

Intergenerational Learning and the Spirit of a Place

The CER Local Case Study Report (PDF) The CER case study has three strands:

- Government agencies consulting with the general public
- A community museum which hosts educational trips

- A community music group All three strands are concerned with landscape and community in North Wales, but they are different with respect to the nature of the public space they use, their approaches to intergenerationality and their use of ICT. The Countryside Commission for Wales (CCW) and Forestry Commission Wales (FCW)

These are government bodies that have a remit to consult the public on issues concerning the environment. At the present time they are consulting the public on the development of two forested areas on the North Wales coast. In this strand the aim was to develop tools and activities for communities to develop their own agenda for their local environment and to develop a shared appreciation of their local environment that is accessible to all. There was a co-design session that brought together the two organisations with experts in visualisation and mobile technology. We looked at, for example, 3D simulations of sensitive environmental locations and handheld devices for recording information about the environment. During the session it became apparent that these government bodies struggle to engage members of the general public, and that they regard the public as discrete, often age-segmented common-interest groups such as birdwatchers, cyclists or property developers. Many of the participants went away with new ideas about how they could engage with members of local communities.. Prosiect Menai, Menai Bridge

The location of the second strand of the case study is Menai Bridge on the island of Anglesey. Prosiect Menai (Menai Project) is a community group formed to foster interest in two historic bridges which link Anglesey to the mainland of North Wales. The first part of the research for this strand was to observe a school trip to the project's exhibition centre, from which retired engineers showed the bridges to the young visitors. This was followed by a co-design session with stakeholders from the project, in which there was a discussion about how ICT, particularly mobile technology, could be used to enhance the educational work of the project. The stakeholders were particularly interested in raising money, for example by selling audio tours which people could download onto their mobile phone or MP4 players. A second co-design session was held where "knowledgeable elders" from Prosiect Menai worked with a small group of local teenagers to create sample audio-visual files (augmented podcasts) about the history of the area. The project is keen to secure funding to continue with this work.

Nantlle Vale Band, Talysarn

The third strand of the case study is centered in the former slate quarrying village of Talysarn, in the mountains in Snowdonia. This is the home of the Nantlle Vale Band, a brass band populated by local people spanning three generations. No co-design was carried out here, but it was included because the band possesses many of the ideal characteristics of an intergenerational group learning together in a public space, employing ICT to enhance their experience. It is a well-established community of practice where young and older learn together as equals in a convivial space. The band has its own website and a video of a performance on the video sharing site You Tube. A recording of the band practising was recently included in an art exhibition. Performances are occasionally recorded, and there is scope for doing more of this, for teaching and business purposes.

RESULTS The main conclusions from this study were:

Collaboration with statutory bodies is a long, complicated process but the potential to influence the way such organisations consult and gather data is great. At present government agencies consult groups of stakeholders separately, rather than using intergenerational collaboration. Prosiect Menai and Nantlle Vale Band are good examples of intergenerationality that work in a community. The presence of real experts, real artefacts and a shared enterprise in a real "third place" are strengths of these models. The collaboration with Prosiect Menai was highly successful and resulted in their wishing to form an informal intergenerational group to design ICT-based resources for their exhibition. Planning of any informal learning activity, particularly of an intergenerational nature, needs to take account that key players have needs and commitments too, and will not necessarily be available when the organisers want them to be. Also intergenerational activities may need to comply with legal requirements such as disability access, risk assessments and criminal record checks. In the context of intergenerational learning, ICT can facilitate interactions between different groups of people and present information in ways that people can understand and respond to. Organisers should avoid making assumptions about people's ability and attitudes. This research has demonstrated some of the ways in which different generations can work together and learn from each other, and enjoy doing so. Introducing ICT, particularly mobile technologies, into these scenarios has the potential to enrich and expand the intergenerational experiences.