

CREATIVE CITIZENS



Creative Citizens' Variety Pack
Inspiring Digital Ideas From Community Projects



Royal College of Art
**THE HELEN HAMLYN
CENTRE FOR DESIGN**

Nesta



EPSRC

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Liverpool John Moores University,
Liverpool Vision,
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South Blessed, Bristol,
Technology Will Save Us,
The British Beekeepers' Association,
The Glass-House Community Led Design,
The Honey Club,
The Mill E17, Walthamstow,
Tidworth Mums, Wiltshire,
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and Abbie Vickress

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Foreword

Alice Casey
Innovation Lab, Nesta

Communities have a great deal of untapped creative potential. When people get together to shape their communities, they unlock latent potential to make a positive impact in a variety of ways. This is something that has been going on within community organisations for many years. At *Nesta*, we saw it in our work on 'Neighbourhood Challenge' in 2011, and have found it reflected once again through the Creative Citizens projects in 2014. What is now changing is the complexity of community life and its challenges - and the widespread uptake in use of digital tools.

Practical Creativity: Digital media and other technologies are changing the way communities are shaping their surroundings and tackling local challenges, but it is a gradual process, not a revolution. You can see examples of this happening everywhere across the UK and beyond in many and varied ways: from the ambitious and large-scale, to the small and informal.

The multiplicity is reflected in this Variety Pack. People are pragmatic in their use of technology, picking and mixing elements that appear to 'get the job done', often combining digital media with traditional methods of engagement. Examples include: creating 'hyperlocal' media outlets, running crowdfunding campaigns, using physical prompts to bring offline content online, collaborating on local visual plans, and developing new and creative skills.

Sharing Knowledge: Sharing these - often undocumented - uses is vital if we want to accelerate knowledge-sharing and good practice, to help communities make more of what is available to them to tackle tough challenges, more quickly. We compiled the Creative Citizens' Variety Pack to capture and share a snapshot of this wealth of creative applications of digital tools being developed at the grass roots. We hope it will help equip communities and funders with a greater understanding of the nature, value and variety of this activity.

We are still in the early years of the development of the internet, and there are many more changes to come. Communities need to be supported to take up digital tools to full effect: to manage resources, to create, to share. Funding and support institutions for communities must also learn from these stories and adapt their own processes to support and mesh with digital grassroots initiatives in more meaningful and effective ways.

This means skills, expertise and good practice being shared. This Variety Pack is one small way of doing this. We hope it will help prompt explorations, and that it will be just the start of more work to support this new wave of digital, diverse, locally-led change.

Welcome to the Creative Citizens' Variety Pack

*Dan Lockton,
Catherine Greene,
Lizzie Raby,
Abbie Vickress.*

*The Helen Hamlyn
Centre for Design,
Royal College
of Art.*

Welcome to the Creative Citizens' Variety Pack. This is a small collection of community projects from around the country, which all make use of digital tools in creative and interesting ways. They enable groups to develop, achieve their aims, and sustain themselves. As Alice Casey says in her foreword, the collection is a snapshot of inspirational ideas and tips rather than a comprehensive guide, but we hope you'll find something useful here whether you're currently involved in a community project yourself, are looking for possible future ideas for your group, or you consider yourself a 'creative citizen'.

As you'll see, the groups and their projects in this Variety Pack are all very different, but they have lots of challenges in common and so we've broadly grouped them into four themes: Supporting each other locally, Telling stories, Placemaking and Building skills through making together.

Among the organisations and creative projects featured, we have beekeepers and bakers, newspapers and graphic novels, mobile games and apps, and communities of many different kinds. Each includes a set of practical tips and suggestions 'from the field' about what others can learn from the process. These range from specific advice about how to manage particular digital tools, to more general insights about how to engage people and keep them motivated. Ann Light from Northumbria University—who has experience working with many different community groups on using technology and design in their activities—has also contributed an article with more detailed discussion of techniques for reflecting on what you do, as a way of supporting creativity.

Creative Citizens and Digital Tools

What do we mean by ‘creative citizens’?

Everyday millions of people do something creative, from knitting and genealogy to photography and choirs, sometimes organised in community groups and networks, sometimes not. The crossover into ‘citizenship’ begins when there is a social, political or civic element to the creative work.

What do we mean by ‘digital tools’?

We’ve drawn the boundaries quite loosely here, aiming to include a spectrum from common, social networking platforms such as Facebook, to ‘one off’ creative technology projects. Many projects have a common link, through digital technology, to physical spaces—such as a building or a neighbourhood. Others have a common link using the opportunities that digital technology provides, creating physical media such as printed newspapers or graphic novels. The term ‘transmedia’ is sometimes used for these kinds of projects.

The connected communities programme

The Variety Pack has been produced as part of the project ‘Media, Community and the Creative Citizen’ funded by the Connected Communities programme. A number of the projects in the pack have come out of this UK-wide programme designed to help connect community groups with academic research. The projects aim to help researchers to understand the changing role of communities, particularly how they encourage health, economic prosperity and creativity. It is jointly funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council.

Getting involved

Would you like to see your community’s project in the Variety Pack in the future? The online version, at creativecitizens.co.uk, will continue to be expanded with new projects, so please do get in touch: varietypack@rca.ac.uk.

REFLECTIVE CITIZENS



Artist Laura Sorvala records the work of the Effectiveness in Action group (2013-14), capturing unconventional perspectives with an unusual reportage style. Credit: Liz Orton.

Reflective Citizens: Some Creative Tactics for Communities

*Ann Light,
School of Design,
Northumbria
University.*

Well-chosen reflection is an important part of being creative. There is plenty of evidence that considering actions from more than one perspective allows people to make greater imaginative leaps and provides the learning to underpin decisions (e.g. see Donald Schön's work).

The following ideas are drawn from several Connected Communities projects that explored how we make change in the world around us. They were devised as reflective techniques, to make it easier to learn fast about what works and how it can be improved. They were tested with people from many walks of life. They seem to work across many types of project. And they are presented here as inspiration to experiment with how to be creative. They should work well with some of the other ideas in this Variety Pack.

Article continues overleaf.

Making distinctions

Bring groups together that have something in common, but not too much. This is particularly successful when you can spend some time discussing your experience with people from different countries or different parts of the country, as meeting others is a great way to start noticing the things you take for granted in your neck of the woods. By deliberately exploring similarities and differences, you start to work out what is welcome and successful about what you do normally and what might be changed. Even better, learning what other people take for granted may suggest to you a way to make the changes you want to see, or at least what the conditions for change might be.

Making mischief

Another technique for getting perspective is to invite a joker into the pack, especially if you have people who are likely to get stuck in positions from which they do not want to move. Elect an 'agent provocateur' or 'critical friend' who has permission to ask difficult questions, turn suggestions upside down, show silly videos and take ideas to their absurd limit. It helps if the person in this role is light on their feet, tactful, slightly outside the main group and specifically invited to be a little different in their thinking. Without an introduction, other people may wonder why they are being so awkward!

Making media

A third way to reflect together is to use video or audio recordings to capture moments in your neighbourhood and then study them. Things always seem different when you play them back and, once everyone has got over the horror of hearing and seeing themselves, it is a chance to notice what might not be apparent normally. If you make a whole series of recordings spread out over time, you have the perfect means to chart developments in your area and decide to what you want to give your attention. It also makes a fascinating legacy of fashions and how we were living our everyday lives in the moment that it was captured.

Further reading

How we made it happen: Recommendations
<http://howwemadeithappen.org/research-results/>
Schön, Donald A. (1983) *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*, Basic Books, New York.

There are some ideas about how to use audio at the blog howwemadeithappen.org/research-results/.



*Groups from around the country meet near Oxford to explore Stimulating Participation in the Informal Creative Economy (SPICE, 2011).
Credit: Ann Light.*

Supporting Each Other Locally



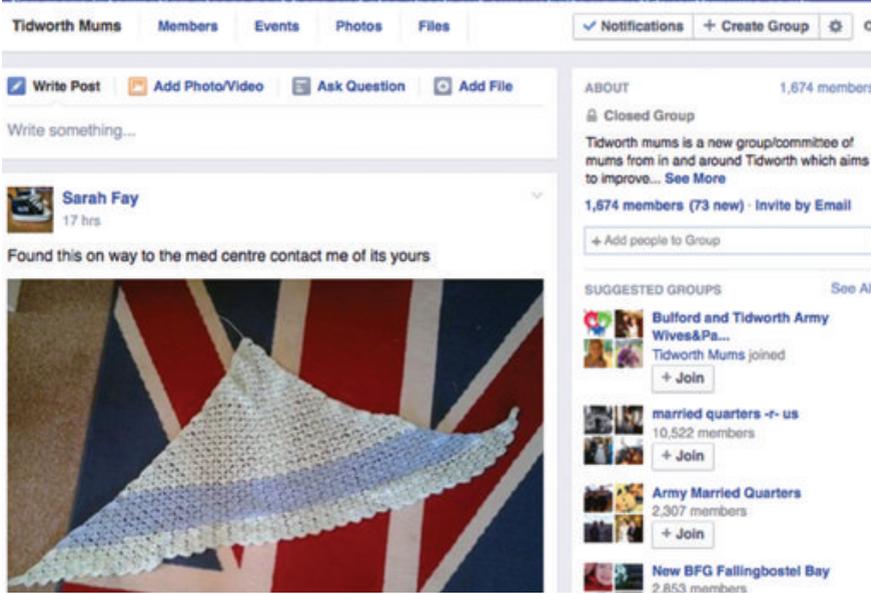
Tidworth Mums

Louise Dredge and Charlotte Blakemore

TIDWORTH MUMS



Mapping the assets of Tidworth Mums during the Unearth Hidden Assets project. Credit: The Glass-House Community Led Design.



Screen grab from Tidworth Mums' Facebook Page. (July, 2014)



Mega Soft Play Engagement Day in February 2014.
Credit: The Glass-House Community Led Design.

Tidworth Mums

*Tidworth Mums,
Tidworth,
Wiltshire.*

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W *tidworthmums.
co.uk*

Digital Tools Used

*Facebook,
Twitter.*

Tidworth Mums wanted to support local families and help engage their wider community. They created a Facebook group to share information about local activities and services with other members of the local community.

About

Tidworth Mums are a not-for-profit group in Tidworth (a garrison town in Wiltshire), dedicated to improving the emotional, social, physical and economic wellbeing of civilian and military families in their local area. Shortly after they were formed in March 2012, the Mums set up a Facebook group to share information about local activities and services with other members of the community. They sensed that, in their local area, the majority of people access information through digital technology, often through their smartphones.

Initially, the Facebook group had a handful of members, but this quickly grew and two years later, there are 1,674 members (July 2014). Six admins, all members of Tidworth Mums, monitor the group on a daily basis. The group is active every day with up to 20 new posts added daily. Members post questions such as, 'Does anyone have any moving boxes please?', 'Does anyone know anywhere that does horse riding lessons for 4 year olds?' and 'Does anyone have any recommendations for a good local dentist?'

Key groups within the local community, including council representatives, children, youth groups and other community partners, frequently use the Facebook group to promote their activities and share information such as job opportunities, council meetings and events and opportunities for military and civilian families. Importantly, the group does not allow any advertising of a profitable nature, which was an important decision to ensure the group would serve its intended purpose and not become overwhelmed with spam and advertisements.

What is the impact of the project?

The group has become a fantastic source of local knowledge for the entire community—both military and civilian families. One of the aims of Tidworth Mums was to integrate the two communities, and the Mums have championed this through their Facebook group and the various activities they run throughout the year.

How did digital media make a difference?

With people able to access the group at a time and place convenient to them, making it easier to participate, it enables the Mums to reach far more people than they would be able to through traditional, analogue media.

What next?

The Mums are currently working to build the case for a children's soft play area in Tidworth, they are being helped with this through their past involvement in the research project 'Unearth Hidden Assets through Community Co-Design and Co-Production' in 2013-2014 (with The Glass-House Community Led Design, the Open University, Wiltshire Council and the Army Welfare Service).

What Others Can Learn

Establish a set of rules

Have a clear set of rules for your Facebook group and monitor the activities within the group constantly to ensure that they are followed. It is also important to communicate these rules clearly to members on a regular basis.

Avoiding spam

The Mums set up their Facebook group as a closed group—requests to join are approved by an admin—in order to filter out fake profiles and spam. Their clear set of rules also helps to overcome any issues with inappropriate posting.

Share responsibility

While the ‘admin’ role is an unpaid one (which is the case for most members of voluntary groups), it can take up a lot of time. People are able to access digital technology on a 24/7 basis, which means the group needs to be monitored constantly, and doesn’t fit neatly into the 9-5 box! Having more than one admin will help share the load.

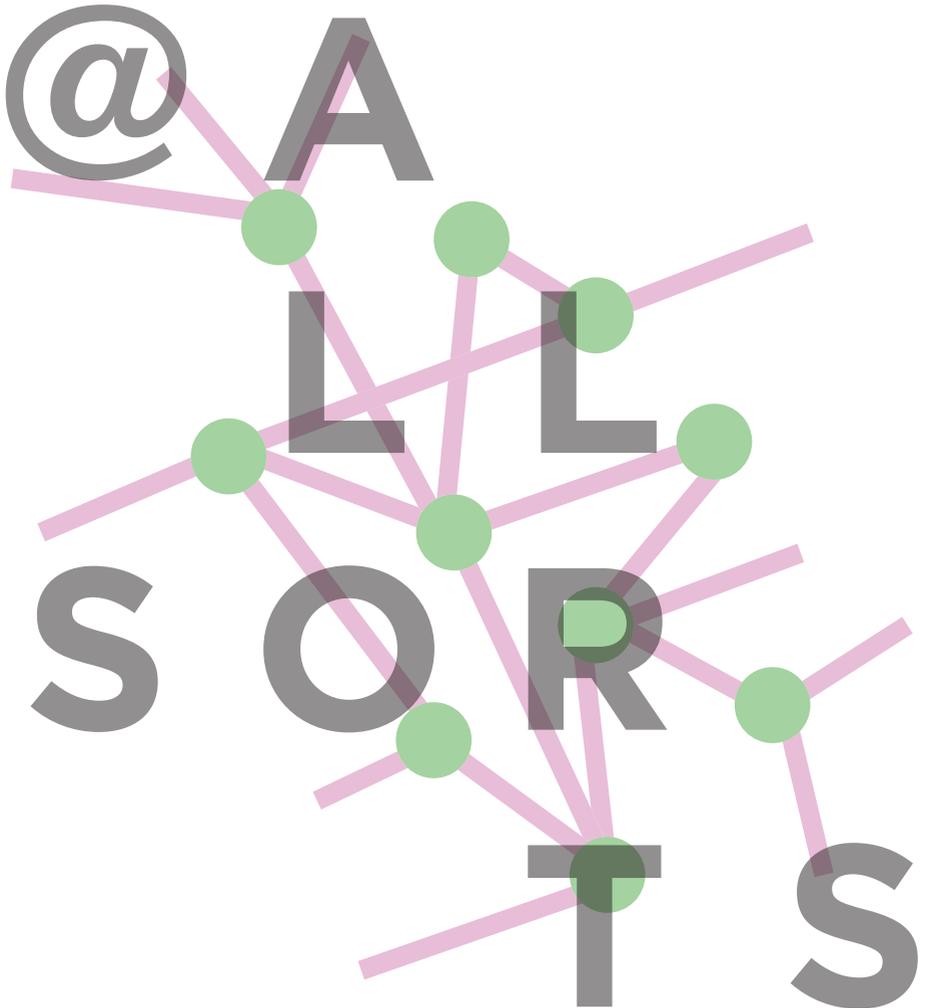
Learn from experience and be adaptable

Rules have been tweaked and updated over time as the Mums observe how things work in practice. Ideas about how things could be done better emerge as group membership grows and Facebook technology evolves. So, while remaining true to the original aims of the group, it’s important to be adaptable!

“The Facebook group has helped a lot of mums to have the confidence to actually come to the toddler groups and other activities through meeting someone online and coming along with those mums.”

*Joyce Stretton,
Army Welfare
Service, Tidworth*

Supporting Each Other Locally



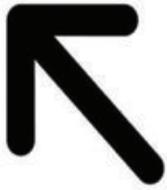
Social Media @Allsorts

Allsorts Youth Project and Olu Jenzen

SOCIAL MEDIA @ALLSORTS



Credit: Allsorts.



This person is standing up in the fight against
**HOMOPHOBIC, BIPHOBIC
AND TRANSPHOBIC
BULLYING**



This week is Anti-Bullying Week. Please share to stamp out LGBT Bullying

Check out our website: www.allsortsyouth.org.uk Become a fan: www.facebook.com/AllsortsYouth

Example of an Allsorts-designed Facebook widget that people can add to their profile picture. Credit: Allsorts.



Allsorts youth dressed up and ready for the Brighton Pride parade. Credit: Allsorts.

Social Media @ Allsorts

Allsorts Youth
Project, Brighton.

Contributors

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F [facebook.com/allsortsyouth](https://www.facebook.com/allsortsyouth)

Digital Tools Used

Facebook,
Twitter,
Tumblr,
YouTube.

Social Media @ Allsorts is a LGBTU (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and unsure) youth engagement project, exploring and using digital and social media to inform, campaign and reflect on the issues LGBTU young people face.

About

Allsorts wanted to use social media to complement and support their 'traditional' on-site youth support work, which they have provided at the LGBTU young people's centre in Brighton since it began in 1999. With support from the Tudor Trust, the Social Media@Allsorts project explores using digital and social media as the main method of engaging LGBTU young people and to inform and campaign around the issues they face.

Instead of creating a purpose-built website to offer online mental wellbeing support, the project makes the most of available mainstream social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and YouTube, which are already popular amongst this group. Allsorts use social media to publicise their activities, to collaborate on campaigns, to foster peer support and to provide one-to-one support from youth workers. They can use the same social media platform to communicate with different audiences—service users, volunteers, other relevant service providers, potential or existing sponsors—and with a wider audience looking for information about being young and LGBTU. Using the same platform, they can choose to share some information and conversations just between Allsorts staff, whilst allowing others to appear more publicly on the organisation's Facebook page. This is an efficient way for Allsorts staff to manage their different types of communication, and as they share one profile, the staff workload is equally distributed.

What is the impact of the project?

The use of social media for outreach work contributes to the sustainability of the charity. It has also raised wider awareness about the organisation and its work. For example, in 2013 the website visits increased by over 1,500. The Facebook fan page 'likes' went up by 200, with a single campaign getting just under 500 likes on its own. And on Twitter the organisation gained over 600 new followers. The project has empowered both staff and young volunteers. Staff with little experience in using social media have learned about its usefulness. Young volunteers have found themselves taking the lead on social media campaigns, and the experience of building a momentum around their activities and campaigns using social media has encouraged them to do further work.

Allsorts have worked with the University of Brighton to create a 'social media toolkit and e-policy document' to share all of this learning with other small charities looking to utilise social and digital media in their work.

How did digital media make a difference?

Social media allows Allsorts to communicate effectively with multiple audiences, publicise their services easily, campaign, engage potential sponsors, create peer networks, as well as communicate directly with existing and new members. It also offers opportunities to engage with young people who may not, for various reasons, be able to travel to attend a drop in session at the Centre, or, in some cases, are not able to speak on the phone.

What next?

Going forward, Allsorts is looking to explore the potential of e-mentoring and are also working to adapt some of their social media tools for their work with the under 16s and hard to reach youths.

What Others Can Learn

Knowledge exchange

Reflecting on and sharing your experiences of using social media can contribute to knowledge exchange between organisations and small charities. Whether you work in different contexts or address different audiences, sharing practical knowledge about the different communication strategies your organisation uses will be beneficial for you as well as for other organisations.

Understand the medium

Social media is not designed with the purpose of doing outreach work in mind, nor does it typically allow for much diversity in terms of gender and sexuality in its set up. It's good to be aware of this but don't be deterred, there are ways of working around these drawbacks and plenty of reasons for using the social networking services that your target audience are already using. One great feature, for example, is the timed post. It allows staff to compose a message at any time convenient for them, but for it to be released and appear on followers' timeline at the time they are most likely to read it, for example after school has finished for the day.

Prepare to change

Be prepared to change setup. The way people use social media and the sites they prefer to use change all the time, and with young people they can change quite fast. Don't invest in too rigorous a structure as you may find you have to change, or even abandon them.

Supporting Each Other Locally



C O N
N E C T
C A N
N O C K

Connect Cannock Newspaper Pilot

Jerome Turner and Dave Harte

CONNECT CANNOCK



Distribution of the newspapers by different members of the community helped to increase the area the papers reached.



Members of the community participate in a workshop.

Not just local news – HYPERLOCAL news

ACROSS the country newspapers are shedding their focus on at least making a reduced emphasis on distant local stories, reports Joanna Topley, researcher at Birmingham City University.

For most newspapers the Great Plains, for example, has now gone, the area is covered by just one local paper, the *Canwest Chronicle*.

There's a problem particular to Canwest though. In why is this happening? A number of reasons. Advertising is harder to sell, and this provides a large part of a newspaper's income. Staff who were allocated to local reporting are either losing their jobs, or being allocated to other organisations.

So where can you turn for local news? Well, there are other options, but it's not easy to struggle to remember the last time you heard Canwest's mentioned on BBC's *Midlands Today*. There is another solution though: the Internet.

Some organisations like the *Canwest Chronicle* have set up their own independent Canwest news website, you'd have to look to the *Canwest Chronicle* website (and their Facebook and Twitter pages).

So is the age of blogging too happening in Canwest? No, all around the country, around the world, in fact, ordinary people are setting up websites for their local area. We call it hyperlocal.

At Birmingham City University we're currently in the middle of a research project that is exploring the phenomenon of hyperlocal news publishing. Will they do this? The newspaper will have helped you discover another source of news, but there is also one other factor that makes hyperlocal publishing successful too.

For the people, by the people

Some of the best hyperlocal websites have now been created to share news which is going on in their area, their stories and sometimes on other local issues in their area.

So as you're reading the news in this paper, and hopefully looking at *Canwest Chronicle* website, think about what you can add to the conversation.

You can participate through Twitter, Facebook, or the website.

You can also share our research project.

This newspaper is supported through a research grant from the UK Research Councils in part of the *Community Communities* award. Find out more at ukri.gov.uk.

Advertisement: *Adapted from the newspaper article 'Not just local news – HYPERLOCAL news'.*

A screen grab of the newspaper, available to view online. (August, 2014).

Connect Cannock Newspaper Pilot

Connect Cannock,
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Staffordshire.

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Cannock.co.uk

W *Creative*
Citizens.co.uk

T *@Connect*
Cannock

T *@jezturner*

F *facebook.*
com/connect
cannock

Digital Tools Used

Adobe InDesign,
Newspaperclub.
com,
Facebook,
Twitter.

Connect Cannock is a ‘hyperlocal’ news website serving a community where the local newspapers have ceased publication. In this project, Connect Cannock, together with researchers from Birmingham City University, encouraged local people to participate in the introduction of a new printed newspaper, which brought the website to the attention of a wider cross-section of the community.

About

The aim of this project was to re-introduce a physical newspaper into the community. Through focus groups and workshops with local people in Cannock, we learnt that local newspapers were sorely missed and that many people had not heard of Connect Cannock (the online website, Facebook or Twitter accounts). Therefore one of our aims was to play into people’s current ‘media’ ideology (that news was found in newspapers), but inform them of their local online news source.

Another aim was to test the potential for more participation in Connect Cannock’s newsgathering and writing from local residents and organisations. To date, the editors have been very active online, but ongoing relationships with readers had not necessarily been established. One relationship was with a local photography group, in which the editors often organised ‘photowalks’ with them socially, and we (the researchers) joined one of these, discussing local, ‘newsworthy’ issues inspired by encounters around town. The resulting photographs would go into a double page spread in the newspaper.

The newspaper was compiled and written by the Connect Cannock editors, with additional stories provided by other contributors. We had assumed that much content could originate from the existing blog and Facebook page, but many new stories were created too, and a large part required chasing stories that could appropriately fill various awkward page spaces (not a usual concern in online media). We used Newspaper Club, who specialise in printing small runs of newspapers for community groups and events. We printed 1,000 copies and the

“People miss the Chase Post as they felt it was ‘their’ local paper. Now that that’s gone, there’s a big void in printed press and people don’t really like the Express and Star as it’s not ‘local’ enough and not community targeted. It has little news and mostly irrelevant ads that people aren’t interested in. It’s certainly opened my eyes to how much people value what we [Connect Cannock] do.”

Editor of Connect Cannock

team hand-delivered them to cafés, shops, hairdressers and newsagents in small batches, so that they could then be distributed onwards into the community. The paper proved very popular with residents, and a second issue has since been designed and printed, with the additional aim of testing the potential for selling advertising.

What was the impact of the project?

The newspaper pilot enabled Connect Cannock to exercise an idea, and also engage with a new cross-section of their community (those who would like local news, but wouldn’t always think of looking for it online).

How did digital tools make a difference?

The key thing with this project was using the print medium to link the existing online digital media to the offline world in a new way, attracting and engaging people to become familiar with the Connect Cannock website.

What next?

Connect Cannock have already produced a second print newspaper, for which they attracted some paid advertising, and are considering making it a more regular feature. Like many other hyperlocals, they need to find ways to make it viable in terms of the time and money it takes to produce it. Even if it doesn’t continue, the newspaper has acted as an effective way to bring the website to the attention of the people of Cannock.

What Others Can Learn

Take advantage of existing relationships

Utilise existing connections within your readership, and look for them in unexpected places. Sometimes it will require a few phone calls or emails to set a steady flow of press releases rolling your way, but once established this can provide news from community sources such as schools, the police, and your local council.

Print is different to online

Not only do people perceive print media differently to online media, but the practice of setting up and running such a project is also very challenging. It requires an understanding and expertise in design and layout that is not usually expected in similar online local news blogs.

Print can be a source of income

It is possibly easier to sell advertising space to organisations and businesses in print media than it is online, but requires a lot of determination, confidence and time. Advertising will help to cover printing costs up to a point: as the number of adverts increases, so does the page count, and therefore print cost, in order to accommodate it.

“Thank you for the copies of your newspaper, read it cover to cover and couldn’t put it down - great read, and hoping there will be another one. Fantastic, thank you.”

Cannock Resident

Telling Stories



Story Machine

Dan Lockton, Catherine Greene, Gail Ramster,
Alan Outten and Lizzie Raby

THE STORY MACHINE AT THE MILL



A young visitor to The Mill uses the Story Wheel to interview Walthamstow artist Michelle Reader.



At the Telling Stories launch evening, young people put on a puppet show, streamed wirelessly to the Story Chair projector.

Junior Reporter training using the Story Wheel.



The Mill
*People making things happen.



- Get Involved
- Grow your Idea
- Donate Now!
- Book a Room
- ArtWorks @ The Mill

The Story Machine is a new digital tool developed to help us show the creative energy that is spent every day at The Mill, in activities, exhibitions, celebrations and workshops. It's the culmination of a year's collaboration between the RCA Helen Hamlyn Centre of Design and The Mill, as part of the research project The Creative Citizens. We are very grateful to them and also to artist Michelle Reader, who worked with the RCA to build the magical story booth from innovative ideas by young, creative citizens.

Using the 'story wheel' iPad, the public and volunteers can record the activities that take place in The Mill in the form of photos and videos, which will be automatically uploaded to our website so that we can share the action with you at home.

Check out some recent photos here:



Our opening times

Tues, Wed, Thur: 10am-7pm
Fri/Sat: 10am-6pm
Sun: 11am-2pm
Tel: 020 85213211

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Get news from [The Bridge](#), The Mill's exciting new project in E10, or email them at thebridgee10@gmail.com

What's On @ The Mill



The Mill's website, automatically updated with the latest images from the Story Wheel.

The Story Machine

*The Mill,
Walthamstow,
London.*

Contributors

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Digital Tools Used

*Storify,
If This Then That,
Apple iPad,
Apple TV,
Flickr,
WordPress,
mini-projector,
Twitter,
Facebook.*

The Story Machine is a mini-cinema/puppet booth/video camera which enables the community's stories to be told, seen and heard more widely and more easily, through a combination of digital technology and engaging 'low-tech' activities.

About

The Mill, a community centre in Walthamstow, east London, provides space and resources for local people to organise groups, events and activities for adults, children and families, ranging from art exhibitions to book clubs to language classes. There was a need for volunteers and participants to be able to share their stories of The Mill, and the activities they take part in—with the existing community, but also to help the centre engage with the wider community, and at the same time provide evidence of The Mill's impact on its local area.

Through a process of collaborative workshops involving volunteers and participants at The Mill, designers from the Royal College of Art, and local artist Michelle Reader, we arrived at the 'Story Machine', comprising the Story Chair (a mini-cinema and puppet booth) wirelessly connected to the Story Wheel (an iPad Mini built into a steering wheel).

People taking part in activities at The Mill can use the Story Wheel to film and photograph what they're doing—helping to show the creative energy that is spent every day, in exhibitions, celebrations and workshops. The videos and photos then upload automatically to the Story Chair, where they can be viewed and shared in the centre, and photos are also uploaded to The Mill's website, ensuring there is an ever-changing kaleidoscope of images of their activities. As The Mill's Ingrid Abreu Scherer puts it, the idea is to "use digital technology to add value to our activities and messages, not to replace them".

What is the impact of the project?

The Story Machine was launched at an exhibition in February 2014, *Telling Stories*, which encouraged local people to contribute stories of Walthamstow and The Mill, via a postcard wall, and interviewing each other using the Story Wheel. The Story Machine has gradually been incorporated into activities, including a Junior Reporters' workshop (where young people learned interviewing and reporting skills through using the Story Machine) and use at a range of events, providing an ongoing record of everything that happens at The Mill.

How did digital tools make a difference?

The digital tools we used were mostly existing platforms, linked together in new ways. One big obstacle was language (more than 100 languages are spoken within two miles of The Mill), and so visually engaging tools are important to remain accessible, informative and appealing. Equally, it was important not to lock people out by using technology that's outside their reach or competence. Think about the age, economic and language background of your audience.

What next?

The Mill is currently working with two deaf groups in Walthamstow, and this has led to thinking about the implications and potential of tools such as the Story Machine for people with different abilities to access and contribute to digital content.

What Others Can Learn

Events

Organising events can be an important way of engaging people in trying out new technology for the first time. Events can link the physical and digital in ways which make the possibilities of digital technology more 'real', and give explicit focus to using it. We used events both to create the Story Machine, and to make use of it once built.

People

Involving the right people is key. The co-creation workshops which led to the Story Machine involved families with children as well as other volunteers. This was fantastic for generating ideas and creativity, but it did mean that the project evolved into something with a strong focus on children's storytelling, which was different from the original aims.

Adaptability

At the beginning we experienced several technical issues with the Story Machine where it did not work for several days. But people found surprisingly low-tech uses for it, e.g. as a theatre for shadow puppets. This meant it continued to be used. After seeing this we included these low-tech uses in its menu of uses and encouraged people to think of new ones too.

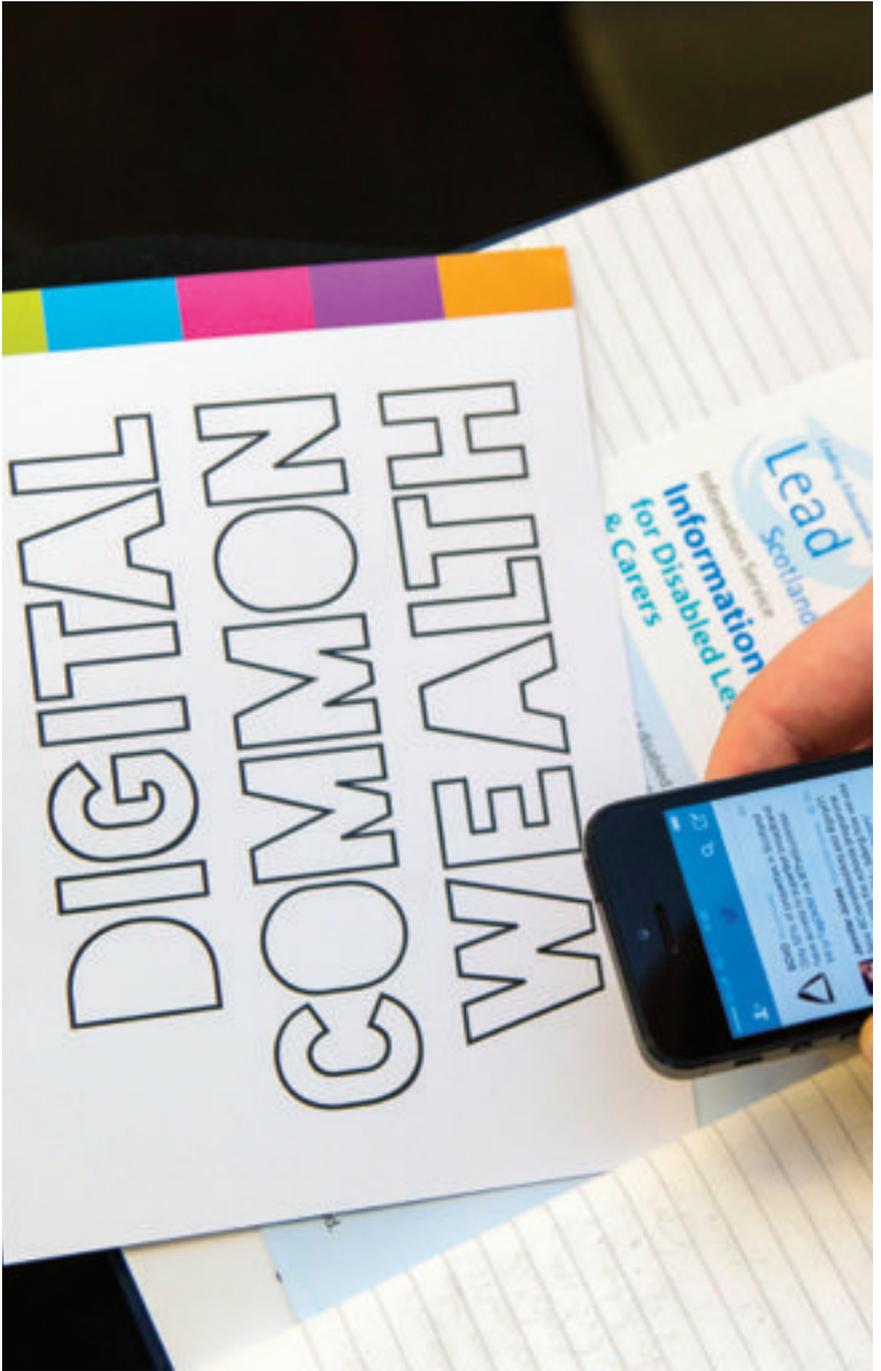
Telling Stories



Digital Commonwealth

David McGillivray, Jennifer Jones,
Alison McCandlish & Gayle McPherson.

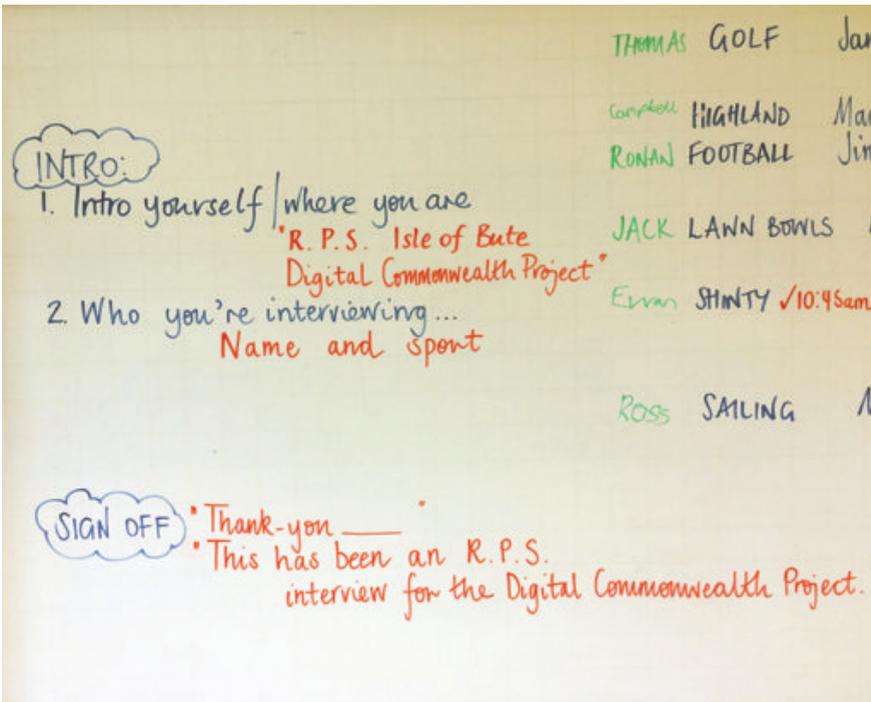
DIGITAL COMMONWEALTH



Credit: Digital Commonwealth.



Digital Commonwealth participants on Orkney get to grips with using smart phones to produce a short interview with a local Kirkwall librarian, whilst being filmed for the Community Channel's Brilliant Scotland programme. Credit: Digital Commonwealth.



Rothesay Primary on the Isle of Bute prepared and researched questions to ask local sporting heroes to record and showcase activities the Isles are famous for. Credit: Digital Commonwealth.

Digital Commonwealth

Across Scotland

Contributors

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T [@DigCW2014](https://twitter.com/DigCW2014)
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[#citizen2014](https://twitter.com/citizen2014)

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Y youtube.com/digitalcommonwealth

Digital Tools Used

Smart Phones,
Tablets, YouTube,
Google Maps,
WordPress,
Flickr, AudioBoo,
Twitter, Facebook,
SoundCloud,
Mozilla Webmaker,
Audacity,
Filmic Pro,
iMovie, Videopad.

The Digital Commonwealth (DCW) project enables people and groups to make the best use of creative tools and digital technologies to tell their stories, making the process more accessible.

About

Digital Commonwealth aims to enhance groups' and individuals' abilities to ensure their voices are heard in the saturated (and often commercially-motivated) 'media landscape' of a major event such as the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Over the course of a year, Digital Commonwealth have worked on a range of projects with individuals and groups to develop their skills in using blogging, audio, video and social media for storytelling, in communities and in schools across Scotland. These projects are led by practice-researchers at University of the West of Scotland, and funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

The work has built on the University's expertise in songwriting, creative writing, filmmaking, and facilitated workshops with local community groups around the institution's four campuses in Ayr, Dumfries, Hamilton and Paisley. This has led to participants telling their stories in a variety of different ways and using a variety of media, from documentary films and creative songwriting to blogging and social media.

This has included work with Alzheimer's Scotland, sheltered accommodation providers, voluntary action groups, disability support services and multicultural women's groups.

What is the impact of the project?

Through empowering people to use freely available, mobile, digital media tools and techniques, the project has reached out to individuals and groups experiencing social, cultural or economic marginalisation, whether related to age, ethnicity, poverty, disability or social isolation.

How did digital tools make a difference?

Use what's in your pocket. DCW encouraged people to use familiar technology to shift from media consumption to production, rather than learning specific tools that later become obsolete. Participants often use Facebook and YouTube socially or personally, but workshops showed people how they can contribute to online conversations by capturing existing, but often unheard, narratives. Once participants felt confident using their own mobile devices for producing as well as consuming stories, the DCW project encouraged them to apply this beyond the Commonwealth Games.

What next?

Now that the 2014 Commonwealth Games are over, the project will use the resources, workshop materials and outputs developed to help explore, inform and transform how digital media literacies can be taught in school and community settings across Scotland and further afield. All of the materials produced by participants will be archived digitally. These archives will be developed by the partnerships formed through the project. This will ensure that the community groups involved in our project can continue to receive advice and support to ensure their practice is sustained. The research team will also distribute our findings widely, to inform others of good practice.

What Others Can Learn

How to recruit people

A project focused on people wishing to improve their digital literacy skills cannot rely only on digital means to recruit people. As an official Scottish Government Legacy 2014 project, we were able to talk to contacts across all local authorities, allowing us to involve schools and community groups who were already participating in Commonwealth Games-related projects. Using existing networks, relationships and collaborations allowed us to open doors to schools, community organisations and charities that were not currently involved. This requires face-to-face time, building trust, and clear communication about the project's aims and expectations.

Be flexible

People and groups have their own interpretations of what 'digital literacy' and being a 'beginner' is, and what training entails. Some groups have access to gold-standard technological tools, but may not have the skillsets to use them most effectively. Others are working with outdated hardware and software, or even have internet filters preventing access to certain tools. When delivering a nationally distributed project, it is crucial to audit each facility prior to delivery. This ensures learners can participate fully and appropriate training schedules can be designed.

Use events as a catalyst

Focusing on digital literacies, storytelling and the Commonwealth Games enabled a shared context for producing content. But small scale events can also provide a community focus to gather around, where the production of citizen-led content can lead to further documentation and awareness-raising. Event attendees are often more willing to contribute views, allowing for participants to gain experience in approaching the general public or representatives for interviews for the web.

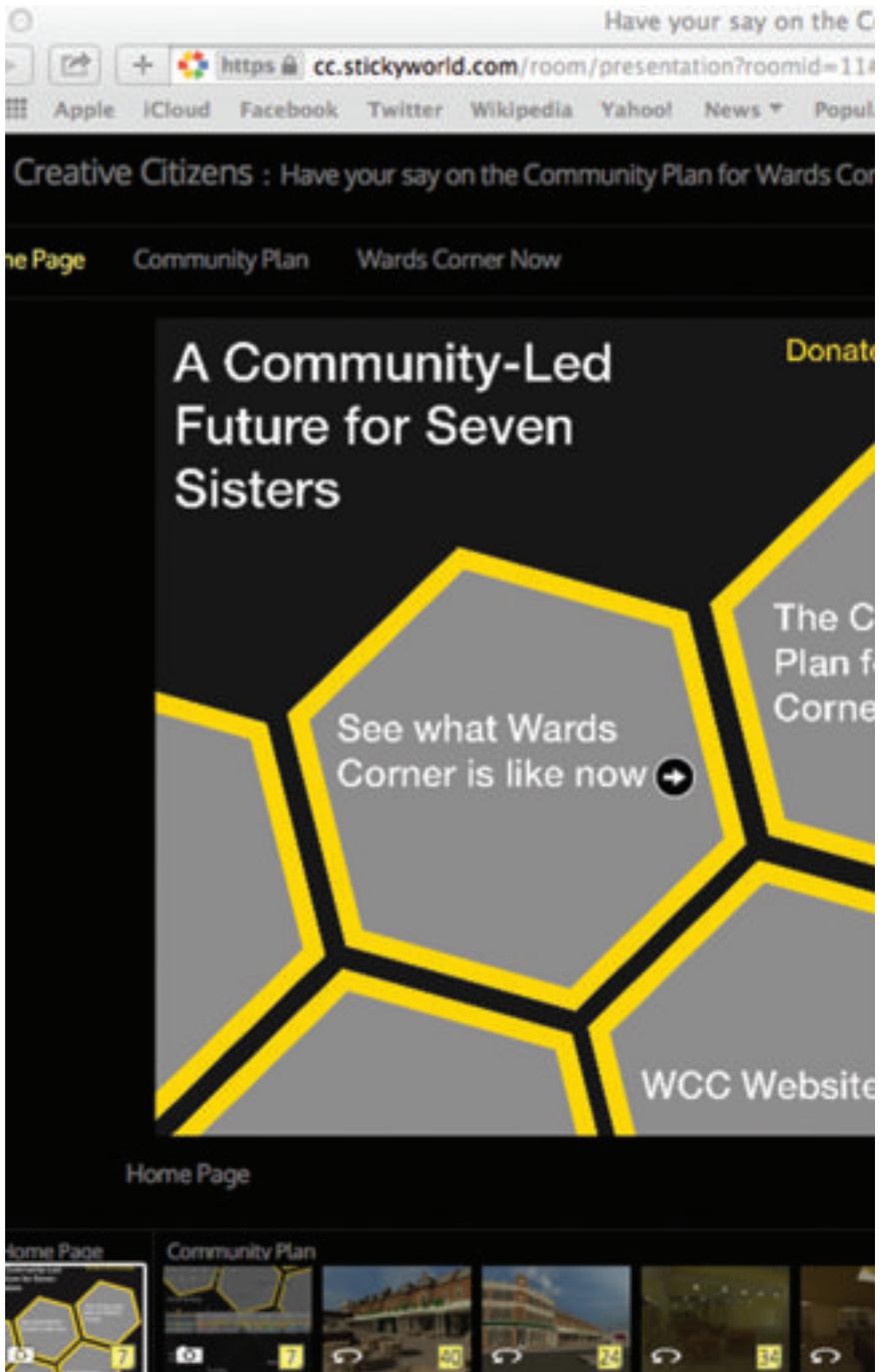
Placemaking



Wards Corner Community Plan

Katerina Alexiou, Giota Alevizou
and Theodore Zamenopoulos

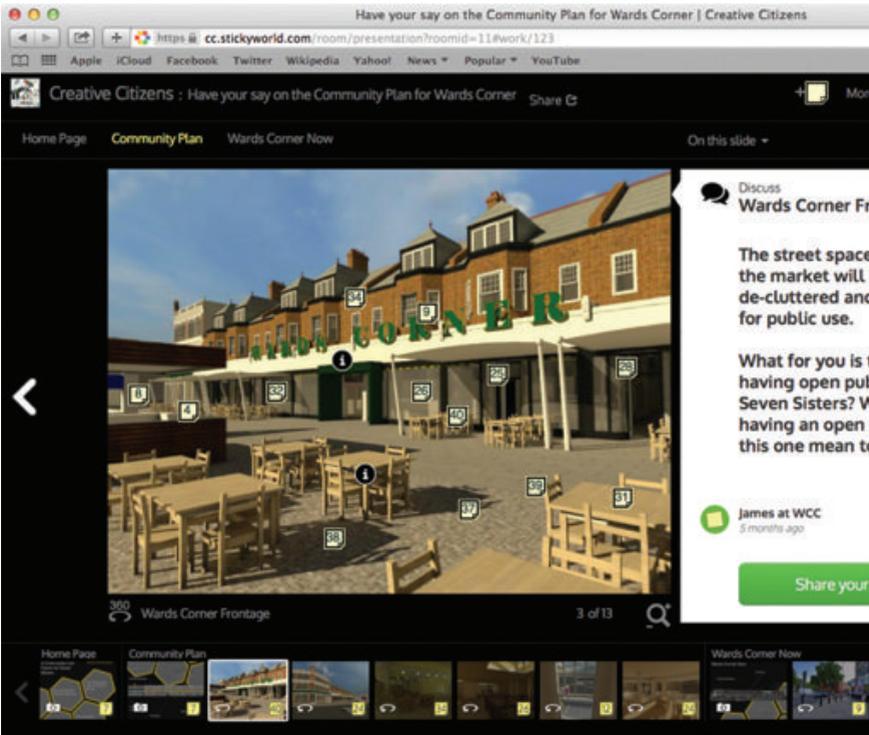
WARDS CORNER COMMUNITY PLAN



The Wards Corner Stickyworld home page. Credit: Creative Citizens.



Images from the co-creation and community engagement activities. Credit: Giota Alevizou.



3D Virtual Tour of the Wards Corner Frontage on Stickyworld with numerous comments from the local community. Credit: Creative Citizens.

Wards Corner Community Plan

Wards Corner
Community
Coalition,
Tottenham,
London.

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W [wardscorner
communityplan.
wordpress.com/](http://wardscornercommunityplan.wordpress.com/)

W [wardscorner.
wikispaces.com/](http://wardscorner.wikispaces.com/)

W [cc.stickyworld.
com](http://cc.stickyworld.com)

F [facebook.com/
wardscorner
community](http://facebook.com/wardscornercommunity)

Digital Tools Used

Stickyworld,
Facebook,
Wikispaces,
WordPress.

Wards Corner Community Coalition wanted to find a more compelling and convenient way to engage their local community in developing their own vision for the area. They used the Stickyworld platform to create a 3D environment online that would help people engage in planning, and confront other plans for the site.

About

Wards Corner Community Coalition (WCC) is a grassroots community group campaigning to save the indoor market above Seven Sisters tube station located in Tottenham, north London. The indoor market is home to a bustling multi-cultural community, but the building was proposed to be demolished by a developer. In 2013, WCC proposed a plan for the development of the overall site drawing on the aspirations of local people and seeking to enhance the local social and economic capital.

With support from researchers at the Open University, WCC envisioned and designed a virtual tour of the community plan—both inside and outside the building—using the Stickyworld platform (<http://tinyurl.com/wccstickyworld>). This online tool allows people to step into the space virtually, explore the current market and find out about the design proposals and principles. It was used alongside a social media campaign, and a series of face-to-face meetings and events to engage local people (particularly market traders) in the debate, and to record their views and comments. The proposal received enthusiastic support and comments fed into the consultation process for the submitted community plan. The plan was approved by Haringey Council in April 2014.

What is the impact of the project?

The project enabled a greater diversity and number of citizens to take part than the group might have expected using a more traditional engagement method. See also a parallel Creative Citizens project using Stickyworld—the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan (<http://cc.stickyworld.com>), which also aims to enable greater local engagement in planning issues.

How did digital media make a difference?

According to feedback from participants, accessing the plan through StickyWorld offered them a much more engaging and convenient experience than the traditional planning process. The 3D visuals helped people to imagine the space in a way that would not have been possible using a static model. The online the platform helped people take part at times that suited them best, and to 'drop in' and comment quickly, thus lowering barriers to participation.

What next?

As a result of using the platform the team feel more confident applying the tool and using the results to lobby for change in future planning activities.

What Others Can Learn

Engaging the community

The online plan was a result of a long process that involved collaboration from local citizens. This process was embedded in the local context and activities and enabled local people to relate to the issue as well as to use their skills and talents to tap into the project. This helped to ensure that aims and needs of the local community would shape the outcome.

Combining different media

WCC used content from the online platform to produce other forms of media, such as booklets, posters and flyers. This offered people alternative ways to visualise the plans and get informed about related events. It also linked back to the other online media including the project's website, as well as to WCC's Facebook and Twitter and enabled others to spread information. The variety of communication practices and media outlets contributed to the success of the plan.

See also

The Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum Stickyworld.

Placemaking



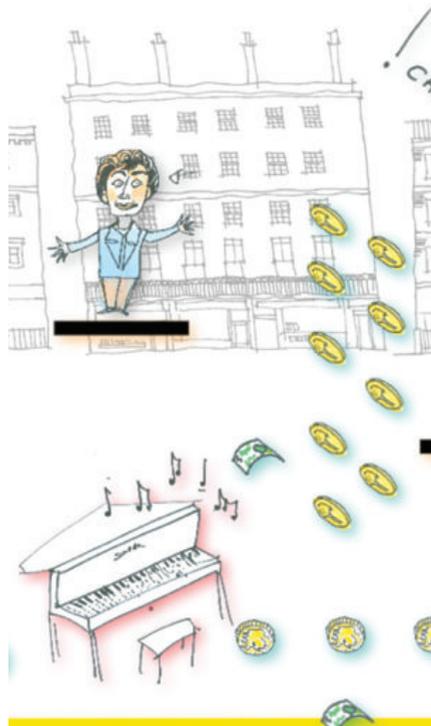
Play Your Place

Ruth Catlow and Mary Flanagan

PLAY YOUR PLACE



*Play South Westminster at South West Fest Gala Day.
Credit: Katherine McNeil.*



Game screens (clockwise): Play Southend - One Stan Army; from Play South Westminster - Grab the Cash; Dog Snog; It's on Fire, Oh No!

Play Your Place

Southend, Essex,
Finsbury Park,
London,
South Westminster,
London,
Online.

Contributors

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T twitter.com/playyourplace

Digital Tools Used

Javascript,
PHP,
MySQL,
Box2D,
GNU,
General Public
Licence,
Github.

Play Your Place is a framework of playful, social drawing events and simple online game-building tools through which people draw, make and play games to develop a collective vision of their future locality.

About

Play Your Place is an open art framework for people to get involved with civic and urban planning in their local area, through drawing and building games socially. People taking part can express their aspirations for their local area in public events via a free, online and mobile game-building website.

Inspired by knowledge and experience of their neighbourhood, participants can draw and upload images of settings, obstacles, prizes and protagonists. They build computer-platform game-levels to recreate and transform local challenges and rewards. Anyone can then go online to play, remix and share these free games about their neighbourhood, and to rank them for the quality of their change idea, local flavour, fun and artistry.

Developed and piloted in 2013 in Southend-on-Sea on the Thames Estuary, Play Your Place springs from a collaboration between Ruth Catlow (Furtherfield, UK) and Dr Mary Flanagan (Tiltfactor, US). It is supported by Metal, and funded by Arts Council England East and Southend Borough Council. Ruth is an artist, co-founder and co-director of Furtherfield, which provides platforms and spaces in London, and online for people to encounter and establish experimental arts and technologies on their own terms. In this way, more and more diverse people strengthen the expressive and democratic potential of our shared techno-social landscape—locally, nationally and internationally.

Play Southend is ongoing. It currently comprises over 100 games and its public programmes have already engaged over 1,000 local people. In July 2014 a new programme for residents of South Westminster was co-commissioned by Tate Britain and Peabody Housing Trust.

Five new games were created and exhibited alongside the British Folk Art Exhibition. All games can be played by people all over the world.

What is the impact of the project?

Play Your Place aims to develop the context for fuller participation by people (especially young people) in the formation of their communities. It aims to involve more and more diverse people in the formation of civic life and the shaping of public spaces, creating a richer flow of ideas (wild and sensible), insights, knowledge and power between people, communities, institutions and agencies that shape places.

How did digital tools make a difference?

Play Your Place is built around open source software, and the platform, developed with Soda (soda.co.uk) has been published to Github as a free and open source game platform under a GNU Affero General Public Licence in October 2013. This means that others are free to build on and modify the work.

What next?

The next major iteration is planned in North London's Finsbury Park, where Furtherfield Gallery and Commons are located. Working with Dr Harriet Hawkins, Cultural Geographer, Royal Holloway University of London (funded through the Culture Capital Exchange Creative Voucher Scheme), this will explore how diverse, hard-to-reach individuals and groups might create persuasive ideas for planners and developers, and so impact on the thoughts and decisions around planning the places where they live. This, in turn will underpin a process of digital business modelling to develop the project's sustainability: building partnerships with other arts and community organisations as future hosts, and identifying appropriate exploitation opportunities in public and commercial sectors.

What others can learn

Involving people in the software design

Participants understood and enjoyed the fact that they were shaping the game-building framework for future players. Through using an iterative design process, which integrated participants' reflection and evaluation into its development, we maintained an open conversation about co-creation of shared infrastructure.

Thinking evil

A fun way to think about risk. In the early stages of the project we ran a joint programme of staged software development and community events. A combination of complex unforeseen difficulties placed a lot of pressure on facilitators who were forced to improvise in order to avoid participants becoming disappointed or frustrated. In planning for events at South Westminster, we thought about what it would look like if everything went spectacularly wrong, and then flipped it (thanks Paul Tyler). Thinking evil is fun, and it enabled us to be more imaginative and to make better plans. We discovered that this approach also unlocked better game-building experiences for people.

Rich vs easy engagement

We are still working on the balance between participant investment (of time and effort) and reward (creative expression, social kudos and empowerment). High quality games inspire people to get involved. By commissioning experienced artists and game designers to seed the platform with a few high quality games we demonstrate what is possible, provide templates for remixing and model some fun games. There is still work to be done on making the online game-building experience as rewarding as the events that take place in public space.

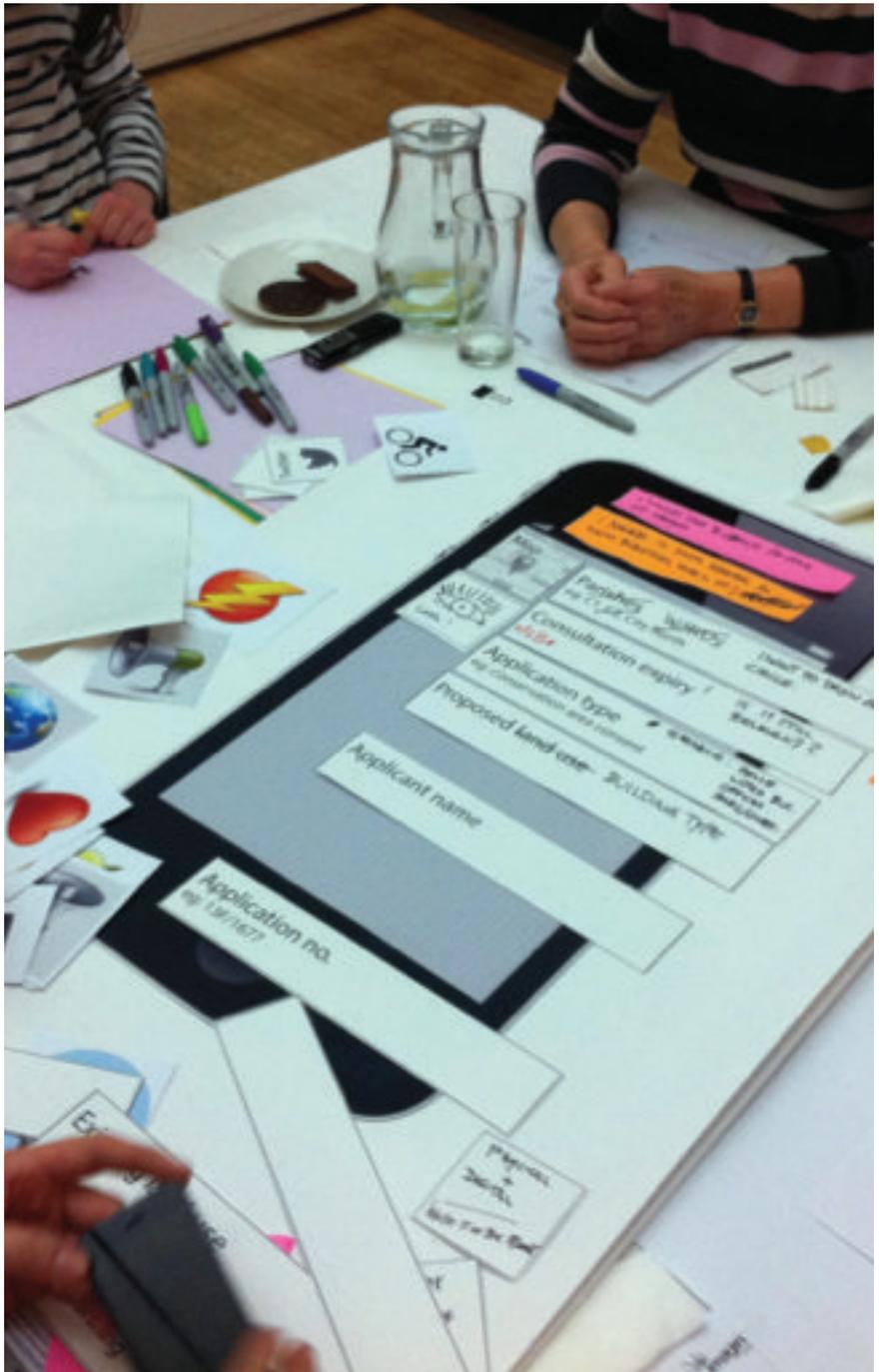
Placemaking



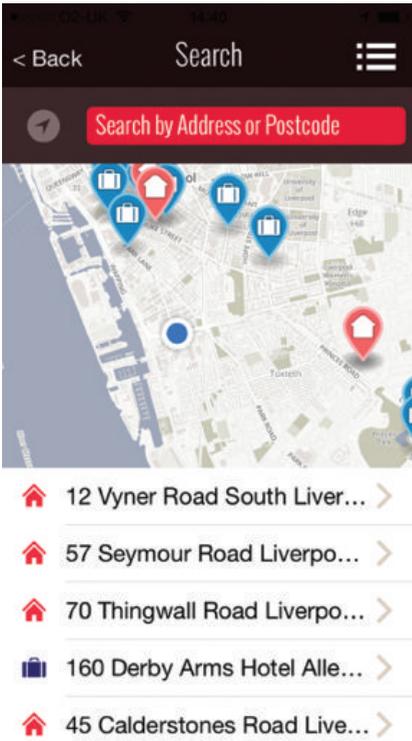
Open Planning

Lara Salinas

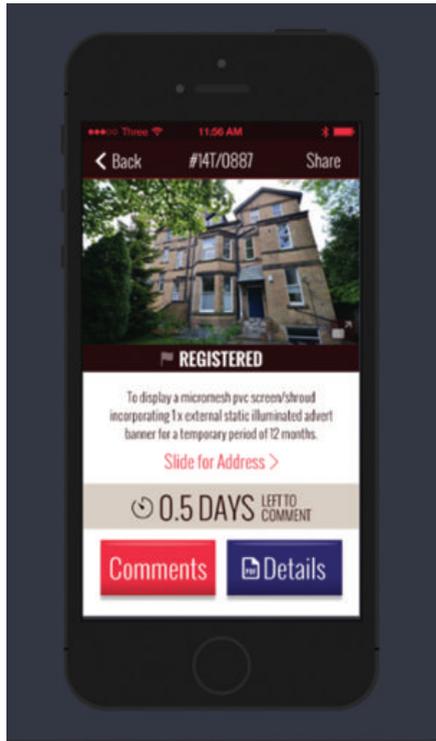
OPEN PLANNING



Co-design workshop with citizens that led to the design of the Open Planning App (beta). Credit: Lara Salinas.



Open Planning App (beta) displays planning applications near a user's current location.



Open Planning App (beta) shows planning application details.
Credit: Lara Salinas.



Site notice, tied to a lamp post in Bold Street, Liverpool.
Credit: Lara Salinas.

Open Planning

Liverpool

Contributors

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Digital Tools Used

*Open Planning
App,*
*Liverpool Planning,
Portal Data,*
Facebook,
Twitter,
Open Street Map.

Open Planning is a Liverpool-based project aiming to empower and engage citizens in the local planning process, through a mobile phone app which improves communication channels with local authorities

About

Open Planning connects the planning process with people's everyday ways of communicating, enabling a more engaging, transparent and accessible planning system. The Open Planning mobile app (currently for Apple iOS devices) makes it much easier for the public to locate planning applications on a map, subscribe to digital notifications, engage in public conversations, and quickly contact local planning authorities, maximizing the 21 days of public consultation.

Our aim is to improve the current planning application process by taking a citizen-centred approach. From the point of view of communities, improving the planning system requires better communication channels with local planning authorities. The project is funded by the Creative Exchange, an Arts & Humanities Research Council initiative.

The planning system is a public mechanism that manages the use and development of land and buildings, shaping the built environment in which we all live. Although the planning system has been recently improved, changes have typically been to increase administrative efficiency instead of fostering engagement with communities and bringing quality into the process. By better connecting the planning system with everyday communication practices (such as mobile phone use), Open Planning seeks to make it easier for citizens to communicate effectively with local authorities and participate actively in the configuration of their city.

First, we reviewed the policy framework in England, learnt from similar initiatives, and ran a series of workshops with local community groups, local planning authorities and developers. Not only did we gain understanding of the planning system and how it may be improved, but this also helped us understand the needs of different people and organisations in the process.

In a hands-on workshop with community members in Liverpool, we developed an early prototype for a mobile app and discussed with local planning authorities. As a result, we went on to develop a first Open Planning prototype that provides a map-based visualisation of planning applications, a digital alert service that reaches citizens based on their physical location, a platform to comment on planning applications and a direct communication channel with local planning authorities.

Some authorities have embraced Open Planning's initiative as it results in a more efficient process, and follows the UK Government's 2012 White Paper on Open Data. The collaboration with Engage Liverpool, Liverpool Vision and Liverpool City Council has been paramount to the development of a first prototype that responds to citizens' needs and is fully integrated into the planning system.

What is the impact of the project?

Open Planning makes the planning system more accessible, making it easier for citizens to know about and engage with changes in their built environment.

How did digital tools make a difference?

A digital tool like the Open Planning app reconnects the planning system to citizens' everyday life. Open Planning provides the data that is already held by the local planning office, in a format that is more accessible for the public. The first version of the Open Planning app allows people to browse a map to find planning applications, set up a notification area and be the first to know when a planning application is submitted within those bounds, comment and discuss planning applications, share on Twitter and Facebook and have access to all available information online.

What next?

Open Planning is a proof of concept. It sets out to demonstrate how it is possible to make the planning system more accessible, democratic and engaging with quite a limited investment. In our opinion, future versions of Open Planning could provide a more adequate service than current providers, tailoring to the needs of local planning authorities, developers and citizens alike.

What Others Can Learn

When bottom-up and top-down initiatives meet

Collaboration between local communities and public sector organisations can be challenging, as different approaches to the same matter may seem opposed, even unbridgeable. We have found ourselves in the role of facilitators, liaising to create solutions collaboratively that meet the citizens' and council's requirements.

From consultation to participation

In pursuing the design of a system that favours knowledge and creative exchange, we have opted for a participatory and collaborative approach. However, in our experience, local public organisations feel more comfortable with consultation, and are wary of participatory processes where the outcome may be—initially—unclear.

Local councils' constraints

Initiatives that bring additional resources to help local councils meet governmental guidance are welcome. For example, Liverpool City Council explained that resource constraints not only hindered service innovation, but also limited their capacity to collaborate with us.

Placemaking



H O
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B A K
E D

Homebaked

Samantha Jones

HOMEBAKED: AN OVEN AT THE HEART OF ANFIELD



Homebaked CLT and Community Bakery—Brick by Brick, Loaf by Loaf, We Build Ourselves. Credit:Homebaked CLT and Community Co-operative Bakery.

An oven at the heart of Anfield

by Homebaked Community Bakery

Home Updates 6 Backers 494 Comments 32

Liverpool, UK Food

Funded! This project was successfully funded on January 29, 2013.



494

backers

£18,725

pledged of £13,000 goal

0

seconds to go



Project by
Homebaked
Community
Bakery
Liverpool, UK

First created · 0 backed

Has not connected Facebook

Homebaked successful Kickstarter campaign: Oven at the heart of Anfield. Credit: Homebaked CLT and Community Co-operative Bakery.



We have a common aim—it's to do with the oven at the heart of Anfield: 'We will rise!' Credit: Homebaked CLT and Community Co-operative Bakery.

Homebaked: An Oven at the Heart of Anfield

Contributors

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Digital Tools Used

*Kickstarter,
Facebook,
Twitter.*

Homebaked is a community-owned bakery and community land trust in Liverpool, developed through a Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign. It provides local people with a choice of healthy food, job and training opportunities and a community meeting space.

About

Homebaked is a Community Land Trust and Co-operative Bakery located in Anfield, Liverpool. It has grown out of a Liverpool Biennial project 2Up 2Down, with artist Jeanne Van Heeswijk. It received support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Metabolic Studio, Arts Council England, Liverpool City Council, all the individuals that help through knowledge sharing, in-kind labour and 494 Kickstarter backers.

We wanted to re-open our local bakery in community ownership, which had been the last traditional business on our high street. Our desire was to produce food locally again, to give people a choice of healthy food, offer job and training opportunities and become a meeting space for different communities in our area.

Inspired by Community Land Trusts (CLTs) such as Dudley Street Neighbourhood Initiative (Boston, Massachusetts), East London CLT and Lyvennet CT (Cumbria), the Homebaked Community Land Trust proposed community-led development, providing workspace for social enterprise and affordable housing.

“Kickstarter... it’s a brilliant thing to exist: I love it, and what it allows you to do. The fact that we’ve raised our money with eighteen days to go. It also gives you an idea if the project is worthwhile; you get a scope from it.”

Jessica Doyle: local resident, co-creator, Master Baker and board member.

What is the impact of the project?

In April 2012, and after two-and-a-half years of community engagement, Homebaked Community Land Trust was established with the aim of providing affordable housing, at the heart of which is the bakery.

How did digital media make a difference?

This project became possible as a result of our campaign on the crowd funding website Kickstarter. Our campaign ‘Oven at the Heart of Anfield’ was a huge success and with the help of our 494 Kickstarter backers we were able to turn our idea into a reality.

What next?

We now aim to develop the entire block as a community-owned mixed scheme for social enterprise, as well as affordable housing.

“These things were bound to happen; they were supposed to happen. We MADE them happen. Then success gives you more confidence and you hope the next thing you do is going to be really successful. People may have had doubts about it, but they didn’t have a self-conscious, “Oh this can’t work.” It was a real boost, thinking what you’re really capable of. The support has been immense too—the donations”

Jessica Doyle: local resident, co-creator, Master Baker and board member.

What Others Can Learn

Taking things into your own hands

The biggest thing we have learned is that it is actually possible to take matters into our own hands and manifest as a group what we care about. We never expected our Kickstarter campaign, 'Oven at the Heart of Anfield' to go as massive as it did. People contacted us from all over the world, and there was intense media and press coverage that came with it. We learned that there are a surprising number of people out there who want, and support change.

Learning from the unexpected

Unexpected things happen all the time at Homebaked. 'Welcome to Homebaked, never a dull moment!' So yes, things happen every day, but we learn how to deal with them. We have got very good at improvisation and creative problem solving. We have also collectively learned from our mistakes, we talk about them and we try to share what we learn.

Take care of each other

We learned a lot of skills around baking of course, and business development, management and co-operation. But we also learned to be honest with ourselves as individuals and as a group: making change is hard work both emotionally and physically. We learned that we could burn ourselves out, if we don't take care of ourselves and each other; it is incredibly important to celebrate and have fun along the way.

"I think the entire experience of the Kickstarter campaign was one of the craziest times for us. It was a real turning point in our journey. It was the amount of pledges and all the personal messages of encouragement that had such an immense impact on our confidence."

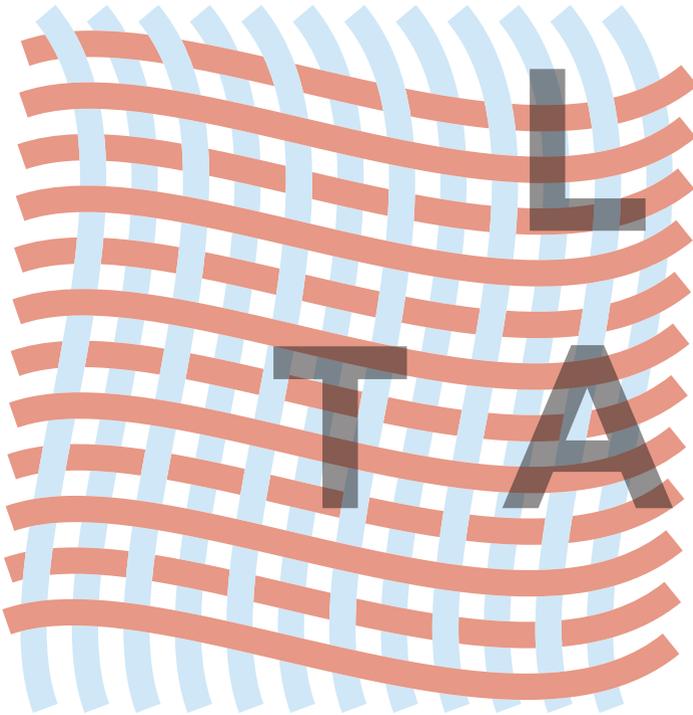
Britt Jurgensen: local resident, co-creator, and bakery and CLT board member.

"Our big aim is to become self-sustainable as an organization, so that profits from the business can cover all activities Homebaked offers and our customers can take part in making them happen, either simply by buying a loaf or, if they desire by taking part as a member"

Britt Jurgensen: local resident, co-creator, and bakery and CLT board member.

Building Skills Through Making Together

T E L



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Tell-Tale Technology

Rachel Keller

TELL-TALE TECHNOLOGY



Smart devices interact with the quilt to play videos, sounds and images.



Each quilt block was made by a different member of the team to produce the final quilt which centred around a certain theme.



The final quilt on display.

Tell-Tale Technology

Lancashire &
Cumbria

Contributors

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University.

W highwire-dtc.com/rachelk/Techno-Quilt.html

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Digital Tools Used

Near Field,
Communication,
(NFC) Tags,
Tablet Computers,
NFC Readers.

Tell Tale Technology is a community project using the swipe technology found in contactless payments to enable digital storytelling by linking textiles to video, audio, and photographs,

About

Tell Tale Technology links textiles to digital media using the swipe technology found in contactless payments. It provides a creative textile-based opportunity to improve and share digital media and making skills through innovative media sharing, whilst having fun and getting to know more people.

The first two community groups to work with the Tell Tale Technology project were a Family Centre in Cumbria and 'Blackburn Girl Geeks'. Rachel Keller of Lancaster University worked with these groups, with funding from Lancaster University's Faculty of Arts and Social Science and Unlimited Social Enterprise funding.

The two small groups met four or five times over several months. Each member of the group made a part of the quilt known as a block. The two quilts had different themes—one themed 'Girls into Computer Science' and other themed 'Favourite Things.' The group used computers to design their individual quilt blocks and the associated hidden digital story within it. To do this they used audio, photo, photo collage, slideshows and video.

Once the quilt blocks were finished and the digital media completed, each participant was given an electronic tag to which they could attach their digital media to by using an app. They then hid their tag within their quilt block. When a 'smart device' (such as a smartphone) is placed close to each of these quilt blocks, the device shows the digital media associated with it.

'I was thinking about making a quilt at home with soundbites, things we would talk about in an evening, and songs that I would sing to him and stories—we always do the same stories because he likes his routine, different sounds for the different squares. He can use that as comfort when I am not there. I genuinely believe it's going to have a massive impact'.

Mother of autistic child

What is the impact of the project?

The resulting quilts can be seen, heard, felt, and smelt. This attracted people that may not be that interested in technology or aware of the possibilities, as well as those already technologically skilled but who see an innovative potential in the textiles. As well as increasing confidence and knowledge, a wide range of skills were acquired between group members. From basics such as search skills and downloading, through to multimedia editing. Making together encouraged sharing the stories and experiences that members wanted to celebrate.

How did digital media make a difference?

Embedding digital media within the quilts allows people to explore the meanings and stories behind each other's squares. It also enables people to leave their stories behind for others to listen to when they are not there. For example one participant is planning one for her son who doesn't settle to sleep when she is working nights. Her son is nearly 11 and is on the autistic spectrum (see quote left).

What next?

We are currently working to simplify the digital process and make it accessible to more groups without requiring dedicated help—we are developing our own purpose-built free app that will help with this. The app and small electronic tags can be used, not just with the quilts, but with any item of significance to a person or group. It is taking the technology out of the hands of a select few and opening it up to the creativity of the ordinary citizen.

We hope the project will help to extend employability skills, unleash creative potential and strengthen the communities involved. The project also has therapeutic applications because of its multi-sensory approach.

What Others Can Learn

Organisation, finance and skills

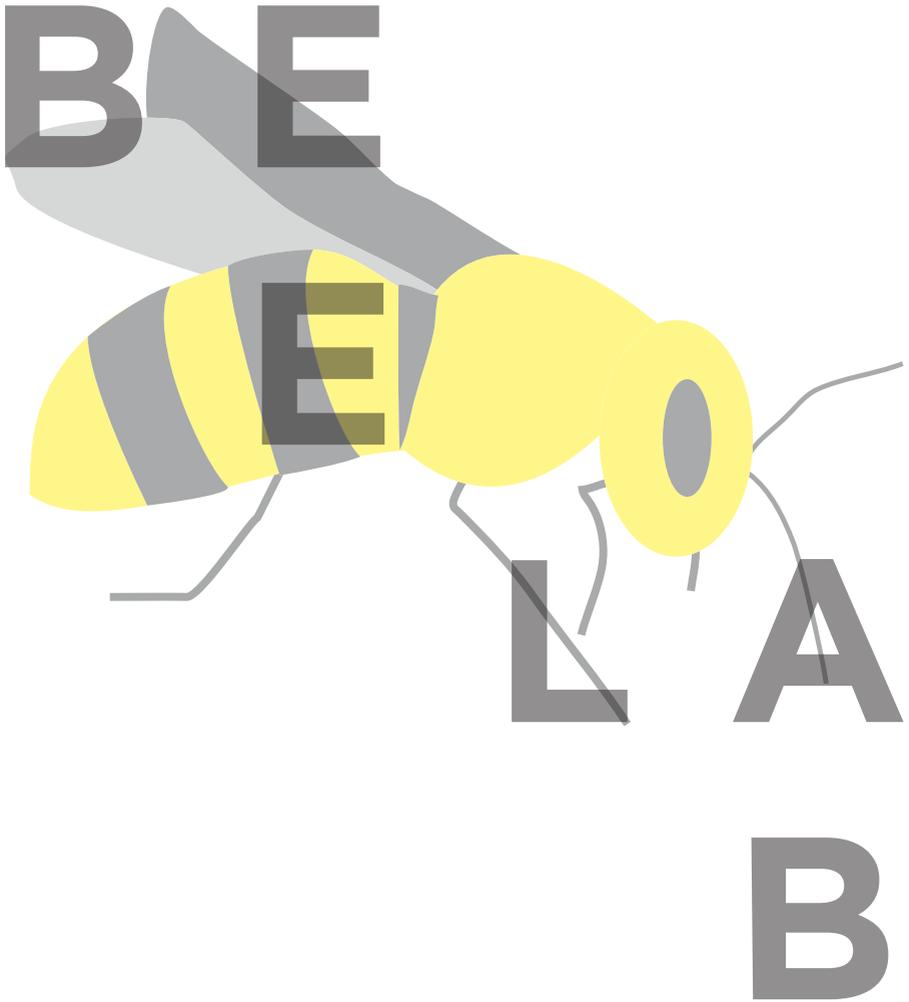
Be organised, persistent, patient and have a vision for what you could do with your project. Have a checklist and plan of everything you need including materials, community tutors (or participants with the skills to share), policies and insurance. From a finance point of view, try to find a free meeting room and someone with the digital and textiles skills to help, as these tend to be the biggest potential costs. Bring along cake and drinks to share. We found the social times away from the project to be a valuable part of the project.

Tips and tricks for sparking the imagination

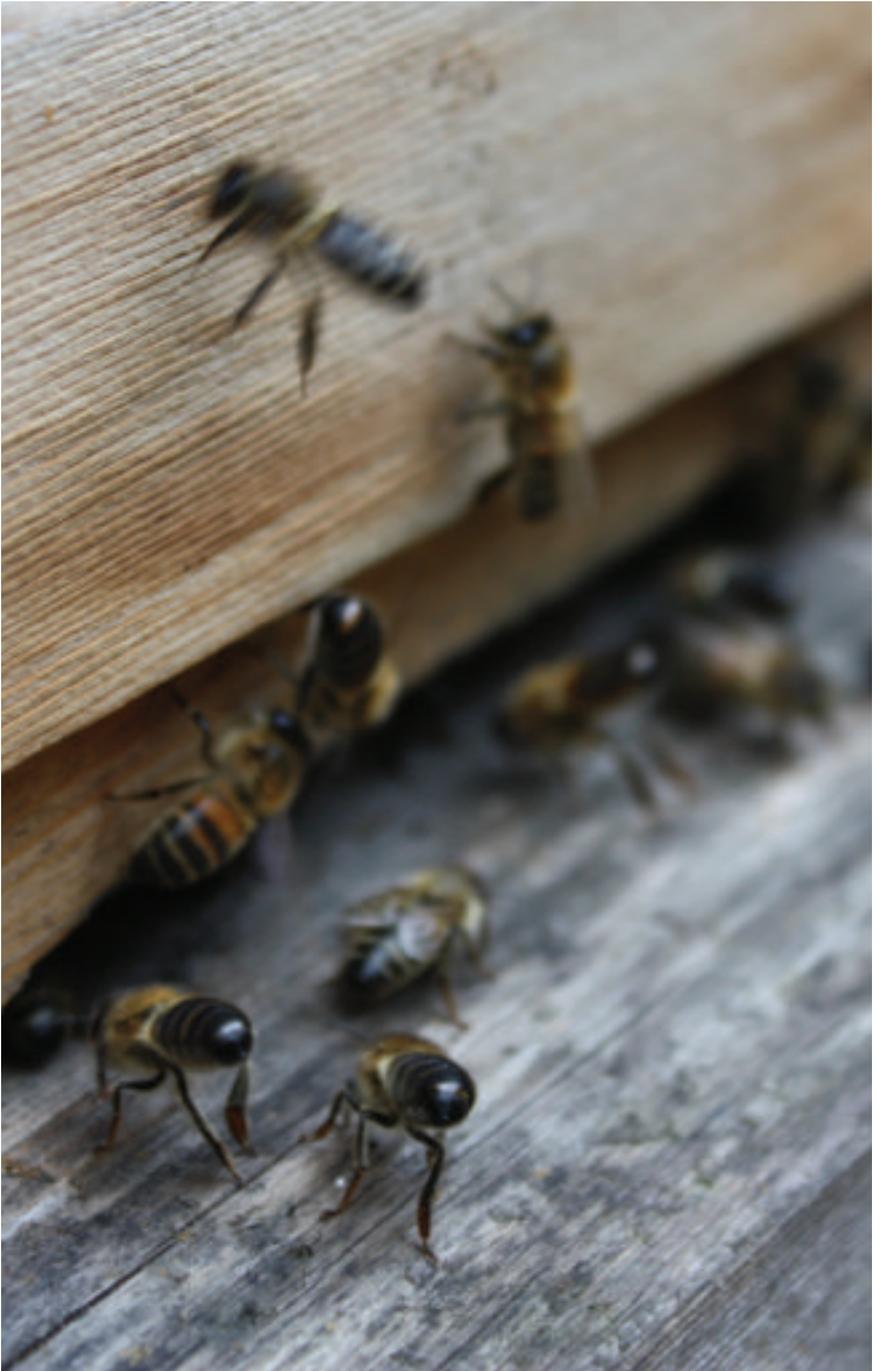
Spark the imagination—share ideas. The hardest part is getting people together at the right time and in the right place at an affordable cost. Showing ‘here’s one I made earlier’ may spark more interest. UFOs (Un-Finished Objects) are everywhere, even when people are enthusiastic about what they are doing. Plan how much time you need and double it. Gentle, timely nudges are good. Even if not everyone finishes, this doesn’t mean they haven’t found it useful.

“I’ve loved the computer – it has taught me not to be frightened of it – it’s not just boring spreadsheets – it’s given me the confidence to sign up for a class. I didn’t think anything was to be gained from having a computer”

Tell Tale Technology participant



BEE LAB



Understanding the territory of design.



Deploying the Bee Lab Kits with beekeepers.

Bee Lab

Across UK

Contributors

Rob Phillips,
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W *The British
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Association*
bbka.org.uk

W *The Honey Club*
honeyclub.org

W *Technology
Will Save Us*
techwillsaveus.com

W *Horizon Digital
Economy*
horizon.ac.uk

W beelab.org,
rdphillips.co.uk

T [@beelab_open](https://twitter.com/beelab_open)

Digital Tools Used

Open-source
electronics,
Prototyping kits
from
techwillsaveus.com,
Twitter.

Bee Lab is a project about enabling the beekeeping community to enhance care for bees, by harnessing the power of open design, DIY technology and citizen science.

About

The Bee Lab project aims to use the power of technology and Open Design to enhance the practice of beekeeping—making it easier for beekeepers to care for bees in today's unpredictable environmental landscape. Using the principles of Open Design, we are bringing together a community of passionate, multi-disciplinary people to create customisable monitoring devices that enable beekeepers to monitor and share the health of their bees across the beekeeping community.

Honey bees are an essential environmental pollinator. They contribute every day to our environment, food supply and our economy. However, the practice of caring for bees has become increasingly complicated over the past 15 years—uncertain climate, sprawling cities, weather diversity, GM crops and disease management have made life difficult for bees and beekeepers in both urban and rural settings. We believe that by harnessing the sense of community instilled in the beekeeping world, and empowering people with appropriate technologies, we can help beekeepers enhance care for their bees.

We put on a series of 'hackdays'—collaborative, practical technology workshops—bringing together technologists, product designers and engineers to work with the beekeeping community to co-create customisable, monitoring devices that can be inserted into hives to sense different signals for the beekeeper to read—including frame or feeder weight, whole hive weight, temperature and humidity. The idea is that the more that the bees can communicate to their beekeeper, the more the beekeeper can understand and respond to them without even opening up the hive.

What was the impact of the project?

The project's still ongoing, but so far Bee Lab has involved and reached beekeepers in the UK and around the world, and been shown publicly at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

How did digital tools make a difference?

Low-cost digital electronics, open-source technology and the growing 'maker community' have helped enable many more people to become involved in being part of citizen science projects. What would once have been the preserve of scientific laboratories is now available and accessible to the public, and can be used in creative ways.

What next?

Using 'open design' methods, the device designs will be published online - free to be used and 'hacked' by anyone. Data gathered from these devices will be made public to help others understand the health of their local environment, informing sustainable and bee-friendly approaches.

What Others Can Learn

Create project champions

Empower individual people to become advocates for the project. They will be more powerful and influential within their community than any external researcher or organisation. Give these advocates the resources to describe and recruit people to the project, as their input will be more powerful.

Listen to desires, not technological opportunities

Throughout the project, we ran 'territory scoping' workshops and 'deployment in the wild' with our user base. Beekeepers freely expressed their desires for technological uses and applications; these have been vast and critical. Whilst technological interventions are exciting for industry, and can be very creative, make sure that these align with end users' needs and are not over-complicating a simple exercise.

Open 'Design' or assembly

Designing artefacts and systems takes time and relies on expertise to deliver tangible, economic results. If you are engaging audiences to create or design 'openly' then carefully consider the stages where they are 'designing'. What is the user's skill base? Do they need support or resources? What is the output and are validation procedures required? When opening a process or product creation consider the audience and design material carefully.

Always think motivation

During the 'recruitment' parts of the project, educational institutions and community groups that we never thought we would engage with have come forward. Deploy your projects within different communities and allow them to self-select. Always consider that community-based projects are not just about the 'project', but about what individual participants yield for themselves. Try to align these personal end user needs with those of the community.

Building Skills Through Making Together



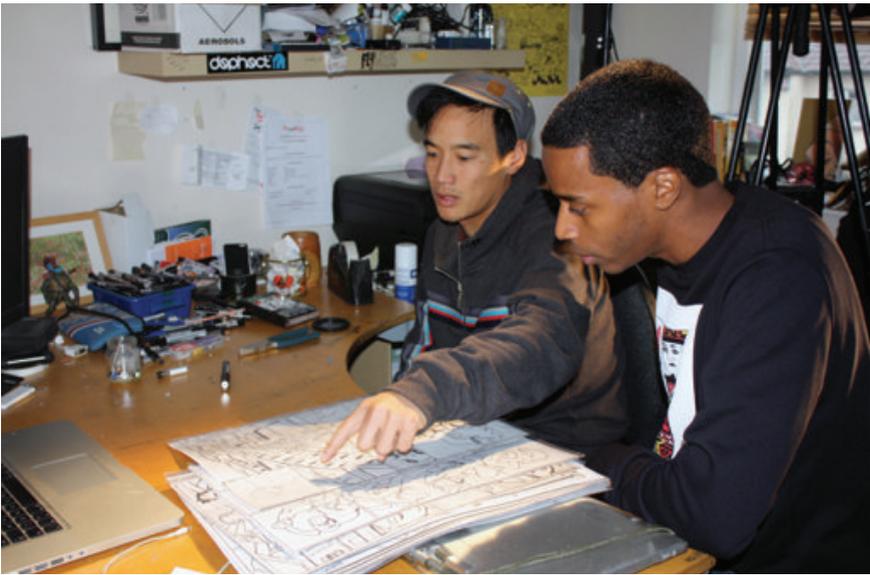
Indigo Babies with South Blessed

Emma Agusita, Jonathan Dovey
and Shawn Sobers

INDIGO BABIES WITH SOUTH BLESSED



*Indigo Babies creator, Vince Baidoo, and Jon Dovey from the University of the West of England, on a research 'walkshop'.
Credit: Emma Agusita.*



*Indigo Babies creator, Vince Baidoo, with illustrator Silent Hobo.
Credit: Emma Agusita.*



*Indigo Babies Graphic Novel #1. Credit: South Blessed/Crown
Root Publications.*

Indigo Babies

Indigo Babies,
South Blessed,
Bristol.

Contributors

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W [theindigo
babies.com](http://theindigobabies.com)

T [twitter.com/
theindigobabies](https://twitter.com/theindigobabies)

Y [youtube.com/
theindigobabies](https://youtube.com/theindigobabies)

Digital Tools Used

YouTube,
Twitter,
Illustrator,
Photoshop.

Indigo Babies is a graphic novel, in both print and digital formats. It is published by the Bristol creative youth network South Blessed, to fund opportunities for young, creative people.

About

South Blessed is an online platform for young, creative talent in the South West. It works with young people to produce media content, and has an online file-sharing site. It showcases youth talent in music, fashion, skateboarding, news and journalism. The channel has a wide audience and has enabled the group to share their creativity. However, the network's highly informal and self-funded nature means it is quite precarious. South Blessed founder, Vince Baidoo, was interested to explore other ways to help South Blessed become more sustainable.

With support from the Digital Cultures Research Centre at the University of the West of England, Vince worked with renowned Bristol street artist Wei Ong (aka Silent Hobo) and up-and-coming young illustrators to produce a graphic novel called *Indigo Babies*. The publication produced in both print and digital formats, is being sold by South Blessed to fund future creative production and employment for young creatives in the South Blessed network. The comic's theme is 'The world is changing, the children have already changed.'

Vince saw the production of the comic as a chance to build new skills, spawn new collaborations and increase opportunities for the young people around him to develop their creative talents. He sees what they do as 'transmedia'—storytelling across different media, seeing both digital and physical media as complementary rather than an either/or choice.

What is the impact of the project?

The project has enabled South Blessed to work with a team of creative collaborators to create and produce a richly illustrated comic to a professional standard.

How did digital media make a difference?

Using new and existing online networks and platforms, South Blessed has been able to share their comic with a wider audience and connect with others to turn Indigo Babies into a microbusiness.

What next?

South-Blessed has now created its own self-publishing arm. Crown Root Publications and Indigo Babies comic sequels have been planned. Vince intends to develop a 'transmedia storyworld', enabling *Indigo Babies* narratives to be produced and shared across different media formats and platforms.

What Others Can Learn

Relationships and collaborations

Collaborations between large, commercial organisations like Universities, and small, unpredictable creative groups are challenging. Clear expectations need to be established, relationships need a lot of attention, and resources need to be made available as equitably as possible.

Linking online and offline

Having a vibrant online network and community is not the same as having an income stream. Creative community businesses also need to have goods or services they can sell, so that their online attention becomes part of a sustainable business plan.

Useful Resource and Search Terms

Here is a small collection of some resources that contributors have recommended, we suggest that you use a search engine to find them. If you have any others to suggest, please get in touch: varietypack@rca.ac.uk or add them at: creativecitizens.co.uk

Generally Useful

Community Design Exchange
(The Glass-House)

Community Media Association

Connected Communities Media Collection
(community media from across the UK)

Our Digital Community

Nesta Neighbourhood Challenge

Making Media with Communities: Guidance for
Researchers by Northumbria University, 2014

Doing Research Together: How to make sure things
are fair and no-one is harmed, by the Centre for
Social Justice and Community Action, Durham
University

Donald Schön, (1983) *The reflective practitioner: how
professionals think in action*, Basic Books, New York.

Making the future, one prototype at a time (a
collection of social design methods and toolkits
compiled by Nesta).

Nesta DIY Toolkit (participatory tools)

Supporting each other locally

- How to set up a Facebook group
- How to set up a WordPress blog
- A Survivor's Guide to Hyperlocal Media

Telling stories

- How We Made it Happen: Community groups making programmes for local radio, with recommendations
- Community Media resources: radio, TV and film
- Raising Your Voice: Digital Storytelling to Create Change
- Representing Communities project
- Digital tools for storytelling (via the Digital Commonwealth project)

Placemaking

- A Compendium for the Civic Economy
- Neighbourhood Planning LinkedIn Group
- Commonplace
- Stickyworld
- PlanLoCaL Localism & Neighbourhood Planning resources

Building skills through making together

- Make magazine (DIY technology projects)
- Instructables (community of makers creating instructions for others)
- Maker Faires and Mini Maker Faires (Newcastle, London, Brighton, Edinburgh)

Digital tools mentioned in the case studies

Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Storify

Blogging: Tumblr, WordPress

Video: YouTube, iMovie, Filmic Pro, Videopad

Photography: Flickr, Adobe Photoshop

Audio: AudioBoo, SoundCloud, Audacity

Mapping: Open Street Map, Google Maps, Stickyworld

Fundraising: Kickstarter

Websites: Wikispaces, Mozilla Webmaker

Linking Together Digital Tools: If This Then That

Graphic Design: Adobe Illustrator and InDesign

Game Design & Coding: Javascript, PHP, MySQL, Box2D physics engine, Github

Printing: Newspaper Club

Hardware: Smart phones, tablets, Apple iPad, Apple TV and mini-projector

Electronics: Near Field Communication (NFC) tags, prototyping kits from Technology Will Save Us

Licensing: Creative Commons, GNU General Public Licence

The Creative Citizens' Variety Pack is a collection of 12 inspirational community projects, all making use of digital tools in creative ways for social benefit, with practical suggestions and advice.

From beekeepers to bakers, storytelling to social media, and newspapers to graphic novels, we hope you'll find something useful here whether you're currently involved in a community project yourself, are looking for future ideas for your group, or just consider yourself a 'creative citizen'.



Royal College of Art

**THE HELEN HAMLYN
CENTRE FOR DESIGN**

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