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This AI-based chatbot helps artists collaborate with each other and find suitable projects

DARA identifies artists' interests and skills and gives them a list of potential collaborators and grant-makers across the globe



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Being an artist is no easy task, especially when resources are lacking. But another main challenge for most artists, including performance artists, is to find the right contacts to help you put your content out there, and be able to collaborate with like-minded individuals and find projects that interest you. **DARA** ('thread' in Kannada), a unique AI-based chatbot, was created with the help of generous financial aid by the British Council in order to help artists collaborate with each other easily.

Jonathan Kennedy, Director of Arts, British Council India said, “Emerging Indian creative entrepreneurship is making its mark on the global stage and we hope that the innovation of the DARA platform will help Indian creative professionals take their work to the next level through access to the UK creative community and global networks. DARA was the result of an Open Call announced by British Council in 2018. The Open Call invited proposals that leveraged digital technology to facilitate greater collaboration between artists and creative professionals from India and the UK. DARA was one of the proposals, submitted by India-based tech artists Archana Prasad and Sean Blagsvedt. The British Council is heavily investing in digital arts projects and believes in the power of the world wide web to enable greater connections and access to resources and to democratize arts.”

In a conversation with 43-year-old Archana Prasad, the founder of the app, she tells us more about hwo the platform works.

Excerpts...

1. What was the need you saw for a chatbot exclusively for artists?

I've been working in the cultural sector for a long time. One of the main challenges I faced was that it's not easy to find patrons of art, especially if the artists are experimenting with something new. As an artist myself, I've also had this desire to connect with other artists and like-minded people with complementary skills. The

further you get away from your educational years, the further you feel disconnected from the larger community. For performance artists, just getting the right venue can make a huge difference. These are all pieces of information that are extremely hard to come by in our country.

2. How can DARA help and what are its features?

The AI-based chatbot will help artists connect with each other and find projects. Similarly, the grant-makers can also connect with relevant artists. I stress on the word 'relevant' because that's what a chatbot can do best. It creates a human-centric loop for individuals to communicate and talk about themselves. Similarly, because she's AI-based, she can connect them one-on-one to the right people, whether they're grant-makers or collaborators.

3. Is it still in the concept stage or is it functional already?

We have a pretty robust MVP. If you go to *dara.network*, anyone can go ahead and chat with the bot. It is functional now.

4. How exactly does the bot work?

The process of using the bot is almost like WhatsApp, except that you're not chatting with a human being on the other end, you're chatting with a bot. She guides you through a series of questions like your interests and areas of expertise. Then, it gives you a list of potential collaborators and grant-makers across the globe.

5. Was it a challenge to form this network and reach out to artists?

We decided right from the start that the people we wanted in the network are those who desire to collaborate. We talked to about 23 people in the UK and India. They believed that the network would be a curated effort. We hosted dinners for selected people and asked them to recommend artists who would benefit the most from the network.