How to run a community collection online

Alun Edwards, University of Oxford: RunCoCo

www.thegreatwararchive.org
George Cavan was a Company Sergeant Major in the Glasgow Highlanders. He lived with his family, his wife Jean and 3 daughters, in the Drill Hall in Carluke, Scotland.

While away at training camp the orders came through to dispatch to France. The train he was on with his troops went through his home station but did not stop there.
George threw out onto the platform a matchbox containing a note to his family.

On one side: the name of his wife and on the other: his message.

Someone picked up the matchbox and delivered it to the family.

George Cavan was killed just a few days after arriving at the front in France on the 13th April, 1918. He lies in an unmarked grave but is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial.
Welcome

The First World War Poetry Digital Archive is an online repository of over 7000 items of text, images, audio, and video for teaching, learning, and research.

The heart of the archive consists of collections of highly valued primary material from major poets of the period, including Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, Robert Graves, Vera Brittain, and Edward Thomas. This is supplemented by a comprehensive range of multimedia artefacts from the Imperial War Museum, a separate archive of over 6,500 items contributed by the general public, and a set of specially developed educational resources. These educational resources include an exciting new exhibition in the three-dimensional virtual world Second Life.

Freely available to the public as well as the educational community, the First World War Poetry Digital Archive is a significant resource for studying the First World War and the literature it inspired.

Videos on YouTube, incl. show-reel

www.youtube.com/user/ww1lit
In 2008 the University of Oxford used the general public to build on a freely-available, online archive of the manuscripts of many of the British poets from the First World War. They contributed to a community collection.

Funded by JISC (for 4 months only), so now we use Flickr to receive contributions.

Website: www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa
2008: Simple online submissions process

Contributors asked to agree to basic terms & conditions of the license

Contributors enter basic metadata

Offered a large open ‘notes’ field for further information or anecdotes

An admin system allowed reviewers to: check items for their validity; correct or add to the metadata; flag items of particular interest/value

Website: www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa
‘Roadshows’ / submission days

2008: The project collaborated with organisations
Offer on the spot digitisation and advice
A ‘Submission Day Pack’ guided libraries etc. to run their own day
Photo submitted by the nephew of the William Gaunt, (seated here)

Nothing particularly unusual in this photo - which had been on the mantle-piece in William’s widow’s house?
Flickr: No formal submission/metadata

A future project might enhance metadata?

Comments can be facile or funny and can sometimes be incredibly informative

Comments and faves

zac191418 (21 months ago | reply)

William Henry Kirkpatrick is a 'Leading Stoker' (right sleeve propellor with a star above, within his 'branch') and a Leading Seaman for rank/responsibility (anchor) with a good conduct stripe (left sleeve).

...and smoking a pipe.

Photograph taken at Royal Naval Ordnance Depot, Bull Point, St Budeaux on the Plymouth side of the Tamar River immediately opposite Saltash. I can only assume he and his fellow Stokers have been attending a course within the building behind that carries the Vocat(ional) Train(ing) sign.

www.plymouthdata.info/Royal Naval Ordnance Depot.htm
1917-reservists called up and prepared
1917-временно мобилизирани Българи
Public contributions to The Great War Archive

- Public contributors uploaded 5,900 digital objects to website in 4 months
- The project uploaded 600 digital objects from 5 submissions days
- Over 6,500 items collected March-June 2008, 90% submitted by the public direct through our website

A Flickr group continues to collect items (since July 2008 over 2,500 uploads to date)

Website: [www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa](http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa)
Comparison: professional and amateur

- First World War Poetry Digital Archive
  - Cost £40.00 / item
  - Primary source material dispersed amongst libraries & archives in UK, USA & Canada
  - Digitisation performed by holding institutions according to project benchmarks
  - Images digitised as High Quality TIFFs and delivered as ‘good enough quality’ JPGs, Audio as MP3, Video as MPEG 4
  - Catalogued by trained cataloguers
  - Quality Assured twice, including by a key expert in the field
    - Dates, location, provenance, etc.
  - Images digitally watermarked using DigiMark

- The Great War Archive
  - Cost £3.50 / item
  - Primary source material held by individuals in the UK and abroad
  - Digitisation performed by the public using scanner/digital camera or by the project team at submission days
    - Digitisation guidelines provided
    - Not mandatory
    - All files types accepted
  - Initially catalogued by the public
  - Quality Assured and metadata expanded upon by the project team
    - Dates, location, provenance, etc.
“In building community collections...

- **Pitfalls:**
  - Quality of material and the quality and validity of metadata
  - Less resource intensive to digitise BUT more resource intensive in terms of marketing and engagement
  - Building a community requires long-term support

- **Benefits:**
  - Engaging the general public in University projects
    - Releasing unseen material, providing new avenues for research and teaching
    - Preserving histories that may have been lost
  - Economies of Scale
  - Communities can become self-serving

...we’re also building communities themselves”

From *If You Build It, They Will Scan: Oxford University’s Exploration of Community Collections*, by Dr Stuart Lee and Kate Lindsay. EDUCAUSE Quarterly Vol 32 #2, 2009

The strategies and processes behind The Great War Archive are explained in detail

[www.educause.edu/EDUCAUSE+Quarterly/EQVolume322009/EDUCAUSEQuarterlyMagazineVolum/174539](www.educause.edu/EDUCAUSE+Quarterly/EQVolume322009/EDUCAUSEQuarterlyMagazineVolum/174539)
The Great War Archive showed...

- How community collections can work and bring great benefits, most notably reduced costs
- And that this is possibly a model we should be pursuing in the future alongside traditional high-quality digitisation
- Moreover, that academia should try to engage the public in its research and recognise that the public not only may hold material, but also is willing to engage in these activities

From *Digitisation, curation and two-way engagement*, by Chris Batt Consulting, August 2009

Action: two-way engagement

- “…knowledge co-creation and exchange rather than simple knowledge transfer; a dialogue which enriches knowledge for mutual benefit”
- “…community engagement is more than citizen participation... it would be questionable to describe it as community engagement, unless there have been some fully open opportunities for... Collective involvement in the agenda under discussion”

From *Digitisation, curation and two-way engagement*, by Chris Batt Consulting, August 2009

www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/reports/2009/digicurationfinalreport.aspx
Action: share expertise

- Expertise can be recognised as not just a staple of the academic identity
  
  “Knowledge is no longer restricted to the boundaries of universities and higher education facilities. These institutions no longer have a monopoly on where good ideas come from, nor how information and knowledge is used. They can not control how the knowledge they create is used and where it is accessed”

- Shared knowledge, engagement of the public in academic work is of mutual benefit to the community and to the institution

From *The Edgeless University: why higher education must embrace technology* by Peter Bradwell. DEMOS: June 2009

www.demos.co.uk/publications/the-edgeless-university
Action: share culture

YouTube, iTunesU, Flickr and Wikimedia Commons etc.

Share your knowledge, engage with the audience with comments and conversation

Share your collections, use a Creative Commons licence

http://glamwiki.org

www.flickr.com/groups/greatwararchive/
Action: “e include”

The People’s Collection, and other initiatives in Wales like:

Digital storytelling and technical support for communities and social enterprises,
Communities 2.0

http://geecsblog.blogspot.com/

For Culturenet Cymru (National Library of Wales) “heritage is the hook” for digital inclusion

www.culturenetcymru.com/
Action: crowdsourcer

“Crowdsourcing is when a problem is broadcast to a wide audience or community that could solve the problem collectively. Mundane tasks could be outsourced to a motivated and enthusiastic community of experts. The community can assess the answers and provide the quality assurance”

JISC rapid innovation projects: developing community content, 2010

e.g. Welsh Voices of the Great War Online, collecting until Feb 2011, using RunCoCo software and guidelines

www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/digitisation/communitycontent.aspx
www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/programmerelated/2010/communitycollections.aspx
But is that really the ONLY measure of impact for these projects?

“The project may allow scholars to interact with thousands of non-specialists in its execution, but the results will still be processed by the stultifying academic mill... no matter how successful Transcribe Bentham, the 'impact' will be felt in the same usual way - through publications. This is a nonsense, but it's part of the academic game ... It's not enough to make something that is successful and interesting and well used: you have to write a paper about it that gets published in the Journal of Successful Academic Stuff”

Melissa Terras, deputy director of the UCL Centre for Digital Humanities
http://melissaterras.blogspot.com/

Members-only code is outdated: The academy needs to cast off its exclusionary conventions and make its publications accessible to non-specialists and the public by Ann Mroz, leader: Times Higher Education, 15 July 2010
www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=412539
Action: join an online community of interest

- RunCoCo offering training, support, networking, e.g.
  - Two-way engagement on Twitter: @runcoco
  - Sharing links to other relevant resources and exemplar crowdsourcing initiatives using Delicious
  - Maintaining momentum with the blog
  - Disseminating key software tools, methodologies, and work-flows developed under The Great War Archive and beyond. Developing an open source system (called CoCoCo) to collect digital objects

- **e.g. Woruldhord**, based at the University of Oxford, is collecting teaching and learning material relating to the Anglo-Saxon period of history (450AD-1066AD) until 14 Oct 2010 (anniversary of the Battle of Hastings), using RunCoCo software and guidelines

RunCoCo: How to run a community collection online

e.g. Free Workshop: Sustainability issues for community collections, 3 Nov 2010

Woruldhord

Run CoCo

RunCoCo [http://runcoco.oucs.ox.ac.uk/](http://runcoco.oucs.ox.ac.uk/)
Woruldhord [http://projects.oucs.ox.ac.uk/woruldhord/](http://projects.oucs.ox.ac.uk/woruldhord/)
Company Sergeant Major George Cavan was my husband’s Great Grandfather and although he already knew a some of his history he was amazed to see reference to this note as he never knew it existed, its great to see that his family in Australia where able to not only keep this item intact for 90 years but also able to let the Great War Archive have the item for future generations to see.
“Kontaktanzeigen”

“Wir suchen…”

Europeana and the University of Oxford are looking for partners to help run The Great War Archive in Germany

“Mirth in Wartime (c.1918)”, Flickr image by postaletrice [www.flickr.com/photos/postaletrice/4382411053/]