The Amazing Pop Up Archives Project

What
This report will focus upon the learning drawn from the ‘Amazing Pop Up Archives Project’ which was developed for and by Derbyshire Record Office (DRO), based in Matlock, Derbyshire. The writing below seeks to highlight key steps and methodologies employed in the process, in order to share the learning and inform and outline potential next steps.

The project resulted in four Pop-Up events, (literally springing up) at various places across the county over a 12 month period.

Why
The aim of the Amazing Pop Up Archives project was to take a taste of the DRO archives out into different and diverse communities in Derbyshire, and in doing so to bring these extraordinary archives to life. The central mission of the project was to engage people, particularly young people and those who may not ever have visited DRO, through employing archival materials from the county’s last 900 years in creative and engaging ways. Ultimately, the work sought to raise awareness of the DRO through using documents and histories drawn from a choice of over 3 million items in the collection, yet tailored-made, rendered bespoke, to each location that the Pop-Up visited. The project was concerned with interpreting and accessing archives but also about collecting stories from the people we met along the way.

Who
Paula Moss (Co-Project Manager) had already built up a strong relationship with the staff and material at DRO through her former role as artist-in-residence (2011-2013). The Pop Up Archives project was created by Paula and DRO Archivist, Karen Millhouse (Co-Project Manager). To develop their vision, they brought together four very experienced creative facilitators, an independent researcher (genealogist) who was familiar with the DRO, students from Highfields secondary school (a Matlock school local to DRO), a lecturer and students from University of Derby, and a project Events Co-ordinator. The creative facilitators were drawn from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds; dance, drama, music and poetry. The project also commissioned a filmmaker and an independent Evaluator.

Before the close of the first planning meeting, and as a result of the team’s delight in wondering literally and metaphorically through the archives, the project team members had been re-branded as Agents of Wonder. Their experience in and mastery of their own specific crafts, matched the Archivist’s knowledge and passion. It was up to these creative facilitators to bring the archives to life supported by the entire project team.

When
The four locations were chosen to provide both a geographical spread and a contrasting range of events. We were always clear that creating pop-ups within existing events would allow resources and energies to be invested in the content and quality of the work rather than the promotion and marketing of brand new events. The first event was at Wirksworth Festival, (September 2016), the second at a car boot sale in Swadlincote (June 2017), the
The Amazing Pop Up Archives Project

third at Ripley Music Festival (July 2017) and the fourth at Gamesley Community Day (August 2017).

How
Letting the archives lead the story?

Bringing together such a range of different practices and personalities and experiences was complex and time consuming. To ensure maximum impact and joint-ownership every step of this project demanded that all those involved in the delivery were given time and space to listen, to really listen, to each other.

Creating a sense of open-ness and intrigue was evident from the very first planning meeting convened and facilitated by Paula and Karen. All of those involved in the planning, delivery, documentation and evaluation were invited to share their backgrounds and experience, inevitably dwelling in and reflecting on their similarities and differences. They were then invited to make a practical link, a personal connection to the DRO archives. Each individual was encouraged to play with the archives from their own unique perspective and interests. Creating a space where-when, with the support of the DRO staff, all those involved in creating, delivering and evaluating the project could find a place where they could choose to start, and thus build ownership and a meaningful connection to the materials was vital. Such a start encouraged us to be intuitive, personal, hands-on, even brave, and was collaborative. This concluded our first training session. In retrospect, this exercise was an absolute mirror of the environment which the project hoped to create for its audience-participants ‘on location.’

Wonderment and wondering.
Finding the spark, choosing an ignition point.
The archives inspired us, but so did the archivists with their experienced-based interjections that confirmed that sometimes the most interesting things are found in the gaps, and in the questions that people bring. As we requested for and were brought the archive materials, the books, newspapers, articles, programmes, and photographs, we were drawn in. They instilled in us the idea of wonderment, of being privy to this extraordinary collection of wonders of Derbyshire, of wondering with purpose, of wonder for its own sake. Wonderment itself became a process, a methodology.

Allowing the Learning to accumulate.
From this initial planning meeting, we developed a framework. This required significant investment in planning (with as many of the team as possible), which in turn allowed for a wide and multi-angled discussion. The process was always careful, never rushed (sometimes slow) as ideas were developed as a team, with the creative facilitators taking the lead on HOW they might bring their own expertise to approach the archives creatively, and indeed to use the archives as inspiration for a creative ‘output.’ We built in at least an hours (facilitated) reflection after every event and before planning the next one. We focussed on what went well, what could be improved, what would we definitely do or not do again. Questions that everyone in the team could engage with. These reflections were designed so

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that every member of the team had a say, as equal voice as possible. Their responses were gathered through employing strategies that foregrounded individual reflection and collective discussion, allowing time for quiet, sometimes silent reflection, before each member of the team shared their thoughts through written or spoken words.

Each Pop Up took place at a very different event, in a very different context, so each one had to be specifically tailored to that place, and draw upon geographically specific content.

Wirksworth
Wirksworth was, in some ways, a reassuring start. Many of the team were familiar with the Arts and Architecture-based festival in the Market Town close to Matlock and DRO and they knew the organisers and spaces. However, it was also full-on, super busy and incredibly hard work installing and striking the site-specific exhibition and participation areas.

We were lucky to have the opportunity to build upon these local relationships, and especially the relationship with the local vicar, placing our loaned tent for the two days on the Vicarage’s large lawn area, which was away from busy roads, yet had great access from a range of busy thoroughfares and gave us the space we needed to carry out our various and numerous activities.

This experience cemented the belief that, with a limited budget, being part of a bigger event, yet having our own space was crucial. The tent was a good size for the place-related documents, a map of the area, card catalogues and of course for the audience-participants and staff, with windows that allowed the light in, yet with the possibility for open sides.

Each creative facilitator was given space and support to create their own place-related connection to the archive. The timetabled activities; story-telling, dance/performance and music workshops took place either in a smaller adjacent tent/gazebo or, in the drier spells, in front of the main tent. The proximity of the two tents was an issue as the performance area felt a little detached from the archive area, and connecting the two seemed crucial philosophically and literally.

We had a captive audience (circa 850), who were very engaged, with many of the audiences returning to the activities and bringing others with them. The event, and our part within it was very well organised, and from the out-set the team-work was excellent. The mix of manager, creative facilitators, archivists, genealogists, historian and students invited a range of ways that the public could engage with the materials. The publicity - the signage, notices and use of certificate (if you contributed your story or piece of history to the project you received a certificate, as an Agent of Wonder, which also acted as an invitation to visit DRO) was strong. The preparation of the place-related archival materials both for the main tent and as stimuli for the creative experiences was excellent. Timetabling the creative activities was useful but the detailed structure also needed to allow a great deal of scope for flexibility.
The Amazing Pop Up Archives Project

However, the set up and take down was arduous, relying on too few people. The tents needed to provide better cover for the wet weather conditions and be more firmly secured! The spilling over of people and practices is important, and the separation of the practices was not helpful.

Preparing/researching for activities in all of the areas was very good and well supported BUT it took a considerable amount of time. We had not yet really worked out how the interns, from The University of Derby, could support this. Developing a more meaningful, relationship to the interns was crucial and we were still searching for a better mechanism for follow up day/s, to lead people back to DRO.

A Creative Facilitators reflection upon the Wirksworth Pop-Up Event

Maria Whatton – story-teller

I thought the performances were vital and brought the documents, the written materials to life. I think this is something we definitely need to have at every event, some form of live, creative work – performance, making, an interactive element.

The letters from the archive, from ladies maid Elizabeth Winchester in the Chatsworth household that I was using were very engaging both for me and the audiences. In terms of preparation I felt like I could have gone on and on discovering many, many artefacts and documents etc. so I am very grateful to the archive team who helped me with Elizabeth’s letters and background. I feel that the letters are a goldmine of information and are perfect for this project. I definitely want to develop Mrs Winchester and would love to get a couple of props in terms of costume to delineate the character further.

I felt I needed to put the character in the context of her family and time, so I ended up reading about eighteenth century lead mining, Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire, her life, the monarchy and general Georgian Britain. I loved doing this. It is very time consuming, but I think it’s vital.

I’m glad I did that preparation because the public asked questions of me as though I were an expert. Fortunately, I was able to answer them. It was a great opportunity though to be able to point the public in the direction of the archive for further study and research.

Sometimes the archive area was packed, particularly later on Sunday and that must have been exhausting for the staff who were there all the time. The interactive map idea was good and definitely engaged people but so many people added to it that I don’t know whether that was getting a bit messy towards the end?

Our dancers’ treasure hunt worked really well because it definitely catered for the younger participants and there were plenty of families. The music attracted people to the performance areas. The work showed how the archive material could be used as a spring board for creativity and creative engagement.
Swadlincote
The context, a car-boot sale on the Derbyshire/Leicestershire border, was a very different set up and experience, yet it was perhaps closest to the original idea, to take the archives out to a critical mass of people, who lived a good distance away from DRO and Matlock. Such an event necessitated very different strategies, most notably the team had to move out into and through the crowds, often gathered around or near singular stalls, in order to draw in peoples’ curiosity and invite them to the archival material.

We acted upon the Wirksworth reflections in a number of ways. Firstly, Gazebos had now been purchased specifically for the events, and they proved to be a good buy. They improved the space created, delineating distinct areas through their bright colours, yet clearly connected the activities, alongside the use of one of the creative facilitator’s camper van. The set up was much smoother, thanks to the overnight campers from the team and the take down was much more efficient, with an all hands on deck approach.

Communication with the site/event was clear, and once again the events manager provided a very workable and highly ‘flexible’ timetable. As the event progressed we moved further and further away from the timed events as these didn’t seem to be connecting with our audiences’ rhythms. We built on many of the strategies used at Wirksworth, but the content was absolutely bespoke to Swadlincote. The idea of an interactive map was kept, which allowed our creative facilitators to tease out stories from the public, whilst they were engaged in finding personal connections on the map. The roaming, actively drumming up audiences, worked well and led to the feeling of a much more spontaneous, yet quality engagement with the public. The research related to the area, and now with much more involvement from the students and interns, was really rich and provided inspiration for the creative outputs. Amongst many other outputs Matt Black, the project’s poet, created a site-specific poem.

An Interns reflection on Swadlincote
I have enjoyed working with the archives and learning more about the county of Derbyshire. I have found a wider variety of sources than I thought would be there. I have also realised that the creative outlet for archives can be a useful and more engaging way to help archives be related to the public. I found it helpful to bounce ideas for research in between myself, other researchers and the creative team. This helped me to find a wide variety of sources, especially ones that could be creatively interpreted. I found encouraging the public to find interest in the archives I chose to take along to the event challenging. The only one I chose that most people appeared interested in was the Joshua Reynolds engraving. I felt that the creative interpretation of archives was a good way to allow others to understand what archives are and how it may relate to them.

The audience at the car boot was challenging. Their participation involved the more visual things involved at the pop up event. This largely included the map and their own stories. Participating in this way was useful for the more creative part of the event. I felt a little disappointed when not many people were engaging with the written archives that were
provided. However, I feel that this can be a thing to take forward as a thing to make a positive change with for further events.

Ripley
At Ripley, we were a small part of the well-established Ripley Music festival. By now the team work, the construction and deconstruction of the set was very intuitive. With more people helping the set up, and because we now understood and knew the set up, everybody could contribute and allow the DRO material to find their most appropriate and functional space. Once again the archive material used on site to engage the audience was very relevant and bespoke. The depth of the pre-work has a definite and tangible impact, with some excellent (stand-alone) creative work produced from the archival material.

Both the maps and the specific use of index cards to gather peoples’ stories and histories worked well. In addition, The Absent Voters Electoral Register (which listed the names of local soldiers serving overseas during the First World War), drew local interest. Asking people for a geographically based personal memory worked really well and led to really good quality of engagement and personal input.

Once again, the specificity of the event, with a central ‘music stage’ taught the team valuable lessons. Building on the experiences of Swadlincote, at Ripley going out into the crowd became even more necessary, as we began to really understand the need to go to your audience. However, we were positioned right at the back of the field, and there was not much time in-between the scheduled music performances when people were all facing the central ‘gig stage’ with their gaze directed to that and away from our activities. However, the stage was also an unexpected bonus when we were given ‘mic time’ to promote the project.

A position at the side might have been better, and in retrospect we needed to be even more fluid in our timetabling of our performances in relationship to an ever-shifting music festival programme. Trying to perform our archive-related stories and songs against the sound coming through loudspeakers was challenging.

The quality of interaction with the public at Ripley was very good. When people stayed, they stayed for longer and worked in more depth and the audience response was very positive. There was a real feeling of the team knowing their place, their roles and feeling part of a community. Once again, the organisers seemed keen to invite us back, and felt that the relationships and content had worked for them.

A students’ reflection on Ripley
As an individual, I have learnt a great deal about the history of a certain area, ones that I didn’t know existed or I have been to. I have learnt how to talk to people on a level that is okay and with a sense of understanding. We had to keep them engaged in a range of different things, you can’t keep a child occupied with the same things that you can keep an adult occupied with. You have to have something that makes your participants want to keep looking, a connection to a family member or friend, or objects that catch the eye.
The Amazing Pop Up Archives Project

Gamesley
The Gamesley event, a long-established gathering, had a real community feel. The event took place near to a shopping area, and the row of shops, close to where our tents were situated, included a very popular café, which had clearly become a vital part of the community. Our musician seized the opportunity to engage with the customers and staff, and performed a song he had written, once again made bespoke to the specific area, another example of us adapting to the very specific context we found ourselves in.

It is remarkable how different the four different events have been. Wirksworth was so tightly planned and structured, by the time we got to Gamesley, near Glossop, we were much more responsive to our audience and could be more flexible with plans for the event.

However, the pre-work was just as detailed, and the pre-work, as in the other events, was crucial. Any visitor to this Pop Up would have seen an exciting, vibrant group of people, and our stall had a very different energy from many of the other stalls there. If you find the rich material, and so much of it is rich, then it is about but the ability of the team to gently coax and invite your audiences in.

By Gamesley, we had come to understand that this work was really and truly about our ability to develop relationships through history. Furthermore, that the individual participants’ connection to the specific materials and documents is so important, and that the different activities provide a range of access points into these histories.

The luxury of working as a larger group has demanded considerable time, but it has also created many more opportunities. So many voices gave rise to so many options and this in turn has enabled so many variations. Teasing peoples’ histories out takes time, and we were able to give them that time to listen.

What have we learnt as individuals?

Emily Atkin: Student Volunteer
I think I have learned to take things as they come, if there are any problems work them out as you go, from engaging with people to set up as well as adapting to the environment as each event was different from the last.

Wirksworth had a constant flow of people who seemed to come in waves, in which I had to develop my multitasking skills of eating and talking to people. This was also the one that put me in a position to push forward to the other events, as in the beginning I was unsure of what the project was going to entail and how it was going to go, yet being at Wirksworth with a bunch of great people that I never would have spoken to before this really inspired me. Ripley was a great event to show what we could improve on as we had to compete with whatever was on the stage, which people came to see. Finally, with Gamesley it was a good
way to wrap up everything, as an individual I learnt that making connection with wherever you are is a good thing, engaging/meeting people to show that their history does matter. Finally, I also learnt that I have a voice to speak out with, as a person that doesn’t like speaking out in front of crowds and groups of people, it boosted my confidence to do that. And with being the only one who came from sixth form to stick with it, in a room full of adults that I didn’t really know, didn’t raise my hopes but overall, my expectations changed and I have learnt a lot from this experience.

Kristian Barron: Student Intern
What became most apparent to me after my first pop up event at the car boot was that you need to have a range of materials that can be engaged with at different levels by people; visually, aesthetically, historically, and socially etc. and that as a team we are there to facilitate in whatever shape or form that may be.

I have learnt not to labour endlessly over the archive materials and local studies sources that I would choose to take to the events and instead let the materials and the ability of the team speak for them. In learning from the mixed and sometimes un-interested public at the car boot, I realised at Ripley Music Festival that as an individual the vital point in gaining people’s attention was to make a connection through a conversation and allow them to interact with the materials freely and on whatever level they desired. Once you had their attention you could then find a way in to their own personal history or feelings about the pop up idea, and at that point when they were more relaxed, if you asked them for a little story about themselves individuals would often open up and share a thought, an idea, or a memory connected to the place or the people of Ripley.

Matt Black: Creative Facilitator
I’ve understood much more about the richness of the archives, and the huge range of ways and levels in which different people (not just creative facilitators) can be engaged by them. From apparently light and easy, to much more significant and deeper levels. It also has felt as if the transition between light and easy, and significant and deeper, is hard to measure or predict how or when it might happen – a switch can be flicked in a moment, for very unpredictable reasons, between an apparently light conversation about where a road used to be, to a strong family memory, a flash of identity, or a realisation of change and difference. This can lead to a very different level of interaction and conversation. This seems immeasurable, and difficult to predict, but the integrity of offering resources and stimulation that is local and close to people’s real and tangible histories, and hearts, is a big factor in this.

I’ve learnt the fantastic value of team work, and of how a set of different characters, with different skill-sets and personalities, can all contribute in different and very valuable ways to a project, but also about how we all contribute ourselves so strongly, so that for members of the public there is a very rich variety of people to find ways of connection through – and that is a real resource, which means that having a large team like this has many layers of added value. I’ve learnt about the importance of thinking fast on our feet about how an
The Amazing Pop Up Archives Project

event is developing, how the public is responding, and how we might adjust what we are
doing to fit any particular set of circumstances.
I’ve learnt about the importance of plenty of planning time – our initial planning meetings
were crucial in developing, exploring, thinking through and refining what we might do with
people. We also learnt new ways of working along the way which were important, and we
became more adept at being flexible to different circumstances. I suspect that before the
project began I thought we would develop a more fixed travelling roadshow, if you like, not
so tailored to such different contexts.

Danielle Burton: Student Intern
Before starting the project, I didn’t really know much about archives because I hadn’t used
one before. I knew that it they were something I wanted to use in the future and so I
decided to apply for the project. The expectations I had was of a slightly stuffy room where
historians study old documents, which I thought was the main reason people didn’t want to
use them or even know what one was. This wasn’t the case and I have since found it a more
creative place where I have been able to think more creatively about interpretation of
themes and to think more about ordinary people, not just the big history I’ve been used to.
I also didn’t really know how well the idea of mixing people from so many backgrounds
would work to help interpret archives. As I have had little experience of working with
creative facilitators in the past, I was unsure how I would deal with them in terms of the
history and archives involved. However, I now believe that the team worked together
fantastically and it has allowed me to be more open minded and appreciate the different
skills people have more than I had done previously.

The project has helped me learn that archives are relatable to all people, not just historians
such as myself, as they are useful tools for finding snippets of information on the lives of
ordinary people from the local area. It has made me appreciate how difficult it is to engage
the public with history but I have enjoyed the challenge as it has allowed me to pass on my
passion to others who were involved in the project, as well as the public who attended the
events. It also helped me to represent the project at a local creative history conference and
to be proud of what the team has produced together.

Julian Butt: Creative Facilitator
This work has extended my collaboration with other creative facilitators and developed
pieces of new exciting original work that I had no idea about or preconceived idea of
before.

I usually work with young people, this project has been a change in that I have worked with
older audiences and participants and developed new skills. Working with the Record Office
has been really interesting, I had some experience of this before but not at the level
developed through this project.

Debi Hedderwick: Creative Facilitator
My expectation previous to starting the practical work of the project was that I would be
employing more of my usual skills and work experience (i.e creative movement and

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performing arts) in my interactions with the participants.

Working firmly outside of your known experience and strengths is fairly nerve-racking, but facing the new challenges and using new approaches, thinking on your feet and responding creatively to need, is a positive learning experience. I found that, as in Creative Mentoring experiences, I had more in the realms of art, craft, writing etc. to offer than I previously thought! Transferring my own creative skills to positive effect was an enlivening experience.

Although the street theatre personal interaction (in character) with potential customers who are really not expecting it, was nerve-racking in anticipation, it was well worth it in terms of positive reaction and response, and a good deal less intimidating once you’re in role and going for it!! It was interesting to see how well it engaged people in at least visiting the Pop Up arena!

In comparison to my more usual emphasis on large themes, society’s underlying narratives, the attention to intimate and personal community and family history is hugely attractive to people and important to them. Having grown up with parents who deliberately tried to “move on”, and don’t show specific interest in their own family history and personal stories, the extent to which people found the small and personal details of family history not only of great interest but even hugely moving was fascinating and, in turn, moving, for me.

Before the project I had heard of DRO, but it hadn’t really caught my interest. I think I thought it would be a rather dry and uninteresting collection of “records”. I have learnt that DRO provides an absolutely fascinating, rich, deep, relevant, varied and wide reaching resource of life in Derbyshire, including through many centuries and throughout the varied strata and groupings of society and Derbyshire’s communities. I have also learnt how well versed, experienced and helpful the DRO staff are helping to find the information, documents, stories etc. that people are interested in.

Karen Millhouse: Archivist & Project Manager
I have learnt to think more freely. To abandon (to some extent!) what you know so that your creative side can take the lead. I might know what this or that document is, why it was created, the history behind it, but what might it mean to someone seeing it for the first time? What do they see? Possibly something completely different to what I see.

I have learnt to let the archives speak for themselves, they may ‘say’ something different to whoever looks at them, which can be the magic and wonder of them. I have learnt that a tiny element can spark imagination and creativity. I am excited to see what amazing work we as a service can do in the future and it’s thanks to working with such an inspirational, creative bunch of people that I feel this way.

I found that I had complete confidence in all members of the project team – I could let the creative facilitators loose to be creative with whatever had inspired them and not worry, but rather be excited, about what was to come back. I have never been a control freak but having this confidence was liberating and enabled me concentrate on project management.

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The Amazing Pop Up Archives Project

**Paula Moss: Project Manager**
Of course, I’ve learnt loads of things. Some of them are ‘re-learns.’ We couldn’t have done what we did and so well without the breadth of experience and individual skills of each team member and that getting that team right was everything.

I learnt that it’s ok to be over ambitious with ideas. With such a great range of expertise and commitment, eventually they get boiled down into some magical thing that you can actually, practically deliver! I relearnt that reflective planning, especially in such a large team, is such a brilliant thing and that for a project like ours, where were are designing it as we move through it, it really does work. I’m so glad we decided to build in flexibility to the project, that was our creative ‘magic trick up our sleeve’

**Wendy Johnson: Events Coordinator**
The team worked really well together and despite initially not feeling confident how my role worked within the team, I became more confident regarding which areas I should focus on to enable the other members to carry out their roles.

I meticulously documented the planning for the first event. I wasn’t sure if the information was overload, but as each event happened I became confident that this supported the creative facilitators to concentrate on their creative input and collaboration. I felt I kept an overview of what needed doing and who was doing it.

However, I was worried that there was a large amount of preparation for Karen (Millhouse) some of the systems and procedures within Derbyshire County Council meant that Karen was the only one who could prepare/ organise certain things. I found this difficult, however I felt with each event I became clearer on what I was and wasn’t able to be responsible for. I think that the relationships built and the way we worked was very supportive. However, there are questions I could have asked from the onset. I have learnt that getting an understanding of the organization’s procedures can really influence the planning and gives clarity of what is possible.

I had to remind myself to focus on nuts and bolts and think of practical needs when discussing the events, it was easy for me to slip into creative ideas when this was not really my role. However, my understanding of the creative process and having an overview of the rational was incredibly useful, I think being excited and feeling part of the creative process really helped me to be able to plan and communicate with the venues.

**Maria Whatton: Creative Facilitator**
I have learnt some new aspects of history that I was unaware of. I had a stereotyped view of what a female servant to a Lady in the eighteenth century would be like. In researching Elizabeth Winchester, having read her letters, I began to realise that these women were often educated and of “good” background. The letters helped me to see the person rather than have an abstract notion of a “servant.”
Similarly, I had never come across the “Pentrich Revolution.” I learnt a lot about that part of Georgian history because of this project, especially relating to the working class. It was fantastic to be able to connect up the event with other historical happenings at that time (Mary Shelley writing Frankenstein, for example). So in terms of my own knowledge Pop Up has helped extend and deepen my understanding of historical events.

I have learnt what a massively valuable resource the archive is to go and find great stories – which is a golden bonus as a Storyteller.

In terms of working as a creative facilitator this project has increased my understanding of how important the team you work with are. The collaborative element of such projects has always been a draw for me. I seize the opportunity when I can because I often work alone.

On this particular project the team have been especially cohesive and supportive. I think that has been one of its strengths and I appreciate Paula Moss’s ability to pull that team together. I have appreciated that the people involved are very talented, so always come up with imaginative ideas which are rolled around in our meetings until we discover what will work best. I have also learnt how important meetings are to negotiate and explore ideas fully as well as being reflective on what works and what doesn’t.

All the creative facilitators involved were willing to improvise on the spot which we have had to do at certain events and this has not only been fun, but produced some exciting unexpected outcomes. Not all creative facilitators are able to be that flexible!

**What have we learnt about engaging audiences?**

**Emily Atkin**

Every audience is different. To engage adults is different to engaging children, and overall, I believe that we did try to facilitate for everyone’s interest with the crafts for the children and books and documents for the adults. However, to do this again there would have to be some changes in where the tents are positioned so there isn’t a competition between us and something else happening (Ripley).

Having the different elements that the creative facilitators brought from storytelling, poems, characters and songs made it something different. It wasn’t just an event where there was just some information that people read but instead it was interactive for the audiences. I think the best thing was that no one took charge of a particular event like first planned, instead it gelled together to create a group of creative people, who brought attention to what we were showing.

**Danielle Burton**

I found this was the most challenging aspect of the project because of the Swadlincote car boot, where some of the visitors weren’t that interested in what documents we had to present. However, even at this event there were people interested who I would never have
The Amazing Pop Up Archives Project

thought would be, such as the Romanian family who were still fairly new to the area and were interested to learn about its history. It was good to have different ways of engaging people as they weren’t at the events specifically to come and view archives, so it helped to think about the reasons why people were there before trying to engage them.

Kristian Barron
I have learnt that in engaging audiences in the archives you have to have a very fluid approach and almost take a back seat at events, in the sense that the question I was asked frequently when people first approached me was, ‘what’s this all for then?’ and quite often you have to explain a little bit about the project and the team and break down that initial barrier. On many occasions I sensed that people didn’t particularly place much value or importance in their own stories or connection to a place like Ripley, and it was very pleasing to see that after a bit of coaxing people would open up and engage with the material often in unexpected ways.

I learnt that as a member of the team I am purely there as a facilitator and this became apparent when a lady took interest in the old Ripley Festival magazines, the ‘RIP’. The lady sparked the conversation by admiring the design and bold colours of the pages and after a few leading questions she began to talk about how she used to work on cruise ships as a dancer in the 60’s and 70’s and how she eventually settled for a while in Derbyshire with her husband to start a family. That particular lady and conversation showed me that if I stepped back and let the individuals feel comfortable in engaging and expressing themselves the input was much greater than if I had just talked about the object itself, it made me realise the importance of a tactful and sensitive approach to engaging with our future audiences.

Matt Black
It’s the strongest single project experience I’ve ever had of different audiences needing such different approaches. Some audiences need things to look at and provoke conversations and questions, others are drawn to clearer “activities” which then may lead to questions and conversations. I’ve also learnt that I think we could possibly, in planning, question still more closely the likely nature of an audience, and if we are doing a Pop-Up at an event where they are there for another reason. We could possibly imagine and visualise into that scenario more, to inform what we plan to do. I’ve learnt that some people in audiences like to browse, to be left alone, to be given complete freedom, others want to be wanted, to be given a reason, to be given a job to do, to be asked to do a favour.

I’ve learnt that we have to be resilient when working with audiences that aren’t expecting us to be there – we have to keep being flexible, and finding ways of making it happen. I’ve been reminded that creative material inspired by the local culture and history, and the more local the better, is a fantastic way of connecting to people.

Julian Butt
The ‘Pop Up’ experience has been interesting and the need to adapt and change it at each event was intriguing. It was ‘necessary to think on our feet’ and the team did really well in
The Amazing Pop Up Archives Project

this aspect of the work. It was interesting to see the differing techniques of audience engagement used by both the creative facilitators and the records office and I have used some of the ideas in other work, e.g. in working with Matt on his Storm Officer project and talking to audiences. The public responded well to the creative process and inspired some fantastic new work.

Debi Hedderwick
One of the most important learnings in engaging audiences was “the angel is in the detail.” The more personally relevant, intimate, pertinent to a specific community, locality, family experience, the more it is likely to interest and inspire participants. It was moving to see people respond and be moved by the emerging details of their own family history.

The mixture and range of activity on offer, including participatory and creative arts work, practical support with researching, browsing (both with support and on their own), and exploring / discovering, was ideal for suiting the diverse age and range of people attracted to the Pop Up arena.

All the specific skills and approaches offered by the team were used (and more) and the power of the offer was in the diversity and range of the professionals involved. It was a wonderful, talented, committed and fun team to work with and I felt privileged to be part of it.

The positioning of the Pop Up arena compared to the main activity of the event is vital in order to create and sustain interest - I am mainly thinking of the Ripley Music Festival set up during which the audience was sitting (enjoying the music) with their backs to the Pop Up stall - this made it much harder to stimulate interest.

A social pedagogy approach, for example, engaging collaboratively in an undemanding activity (e.g. colouring) is a very positive way of building interest and then leading that interest forward into the main topic (taking an interest in the records on offer). It was very interesting to me that this would work so well even in a very public arena in which there were many other activities to be distracted by.

Karen Millhouse
I now have a more fluid approach to engagement. The people who engage with you will bring their own dynamic – they may take the event in a way you didn’t expect or plan, but that can be exciting for everyone! One significant point which I have learnt is the importance of having levels of access for the public. Having different ways for people to engage in the same event has worked so incredibly well for Pop Up, it made our events all inclusive!

I have learnt the value of reflection. Reflection has been part of all projects I have worked on but I have never seen it work so well and been so crucial throughout the project. Evaluating to better and adapt our approach was a key part of the project’s success. I have
The Amazing Pop Up Archives Project

learnt the importance of being open to change and adapting a project. The project was about people and for the people we met so why shouldn’t it change in response to them?

Paula Moss
That if you’re working with those who don’t normally engage, that we have to employ everything in our creative reservoir to draw them in and that more often than not they come if their children do! Offering ‘site relevant’ materials and a number of ways in allowed us to make connections, draw people in and be as creative as we could in our interpretation with our documents etc.

The importance of reflective planning was crucial - allowing us to tailor each event to the nature of the community and their audience who would be there. It has really been all about developing relationships - from within the team itself, to our relationship with the archives, to ours with the organisers and then the audiences on the day. Applying my mantra of ‘you matter, we mind’ paid dividends.

Wendy Johnson
I was amazed at how powerful the stories and connections were - and whilst I new this from other work I really loved observing the personal responses and recognising the way in which we were delivering the opportunity to connect was enabling people to engage. It made the planning process which we had worked through essential to the success, including our in depth considerations around presentation of information and things to look at, creative interactions, practicalities, relevance to audience and event, layout of space and signage. Whilst we recognised some things hadn’t worked, the process we had gone through allowed us to change and respond both on the day and planning the other events.

Understanding the various ways we wanted people to engage grew, I felt we got more relaxed about timings and predicting how people would engage, each event was different and responding in the moment became essential. Seeing the impact of the gentle gathering of people - eg Debi as the lady gatherer (at each event slowly building a relationship with the younger ones), Matt chatting to people and collecting stories, Julian’s music drawing peoples attention and Maria finding opportunities to offer a story and bring theirs to life.

Each event seemed to build up some sort of special moment and capturing this through film is really important to the legacy as well as an offering to the people afterwards, this could be a great opportunity to reconnect and do some follow on work. Looking out for spontaneous moments and opportunities became easier as we learnt from each event. We became better at making the personal relevance a focal point.

Having the experts there (archivist, historian, genealogist) was really important, we were able to gather the interest but facts and knowledge were needed. It was so good to pull on the archivist and researchers findings and knowledge of what certain information told us. The planning session discussions helped, along with each event briefing of what documents were was essential for me as I was at the event and interacting, but had not looked at any of the documents or researched to the extent of the creative facilitators.

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Maria Whatton
I have learnt that with outdoor events you have to be completely flexible and sometimes lay aside hard work that you have spent ages on for the better good. For example when working on material for the Ripley Music Festival event, Julian, Matt and I had created a 15 minute performance which was quite a sensitive piece of work. Although we did manage to perform it to a small group of people, it was overshadowed by the noise from the main stage in the field. We decided not to repeat it. We laid it aside and Matt and I felt it better to go and mingle with the crowds and collect stories instead. This was much more appropriate for this setting.

I had no sense that this was wasted work. Quite the opposite. I knew that this piece of work should be performed again at a more appropriate venue (where there would be a quiet, attentive audience). In this way we can continue to advertise DRO to people beyond the framework of this project.

I have also learnt that there are a variety of ways to engage audiences. We have used our own networks (i.e. some of the creative facilitators have highlighted events in the schools, scout groups etc. we are already working in, with the help of Wendy and Paula creating digital posters). I have also learnt that using props and visual aids can attract audiences but that the main way to engage is to go and talk to people and gently get them involved. Having printed art frames, heraldic shields, maps and story tags etc. are a brilliant way to get people involved. I have found myself acting as an amanuensis so that those who don’t want to write still get their story captured and documented.

Where does this lead us? What expectations do we have for the future?

Emily Atkin
I hope that this will develop and move forward, involving more people, maybe expanding it into schools. I’d love to develop more into the research of Derbyshire as some of what I have learnt over this period was fascinating and I enjoyed speaking about it to people who didn’t know about it either. I think it would be good to develop connections with the places that were visited, get them more involved in what their community was founded on and its past, to collect more stories.

I didn’t really have many expectations when this started, I didn’t know what to expect as it wasn’t really explained much when announced at school but overall it has gone above what I expected, it can move in many different directions now that it has ended.

Danielle Burton
This has led me to make the choice of doing a Public History and Heritage MA, with the hopes of possibly going into a career related to archives or collections in some way. I also believe that the project itself has helped to raise the profile of the Record Office in the local
area and to prove its relevance to the community. It will also help to engage the public with
the history of where they live. If a follow up project is developed I would definitely like to be
involved as I have enjoyed my experience and I feel it has helped me understand how
people can engage with history.
A good area for a follow up project would involve schools and or universities/colleges as the
project saw a desire in that age range to learn about archives and history in this way. For the
dissertation of my MA in Public History and Heritage, I have decided to continue the theme
of archives and outreach. I hope to use the project as a case study for it. I also feel that
similar projects and continued outreach would be a good way to engage the public and to
help maintain a relationship with them.

My expectations have changed as to how many people actually use the archive service. I
was able to encounter many visitors who were intrigued to see what I was researching and
even asked for advice in their own research skills. I was also surprised how far people
travelled to use our service when I met an American couple who had made a special holiday
to Derbyshire to research their family trees.

The greatest way my expectations have changed is that I have now learnt that people you
least expect to become involved in such projects may actually be the ones who are the most
interested.

Kristian Barron
I think the project now needs to keep its momentum up and hopefully begin to spread its
roots into the schools and colleges of Derbyshire, with a focus on facilitating a
contemporary environment that shows the connection between archives, children, and the
educational benefits that further both practical and creative learning.

In terms of the Pop Up’s live events I would like to see the project seeking out wider
communities and engaging with a broader and ultimately truer reflection of Derbyshire’s
demographics, this is where the potential to work in schools around the area would be
invaluable and I hope that this would provide the record office with an opportunity to widen
their collection as well as have it challenged and questioned by new generations of children
and the wider public.

I think this leads the project to take on Karen’s proposal of now taking our Pop Up into
schools and engaging directly with a younger audience. And I hope that this next path for
the project will teach children the importance of being open minded to their local history
and give them the confidence to talk freely about social history and what it means to them. I
also hope that there is the potential for an integrated program of education that facilitates
the teaching of practical skills and inspires individuals to take on further independent
research into areas such as social care, design and art, engineering etc. (a wide sweeping
idea I know).

As an individual this project has taught me a lot of practical skills and a good deal of
research skills, and undoubtedly I have tried to soak up every bit of knowledge and wisdom

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from each team member which has played a big part in helping me get a job at the V&A museum in London which I started in January 2018.

**Matt Black**
I’d love to do more Pop-Ups, I think they have been brilliant, and overall very successful. It would seem a fantastic opportunity to learn from what we have done and to take this forward to a Phase Two. These have been inspiring and testament to a fabulous team. I’d also love to develop the Ripley piece that was started with Julian and Maria, if we found an opportunity.

I also love working with this team, and even if there wasn’t a Phase Two of this project, I’d love for us all to work together again. I love the planning sessions, evolving our way towards solutions for very interesting challenges. I love the idea that we already are a creative interpretations company for occasional challenging community engagement projects. It’s redefined in my mind what Pop Up can be as well, which has always felt very light touch and fixed. In my mind we are Pop Up and Bespoke...

**Julian Butt**
I think the work could have a valued follow up. All the areas we worked in were keen for more and it would be good to extend the practice to other areas of Derbyshire. I think the model of creative facilitators working with the record office was really interesting and it could be extended to other creative forms and facilitators. I think the original idea of having a key creative practitioner at each project did not work out and as a result most people were at every event. This was largely due to enthusiasm but it meant that the amount of planning meetings was more than I expected.

**Debi Hedderwick**
It would be very interesting to continue to research into and deliver to further areas of Derbyshire and beyond. I think each and every different area would offer different and new approaches according to the specific histories and materials pertinent to the locality; but there would also be approaches that we have found to be successful that could be reinvented for different environments (in my case The Children’s Treasure Hunt - from Wirksworth; the Lady Gatherer - from Swadlincote as an audience warm up....).

My expectation is currently that, given sufficient source resources, we have the team experience, combination of skills, enthusiasm and positivity to create many more Pop Ups! I would be very keen to be involved as a team member in future developments of the project. It has been a fascinating and fun project to be involved in, and one that has presented new professional experiences and learning for me. An “Agent of Wonder” is a great thing to aim to be!

**Karen Millhouse**
I’d like to continue to work on the idea of how important the, for want of a better word, ‘smaller’ pieces of history are – those very personal snippets which people often think not
The Amazing Pop Up Archives Project  

worthy to be added to an archive. I’d like to continue encouraging, and sometimes convincing, people that their history is vitally important and valuable and deserves a place in the archival history of the county. I suppose it’s the really personal stories which bring a history to life and enable others to identify. We all have those stories, recollections, anecdotes and those, however small or inconsequential people think them to be (and we have experienced that feeling at our events) have the power to resonate with others and so engage them with the importance of their own history, with their community or with our collections.

I’d like to take this project into schools, having been inspired by the small amount of pre-work evidence (which was never actually in the project plan); to work with school children, children in care homes and special needs schools. I’d like to see what amazing things could come out of doing a Pop Up project with them. I have no doubt that we could do some amazing work together – learning from each other.

**Paula Moss**
My expectations of what the project could actually deliver carried on growing throughout the year. Moving forward I hope this Pop Up leads to another more developed one in the future. It’s been a truly rich and inspiring experience.

It was also quite physically hard sometimes getting there and setting up/taking down especially for the first event at Wirksworth. I thought it was a challenge to get participants to follow up with a visit to the DRO.

I was genuinely surprised at the depth of engagement and discussion that happened around the archive material we presented. I was amazed at the stamina of some young people who came and stayed with us - all day in a couple of cases! I have also been surprised by the keenness of all the venues to want us to come back!

The team has made all the difference in this project - something wonderful and unforgettable.

**Wendy Johnson**
I was really impressed at the evidence that the pre-work with schools brought people to the stand and also deepened their interaction. I felt this would not only be relevant for school age, but also interventions to interact with adults could support engagement. eg as simple as a visit to the cafe at Gamesley - however this example is a little chicken and egg as it is only at the event that the opportunities have been seen or have become viable.

The Chair of the Wirksworth Festival has recently said that she really had hoped we would come back this year and that the response had been incredible. She said that many said it was the best thing at the Festival last year. She told me that in 2018 the Parish rooms have received a grant, and as part of that they want to focus on the history of Wirksworth and industries. She suggested it would be great to connect in some way.

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Maria Whatton
I think I’d like to capitalise on the creative output produced. There has been a lot of writing during this project which lends itself to being curated, and explored further. At times it has been frustrating because I have spent a lot of time researching, developing and rehearsing for these Pop Up events and the event itself is limited. Each event has had a stimulus of very different material, and then we have moved on. I would definitely like more time to capitalise on the fruits of our research and be given more time to interpret the source material, polish it up and bring it to further audiences. I would love to work with the archivists and other creative facilitators to do that. I feel we have touched the tip of the iceberg but there is a vast amount we have yet to uncover and bring to the public in a variety of ways that have not yet been explored.

Conclusion
The time and care spent in planning and developing the Amazing Pop-Up Archives project has reaped huge rewards for the participants, facilitators and audiences. Building such a creative, flexible and knowledgeable team has been at the core of this project and fundamental to its huge success. Placing reflective praxis at the centre of the work, and as a fundamental driver for change and innovation, has been key. Every part of the project has been approached from a place of curiosity and open-ness - to the archive, to each other and to the very different audiences in each, very diverse, locality. The bespoke creative activities have been thoroughly supported by specific events and project managers with the most careful and sustained attention to detail. The tailor-made, beautifully researched creative outputs could certainly have many more stand-alone outlets, and the team could and should disseminate this work and the methodologies employed to much wider national and international audiences. Developing pre-work with potential participants and audiences of all ages (for example in schools and care homes) local to any future Pop-Ups seems to be a very logical and exciting progression indeed. I feel very privileged to have been involved in such an innovative and inspiring project, and very much hope to be a part of any future extension.