CREATING EXPERIENCES

SEB CHAN, who will be the keynote speaker at ALIA Information Online 2017 Conference in February, tells us what his life is like as the Chief Experience Officer at Melbourne's Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

WHAT DID YOU THINK YOUR CAREER WOULD BE WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?

When I was a child I was obsessed with Usborne's *The Spy's Guidebook*, Stewart Cowley's *Spacecraft 2000 to 2100 AD* and space Lego. I hoped that there would be a career as an interstellar sleuth but that didn't quite pan out. Then, as a teenager, I wanted to be an engineer or a computer scientist. But because of a late-teen interest in community activism and social change, I ended up training professionally as a social worker before community radio and a burgeoning underground music scene took me down another path altogether. With academics as parents, I'd always grown up in a household of books, music and computers.

WHO HAS INSPIRED YOUR WORK IN THE AREA OF LIBRARIES, MUSEUMS AND MUSIC?

I fell into museums largely through a series of coincidences – but I've been inspired by many to remain in the field. Museum guru Elaine Gurian and museum agitators, Nina Simon and Tony Walker, always inspire me to push museums to be more activist, intentional, and active in our communities, while Paola Antonelli's constant curiosity and fearless attitude as a curator is always inspiring. Music-wise, I'm always discovering new things, new sounds, and new ways of making sounds – right now its people like Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith, Holly Herndon, Jenny Hval, Kiki Hitomi and Ian William Craig who are exciting my ears.

WHAT IS YOUR MAIN AIM IN YOUR ROLE AT THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE MOVING IMAGE?

My role is about bringing a new visitor-centricity to ACMI that foregrounds cross-platform public engagement and public impact as the institution grows into its new persona as 'Australia's national museum of film, TV, video games, digital culture and art'. Chief Experience Officer (CXO) is a strategic role – and it is about introducing user-centred design across the organisation as a way of transforming work practices, collaboration and the types of things we imagine to be possible. There's a strong digital component only because digital is inevitably part of everything these days, especially at ACMI given that all the media we curate, exhibit and discuss is nowadays designed, produced, and distributed on digital platforms. The next few years at ACMI will see it flower into a new

type of museum and my role is about helping to shepherd this change.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR ROLE?

I enjoy the combination of strategy and experimentation – and the scope to work across the organisation as needed. It's a rare luxury, and I'm very grateful to have the opportunity to be doing the role in such a lovely and liveable city.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACE IN YOUR ROLE?

Like any public institution in Australia, we're all trying to find new ways to diversify our revenue streams and be less reliant on single funding sources. That said, the Victorian Government is a fantastic partner, especially since the release of their *Creative State* strategy – they are definitely the most progressive state in Australia.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SPACE WITHIN THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE MOVING IMAGE?

I'm a big fan of the redeveloped Games Lab in our free permanent gallery, Screen Worlds. It's a place where visitors can play a series of different games and we can now more easily curate a changing roster of titles.

WHAT IS YOUR VISION OF THE LIBRARY OF THE FUTURE?

I've been impressed with the way in which libraries have managed the transition from collection holders to knowledge service providers – museums could learn a lot from that transition. I'm also excited by the ways in which different libraries are tackling born-digital challenges. But having lived in New York for four years, I'm still so impressed with the New York Public Library and the way they continue to innovate and experiment on many different fronts simultaneously – from open ebook platforms to civic data – but always in response to their community needs.

CAN YOU TELL US THE STORY OF A DAY IN THE LIFE OF SEB CHAN AT WORK?

7am: Wake up and check in with what has been happening overnight in the northern hemisphere. Having worked in New York for four years and done plenty of consulting in Europe, a lot happens overnight that is of interest to me.

8.30 am: Drop the kids at school, catch up with reading articles on the tram on the way in to work in my Instapaper queue.

9.15 am: Grab my first coffee around the back of ACMI X at Broad Bean.

9.30 am: Catch up with the team and round up what was done yesterday, check what's on the agenda for today, and find out if there is anything or anyone that's impeding progress. If there are any issues then it's my responsibility to try to clear them – which sets up some of my day's activities.

9.45 am: Walk over to the galleries in Federation Square and sit in on the daily briefing with the Visitor Services team. They're a great way of understanding what's happening, what challenges they're facing, and what visitors have found difficult to understand or navigate.

10.30 am: Pretty much meetings back to back, usually around the current projects that my team are undertaking. If we are working on a specific project then half of these meetings will be short and project oriented. My team tries to keep meetings as short as possible when on projects, but that usually means there are a lot of short but effective ones rather than long rambling ones.

2.00 pm: Grab a late lunch and second coffee to keep me going for the rest of day.

2.30 pm: Catch up on some mid-range planning with the team.

3.30 pm: Weekly meeting with my director, where we usually go through what's coming up next and discuss strategy.

4.30 pm: Start wrapping up issues from the day.

6.30 pm: Head home.

7.00 pm: Dinner

8.00 pm: Decompress with some video games with the kids. We usually try to play these together or at least discuss what's going on and how they might have been made, and how different types of game mechanics make the game feel, or maybe a film if it's a Friday.

9.30 pm: Try to do some writing after the kids are in bed. My blog has been a bit dormant in recent months and needs a bit of attention. I find writing is a good way to process ideas and make sense of things.

11.30 pm: Sleep.