



digital:works

annual report 2023-24

About digital:works



Participation Through Creative Skills

digital:works is an Arts, Education and Heritage organisation which works with local communities, providing training and creative assistance,

to produce oral history-based digital media projects.

We are committed to a participatory approach. Creative digital arts are an exciting way for people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with and learn more about others from their local community – especially if they are the ones shaping and leading the creative process.

Accessible Projects for All

Our commitment to participation means we place great emphasis on inclusivity.

Our projects actively involve people from all corners of the community – be they young or old, visually or hearing impaired, or someone for whom English is not the first language.

The skills required in taking part in our projects do not depend on advanced media literacy or prior experience with digital equipment.

Community Ownership

Our goal with all projects is to encourage and maintain participants' sense of ownership of both the process and the final product. This, we believe, is the guiding principle of true participation work.

Chair's Report

We had three major oral history film projects this year and two podcast projects. Two of the film projects were directly supported by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Firstly, working with the British Film Institute to look at Londoner's history of going to British Holiday camps. The film was broadcast on Together TV to great acclaim and extremely positive feedback. Secondly, an exploration of London's Session Musicians on a project working with Camden and Westminster Archives. This was launched at a packed King's Place in Kings Cross to an audience of over 200 enthusiasts. Our other film project this year was with Wimbledon in Sporting History on their project looking at the role of Greyhound Racing in London with particular focus on Wimbledon Stadium.

The two podcast projects were commissions. One was with Notting Hill Genesis, building on previous work with them on their Every Kinda People project, training a group of their residents to interview tenants and residents of the Bolney Meadow Estate about the role music plays in their lives. The other commission was from Wings of Hope Community Association to train their service users and support them in conducting interviews of owners, workers and customers of 5 different eating establishments in west London to examine how food culture from around the world has affected London.

During the year we also made another application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to join up with Camden and Westminster's Archives again to explore the history of live musicians' work in London's Soho and West End, building on our work looking at London's musical history. This project bid was successful and will be carried out in 2024-25.

Partnerships with Royal Hospital for Neuro-Disability and the Katherine Low Settlement – both looking at important anniversaries for their organisations - will also take place during 2024-25.

So, all in all a very busy year with plenty of positives to look forward to.

Sally Booth, Chair

Review of the Year

digital:works have completed two National Lottery Heritage Funded projects this year, partnered with Wimbledon in Sporting History for the second time and conducted two podcast projects.



Session Stories - An Oral History of London's Session Musicians

With funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, digital-works brought together a group of volunteers interested in local and social history to work alongside Camden Local History and Archives Centre and City of Westminster Archives Centre, to uncover the history and working lives of London's Session Musicians.

We used oral history to explore, record and share the memories and experiences of generations of session musicians, many going back to the 1950s. We looked at the experiences of musicians across the musical spectrum, from rock and pop, to reggae and classical.

We examined the working conditions, the role of the studio, the union, the skills of the job and the creative process of a group of musicians coming together in the studios that were so prevalent in London up to 2010.

The project recorded the memories of 23 session musicians ensuring we got a good mix and spread of experience covering music genres, gender and ethnicity.

The project also explored how the process changed as technology developed in musical instruments, sampling and with computer technology in general. We recruited 12 volunteers who learned about the history through talks and studios tours. They then went through digital-work's oral history training process, learning about the ethical issues as well as technical and practical side of oral history recording and interviewing. A reminiscence group provided the opportunity for the group to meet some session musicians informally before the interviews took place to get an idea of the issues and events that shaped the musicians' lives.

www.sessionstories.org.uk

Hello Campers!

Digital-works has run many projects exploring the history of work in London. In this project we turned to leisure, and more specifically to the holiday camps such as at Pontins and Butlins that London's workers visited in increasing numbers from the 1930s to the 1980s after which their popularity declined in the face of cheap package holidays.

The 1938 "Holidays With Pay Act" was the culmination of a 20 year campaign from Unions and, for the first time, made holidays affordable to working class people. For many, trips to these camps were the first time they had been on holiday, replacing the hop picking or boarding house holidays of their parents' generations. Londoners would flock to sites such as Bognor Regis, Camber Sands and Caister and further afield. In addition to the well known names of Butlins, Pontins and Warners, there were holiday camps run by local authorities as well as trade Unions such as NALGO (now Unison) which still has a site at Croyde Bay in Devon. Caister had a "socialist camp" which opened in 1906 offering cheap holidays to working class people from the East End of London.

People would travel as young men and women, later with their families, and then with children

and grandchildren. These holidays formed a backdrop to their working lives, a highlight of the year. The culture and activities of these camps link to Britain's past, to music hall, the outdoors movement, to socialism and trade unionism. They were a place where Londoners met people from other parts of the country for the first time, mixing in dining halls, bars, singing together, playing sport and dancing. These holidays could also allow women, whether they were housewives or working, a break from housework as many opted for fully catered holidays. They also reflect social change, the growth of mass tourism, of the growing wealth of the working class in London, and the growth of foreign package tourism that led to their decline.

This project used oral history as the primary means to research, record and share this heritage. We trained 12 people in heritage and oral history techniques covering how to develop an oral history project, interview skills and audio recording skills as well as researching and developing themes and questions. They then worked in teams using these skills to conduct and record oral history interviews with 24 people.

www.hellocampers.org.uk





Going to the Dogs

In this project we return to leisure, and more specifically to greyhound racing which Londoners visited in huge numbers from the 1920s to the 1960s after which its popularity slowly declined.

Wimbledon Greyhound stadium opened in 1928 and was home to races until it closed in 2017. Over that time it was of huge importance to many in the local community with races attracting capacity crowds of 25,000 in its heyday in the 1930s and then again in the 1950s and into the 60s. Across the country it was estimated that around 7% of the adult population bet on dogs each week and the huge stadium in White City could fill its 60,000 capacity.

There were 27 different greyhound race tracks in London with only two remaining to serve Londoners, Romford and Crayford. Wimbledon Stadium was the most recent to close and was famous as the home of Mick the Miller and held the Greyhound Derby for over 30 years. The site of the stadium is now occupied by AFC Wimbledon's Cherry Red Records football stadium.

This project used oral history as the primary means to research, record and share this heritage.

We trained 12 people to learn about the heritage and oral history techniques covering how to develop an oral history project, interview skills and audio recording skills as well as researching and developing themes and questions. They then went on to work in teams using these skills to conduct and record oral history interviews with 23 people related to greyhound racing either as owners, trainers, stadium workers, bookies or punters.

The completed film was launched at the stadium to a large and appreciative crowd and is due to be broadcast on Together TV.

www.goingtothedogs.org.uk



Commissions

Every Kinda People 3

In 2020 we were commissioned by Notting Hill Genesis Housing Association to run an oral history podcast project built around how music shaped people's lives. The original intention was to train up some of their residents to conduct the interviews but COVID-19 made that difficult, so we conducted the interviews ourselves. In Spring/Summer 2022 we ran a follow up project and trained 12 of their residents in oral history techniques and supported them when undertaking their interviews. This year we did something similar in training up residents to carry out the interviews but this project's interviewees were tenants or residents from the Bolney Meadow Estate and themes covered included their life on the estate as well as music. The completed podcasts include extracts from the songs/pieces of music chosen by the interviewees and are streamed on MixCloud.



Impact of Food Culture in West London

This year we worked with Wings of Hope Community Association to look at how food culture has changed over the years with the arrival of migrants from around the world. We trained up an inter-generational group from their organisation who developed questions for restaurant owners, staff and customers. They identified various restaurants in west London and interviewed people in situ, capturing their stories and the atmosphere of the restaurants. The restaurants covered cuisine from the Caribbean, Turkey, Sudan, Lebanon and Cyprus. One of the establishments dates back to 1958 and they captured an interview with the founder's son. Four podcasts were produced and uploaded to our podcast channel.



Future Projects

Confirmed projects for 2024/25 include a partnership with Camden and Westminster Archives to study live music in London's West End and a project with the Katherine Low Settlement, an important community hub in Battersea, to train their volunteers to conduct an oral history of their work over the last 100 years.

Financial Report

The independent examination covered the year 6th April 2023 to 5th April 2024.

Our total income for the period was £109,801 [£116,034] made up mainly from Restricted Funds (successful funding applications) consisting of £89,701 [£102,134] accounted for mainly by the Kings Cross Rail Workers, Hello Campers and Session Musicians projects. Designated Income (commissions) amounted to £18,000 [£9,850]. The balance is made up from voluntary and management fees.

Our total expenditure to date is £106,413 [£136,813] which has mostly been spent directly on costs relating to the HLF funded projects £89,459 [£109,544], the commissions £10,900 [£22,850] and governance costs of £6,054 [£4,419] which includes insurance costs and accountancy fees.

The difference between income and expenditure over the year can be accounted for by projects being funded in one financial year while expenditure takes place in another.

We have no fixed assets as yet so are not affected by depreciation. We have no current liabilities.

Please contact us by email if you would like a copy of the full accounts.

[Last year's figures in brackets]

Trustees

Sally Booth (Chair)

David Rogers (Treasurer)

Eshan Puri

Maya Gottlieb

Chris Conway

Workers

Sav Kyriacou

Matthew Rosenberg

Jonathan Buckley



Project volunteers visit to Butlins, Bognor Regis

digital-works 
documenting life-stories through creative participation

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