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Partnerships and Collaborations

JO The smart tourism project is a recent example of a collaborative project being undertaken at the University of Edinburgh. It makes connections between academic researchers, typically 3-6 months of their time, with small to medium enterprises to solve problems and address needs within the tourism sector. Examples include the Edinburgh festival, and the use of digital media to address navigation around Edinburgh, elastic demand, greening, and new content and new channels. A project with Historic Scotland addresses the difficulty of digital interpretation provision at remote sites without wireless connections. Research is being undertaken on measures to improve provision and consumption.

MD These problems with infrastructure are common across Scotland. There are huge partnership opportunities for cultural bodies to make links with schools. A Glow meet with Historic Scotland 'Scottish 10 staff' at Skara Brae would have been one such collaboration. However bandwidth problems prevented a live meeting.

PP Why do these encounters have to be live?

JO A live presentation is cheap and easy to do, whereas people have come to expect high production values with a recorded presentation.

MD Live presentations also offer opportunities for interaction.

PP Why is interaction important?

JO Social media such as Twitter demonstrate that the importance is in broadcasting information to your audience, rather than interacting.

MD Glow meets (videoconferencing) enable children to have a conversation with subject experts, and promotes collaboration between the cultural sector and education.

RB Should cultural bodies confine their outreach provision to Scotland, or does the potential of social media change the reality of who our audience is?

PP That does depend on who the institutions target audience is.

MD Confronting a global audience could encourage increased tourism to Scotland.

JO Particularly as the market in Scotland is tiny.

RB RCAHMS market is already international - our collections enable us to have a global reach, for example WW2 aerial photography.

JO Does social media play a part in this global marketing?

RB Increasingly this is the case through RCAHMS Facebook updates and Twitter feeds. In the near future social media and crowdsourcing will encourage participation in the forthcoming Aerofilms project, recruiting volunteers to geotag aerial photographs. Our experience with social media and previous RCAHMS projects has demonstrated that volunteers get great satisfaction from their participation and enjoy working with RCAHMS because they get to work directly with collections on quality projects with high authenticity value. Volunteers have asked for direction – they are a willing army wanting to help the organisation through their involvement with projects. Social media has also allowed friendly competition between volunteers (who can be the first to submit 1,000 images to My Canmore) which for them is highly motivating.

JO Using community expertise is very interesting; can armchair expertise be used more by cultural bodies?

PP So long as their expertise can be used to meet a need. Too often projects are designed without planning for them to meet any particular need.

BW The Scotland's Rural Past project is a good example of a project where volunteers have been involved in meeting a need – that of recording some of the 250,000 deserted rural settlements across the country. Not only have we built up an army of well trained and motivated amateur archaeologists, but their perception of RCAHMS has completely changed as well, from being a distant, academic and slightly boring institution to being a brilliant organisation. This has been helped by the development of a relationship between RCAHMS staff and our Scotland's Rural Past volunteers. With SRP coming to a close in September 2011, how is this relationship to be maintained?

JO This is a great problem, could social media be used to perpetuate the relationship?

PP Social media could be used to continue the dialogue and support between RCAHMS and SRP volunteers. A facility along the lines of LinkedIn group or Yahoo answers could facilitate discussion between experts and amateurs.

JO SRP has created a real community, can social media extend this, perpetuate it, add value as an online community?