Magazine 4, April 2016