

## **Salamanca Arts Centre**

[www.salarts.org.au](http://www.salarts.org.au)

November 2003

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### **Interview with Rosemary Miller on using the Internet to conduct e-business**

#### **1. The business**

The Salamanca Arts Centre was established in 1976 following the purchase of the warehouses at 65-79 Salamanca Place, Hobart, by the state government for the people of Tasmania. The Salamanca Arts Centre Inc. manages the Centre and promotes activities and events in its public areas for the purpose of fostering, nurturing and increasing access to and participation in the arts by all Tasmanians.

SAC Inc provides assistance by way of studios, rehearsal and working space for artists, artisans, theatre companies and other community arts organisations at discounted rental rates. The Centre is home to many artists and crafts people, as well as arts training, community, visual and performing arts organisations. It also houses commercial businesses whose activities support, teach and promote the arts.

Salamanca houses some of Tasmania's premiere cultural venues including the Peacock Theatre, Long Gallery and Sidespace Gallery, shops and galleries selling a vast array of art, craft and design, public spaces to be shared and enjoyed and a constantly changing program of exhibitions, performances and public events.

#### **2. The idea**

Salamanca's original website was launched in 1997, in response to the need for a web presence that would identify the organisation and provide a basic source of information about its nature and activities. The site was very simple and had no interactive elements. In late 2002, in recognition of the limitations of the existing site, a project was initiated to design and develop a new website that would have greatly improved features, including e-commerce facilities, which would represent the organisation more effectively and raise its profile in the arts community.

#### **3. The e-business**

The new site contains many e-business features. In addition to extensive information about the organisation and its operations, including its staff and tenants, visitors to the site can learn about the heritage buildings which house the organisation and access a wide range of information about Hobart.

A membership section enables prospective members to apply and pay via an online form. They also have access to an online newsletter.

An events diary provides information on all that happens within the Salamanca Arts Centre. Patrons can select an event and access a simple ticketing service, through which they provide credit card details online. Tickets are then available for collection at the event.

Merchandising is now possible via an online shop facility, and there is a virtual exhibition feature that supports the sale of artworks.

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Performance venues are illustrated and described, with full details of their specifications for those wishing to hire them, including sample contracts. There is also a venues directory, with links to other venues in Hobart and to major arts organisations.

The site now offers links to a range of services for Salamanca's tenants and artists, as well as for other arts organisations in Tasmania.

### **4. The challenges**

The biggest challenge for the organisation was the initial planning and implementation of the website project. With all its staff heavily committed to their work roles it was difficult for the organisation to find time for the essential planning and development activities. Success could not have been achieved without a strong belief in the importance of an up-to-date website and its potential value to the organisation.

Salamanca's role as landlord also posed challenges. The organisation houses 75 to 80 tenancies, some of whom already had websites, and all of whom had to be represented on the Salamanca website. Establishing their needs and meeting them was a major task.

A visual concept had to be developed, requiring the location of existing visual material as well as the creation of new graphic material, and plans had to be made to add ticketing transactions to the existing financial system.

Most staff members have not been directly affected by the changes. A small group of specially qualified people deal with website issues, one of whom is designated the Website Manager, and carries out the routine maintenance of the site. Major updates will be outsourced to a contractor.

### **5. The results**

The net result of the new site's e-business functions is the provision of a rich source of services and information about all aspects of Salamanca's operations, readily accessible to the public 24 hours a day. The usefulness of the site has been greatly improved for a wide range of individuals and organisations involved in arts-related activities. It also provides increased income for Salamanca itself.

### **6. The future**

As the current website is so new, the first task will be to obtain feedback from users as to the effectiveness of the site and any improvements or new features that would make it more effective. There are also plans to link the box office operation with others in the state, so that patrons can access ticket sales for a number of attractions.

# case study

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### **7. The advice**

Rosemary Miller, Salamanca's Director, believes that, where an arts organisation has all its staff fully committed to its core operations, an external project manager is an essential investment in the website planning and implementation processes. This person will drive the project and coordinate all necessary inputs in terms of information gathering, concept planning and design requirements, and liaise with the web developer. This is a huge task, and Salamanca could not have handled the project without professional assistance.