CADG: COMMUNITY ARCHIVES IMPACT STUDY

CASE STUDY N0. 2

MY BRIGHTON & HOVE

Brighton & Hove, East Sussex.

Project Summary	*My Brighton and Hove* is an online heritage website which presents and interprets material about the city. This includes photographs, memories, oral history and interviews, and material from other local heritage sources such as the local museum, community publishers and private image libraries. The website contains 2,500 pages of photographs, memories and historical information related to Brighton and Hove The project was set up in 2000. It was re-launched in 2006 with a re-designed website which makes it possible for volunteers without many IT skills to edit and maintain the site. My Brighton and Hove is run entirely by volunteers, with around 50 involved each year. Over the last two years the project has become affiliated to QueenSpark Publishers, a local community publishing organisation which works with hard-to-reach groups.
Project Exemplifies	• **Sustainability:** The project has existed now for 6 years, and has very low core costs and healthy cash reserves. Its core activities are run wholly by volunteers,and it has succeeded over the years in recruiting, training and retaining a pool of high calibre volunteers. • **Online contribution / collection:** My Brighton and Hove receives a steady flow of quality contributions online. This method of collection is unusual among community archives; it takes time to establish and requires an approach that blends the effective use of technology with a 'human touch.' • **High quality presentation:** The website is widely used by schools and other users, with around 365,000 visits per annum. It has won *Best Community Website in Brighton and Hove* in 4 years out of the last 5 years, and a volunteer was recently runner-up in the national 'Silver Surfer' Competition 2006.

PROFILE

Project Name:	MY BRIGHTON & HOVE

Subject matter of archive	Subject matter relates to	X	Further Details:
	A specific place / area	**X**	Please Specify: **Brighton & Hove**
	A special interest, e.g. a particular industry		Please Specify:
	Black of minority ethnic community(ies)		Please Specify:
	Faith group		Please Specify:
	Other:		Please Specify:

Location	Address: **My Brighton & Hove,** **c/o QueenSpark Publishers** **First Floor,** **49 Grand Parade,** **Brighton,** **Sussex.** Post Code: **BN2 9QA** Geographic area covered: **Local authority / Neighbourhoods** Description of area: **Key Population Features of Brighton & Hove** (2001 Census)**:** *Size* • Population of 247,817 in 2001, making it the fifth most densely populated area in the South East • 2005 mid year estimate shows an increase to a population of 255,000. *Age Structure* • Lower than average percentage of children in the population • Larger percentage of 20-44 year olds – 42% of population of Brighton and Hove, compared to England and Wales average of 35% • Percentage of 85 years+ population slightly above the national average • Population aged over 60 years+ fallen from above the national average in 1991 to around the national average of 21% in 2001 *Household Structure* • Smallest average household size in the South East, fifth smallest in England & Wales

- Second highest percentage in the South east of people aged 16 and over who are single and never married
- Percentage of lone parent households with dependent children in the population is lower than the national average, but these households make up a higher proportion of all households with dependent children.

Ethnicity & Religion
- The largest ethnic group is white at 94.3%, slightly below the average for the South East, but over 3% higher than the national average.
- At 5.8% the non-white population (term used in Census) is lower than the national average of 9.7%, but higher than the average for the South East. The non-white population had increased from 3.1% in the 1991 Census.
- People from mixed origin form the largest group within the non-white population at 1.9%. The Asian and Asian British community constitutes 1.85% of the population, and the black and black British community constitutes 0.8% of the population, both significantly lower than the England and Wales averages, which are 4.57% and 2.3% respectively, and also the average for the South East.
- 27% of the population stated that they had no religion, the second highest percentage of all local authorities in England & Wales. Fifty nine percent of the population stated they were Christian, lower than the South East and England & Wales averages of over 70%. Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist populations are higher than the average for the South East, but lower than the national average, with the Buddhist population being the highest in the South East.

Health
- Percentages of the population in good health, or not in good health, both around the national average.
- Percentage of the population with a limiting long-term illness around the national average

Profile of Deprivation in Brighton and Hove

The 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranked Brighton and Hove 83rd out of 354 English Local Authorities in terms of average SOA score (1.)   So the area as a whole is well within the top 25% of the most deprived local authorities nationally. Within the South east Brighton and Hove ranks as the second most deprived in terms of the average SOA score.

The overall picture conceals, as it generally does, the extent of deprivation in particular areas and the gap between prosperous and deprived areas within the borough.   Fourteen of Brighton and Hove's 164 SOAs fall within the 10% most deprived in England. East Brighton ward is the most deprived, with the Queens Park ward where the project originated also scoring highly.   The average for the borough also conceals the absence of deprivation in many areas. Seven SOAs are

Notes: (1) by the overall rank of average Super Output Area scores.	within the least deprived 25% nationally. Another contrast is shown by Brighton and Hove having two SOAs in east Brighton in the most deprived 3% in England in terms of income, but also two SOAs in the 95% least deprived in England. The 'existence of barriers to housing and services' is one of the measures (or domains) used to assess deprivation, and Brighton and Hove scores particularly highly (i.e. is highly deprived) in this domain. **Voluntary and Community Organisations in Brighton and Hove** There are over 500 community and voluntary organisations in the area, though some serve a wider area than Brighton and Hove.
Dates	Date project established **2000** Date project ended (if applicable) **On–going – no end date**

1. ORIGINS

My Brighton & Hove was founded by an individual, Jack Latimer, a professional web designer and educator. The project grew out of his experience of running projects and courses training people in multimedia skills by teaching them to record their everyday lives, environment and heritage. He had realised that such training programmes were far more satisfying for participants where they collaborated on a group project.

In 1999 Brighton Council was offering small grants to fund projects marking the Millennium, and *Make Multimedia History*, the non-profit organisation set up by Jack Latimer to provide multimedia training, was awarded £2.000 to run a project to present historical information about Brighton on-line.

The original aim was to run a six month long Millennium project, in which four volunteers would learn sufficient web skills to create and populate a website. The source material for the website came from a multimedia local history exhibition ('My Brighton') that Mr. Latimer had designed five years earlier for Brighton Museum. Although My Brighton and Hove started without any longer term plans or strategies for its continuation, it quickly became apparent to the Steering Group which managed *Make Multimedia History* and also the MyBH project that this project had the potential to tap into an enormous popular interest in history and heritage in the Brighton and Hove area. The publicity to recruit the initial four volunteers resulted in forty turning up! The Steering Group brought together a range of people from the historical and heritage sectors in Brighton.

My Brighton & Hove has evolved into an on-going project which has continued to grow and develop over its six year life. From its inception it has had a close association with another local project*; QueenSpark*, a long established community publishing organisation which works with hard-to-reach groups.

Initially, the two projects had a mutually beneficial relationship in which MyBH designed and hosted QueenSpark's website in exchange for free workspace. The two projects were independently managed and run for the first four years of MyBH existence, but they affiliated 2 years ago and now work much more closely together.

There was no contact between the project and the local Record Office during the early years, though that has changed. In 2006 MyBH developed a collaborative project with the Record Office, and the 'Letter in the Attic' project has recently been awarded funding from the HLF. Contacts with Brighton Museum have been closer: the Museum gave their consent to the re-use of the material from the 1994 'My Brighton' exhibition for the website, and also permit MyBH to reproduce pictures from the Museum's on line image collections. In 2005 MYBH worked with the Museum on an exhibition about Brighton pubs and organised an event to seek out 1960s photos for the museum's collection.

2.   AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

My Brighton and Hove's aims and objectives are described in its constitution as follows:

- **To record the heritage of the Brighton and Hove area in digital media**

- **To promote awareness of local culture/heritage/lifestyle through digital media**

- **To develop information technology skills (and awareness of the need for these skills) among the community**

- **To advance cross-cultural understanding**

Those involved in the project emphasise that a community based project such as MYBH is able to tap into an enormous amount of material and resources that the 'traditional' sector is not able to access or collect.

The projects aims and objectives have not changed since it affiliated with QueenSpark Publishers, but the closer relationship will enable MyBH to develop aspects of its site reflecting the area's diversity, and to incorporate more material from socially excluded and hard to reach groups within the population.

3.   NATURE OF PREMISES

MyBH is based at the premises of QueenSpark publishers, a not for profit community publishing and writing organization. QueenSpark publish books about local people's lives,run creative writing groups and facilitate oral history projects.

The projects occupy one floor of a building in a Regency terrace on one of Brighton's main roads. Although located in the Queenspark ward, which experiences very high levels of social and economic deprivation, they are on the edge of that area and in reality are in central Brighton. Their building is somewhat run down: the projects rent their space and so have not sought to improve or refurbish it. The property is part of a potentially attractive period terrace, but it is not particularly distinguished, although it contributes to the Regency character and street scene typical of Brighton and Hove.

MyBH works in QueenSpark's premises, and stores its equipment there, although volunteers also work from their homes. In the early years free workspace was made available to MyBH, in exchange for which they designed and hosted the QueenSpark website and funded a wireless network for QueenSpark.

To date the project has not stored its own physical archive. It has been negotiating with the local museum about arrangements for their oral history interviewers to deposit recordings of their interview tapes there. (Individuals currently keep their own.) However, this is still under discussion, as the museum routinely wishes to have the copyright of any deposited material; this is likely to pose a problem, but the project is confident that it can be resolved.

4.   NATURE OF COLLECTION

4a) Is the collection digital, physical, or a mixture of both?

The collection is digital – a website of some 2,500 pages.

4b) How much material do you have in your archive?

Type of Measure	Quantity - indicate whether feet / metres and if estimate

Cubic feet / metres of material	**n/a**
Linear feet / metres of material	
Number of drawers in filing cabinet	
Other *Please specify:*	

4c)   Format(s) of material

Format type	Mark X if applies	Format type	Mark X if applies
Paper / parchment manuscripts		Books	
Visual – film / photographs/ pictures etc		Pamphlets	
Visual - photographs		Periodicals/Magazines	
Visual- Other		Electronic – e.g. c.d's / web site content / computer records etc.	**X**
Sound – oral history – planned campaigns; life stories **tapes**	**X**	Objects	
Sound – recorded reminiscence sessions		Other *(please specify)*	

4d)   Heritage Value of Collection

Those involved in MYBH emphasise the heritage value of both the product and the process involved in creating the website.

A key heritage value of the website as perceived by the public is as a source of information and expertise. A large number of very knowledgeable local historians contribute to the site – for example, by publishing articles, dating photos, responding to queries etc.

The project also plays a key role in interpreting historical material. It does this by setting the archival material in a human context, as the title 'My Brighton and Hove' suggests. Old photos from the museum's collection, for example, are set in the context of personal memories, and are interpreted via comments from local historians and website visitors. The interpretative value of this kind of 'non-elite' commentary is considerable.   It also helps to bring the material alive. The Project's founder has highlighted the emotional richness of the material, saying that the sense of emotion and meaning behind the contributions helps to bring the heritage to life, describing it as a 'living, breathing archive.'

The project has value in terms of creating a collection of primary material - some photos and many memories in the website are not published elsewhere. This sort of project is able to tap into huge resources (of information, material,) that are not accessible to the traditional agencies.

5.   PROJECT ACTIVITIES

5a) Range of Activities

Activity	X if applies	Activity	X if applies
Exhibitions / Displays *Describe:* **Contributing to 'Brighton's Boozers' – exhibition about the city's pubs with Brighton Museum**	**X**	Community events, e.g. fairs *Describe:*	
Workshops / meetings / Public lectures *Describe:* **Talks to Museum Computer Users Group / Outreach sessions on family history**	**X**	Publishing, e.g. local history, newsletters *Describe:* **Collaboration with QueenSpark means that the publisher will publish some of MYBH material, and MyBH will place increased amounts of QueenSpark material on the website**	
Participating in campaigns about locally important issues *Describe:*		Collecting sessions, e.g. appeals for photographs / other materials, recording reminiscences, etc. *Describe:* **Collecting sessions through meetings and appeals on line. e.g. collecting of 1960's photos of Brighton with Brighton Museum.**	**X**
Collecting oral history *Describe:* **Interviews of local residents for History Trail project Interviews of elderly in Bevendean for project**	**X**	Theatrical/drama events *Describe:*	
Outreach in Schools *Describe:*		Outreach in community centres *Describe:* **Workshops at community centres**	
Outreach in Prisons *Describe:*		Outreach in Nurseries, Play Groups *Describe:*	
Outreach in Women's Groups *Describe:*		Other *(please specify)* *Describe:*	

5b) Key Activities

The Project's core activity is the collection, presentation and interpretation of material about Brighton and Hove.

It has been innovative in its emphasis on the online collection and presentation of material. The website was re-launched in September 2006 with a new, advanced design that means that people with few technical skills can easily make pages and contribute to the site from their homes.

My Brighton & Hove has taken a number of initiatives to involve new users.

- **They carried out a project with hard to reach groups in 2003 - the 'Lesser Heard Voices' project. This project aimed to seek out the views of some of the city's hard to reach and excluded groups whose views may often go unheard, and include them on the MyBH website. It involved training 5 volunteers in interviewing techniques and website creation. They then obtained material from individuals and groups including the deaf community, lone parents, over 50's, and homeless people which is presented as virtual 'tours' of the city, showing the places and things that have significance for the people concerned.**

- **MyBH will be collaborating increasingly closely with QueenSpark to publish material on the website from the hard-to-reach and marginalised groups that QueenSpark specialises in working with, for example, the Bangladeshi community, the Sudanese community, and a range of faith groups.**

- **MyBH has undertaken other outreach projects, including:**
  - **the collection of photos from the 1960s (with Brighton Museum)**
  - **a project with schoolchildren (with Brighton Council)**
  - **a project creating a history trail round the city (with the 24 Hour Museum.)**

- **MyBH is working in partnership with other organisations such as East Sussex Record Office to develop a project to collect documents that people have stored in their attics. Material for the 'Letter in the Attic' Project will be collected though public appeals, and then published on the MyBH website.**

6.   STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

6a) Structure of Organisation

Structure	Mark X if applies
Registered charity/ Company limited by guarantee	
Written constitution, not legally registered	**X**
Informal – no written constitution	
Part of another organisation *Please specify:* **Affiliated with QueenSpark Community Publishing in 2004 – see below**	**X**

6b) Management and Governance

The My Brighton and Hove was set up by a not-for-profit organisation called *Make Multimedia History*. This organisation had a written constitution (though it was not legally registered or incorporated) and a bank account. Make Multimedia History was managed by a Steering Group drawn from people from the heritage and local history sector in Brighton.

Very soon after MYBH was established the Make Multimedia History Group entered into a close working relationship with QueenSpark, a long-established community publisher. The organisations shared similar aims, and it was considered that they would each benefit by working together, and achieve economies of scale.

In 2004 the relationship became closer and more formalised, with MyBH becoming affiliated to QueenSpark. The My Brighton and Hove project retains its own constitution and its funds are held by QueenSpark in a ring-fenced account. The two projects co-ordinate their planning and activities such as fundraising. This arrangement is judged to have worked well, although initially some MYBH volunteers were concerned about the implications of becoming part of a larger organisation. However, it is felt that the benefits, in terms of improved access to high quality material - particularly that obtained from the hard to reach groups that QueenSpark has a particular expertise in working with - and the operational efficiencies gained have been worth the sacrifice of a degree of autonomy. QueenSpark is also a not for profit organisation.

My Brighton and Hove is run by its volunteers. Any volunteer who is active for three months is eligible to become a member of the Project, and acquires voting rights to make key decisions and to elect the two volunteer administrators who look after the group's finances on a day-to-day basis.

6c) Partnerships in which the Archive Participates

Key partnerships are:

Brighton Museum – MyBH provides an online 'gallery' for the Museum's exhibits, and the Project's volunteers sometimes work on the Museum's projects.

The 24 Hour Museum – My Brighton & Hove created a History Trail for their *City Guides Project* **in 2002**

Brighton and Hove Council – there has been collaboration on educational projects with children.

The Zap Club – The Project is publicising and collecting material for a new archive of this famous arts and music club in Brighton

East Sussex Record Office – My Brighton & Hove is to be a partner in forthcoming Heritage Lottery Fund bid for £50,000 to fund the 'Letter in the Attic' Project. Other partners in this project are the Mass Observation Archives, Access for Archives and QueenSpark Community Publishers.

6d) Planning Activities

Does the project have any of the following?

Strategy		Business Plan	X	Action Plan		Funding Strategy	

QueenSpark has a Business Plan and a Strategy – MYBH does not have a separate plans

If not, are its plans / activities set out in the plans of the parent / host or other body? **YES - MyBH plans are included in QueenSpark plans and strategies. MYBH and QueenSpark co-ordinate their activities carefully – e.g. in applying for funding to sources where can only submit one application between them.**
MyBH develops project plans for each long term project it undertakes.

7. FUNDING

7a) Funding Received

Type of funding	X if applies	Amount received	Period Covered	What Funding Was For
Heritage Lottery Fund	**X**	**£2,250**	**2005/06**	**Share of grant as partner in ZAP Club project**

		£3,000 (from total grant of £50,000)	2006/07	**Letter in the Attic Project – a project collecting the written material people have in their attic**
Big Lottery Fund				
Local Heritage Initiative				
Local Authority **Millennium related funds** **Global Grant (EU)**	X	£2,000 £ 500 £ 600	6 months of Yr. 2000 2002/03 2005/06	**Setting up project in Millennium** **Continuation grant Project with young people**
Government (*please specify*) **DCMS (Culture on Line)**	X	£3,000	2004/05	**Share of grant as partner in project with 24hr Museum**
Charity / Trust (*please specify*)				
Donations				
Subscriptions				
Earned Income, e.g. from sales, from fees, etc.	X	£ 500	Annual	**Sale of copies of MyBH cd (£250 p.a.) Seale of QueenSpark publications / calendar through website (£250 p.a.)**
Other (*please specify*) **Free technical support and services**	X	**Value of Hosting Service: £250 p.a.**		**Software development and hosting is provided free to MyBH by *CommunitySites*, a company set up by two founder members of My Brighton and Hove to enable other towns and regions to set up similar websites. At commercial rates, this probably equates to £250 a year hosting and approx £50,000 in software development.**

7b) Funding Applied For (include details of applications to be submitted in near future)

Type of funding	X if applies	Amount Sought	When Applied	What Funding Is For
Heritage Lottery Fund				
Big Lottery Fund				
Local Heritage Initiative				
Local Authority				
Government (*please specify*)				
Charity / Trust (*please specify*)				
Other (*please specify*)				

7c) Other Sources of Funding
Is the project hoping to raise funding (or increased funding) from any of the following sources?

Type of funding	X if applies	Target for Amount Sought	Timescale
Donations			
Subscriptions			
Earned Income, e.g. from sales, from fees, etc			

8. SUSTAINABILITY

My Brighton & Hove's sustainability strategy is based on keeping core costs very low, and not seeking grants for core funding.

Core costs are kept down to a mere £250 per year by:
- **Using volunteers to run core activities**
- **A working relationship with QueenSpark Publishing with gives the project free working space in exchange for providing technical support and services**
- **Obtaining funding for specific projects, which can be used on occasion to pay people to work on projects on a fixed term basis. This project funding is structured to include a small management charges which is used to cover some core costs, e.g. the cost of hosting the website.**

MyBH has considered seeking money to employ staff, but has major reservations about this course of action and so far has not done so. The feeling is that once an

organisation has done this 'there is no going back' – volunteers commitment can be diminished, core costs rise, of course, and the organisation becomes dependent on external funders.

Of course, working as it currently does, MyBH is dependent on continuing to recruit and retain a body of high quality volunteers, and also has a mutual inter-dependency on QueenSpark Publishing.

MyBH sees its ability to attract and support a steady flow of new volunteers as its key sustainability issue. To facilitate this, they have recently introduced new technology in the shape of an easy-to-use content management system. This means that they will cease to be dependent on having volunteers with relatively high level IT skills (e.g. the ability to use Dreamweaver.) Volunteers will be able to manage the website after less than one hour's training. This will widen the population from which they can recruit volunteers, because although the Project was prepared to train volunteers to the necessary level, this took time and resources, and not all volunteers wanted to develop their skills to that level.

The use of a bespoke content management system in itself creates a dependency (i.e. on that specific system – volunteers may not be equipped to use other packages without up-skilling.) However, the new content management system used stores the data in an industry-standard database, which can be exported to another software platform if necessary. (Any software will be redundant in 10 years time, so it is the data storage that matters, not the software.)

MyBH's affiliation with QueenSpark is seen in part as a sustainability strategy, and as potentially offering an exit strategy for those involved in MyBH should this become necessary at any stage. It is considered that QueenSpark would be in a position to continue the project; the publishers employs 3 staff, has survived for 30 years, and has a track record of securing funding from a range of sources. The MyBH project enables them to deliver many of their objectives, and they would appear to have strong reasons to sustain what is a locally prestigious project.

9. USERS/ACCESS

9a) Accessibility

As there is no physical collection available to view, the question is not really relevant.

The website is, of course, easily accessible and readily available to anyone with access to a personal computer and the internet (which can be done at school or free through public libraries for those who do not have one at home.)

The website is attractive, well designed, and very easy to use, even for those with

very limited IT skills. It is set up in a way that makes it easy for users to make a contribution.

9b) Rate of Usage

Visitors in person	*Number:*	Remote contacts, e.g. website users	*Number:*
Of which how many are 'members' ?	*N/A*	Total number of users? **Visits to MyBH website**	**Approx. 365,000 a year.** **Average visitor sessions are 4,000 a day (i.e. almost 1.5m per annum, but MyBH calculate that only 1,000 a day are genuine, interested users, (as opposed to accidental visitors or search engines).** **Visitor figures have, on average, doubled every year in the 6 years since the website was launched.**

9c) Details about the users

Surveys carried out by MyBH and e-mail responses sent to their site show that:

- **The visitors comprise about 30% residents; 30% visitors; 20% ex-residents; 20% descendants/family historians. No further details are available about users' age, ethnicity, gender, etc.**

- **A lot of schoolchildren use the site for their homework**!

- **The site attracts a lot of interest and contributions from ex-residents of Brighton and Hove who are based all around the world.**

9d) Have the numbers of users, or the type of people using the archive changed over time?

> **The number of users has roughly doubled every year.**

9e) Numbers of staff, volunteers and members involved in the archive

Staff		Number of volunteers	No.	Number of members	No.
Full time	No: **0**	*(actively helping the archive at least once a year)*	**50**	**This is the number of people on MyBH's mailing-list, which includes both volunteers and regular contributors. They forward historical queries sent to the site to this list, plus news of site updates and appeals for contributions on particular themes**. **(They are not formal members**.)	**200**
Part time	No: **0**				

9f) Details of staff, volunteers and members

Staff:

There are no employees.

Volunteers:

At any one time, a core group of 6-12 volunteers are working on the Project each week, and another 12 people are helping out on an occasional basis. A core volunteer tends to stay with the project for 2-3 years on average; the other volunteers stay around 3 months. Hence about 50 volunteers are involved in the course of an average year.

Ages range fairly evenly from 25 up to 65. None of the core volunteers currently come from ethnic minorities. The volunteers tend to be around half and half men and women, though currently more female than male volunteers are involved.

MyBH has found that volunteers tend to be of two broad types and patterns of interest:
- **younger people, who are typically interested in the multimedia aspects and the**

opportunity to learn skills in this area

- older people, whose main interest is in the content of the website – the memories, the stories, etc., and who are less interested in the IT and multimedia aspects.

Volunteers have specific roles. There is a weekly rota of website editors, for example, and particular volunteers are assigned to monitoring comments and the guestbook. Some volunteers belong to an 'oral history interviewing' sub-group.

Volunteers are recruited through the website itself, and through occasional publicity drives through local e-mail lists (e.g. that of Sussex Community and Voluntary organisations,) local radio and press.

MyBH provide training and a 'coaching buddy' for new volunteers, and seek to give them small, achievable tasks in the first instance. They often make a 'contract' with volunteers; asking that, in exchange for the investment the Project makes in their training, the volunteer will stay with the project for a certain amount of time (or complete a certain number of tasks).

10.   EVALUATION & IMPACT

10a) Has any monitoring and evaluation been carried out by the project/ organisation ?

- Website visitor statistics are collected and analysed routinely, though the information available is relatively limited. The Project finds that most visitors come to their site because they are searching (in a search engine such as Google) for a particular street or location. They also note that usage surges every time they issue an update about changes to the site (this is done by email to the 200 or so people and organisations of their mailing list.)

- The Project ran an online survey to determine whether visitors to the website were residents, ex-residents, visitors or descendants of residents. As noted above visitors to the site were split fairly evenly between the categories, with 30% residents; 30% visitors; 20% ex-residents; 20% descendants/family historians. No further information is available about users' age, ethnicity, gender, etc.

- User-testing was carried out in preparation for the re-design of website. Some 5,000 volunteer hours went into the programming, designing, copying across pages and reformatting the content.

- Focus groups are run at the end of funded projects, to explore what worked and what didn't and what lessons should be learnt. For example, the group they ran at the end of the project with the 24hr Museum to create a History Trail

for their *City Guides Project* provided useful information about motivating volunteers.

10b) Overall Assessment

The original aim of the project at its inception in 2000 was to run a 6-month Millennium project, in which 4 volunteers would learn sufficient web skills to create and populate the website. This aim was achieved.

MyBH subsequently evolved into an on-going project with the following aims and objectives, already described above:

1. **To record the heritage of the Brighton and Hove area in digital media**

2. **To promote awareness of local culture/heritage/lifestyle through digital media**

3. **To develop information technology skills (and awareness of the need for these skills) among the community**

4. **To advance cross-cultural understanding**

Some of these aims and objectives are achieved by MyBH's core activities (i.e. the collection, presentation and interpretation of material on the website.) Others are met through particular projects:

- **Objective 1 is achieved through core activity, as demonstrated by the size of the site (2,500 pages of material, much of it previously unpublished).**

- **Objective 2 is achieved through core activity, as demonstrated by the size of the visitor figures.**

- **Objective 3 is achieved:**
  - **through core activity inasmuch as the project teaches and develops the technical skills required to be an online contributor to the site (image sizing, file management, web browsing etc.). MyBH routinely coach their volunteers and contributors in these skills.**
  - **at the more advanced level of learning web design skills objective 3 is achieved through particular projects (e.g. the 'Lesser-Heard Voices' project which provided web training for minority communities to create their own tours of the city)**

- **Objective 4 is achieved through particular projects and partnership work (e.g.**

the incorporation of the 'Faith in Brighton' video diaries into the website). MYBH partnership with QueenSpark Publishers is intended to play an instrumental role in achieving this objective in future, as QueenSpark routinely works with minority groups in the city and will in future publish the outcome of such projects on the MyBH website. Examples include material about the experiences of the local Bangladeshi community and the Sudanese community. MyB&H is also exploring the possibility of an international project. This would involve linking the project with a coastal town in Ghana, assisting people there to create a website similar in approach to MyBH's

MyBH is committed to producing a high quality product. The recent website re-launch involved the copying over of 2,500 pages of photographs and text to the new site where they have been re-edited and re-presented with better navigation. The redesigned website is significantly easier to use, both for visitors, who are now able to make a contribution even if they have very limited IT skills, and also for the volunteers who manage the site. Volunteers no longer need to be trained in quite the range of high level IT skills they once were, but this shift has come about in response to the needs of the volunteers themselves. MyBH has found that the most useful contribution they can make to developing information technology skills (objective 3) is to teach people how to be an effective internet and p.c. users, e.g. by training people in file management, manipulating digital images, etc. The requirement for higher level training, e.g. in the use of graphical web development tools such as Dreamweaver, is now relatively limited.

Awards:

- **MyBH has won *Best Community Website in Brighton and Hove* in 3 years out of the last 5 years. This award is sponsored by a consortium of organisations including the Sussex Community Internet Project.**

- **A volunteer at MyBH won runner up in the national Silver Surfer competition in recognition of her contribution to the relaunch of the website. The award is given by Age Concern England and Digital Unite who have formed a partnership to help tackle the growing problems of digital exclusion of older people in the UK. Speaking about her work, the volunteer said *'…looking at the finished design I feel so proud of what we have achieved. It is very satisfying to have made such an important contribution to the city I love.'***

Speaking about the My Brighton and Hove Project, Jack Latimer said '*The support from ordinary people for this project has at times astounded me. We have enthusiastic volunteers from twenty to sixty years old, all with their own distinct roles. Also gratifying are the comments we receive…..The website clearly has a special place in the hearts of many people who live here and even to those who have just passed through.*'

Users comments about the re- launched website include:

'I was born & bred in Portslade & still live here. I'm 61 & have been very impressed

with your web site. Many old memories have been rekindled. Keep up the good work.'

'Have been finding my way around the new format - many congratulations to all on a great job.' (From a user in New Zealand.)

Another user and contributor made an important point about the site:

'I wish it well, & onward into new generations to come, so that it becomes an everlasting archive, as so many web sites created today so to speak, are only as good as the time those individual webmasters are here. Given that once a book is published it is there everlasting as such, an internet publication is only there while it is managed & the site paid to be live.'

The project has influenced professionals working in related fields. A Museums Officer in Yorkshire described it as *'the finest heritage web site I have ever seen,'* adding that *' I want to shamelessly copy the concept. Please contact me to tell me how you managed to do it.'*

ANALYSE THE PROJECT'S IMPACTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN TERMS OF:

Citizenship

The project brings together people who have not met before, and probably would not meet in the normal course of their everyday lives, in a number of ways:

- Most obviously, volunteers on the project meet each other, and make personal relationships with other volunteers and people in other organisations (e.g. Brighton Museum, QueenSpark Publishers, etc.) and with contributors to the website, sometimes face-to-face, or through other forms of contact. The volunteers take part in some shared social activities, e.g. the Christmas Party.

- Contributors sometimes meet face-to-face, or establish contact in other ways, after first making contact through the website

- Less obviously, people get to know about the lives and experiences of other individuals and groups through the website, especially those of people from groups they may not normally associate with, for example socially excluded groups such as the homeless.

Whilst it is fair to say that the chance to do something creative is the main motivating factor for many volunteers, they often also have an altruistic element. They routinely cite wanting to do something for the town where they live as one of their reasons for becoming involved in the project.

MyBH's 'notes and queries' board and 'email list' provide forums in which

> members of the community help each other with local and family history queries – sometimes going to great lengths to help with other's research.

Community Empowerment / Participation / Improving routes to other services

The existence of MyBH makes a significant contribution to people knowing more about the area in which they live by providing a wide range and large amount of information about the area and its people. An interest in learning more about Brighton and Hove is not confined to current residents: as the analysis of the visitors to the website show, the project also contributes to people knowing more about the area where they or their family have come from / where they used to live / or in which they simply have an interest.

MyBH has led to increased take-up of key related services such as those of the Record Office, Museum, etc. as follows:

- The Project reports that the take-up of the services of the local Record Office by users of their website has increased. Use of the Local History Centre has increased, with the Centre allowing MyBH volunteers privileged access to its material in special 'scanning sessions' so they can capture material for the website.

- The MyBH website incorporates images from Brighton Museum's on-line image bank.

Involvement with MyBH is not known to have led to any members or users joining or initiating any other community groups, campaigns or lobbying activities (as far as anyone knows, though it's not possible to say for certain.) The site is used by community groups to obtain information and to present a profile and information about their services to others, so it is likely to have led to an increased take-up of their services, more members and volunteers coming forward, etc.

MyBH has not helped to improve the delivery of any local public service: this has not been an aim. It should be noted, though, that the Head of Tourism in Brighton and Hove considers that the Project presents information about the area at a level and with an emotional and personal richness that official tourism sites cannot emulate, so it is likely to have contributed to improving tourism services. The site is also frequently used as a resource during generic, publicly-funded IT training sessions for the local community.

Improved Community Cohesion / Breaking down boundaries

In common with most areas there are some barriers and tensions between

different groups in Brighton and Hove. The Best Value Survey 2003/04 found that 38% of people considered that 'people being attacked because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion is a very big or fairly big problem in their local area.' This is significantly higher than the national average of 23%, and put Brighton and Hove in the 4th (worst) quartile of scores nationally (Area Profiles, Audit Commission.) Brighton is now a town with increasing extremes of wealth and poverty, where access to housing and key services is very difficult for many groups.

By publishing material that illuminates the lives of a wide range of people MyBH has made a good contribution to helping to improve understanding between different groups, and to foster the empathy that is a vital element in breaking down barriers between people. In particular, the Project has contributed to people in mainstream organisations and population groups that are not disadvantaged learning more about the lives and experiences of those who do suffer social exclusion. MyBH has been surprised to discover how interesting material about people's lives, particular difficult lives, are to other people, for example in one project the experience the majority of people found the most interesting was that of a homeless person.

By showing Brighton as a interesting, lively, diverse and vibrant place to live MyBH is likely to have made people feel more strongly identified with their community and area.

Through project such as 'Lesser Heard Voices', and the increasingly close work with QueenSpark Publishing which seeks out and publishes the voices of hard to reach and black and minority ethnic communities the project helps to support cultural diversity and identity.

Whilst encouraging familial ties and relationships is not an objective, the opportunities the site gives to family historians may lead to MyBH having some impacts in this area. The site sees a lot of evidence of inter-generational activity, such as children seeking out information on behalf of elderly parents.

Improved liveability of area / Community Safety

MyBH has not had a direct impact on physical regeneration by improving premises or green spaces.

It undoubtedly has helped to improve the image of the area in the eyes of people from outside. Brighton and Hove Council's Head of Tourism has identified this as an important impact that the project has had. The site is a common reference point for tourists considering visiting the city, as well as for prospective new residents (as shown by e-mails to the site, guestbook comments etc.)

The project includes a 'Best and Worst' of Brighton and Hove section, to enable the community to articulate its feelings about the liveability of the area.

Whilst the project is not judged to have been likely to have had a direct influence on reducing residents fear of crime or community safety, by increasing understanding between groups, particularly those of different ethnicities and faiths and cultures it is likely to have made some contribution to reducing tensions. It may this have helped to reduce the higher than average levels of fear amongst residents that people might be attacked because of their colour, ethnic origin or religion, as described above.

Education & Lifelong Learning: Acquisition by individuals of new skills and experience (and outcomes, e.g. going on t0 formal training, etc.)

The majority of volunteers have learnt a significant amount of new IT skills. In the lifetime of the project so far, about 300 volunteers have received training. The project is responsive in teaching the level and type of skills that volunteers most want. They have found that the most useful contribution they can make to developing information technology skills is to teach people how to be effective internet and p.c. users, e.g. training them in file management, manipulating digital images, etc. As described above, younger and older volunteers tend to have rather different needs and aspirations, with the younger ones being more interested in acquiring multimedia skills.

Volunteers also gain other skills, especially in project management and project administration. They take it in turns to convene and chair the meetings where key decisions are taken.

Users also gain new IT skills or develop existing ones. Out of the 1,000 or so visitors to the site each day, an average of 10 record a comment and one new web page is added per day.

Several volunteers have gained employment as a result of their participation in the project.

- Most notably, one ex-rough sleeper who was involved in the 'Lesser Heard Voices' project went on to secure employment within two weeks of his participation. He reported back that his participation in MyBH had been one of the factors that secured him the job.

- Another volunteer has recently applied for a job at another community organisation and requested a reference from MyBH.

- Over the lifetime of the project around 4-5 volunteers have gone on to get jobs in a multimedia related field.

- Also, following feedback from organisations elsewhere in the country which

wanted to set up an equivalent to 'MyBH' in their own locations, two founder volunteers from the project have gone on to form a company (*CommunitySites)* to provide this service.

Volunteers have also gone on into education and training. A couple of volunteers every year enrol on the Certificate in Life History Course at the University of Sussex.

Health & Well Being - Physical, mental and community health

The web-based nature of the Project makes it particularly suitable for, and accessible by, anyone with limited physical mobility, so it is possible for groups such as the elderly to become involved. The re-design of the site now means that volunteers can manage the site from home or other remote locations, and do not have to go to the office. The volunteer who won the 'Silver Surfer' award for her huge contribution to the website re-design is reported to have mobility problems but these did not prevent her putting in very long working hours on the re-launch.

With intensive support from QueenSpark volunteers with mental health problems and a young woman with Aspergers Syndrome have been enabled him to contribute to the My Brighton and Hove site.

What personal benefits do participants say that they have got out of being involved in this project or these activities ?

Volunteers and contributors routinely say they enjoy finding out about the city where they live, and that they feel they are involved with a valuable project. They enjoy the feeling of being creative. The publication of the memories and perspectives of 'ordinary' people is often cited as an attractive and worthwhile aspect of the Project.

At an individual level, the website enables people to connect with their environment and validates their life experiences by encouraging them to contribute memories, old photos etc.

MyBH have many stories of people making human connections through the website (e.g. tracking down birth parents, long-lost friends, venues of first dates, etc). People have been found to be very helpful to each other. Appeals on MyBH Message Board typically attract 2-3 responses.

11. ACHIEVEMENTS, LESSONS & ACTION POINTS

- **What the project has done well**

MyBH has been very successful in:

- **Eliciting a wide range of online contributions. Nurturing and supporting their contributors so that many contribute a number of times.**

- **Maintaining a high quality of presentation – shown by the Project winning awards and building a large, keen audience.**

- **Reaching a large online audience, based both within the Brighton and Hove area and far afield.**

- **Attracting and retaining high calibre, committed volunteers, and offering them useful training in multimedia and other skills.**

- **Having a culture of improvement, shown by the recent re-design which makes the site easier to use for both volunteers who manage the site, contributors to the site, and other users.**

- **Problems, how tackled, things would do differently**

MyBH has experienced problems with:

- **Adequately capturing metadata and permissions at the outset of the project.**

- **Ensuring that the investment made in training and supporting new volunteers yields sufficient dividends in terms of their contribution.**

- **Overcoming technical 'bottle-necks' (e.g. in the past, only certain volunteers had the skills to actually update the site.)**

What would do differently:

- **Would have put all their data into a database from the outset (it has been a huge amount of work to do this retrospectively.)**

- **Advice would give others starting a similar project**

- **It is important to develop a range of effective techniques to elicit online contributions. In particular, follow up, comment on and publish contributions as quickly as possible. This encourages people to send in further material and to develop a long term relationship with the site. When a new contributor makes contact with the website it is important to respond quickly, expressing interest in their contribution – within 24 hours if possible. Showing people a personal, 'human touch' is important.**

- **Give new volunteers a lot of structure and support. Ideally, formalise the agreement about what is expected of, and offered by, both the organisation and the volunteer into a written 'contract.' Starting by asking volunteers to do small, 'bite sized' tasks provides a good way of encouraging them to become more involved. Many volunteers respond best if their contribution is tightly defined and time limited: they feel that they know what they are taking on, and are not going to be overwhelmed with demands they do not feel able to meet.**

- **Start with a bank of material - seed a 'contributory' community heritage website through a partnership with a museum or archive, gaining permission to publish some of the museum's collection within the site as a way of 'starting the ball rolling.'**

- **It is important to start with a vision of where the project is going, and also with a clear plan detailing the actions that need to be taken.**

- **Start with a database – the project is likely surprise you by how big it grows!**

- **Deal with issues around copyright and gaining permissions at the outset.**

ADDRESS, CONTACT DETAILS, REFERENCES AND DOCUMENTS:

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QueenSpark Community Publishers **www.queensparkbooks.org.uk/**

References:

Documents Attached: