ADA AGM October 2013
CHAIR'S REPORT
Zita Joyce

I am pleased to present the Chair's report for The Aotearoa Digital Arts Trust for the period up to now - though I think the legal period may be shorter than this.

The last chair's report covered the period December 2010 to December 2011, so I'll catch up from there.

December 2011 – December 2012
2012 was an even quieter year than 2011, as our major activity was applying for the funding for the Mesh Cities project. Su Ballard, Vicki Smith and I spent a crazy couple of weeks in May writing our hugest funding application ever, for the CNZ Kahikatea fund.

The Kahikatea fund offered us the opportunity to get funding for up to three years to realise a long term project, and employ someone to manage that project. This has been a goal of ADA for a few years, and a really important step in moving to a new level as a network and a trust board. Of course we only received two years worth of funding, and not the three years we asked for, so we'll have to apply for more funding at the beginning of next year for the 2015 programme.

The Mesh Cities project was conceptualised collaboratively in the writing of the application, and it represents an overarching research project for ADA, to reflect critically on the role of media arts in a transitional city. Christchurch is obviously the starting point for that, and the project was inspired by the City Council's plans for the new 'Smart' city of ubiquitous wifi, ultrafast broadband, and creative IT solutions. At the same time, the council and other groups has been promoting the power of 'art' to make the transitional city more interesting, and the new city more creative seeming. So this project represents the intersection of these two dreams - the smart city and the creative city. They have particular meanings in the rebuilding of Christchurch, but they are the twin desires of all contemporary cities. The demolition of Christchurch itself after the earthquakes adds that extra need for something to happen, and of course the new understanding of earthquake risk has serious implications for creative spaces in other cities.

Under the umbrella of Mesh Cities we're running a series of symposia and artist tours and workshops, and it is very exciting to have achieved the first point in that process.

So, to an event summary:

Event summaries:
ADA website 2012

In 2011 we undertook a significant overhaul of the ADA website, designed and developed by Luke Munn, and project managed by Stella Brennan, with design and support work and research by Ana Terry.

And then in 2012 we were able to update the content of the site with the help of the wonderful Sophie Davis, who carried it out under the umbrella of the University of Cantebrury Arts Internship programme. Sophie did a lot of work in the artbase part of the site, updating and expanding that archive, and also expanded material on symposia, and most significantly, she uploaded all of the chapters of the ADA Reader as PDFS, and made cover pages for them. So that book is now entirely available online.

Sophie has continued to contribute to ADA, and we have been able to employ her for aspects of event management and we hope she'll stay keen! (She did lots of work for Janine's workshop in Chch on thursday, but is weeks away from submitting her masters, so couldn't come this weekend.)

And now, Vicki is actively keeping the mesh cities section of the site updated, so it's rather more up to date and dynamic than it has been for a while!

2013: Mesh Cities year 1
As of January 1 this year we have been able to employ the wonderful and efficient Vicki Smith as project manager for Mesh Cities through to the end of next year, and maybe, hopefully through 2015 as well.

The first event under the Mesh Cities umbrella was the **Mesh Cities launch** in Christchurch at easter. It was hosted by the Physics Room gallery, and we brought together a number of invited guests and ADA members to consider the emergent questions about the role of media art in the transitional city, or to borrow from our framing concept:

> Through the idea of the 'Mesh City', The ADA Network asks, how can networked media artists respond to the conditions of contemporary Aotearoa? What opportunities arise here? What does the 'smart city' mean for media art practice? How can nimble processes respond to public spaces as creative venues and their importance for future community development? And how can media art contribute to reimagining, remembering, reinvigorating, reconnecting with, or indeed resisting, urban and social space?

In workshopping around the launch event we came up with these three central ideas of Space, Network, and Memory. Obviously these have become the framing ideas for this event, and will work forward for the Auckland symposium next year, and hopefully a Christchurch one in 2015. As ideas these have different resonances in each city, and for the connections between the cities.

The second event was a **panel discussion we hosted at ISEA** in Sydney in June. The panel was ADA members, Su Ballart, Vicki Smith Caro McCaw, Trudy Lane, Janine Randerson, Ian Clothier, and Danny Butt. Each participant talked about work and ideas relating to the overall Mesh Cities concept, to present the range of issues across New Zealand. The written version of that has been nicely received by the peer reviewers, and will be in the ISEA proceedings, and linked from the ADA website.

The third event for the year is the first part of our first **local artist tour**, which was launched by Janine Randerson with a workshop and talk in Christchurch on Thursday, and a workshop discussion here yesterday. Janine's work with live air quality data has some wonderful potential resonance in Christchurch, and we have been able to build some hopefully productive connections with the sensing city project being developed by Roger Dennis, with the plan to plant sensors in every conceivable context around Christchurch, to measure air quality, traffic, pedestrian use, and so on. From the Sensing City website:
"The Sensing City concept positions Christchurch as a world leading city by incorporating an integrated network of digital sensors into the physical infrastructure (utilities and buildings) of the Christchurch CBD that generate real time, granular data for multiple uses and benefits."

And of course the fourth event for 2013, is this wonderful **symposium**. This is the first one I

haven't done any work on since 2006, and I have loved being a participant, so thank you to Vicki Smith, Caro McCaw and the rest of the symposium team for this. Next year's Chairs report will report more fully on it.

ADA Board and structure.
Reviewing the 2011 chairs report, the section on the board begins like this: **"**The ADA board has been extremely stretched since the last AGM. Life, and in some cases death, has very much gotten in the way and our ability to maintain the kind of energy we have brought to ADA in the past has diminished significantly."

At that stage we didn't know how to be able to carry on as a group of people, and so I'm very happy to be able to say that the questions ahead of us now are much more future looking.

The Kahikatea funding has released us from the relentless grind of funding applications, and short term planning, for a small window of time at least. Being able to employ Vicki to take care of the day to day organisational tasks for events and finances is an amazing development.

And that leads us to new questions and possibilities for the board.

For this period at least, we are able to actually be a governance board. Because we've been operational until now, and everything that ADA has done has been done by board members, there's been very little scope for more expansive thinking.

So now, I would like to see a new kind of board develop for ADA. If the board is strategic and the Mesh Cities project series is successful, we should be aiming for some kind of rolling funding beyond this one, and the ability to employ people to be able to realise projects for and on behalf of the ADA community. The board then can be a true governance board, and carry out the overarching strategic thinking and conceptualisation, without the daily chores that had us in such a state by the end of 2011.

Of the current board, two members are resigning at this AGM, our founder Stella Brennan, who has just had a second child, and founding board member Su Ballard, who is now based in Wollongong. So the remaining board is Julian Priest, Vicki Smith, Ana Terry, and myself. I am hoping to transition off the board in the short term, and be able to enjoy being a member and participant.

So before the next AGM, I would like to us to have a board of about 6 members, none of whom is me, who are experienced in arts governance, closely involved in making and researching media arts, and driven to develop the possibilities of the ADA network.

And for that I'm taking a lead from a comment Sophie Jerram on the ADA list this morning: "I'm at a Loomio retreat on the kapiti coast and sense very strongly that the digital arena is becoming increasingly complex and loaded and the work of ADA in maintaining critical debate is still vital.