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CITIES

Pune chapter of Arts Culture Resources India inaugurated

ACRI, which is a platform for professional opportunities in the cultural and creative sector, has 50,000 subscribers in more than 15 countries.

Pune |
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ACRI, which is a platform for professional opportunities in the cultural and creative sector, has 50,000 subscribers in more than 15 countries. (Source: ACRI webpage)

Written by Taraana Madhok

The Pune chapter of the Arts Culture Resources India (ACRI) — a platform for arts and culture managers to interact — was inaugurated at an event held at the British Council Library recently. ACRI, which is a platform for professional opportunities in the cultural and creative sector, has 50,000 subscribers in more than 15 countries.

"How do we help people find meaning and beauty in their lives? The meaning making is what we're looking for," said theatre actor Ashish Mehta, at the event titled Arts and Cultural Management 101. The venue was packed with people who had braved torrential rain and

bumper-to-bumper traffic. Addressing them, besides Mehta, were two other stalwarts of Indian art — Rashmi Dhanwani, founder of Art X and ACRI, and Padmapriya Janakiraman of Sahapedia.

Art X is an art consulting firm, while Sahapedia is an online encyclopaedia of Indian heritage and culture.

"Nobody is building the culture sector for you, you have to build it for yourself," said Dhanwani. She traced the beginning of ACRI in 2013 as a Facebook group to disseminate information on grants in the Arts and Culture sector. With daily posts on jobs, internships and grants, the group is now run by volunteers. ACRI soon realised the limitations of virtual interaction and the need to take the initiative offline, resulting in city-specific 'Chapters'.

Dhanwani spoke about her experience in setting up Art X in 2015, and drew attention to the link between "two universes of people" — those who create art and those who provide services for artists. She tracked the funding approach in India, from royal and religious patronage, to the government, formal institutions, organisations and entrepreneurs.

Most people who want to research on an element of Indian culture visit Sahapedia. A digital resource with free and open data on the "arts, cultures and histories of India", Sahapedia maps heritage in the form of articles, photo essays and site walkthroughs. After mapping Chattisgarh and Fort Kochi, Sahapedia is working on a culture mapping project for Pune. Padmapriya, who is a dance and film artiste, stressed on the importance of defining communities, citing the example of Pune, which happens to the "largest producer and consumer of digital cultural knowledge". Themes include food, films and literature. "Fifty per cent of Pune's population are migrants, so it is a challenge to define communities," she said.

At the end of the session, speakers talked about the change in CSR laws having benefited the arts sector to an extent, and the advantages of core funding over project funding and crowd funding. "Your family and friends won't give you money twice or thrice," said Dhanwani, emphasising that crowd funding cannot be repeated often.

The second Pune Chapter will be held on October 9 and will address either grant writing or project management.

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