



PROGRAMME

DOC EDGE INDUSTRY 2026

Beyond the Algorithm

Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua

I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past

The documentary landscape is transforming at unprecedented speed. Algorithms shape what audiences see, AI tools reshape how stories are crafted, and the boundaries between creator and machine grow ever more fluid.

Doc Edge Industry 2026 brings together filmmakers, technologists, distributors, and storytellers to explore what lies beyond the algorithm — the human creativity, cultural wisdom, and authentic connection that no machine can replicate.

This year's programme asks bold questions: How do we harness technology without losing our voice? How do we ensure diverse stories reach audiences in an algorithmically curated world? And how do we move forward while honouring the knowledge of those who came before us?

KEYNOTES

Our keynote speakers challenge us to look beyond the tools and ask deeper questions about the future of documentary.

They explore how algorithmic systems are reshaping distribution, how AI is transforming production workflows, and what it means to maintain authentic human storytelling in an increasingly automated landscape.

From global perspectives on ethical AI use in filmmaking to practical strategies for reaching audiences in a platform-dominated world, these sessions set the tone for the entire programme.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

BEYOND THE ALGORITHM

What happens when the algorithm can't see you? This session explores the stories that fall outside recommendation engines — documentaries about marginalised communities, indigenous perspectives, and unconventional narratives that challenge platform logic. How do filmmakers ensure their work reaches audiences when the system wasn't built for them?

OUTRUNNING THE ALGORITHM

Speed, scale, and saturation — the algorithmic content machine never stops. This session examines how documentary makers can stay ahead without burning out. From sustainable production models to strategic distribution, learn how to maintain creative integrity while navigating a landscape that rewards volume over depth.

AGAINST THE ALGORITHM

Some filmmakers are pushing back entirely. This session spotlights creators who reject algorithmic optimisation — choosing theatrical releases, community screenings, and alternative distribution models. What can we learn from those who refuse to play the platform game, and is resistance a viable long-term strategy?

OUTSIDE THE ALGORITHM

Not every story needs a screen. This session celebrates documentary experiences that exist entirely outside algorithmic reach — immersive installations, VR experiences, live documentary performance, and community-embedded storytelling. Discover how creators are building audiences through presence rather than platforms.

REWRITING THE ALGORITHM

What if we could redesign the systems themselves? This forward-looking session brings together technologists and filmmakers working to build fairer, more transparent recommendation systems. From open-source discovery platforms to cooperative distribution networks, explore the tools and models that could reshape how documentary finds its audience.

THE HUMAN ALGORITHM

At its core, documentary has always been powered by a human algorithm — curiosity, empathy, and the drive to understand. This closing session reflects on what makes documentary irreplaceable in an age of synthetic media, and how the community can protect and nurture the deeply human impulse to bear witness and share truth.

AI SKILLS IN MOTION

A hands-on workshop series designed for documentary professionals ready to integrate AI tools into their practice — ethically, creatively, and effectively.

Participants will explore practical applications of AI across the documentary workflow: from research and transcription to rough-cut assembly and audience analysis. Each session balances technical skill-building with critical discussion about the implications of these tools.

Whether you're AI-curious or already experimenting, these workshops meet you where you are and push you further.



INTEREST GROUP CONVENINGS

Dedicated spaces for filmmaker communities to connect, share challenges, and build solidarity. These intimate gatherings bring together practitioners with shared interests and experiences.

- Indigenous Filmmakers Circle
- Women & Non-Binary in Documentary
- Emerging Producers Network
- Climate & Environment Storytellers
- Pacific Voices Collective
- Disability & Access in Film
- Archive & Memory Practitioners
- Interactive & Immersive Creators

