

#DigiRDG: Town and Country Project Evaluation Report



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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The project

#DigiRDG: Town and Country was an Arts Council England-funded Resilience Project which aimed to transform how The Museum of English Rural Life (The MERL) and Reading Museum operate in a fast-moving digital environment. It was the two museums' third project together and ran between November 2016 and April 2018.

The project aimed to help secure the future of the museums by exploiting digital platforms for building relationships with audiences, through skills development, encouraging behaviour changes among staff and audiences in using digital platforms, digitally-inspired community programmes to help achieve greater diversity and enhancing the museums' workforce diversity through appointing two Diversity Trainee Project Officers.

The project's funding from Arts Council England was £237,500, with funding from Reading Borough Council and the University of Reading bringing the total to £274,132. The core project team comprised:

- Adam Koszary, #DigiRDG Project Manager – full-time
- Alison Hilton, MERL Marketing Manager – 1 day per week
- Project diversity trainees: Charlene Marriott and Nitisha Ramrekha-Heeramun – full-time
- Kate Arnold-Forster, Head of University Museums and Special Collections/Director, Museum of English Rural Life – supervisory role and strategic contributor
- Matthew Williams, Manager of Reading Museum – supervisory role and strategic contributor

The project was steered by a Digital Audit and an Action Plan co-written with digital consultant Fiona Romeo. This was informed by: a review of existing documentation, web and social media analytics, an all-staff survey, a discovery workshop and in-depth interviews with staff.

The team worked with consultant Laura Crossley to create a problem statement that the project should solve, and design a project logic model, which was used as a project management, monitoring and evaluation tool.

The problem statement was:

“Our audiences are not as diverse as we'd like and our digital behaviour is not as effective as we'd like, which could lead to irrelevance, being left behind and, ultimately, not being sustainable.”

1.2 Evaluation

This evaluation report brings together findings and insights from:

- Digital Audit surveys
- The project's review and reflection meetings
- Data and research collected by the project team at events
- Website analytics
- Social media analytics
- Interviews with the project team and museum directors
- A staff evaluation workshop
- A staff survey
- Surveys to the trainees and their line managers

1.3 Project activities and deliverables

The project's events and initiatives included:

- An audio project stand at The Berkshire Show, with activities including a short film, VR headsets, interactive games and making recorded interviews with visitors and stallholders.
- A Family Forum – research on how families respond to the digital devices and activities within the galleries.
- The MERL Digital Takeover Lates – evening events with activities and talks on a digital theme, including: an augmented reality trail, virtual reality of the Reading Abbey ruins, talks based on virtual models (virtual Rome), silent disco, 3D scanning and 3D craft making and more.
- Involvement in Culture24's Let's Get Real project which seeks to understand the social purpose of digital technology for arts and heritage organisations.
- Hardware was purchased and created as a library for museum staff and volunteers to use, accompanied by training in how to use the equipment (on photography, filming and DSLR).
- Trialling three different uses of 3D technology in a schools session with year 8 students.
- A presence at East Reading Festival gaining feedback on a VR tour of The MERL.
- Setting up and running Code Club sessions at The MERL for children aged 9-13.
- Showing 360-degree photos of Reading Abbey ruins and The MERL galleries at community events and showing them on The MERL website.
- Working with teams of second year students on the MA Public History course at the University of Reading to create social media campaigns for Reading Abbey.
- Gaining user feedback on augmented reality trails of The MERL.
- Installing public Wi-Fi at Reading Museum.
- Attendance at some meetings and networking events with local cultural organisations such as [Geek Night](#) and ROAM (Creative Networking for Reading).

Social and digital media initiatives included:

- Reading Museum created a series of Pinterest boards for teach relating to the collections and Reading Abbey on themes such as the Victorian schoolroom, Reading Abbey paintings and Huntley & Palmers biscuit tins.
- Reading Museum publishing four 3D models on online platform Sketchfab.
- Accessible Museum Sprint: creating digital resources for visitors and potential visitors on the Autism Spectrum.
- A Facebook Live piloted for MERL's Annual Lecture.
- The extraordinary viral Twitter success of The Absolute Unit.
- Supporting the #RDG30 social media campaign.
- Creating the Reading Museum blog.
- Both museums' websites have been developed and included the integration and sustained use of blogs.
- Reading Museum has also benefitted from improved photography and The MERL's website has incorporated responsive exhibition trails.

Skills development

A subscription to Skillshare was bought and used by some staff members. The Archives team at The MERL have now incorporated Skillshare into their monthly training.

Several 'Digital Den' training sessions with a mixture of external and internal trainers on topics such as blogs, audiences and outcomes; Agile training; 3D scanning workshop; film training; content; Wikipedia; Instagram; Trello.

Staff also undertook a range of study visits and trips including to the Arts Marketing Association's Digital Marketing Day, an Erasmus trip to the Netherlands and the Museums + Tech conference.

Partnership-working

The museum teams adopted the Agile way of working following training on this, and followed this up with the introduction and use of Trello, a web-based project management application, to plan their work.

Sharing the project and its lessons

Staff and trainees have used social media and blogged throughout the project about their digital adventures, for example blog posts about:

- Using Agile Methods
- Using Trello and Slack
- Project reflection
- Highdown School research on 3D

The project team has also identified nine case studies that highlight the project's variety of achievements and have commissioned a film about the project which will be uploaded to Youtube, disseminated through both museums' social media channels and embedded on the project page on The MERL website.

The viral Twitter success of the 'Absolute Unit' is being showcased widely, for example in the Trendswatch section of the Museums Journal, at the Museums Association's South East Members' Meeting, in academic presentations such as the Natural Sciences Collections Association Conference, in the National Archives' Action Plan for the Archives sector, and at the 2018 Museums Association conference.

1.4 Project outcomes and impacts

As the summary below shows, the vast majority of outcomes have either been met or partially met, and the only two that have not yet been met will be tackled by the museums at the start of the NPO programme.

Outcomes met	Outcomes partially met	Outcomes not yet met
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased understanding of how to be relevant to our audiences 2. Increased digital reach 3. Better understanding of how to evaluate what digital activities and products work for our audiences 4. Increased confidence to take risks 5. Better understanding of what's relevant to our audiences 6. Able to demonstrate that working with communities helps keep us relevant 7. Equipment in place to have a quality digital offer 8. Disseminate and share digital practice 9. Increased understanding of our priorities / core aims and the confidence to say, 'No' 10. Upskilled and empowered workforce who understand and can use digital technologies that are excellent and quality 11. We will have shared our transformation with people/the sector 12. Embedded a sharing and evaluative culture 13. Increased understanding of how to run a sustainable project 14. Be more effective with our resources 15. Better understanding of developing and delivering traineeships 16. Trainees are equipped with the skills to progress 17. We have disseminated and shared learnings from the traineeships 18. The two museums have created a mutually beneficial and strong working partnership 19. The two museums sharing data 20. Able to demonstrate the value of having wider cultural networks 21. Improved feedback across social media 22. Positive Trip Advisor reviews 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workflows in place to prevent poor quality work being released 2. Demonstrate the value of having paid digital staff 3. Delivered 6 excellent community projects 4. Remove the barriers to undertaking digital work 5. Be more environmentally conscious 6. Able to demonstrate the value of joint working 7. Developed a better understanding of Reading audiences 8. Increased our network within Reading's cultural scene 9. Increased use of positive feedback from social media in marketing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Systems to measure diversity of audiences in place 2. Shared evaluation questions/both collecting similar data

In terms of the project’s impacts, the project has already made excellent progress in meeting these already (impacts dealing with longer term change):

Project Impact	Impact met?
1. More Diverse and Greater Audiences are Engaged with our Museums	In part
2. The Quality of our Digital Offer is Consistently Excellent and Relevant to our Diverse Audiences	Yes
3. Our Museums are Leading in Cultural Digital Engagement and Practice	Yes
4. Our Museums Have Built a Reputation for Digital Workforce Transformation	In part
5. Our Museums will have More Sustainable Operating Models	Yes
6. Our Museums are Contributing to Sector Workforce Development	Yes
7. MERL and Reading Museum are Working in a Strategic Partnership	Yes
8. MERL and Reading Museum are at the Heart of the Delivery of Reading’s Cultural Offer	In part

Where the impacts have not yet been met the explanations are below:

- 1. More diverse and greater audiences have attended individual events, but as the museums are not collecting visitor data across the board, it is not possible to know the impact on the museums general visitors.
- 4. A lot of staff have benefitted from training and started using new tools, equipment and approaches, but pockets of individuals remain who have not yet benefitted from the training and/or embraced digital, and building a reputation for digital workforce transformation will take time.
- 8. The museums are cultivating a role in the delivery of Reading’s cultural offer, but are not yet at the heart of this.

1.5 Lessons Learned

Project scope

A clear lesson that the project team and museum directors agree on is that the project was too ambitious in its aims and that going forward with the NPO, the team will ensure they have regular meetings and quickly be able to spot what is going well and not, and whether they need to revisit anything.

Project management

The project team found the logic model essential, especially using it as a review tool to check back and check on progress.

Communication

The staff workshop raised the issue of needing better communication about when to do things and the project team agreed that it was hard to capture the attention of everyone in both organisations and that internal communication could have been improved.

Training

Many of the lessons learned that were shared during the staff evaluation workshop related to digital training, as some staff felt they had not had the time or opportunity to take part in the training. Some of the ideas for improving this in the future include: recording, reusing and repeat training; featuring digital in the inductions of new staff; and having dedicated time for training e.g. a staff development hour.

Traineeships

There was agreement from staff and the trainees that the traineeships could have had more structure at the outset, although to some extent the traineeships were intentionally flexible in order for them to be shaped by the trainees' own interests.

1.6 Project legacies

The project's main legacies have been identified as:

- **Digital engagement** e.g. digital activities that have been tested and could be repeated, blogging and social media, acquiring digital tools and skills to use them to transform public engagement
- **Internal cultural change** e.g. a positive attitude towards change, fewer barriers to trying new things and take risks, confidence to embrace projects
- **External perceptions and relationships** e.g. building new relationships, changing perceptions of the museums, influencing cultural change and improvement in Reading
- **Partnerships** e.g. The MERL and Reading Museum collaboration: knowing people / personal relationships, widens skills' pool, Trello
- **Digital tools** e.g. Trello which means reduced meetings and emails, improved project planning and efficiency
- **Digital skills** e.g. a more shared level of understanding of digital, digital at the start of things – not an afterthought

The museums are in a good position to further embed a digital culture, method of working and skills and expertise thanks to the NPO programme that is now starting. This work will benefit from the consistency in having Adam Koszary continuing as a digital lead and champion working across both organisations.

Where the #DigiRDG project has not met all of its objectives or outcomes, there are plans to tackle these in coming months. For example, the teams are planning to set up a new audience survey for the NPO that aligns with the data that Arts Council England needs; and marketing manager Alison will be funded by the NPO to write a digital marketing strategy for both museums.

1.7 Conclusion

The project

The #DigiRDG project was an ambitious and multi-faceted project which was refined and developed as it progressed.

The vast majority of the project's outcomes were delivered, with some underway or delivered to some extent, and those that were not delivered being rolled over into the NPO programme – for example standardising visitor data collection.

The project team

The enthusiasm and determination of the project team has shone through, as has their willingness to share their experiences and lessons learned with the wider museums sector in numerous in-depth and honest blog posts and now as the project has concluded, at events and conferences, helping to spread their lessons learned throughout the sector.

The project team showed a pragmatic and flexible approach as the project developed, honing in on the museums' and staff's key strengths, prioritising activities and focusing on completing these. For example, the project undertook or boosted several smaller community projects rather than create new, large and standalone initiatives due to time available and staff skillsets. The team acknowledges that the project was over-ambitious at the outset, that they were at times too thinly spread and that time constraints thwarted the delivery of all the intended activities and outcomes. The issue of a lack of time also affected the wider group of staff, many of whom reflected that a lack of time had hampered their ability to take part in digital training run as part of the project.

The team concedes it would have been beneficial to drop some activities (for example developing Future Learn courses) earlier than they eventually did (December 2017 review meeting). As the project developed, they identified the most successful and relevant ways to make an impact and work smarter, for example by contributing and improving existing events and activities rather than creating new ones from scratch.

Staff

Staff members have developed their digital skills and confidence and now have a library of equipment to draw on. Most staff members have shown an appetite for digital, embracing the new possibilities and opportunities digital brings. However, some pockets of individuals remain who have not taken part in training for various reasons or been as closely involved in the project, so are at risk of being left behind unless they receive more support and encouragement (something which will be tackled in the coming months).

As a result of the project's experimentation and willingness to try new things and evaluating their endeavours, staff now have a better idea of what works and what does not work, which can translate into a running start in delivering the NPO programme.

The staff workshop demonstrated unanimity in the identification of the project's main impacts, lessons learned and legacies, despite staff representing different departments and having different experiences of the project. A major impact identified in the staff workshop and in interviews with the project team and museum directors was that of a culture change in the museum, for example a more open mindset towards technology, a confidence to embrace projects, a culture of training and learning, and fewer barriers to trying new things and taking risks.

Culture change

Certainly many of the key project outcomes relate to the museums internally – this culture change, skills development, the equipment library, the experimentation and lessons from this. Staff have hailed the adoption and roll-out of Trello as a project management tool a success, as it has helped to structure and streamline work and facilitate easier sharing, collaboration and communication within and between the museums.

At the presentation of the project's evaluation to staff, staff reflected they were more likely to say "yes" now, to trust colleagues and have more confidence in taking risks.

Audiences

The project has run or contributed to a wide variety of events and community activities for a range of different audiences, with good successes and useful feedback. However, it did not develop a system to measure the diversity of the museums' audiences (which will now be done during the NPO programme, using The Audience Agency's Visitor Finder programme), and there is therefore no evidence yet that there has been a step change in the diversity of the museum's audiences across the board. The exception being The MERL's online audiences, which have hugely expanded and diversified thanks to the viral social media hit The Absolute Unit.

Going forward

The project is well on the way to tackling all of the elements in the problem statement it identified at the outset:

"Our audiences are not as diverse as we'd like and our digital behaviour is not as effective as we'd like, which could lead to irrelevance, being left behind and, ultimately, not being sustainable."

However, achieving this does not end with the project's completion, it is an ongoing journey which will need to be built on and sustained.

The real test will come in the coming years when time passes, staff change and new technologies and applications emerge – is the culture change embedded with The MERL and Reading Museum, and can it be sustained? Unlike many short-term projects which come and go with project staff who then move on, The MERL and Reading Museum have a great opportunity to continue to build on the success of the #DigiRDG project thanks to the NPO programme which involves the two museums continuing to work together, and a digital lead role for the project manager. As staff members said, the project has been "an important testbed for the NPO" and "we've spent 18 months testing things out and experimenting. We now know what works".

Some final quotes from staff members which provide a good conclusion to the project and report are:

- "digital should support everything rather than being an end in itself"
- "digital at the start of things, not as an afterthought".

2.0 Introduction

This report evaluates the Arts Council England-funded #DigiRDG: Town and Country project that ran between November 2016 and April 2018 and involved The Museum of English Rural Life and Reading Museum.

2.1 Participating museums

The Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), part of the University of Reading and based on its campus, challenges perceptions about rural England by revealing the historical and contemporary relevance of country life. It contains interactive, immersive galleries which explore questions of identity, environment, technology, culture and health.

Reading Museum is a Reading Borough Council service, and has been providing original opportunities for learning, inspiration and enjoyment since 1883. Today the collection has over 400,000 artefacts, including objects from the Roman town at Silchester, a unique Victorian copy of the Bayeux Tapestry, an important British art collection, and the Huntley & Palmers Collection relating to the famous Reading biscuit company.

The MERL and Reading Museum form a joint Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation from April 2018.

2.2 The project

#DigiRDG: Town and Country was an Arts Council England-funded Resilience Project which aimed to transform how The Museum of English Rural Life (The MERL) and Reading Museum operate in a fast-moving digital environment, to help secure the future of the museums by exploiting digital platforms for building relationships with audiences, through crowdsourcing, co-curation, marketing and upskilling staff and the communities the museums need to reach. It was the two museums' third project together and ran between November 2016 and April 2018.

Skills development was at the heart of the project as a means of encouraging new audiences and enabling the museums become more resilient and relevant. The aim was to encourage behaviour changes among staff and audiences in using digital platforms to explore through collections, connections between town and country and themes of living sustainably. The team intended to develop new kinds of digitally-inspired community programmes to help achieve greater diversity. The museums were also to enhance diversity in their workforce through appointing two Diversity Trainee Project Officers, who were supported through mentoring and participation in the University of Reading's Museum Studies programme.

2.3 The Digital Audit

The project was steered by a Digital Audit and an Action Plan co-written with digital consultant Fiona Romeo. This was informed by: a review of existing documentation, web and social media analytics, an all-staff survey, a discovery workshop and in-depth interviews with staff.

The Audit found that staff at the two museums were enthusiastic about digital technology and use it in their personal lives, but the majority reported that they need more support at work to stay up-to-date. The main barriers to adoption were time-consuming processes and the need for further training. Reading Museum staff were also constrained by policies dictated by Reading Borough Council.

Staff said they would most like to develop their digital literacy through one-to-one support from colleagues, time for independent exploration, and online guides or training courses. They were most interested in developing digital media production skills.

While both The MERL and Reading Museum were excited to deepen their collaboration and develop more interactive and participatory programming, they had different audience goals - The MERL was interested in reaching new audiences and developing a national profile, while Reading Museum wanted to use digital media to grow existing local audiences.

3.0 Evaluation methodology

This section sets out the research methods that were utilised in the evaluation of the #DigiRDG project.

The team commissioned and worked with an external evaluator – Laura Crossley – from the start of the project in January 2017. Laura worked with the project team to jointly design a project logic model, setting out the aims and objectives of the project based on the project description in the funding application, and the findings of the Digital Audit. This has been used as a monitoring tool for the project and is used as the evaluation framework in this report. Laura also established the most appropriate methodologies for evaluating the agreed aims and objectives; trained museum staff and volunteers as required to carry out evaluation as required; and oversaw and monitored ongoing evaluation to and ensure that it is being carried out as planned and producing useful data including attending two progress meetings, and preparing the structure for a third.

Due to unforeseen circumstances Laura had to step away from the project in January 2018, so consultant Christina Lister was commissioned to complete the evaluation, to analyse the project's data and feedback, facilitate a staff workshop, conduct interviews with the project team and museum directors, and to write this evaluation report.

3.1 Logic model development

The team worked with Laura Crossley to jointly design a project logic model, which was used as a project management and evaluation and monitoring tool. A logic model provides a visual framework of project activities and the short and long-term outcomes that the activities will lead to. In a logic model, each activity leads to an output, which leads to a short-term outcome, which leads to a long-term outcome, which, in turn, leads to an 'impact' – a significant change in the long-term.

The team defined a problem statement at the start of the logic model workshop, an overall problem that this project was trying to solve. The statement the team came up with was:

“Our audiences are not as diverse as we'd like and our digital behaviour is not as effective as we'd like, which could lead to irrelevance, being left behind and, ultimately, not being sustainable.”

To design the model the team, alongside the Director of The MERL and Manager of Reading Museum, firstly considered the impacts that they hoped the project would bring about in the long-term (5 years+ after the project has ended). These impacts, which were based on research and preparatory work by digital consultant Fiona Romeo were:

1. More diverse and greater audiences are engaged with our museums
2. The quality of our digital offer is consistently excellent and relevant to our diverse audiences
3. Our museums are leading in cultural digital engagement and practice
4. Our museums have built a reputation for digital workforce transformation
5. Our museums will have more sustainable operating models
6. Our museums are contributing to sector workforce development
7. MERL and Reading Museum are working in a strategic partnership
8. MERL and Reading Museum are at the heart of the delivery of Reading's cultural offer

After pinning down the long-term impacts, the team took each impact in turn and worked backwards from these to consider (in this order):

- Long-term outcomes, to be achieved in 3-5 years after the end of the project
- Short-term outcomes, to be achieved at the end of the project
- Project outputs
- Project activities
- Resources needed to carry out project activities.

The team made the following assumptions when creating the logic model:

- Individuals and groups from the community will show interest, and participate, in the project
- Staff will have the time to complete training
- Staff will be engaged in the project
- The team will have opportunities to disseminate our work e.g. conference presentations will be accepted by organisations.

In addition, the team identified the following risks:

- External economic factors e.g. cuts to museums; cuts to local groups that prevent them from taking part in external initiatives
- Project staff and other staff might leave
- The project contains a great number of activities and outputs – there is a risk that these may not all be completed
- Resource or capacity issues might make it difficult to embed lessons from project and project activities into core activity.

The logic model was not intended to be a static framework, but a flexible project management tool that could be changed over the course of the project if necessary. It is set out in its entirety in the [Appendix](#).

3.2 Digital Audit surveys

Surveys were conducted at the start and towards the end of the project (see [section 2.3](#) about the Digital Audit).

3.3 Review and reflection meetings

Consultant Laura Crossley facilitated ‘Review and Reflection’ meetings with the project team in June 2017 and October 2017 and the team facilitated the December 2017 session. The sessions enabled the team to reflect on the work they had done to date and consider what had worked well and what could have been improved, as well as to plan for the future.

3.4 Website and social media analytics

Collation of statistics from the two museum websites and social media channels.

3.5 Data collection and analysis

The project team was responsible for the majority of data collection and analysis, and evaluated each strand of the project using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data. Laura Crossley delivered evaluation training to

the team, along with other MERL and RM staff, to support this process. External evaluators collected feedback from the project team, MERL and RM Directors, and other MERL and RM staff.

3.6 Interviews with project team and museum directors

Christina Lister conducted interviews with:

- Adam Koszary, #DigiRDG: Town and Country Project Manager and Alison Hilton, Marketing Manager, MERL on 17 April (in person) and 23 April 2018 (by telephone)
- Kate Arnold-Forster, Head of University Museums and Special Collections/Director, Museum of English Rural Life on 20 April 2018 (by telephone)
- Matthew Williams, Manager of Reading Museum on 16 April 2018 (by telephone)

3.7 Staff evaluation workshop

Christina Lister facilitated a workshop with museum staff looking at what worked well and did not work so well, the impact and legacy of the project, lessons learned and how to build on the legacy going forward. The workshop took place at MERL on 17 April 2018 and was attended by:

- Guy Baxter (MERL)
- Brendan Carr (RM) – present until halfway through
- Danielle Eade (MERL)
- Erika Delbecque (MERL)
- Rhea Douglas (RM)
- Jess Freeland (Reading Museum)
- Lucy Griffin (RM)
- Phillippa Heath (MERL)
- Alison Hilton (MERL)
- Isabel Hughes (MERL)
- Rebecca James (Reading Museum)
- Adam Koszary (#DigiRDG project)
- Adam Lines (MERL) – present at the start
- Charlene Marriott (MERL and RM)
- Nitisha Ramrekha-Heeramun (MERL and RM)
- Rhiannon Watkinson (MERL)
- Matthew Williams (Reading Museum)
- Christina Lister (Christina Lister Comms, Facilitator)

3.8 Staff survey

A survey with similar questions to those covered in the staff evaluation workshop was sent to project participants and staff who were unable to attend the workshop, and also to people who attended the workshop but may have had additional thoughts to add. Two staff members responded, one who had attended the evaluation workshop and one who had not.

3.9 Trainee surveys

Surveys were sent to the project's two Trainees and their line managers (Adam Koszary and Alison Hilton) at the start of the project asking questions about the Trainees knowledge, experience and skills in a range of areas. The survey was repeated at the end of the project.

3.10 Limitations

This report is dependent on and limited by the research that has been carried out during the project. For some events no evaluation took place, and in other instances sample sizes were very small. In some instances data does not exist (for example there is a gap in Google Analytics statistics for The MERL).

4.0 Project inputs and resources

The project's funding from Arts Council England was £237,500, with funding from Reading Borough Council and the University of Reading bringing the total to £274,132. The core project team comprised:

- Adam Koszary, #DigiRDG project manager – full-time
- Alison Hilton, MERL marketing manager – 1 day per week
- Project diversity trainees: Charlene Marriott and Nitisha Ramrekha-Heeramun – full-time
- Kate Arnold-Forster, Head of University Museums and Special Collections/Director, Museum of English Rural Life – supervisory role and strategic contributor
- Matthew Williams, Manager of Reading Museum – supervisory role and strategic contributor.

In addition external consultants were brought in to deliver training and support the project, for example:

- Fiona Romeo delivering the Digital Audit and surveys
- Digital Den training:
 - Mike Paterson, Film-maker
 - Anna Faherty for blog training
 - Thomas Flynn for photogrammetry
 - Martin Poulter for Wikipedia and Wikimedia
 - Natasha Waterson for workshopping community project ideas
- Laura Crossley delivering the evaluation framework and training.

5.0 Project activities and outputs

This section summarises the project's activities, listed under the overall impact and outcomes they are contributing towards, following their categorisation in the Logic Model.

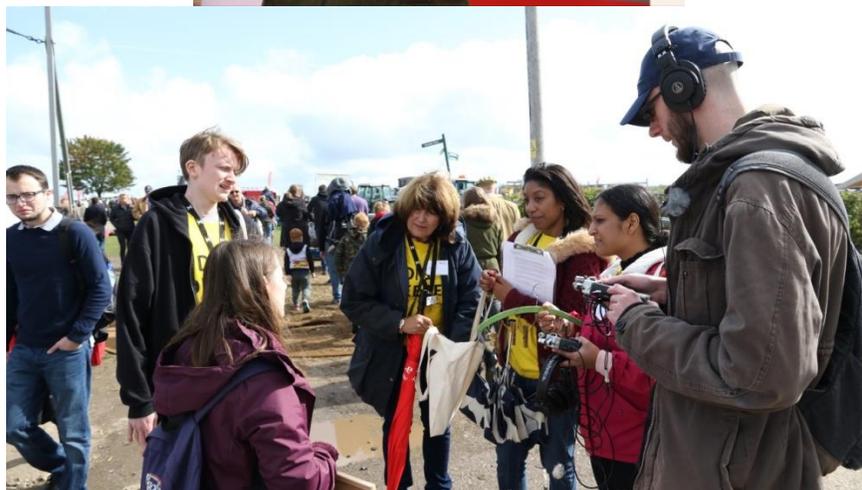
5.1 More Diverse and Greater Audiences are Engaged with our Museums

Project outcome: Increased understanding of how to be relevant to our audiences

The Berkshire Show

The Berkshire Show audio project ran as one of two planned participatory programmes on the theme of 'town and country'. The #DigiRDG team attended the annual Berkshire Show at Newbury showground on 16-17 September 2017, contributing a number of activities to the University of Reading's stand based on the theme of soil. Activities included a short film, VR headsets, interactive games. The team also worked with volunteers and sound artist Felicity Ford to interview visitors and stallholders about their views on different topics relating to the countryside and the town, and capture relevant sounds from across the event in relation to the interviews.

The team interacted with ca. 2,500-3,000 visitors at the University's stand across both days from around 60,000 visiting the Show, and recorded 13 interviews. A selection of interviews were made into an audio piece by the volunteers themselves, and featured in a community exhibition on Brexit at The MERL. Project trainee Charlene wrote [a blog post](#) about the experience.



The Berkshire Show

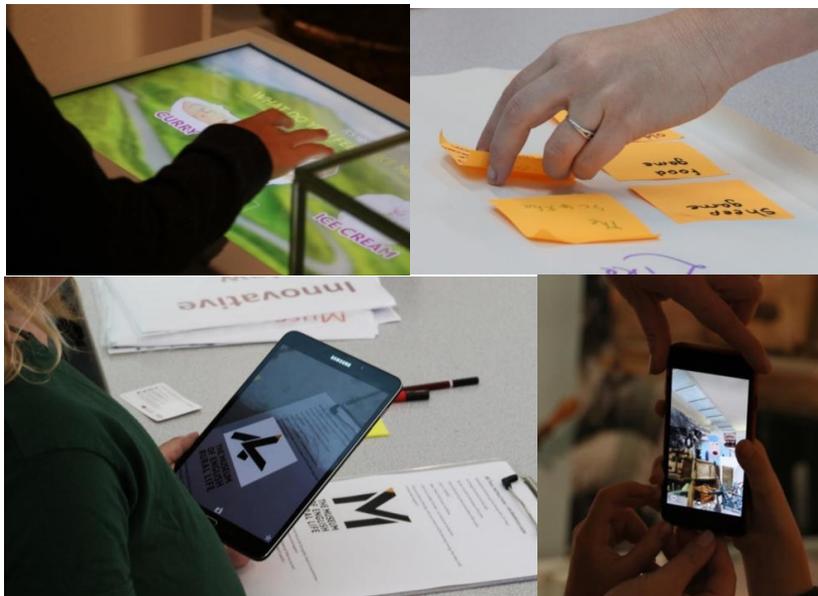
The Family Forum

Colleagues from the #DigiRDG and Audience Development Team at MERL held a family forum at the museum on 4 August 2017. The main objectives were to:

- Observe how families use the museum, with a focus on how they respond to the digital devices and activities within the galleries
- Consider how the museum on a whole can enhance the visitor experience through digital means
- Assess the families to gain a better understanding of their needs as visitors with the intention of re-evaluating certain methods to improve future visits.

Two families attended (one parent and an eight year old girl, and one parent with a six year old girl and a nine year old boy) and were asked to try different activities within the galleries including the interactives: Help! Lambing Time and Seasonal Chef game, the rat trail (a paper based trail) and an augmented reality trail.

Overall the team reported that families appeared to enjoy the session, reacting positively to the various activities within the galleries including the interactives). The interactives proved to serve an educational purpose for the children and some of the artefacts created a nostalgic feeling for the parents. There were some technical issues with the augmented reality trail which the team acknowledged needs re-evaluating to make the process clearer to understand and more informative.



The Family Forum

The MERL Digital Takeover Lates

The MERL ran two Digital Takeover Lates, one as part of the national Museums at Night event in May 2017 and one in April 2018. The events were run by the #DigiRDG team with activities and talks encompassing a digital theme, including: an augmented reality trail, virtual reality of the Reading Abbey ruins, talks based on virtual models (virtual Rome), silent disco, 3D scanning and 3D craft making and much more. Other entertainment included live music and cocktails throughout the evening.

205 people attended the May 2017 event, and 68 people attended the April 2018 event.



Digital Takeover Late, May 2017

Museum exhibition

The project's trainees worked on a temporary exhibition gallery for Reading Museum and digital resources to go alongside the exhibition will be developed. These will go live in the summer of 2019 as the exhibition was postponed.

Accessible Museum Sprint

After undertaking research and speaking with professionals about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the team made a start on the 'accessible museum sprint', setting aside a week dedicated to creating digital resources to trial with a focus group at The MERL. This group was chosen as it was clear that online resources were key in preparing those with ASD for visiting the museum, helping to make them more comfortable visiting a place if they can see what it looks like beforehand, knowing where there may be areas with loud noises or bright light, and knowing what resources or help is available onsite. The team worked with Dr Fiona Knott at the University of Reading's Centre for Autism to decide on which resources were most suitable

The digital resources consisted of:

- 360° photos uploaded onto Google Streetview so that visitors can view inside and outside the museum. An overview of the experience was shared on a [blog](#) and the result can be viewed [here](#).
- a social story – a downloadable guide that visitors can view before coming to the museum, to give them an idea of what to expect upon arrival including activities they can do.
- a sensory map – to inform visitors of sounds they may hear in each gallery, the areas that are particularly loud as well as information on lighting etc.

The team tested the resources on families with children with ASD, as well as a group from Addington School (a school for children and young people with special educational needs).

Feedback from the families included the following suggestions for improvements from the families:

- "Clearer explanation of what happens when each day. And visible."
- "Sensory resources"
- "Street view map was too shaky. The idea is really good but i couldn't watch it."

The families also indicated that the following initiatives would make them more likely to visit The MERL:

- Staff trained in how to interact and help with those with ASD (3/3 chose)
- Activities designed for those with ASD (e.g. trails) (3/3)
- A quiet opening hour on weekends (2/3)
- Sensory backpacks (2/3)
- A quiet room (2/3)

The resulting resources were released to the public on 28 March 2017 to coincide with Autism Awareness Week.



Testing Autism resources

Pinterest boards

Reading Museum created a series of Pinterest boards for teachers relating to the collections and Reading Abbey on themes such as the Victorian schoolroom, Reading Abbey paintings and Huntley & Palmers biscuit tins. The boards have had 462 engagements and 3,985 views as of February 2018, and have 7 followers as of 23 April 2018.

Sketchfab

Sketchfab is an online platform which aims to make it easy for anyone to publish, share, and discover 3D content on web, mobile, AR, and VR. After a training session delivered by Sketchfab's Cultural Lead Thomas Flynn, both The MERL and Reading Museum set up Sketchfab accounts. Reading Museum is currently the only active account with four published models, which have been used in various workshops and as VR for events. There are plans in the forthcoming NPO to utilise Sketchfab in volunteer photogrammetry projects.



Sketchfab

Let's Get Real 6

The #DigiRDG project has connected MERL and Reading Museum to take part in Culture 24's Let's Get Real project which seeks to understand the social purpose of digital technology for arts and heritage organisations. Culture24, in partnership with the Happy Museum Project, 64 Million Artists and Battersea Arts Centre, is working with 18 diverse arts and heritage organisations (including MERL and Reading Museum) to better understand the social purpose of digital technologies for arts and heritage organisations.

In particular it focuses on: How can arts and heritage organisations use digital culture, content and technologies to foster active citizenship and cultural democracy, for and with their communities, to achieve relevant social purpose?

The project runs from January to October 2018, with key findings being shared with the sector at the end of the project. The project includes collaborative workshops, supported research phases, virtual mentoring sessions and ongoing online collaboration across the peer group via Basecamp.

Curators from both museums are participating: Isabel Hughes from the MERL and Brendan Carr from Reading Museum. It is expected that the end project will focus on tackling social isolation, particularly among young people.

Project outcome: Increased understanding of how to market effectively to diverse audiences

Project manager Alison Hilton undertook a General Assembly course in Digital Marketing in May 2017, covering channel marketing, Google Analytics, SEO, e-marketing and social media. She has already put the training to use during the #DigiRDG project in setting up the e-marketing campaign for The MERL. Alison is putting this knowledge and training to use by establishing a Digital Marketing strategy for the joint NPO between the museums.

Project outcome: Increased digital reach

A significant way in which the project increased digital reach was the implementation of Reading Museum's blog. This has allowed staff a forum in which to discuss the museum's collection and the town's history with local residents, and has already become an integral way in which staff communicate. Matthew Williams, Reading Museum Manager, has said: "the blog has worked really well – great with engagement with audiences, guests and partners."

Blog

Join us in exploring Reading's history, our community and our objects!

All Posts Collections Community Get involved Reading Abbey Reading's history Things to do



Matilda - an Empress in the Thames Valley

3 May 2018
Empress Matilda almost became the first Queen of England. She was daughter of King Henry I and a frequent visitor and patron of Reading Abbey...



Marketing, a placement

13 Apr 2018
Ever wanted a fascinating career reaching diverse and interested audiences? Then a museum placement is a great opportunity for you.



Five Fantastic things in our Loan Boxes

5 Apr 2018
Our Loans service began in 1911 and is still incredibly popular with schools today, covering all aspects of the curriculum.



Reading's Top Ten Biscuit Tins

29 Mar 2018
Reading is the home of the biscuit tin. Explore the history of two great Reading companies through the humble tin.



Strictly Schoolroom: A Victorian experience

8 Mar 2018
To peer around the door of a Victorian schoolroom is to encounter another world.



The Day Reading Was Bombed: The People's Pantry 75 years on

30 Jan 2018
Local historian Mike Cooper, explores the events of 10 February

The new Reading Museum blog

The audience engagement, social media and communications skills developed during the #DigiRDG project helped lead to viral success on Twitter for The MERL with the 'look at this absolute unit' tweet (see [case study below](#)).

M The Museum of English Rural Life ✓
@TheMERL Following ▼

look at this absolute unit.

3:52 PM - 9 Apr 2018

30,768 Retweets **107,487** Likes

766 31K 107K ✉

Tweet your reply

M The Museum of English Rural Life ✓ @TheMERL · Apr 9 ▼

This unit in particular was an Exmoor Horn aged ram, owned by G.F. Thorne, The Barton, Simonsbath, Minehead, Somerset.

(P FS PH1/K90651)

The Absolute Unit tweet

A Facebook Live was piloted for MERL's Annual Lecture on 6 November 2018. To April 2018 it has had 2,252 views and 15,832 people have been reached.



Facebook Live

The MERL email program was relaunched, initially with a trial with Reading Arts and then using Mailchimp. Early on, the project team agreed with Reading Arts to pay them for a trial period to include a link to one of the museum's events in their weekly what's on emails and that Reading Arts would send details of selected events to specific target audiences, such as Lates to comedy festival goers. This worked well, however Mailchimp was subsequently chosen due to limitations with the design with Reading Arts and design and security complications when wanting to use Reading Arts' email system to email RM's mailing list.

Project outcome: Systems to measure diversity of audiences in place

The museums ran some online surveys and surveys at some events during the project in the second half of 2017 at The MERL. 23 surveys were completed and contributed to the museum's evaluation of its redevelopment.

Evaluation for The MERL's HLF-funded redevelopment project Our Country Lives show that The MERL reached its diverse target audiences during this project.

Changes to original plans

One (the Berkshire Show) of the two planned participatory programmes was carried out as part of the project. The project team has explained that this was largely down to the target being too ambitious, the focus being on other elements of the project during delivery and due to a lack of staff expertise in carrying out such programmes.

The original intention of developing a course outline for free online courses platform FutureLearn was not met, as it became clear to the team that this was too ambitious for the project, would take around 12 months to set up and not the team's area of expertise.

The temporary exhibition at Reading Museum was postponed beyond the life of the project to 2019, a decision out of control of the project team.

Facebook Live was piloted once. Plans for a second test fell through when participants were not warned far enough in advance by the organiser, but both museums remain committed to using the feature in future, particularly for the reopening of Reading Abbey Ruins.

A content strategy that addresses interests of diverse audiences, will be produced as part of the two museums' NPO programme, drawing on the learning from the #DigiRDG project. It will drive what the digital strand of the NPO delivers, but will also set in stone some of the day-to-day content work.

Apart from some online surveys for The MERL which evaluated specific events, work with the front of house teams on having ongoing self-selecting visitor surveys did not take place, so there are not systems in place to measure the diversity of audiences. The teams are planning to set up a new self-selecting survey for the NPO that aligns with the data that Arts Council England needs in summer 2018, using [Audience Finder](#) surveys.

5.2 The Quality of our Digital Offer is Consistently Excellent and Relevant to our Diverse Audiences

Project outcomes: Better understanding of how to evaluate what digital activities and projects work for our audiences. Increased confidence to take risks. Better understanding of what is relevant to our audiences. Able to demonstrate that working with communities helps keep us relevant. Workflows in place to prevent poor quality work being released.

The project team undertook continuous evaluation of the project and its initiatives, including review and reflection meetings with evaluation consultant Laura Crossley. A December 2017 meeting identified priority areas for the project to focus on during the last few months of the project, and areas which should be rolled into future work or left – for example the 1:1 coaching in digital with the two museums' directors.

The museums have also incorporated research and evaluation into the project's events to help identify audience feedback on the digital activities undertaken, for example the Family Forum and the Highdown School events.

The team is using the experience of this project to roll out logic model planning, Trello management and similar reflection and review meetings.

Project outcome: Equipment in place to have a quality digital offer

Hardware was purchased and created as a library for museum staff and volunteers to use. Training in how to use the equipment purchased was also run (on photography, filming and DSLR).

The following equipment now forms part of a library for staff and volunteers to use:

Box 1:

DSLR: Canon EOS 7D Mark II

Box 2:

Camera: Lumix

360-degree Camera: Theta S

Occipital Structure Sensor

USB phone/tablet charger

Box 3:

Camera: GoPro

2 mini tripods

Wildlife camera

Box 4:

Shoulderpod phone mount

Phone stand

iRig Cast microphone

Bluetooth remote

Ollioclip iPhone lenses

LED light

Box 5:

Audio accessories

Rode shotgun microphone

Rode radio microphones

Box 6:

LED panels (2)

Box 7:

VR headset

Google cardboards (10)

Box 8:

H5 Zoom recorder

Lapel mic

Omnidirectional microphones

Portable recorder kit

Headphones

Box 9:

Raspberry pi set

Little bits kit

Technology will save us bots

iPad

Samsung Galaxy tab s2

HDMI cable

HDMI mini cable

Loose

H6 sound Recorder

iPhone 5ES (2)

Box 10:

Bluetooth speaker

Projector

HDMI cable

Corner

Monopod

Large tripod

Small tripod

Lazy Susan

Selfie stick

Light cube



Some of the equipment in the library

Changes to original plans

The digital advisory board as originally envisaged, with representatives from larger technology firms, was not created because of a lack of time and lack of contacts. However, relationships with representatives from smaller, local technology firms with an interest and stake in Reading's community have been developed, for example with the local Hackspace. The team is also considering morphing the Executive Coaching group into a Digital Advisory Board, with people the project has built relationships with invited to be additional members.

5.3 Our Museums are Leading in Cultural Digital Engagement and Practice

Project outcome: Delivered excellent community projects

The community projects delivered were:

Highdown School 3D sessions

The project team went to Highdown School in Caversham, Reading to see whether 3D scanning, 3D printing and VR would be interesting to year 8 students, as part of the school's Science Fair on 20 July 2017. The purpose of the workshop was to trial three different uses of 3D technology using objects from Reading Abbey to determine:

- Whether students and teachers of this age group would find the activities engaging
- Which activity the pupils preferred
- How the session could be used to explore the authenticity of museum objects
- Whether sessions could be repeatable both in schools and the museums.

The Highdown School visit generated useful feedback on the three types of interpretation showcased (object handling, virtual reality and 3D printing / scanning) and the sessions developed around them from the students and teacher. A [blog post](#) has summarised the session and links to the [evaluation report](#).



Lulzbot Taz printer

East Reading Festival

The team had a stand at the Festival on 25 June 2017, interacting with 120 people. They promoted the Community Treasures event in July, handing out leaflets, and also ran activities including a VR tour of The MERL and individual galleries; woolly frame activity – creating frames out of paper plates and wrapping them with wool; Community Treasures questions – asking people what their treasures were in Reading and the countryside. Feedback (whilst limited in terms of numbers to less than 10 people answering all the questions) showed that the VR video was well received, that children like it and it would encourage a visit to, with the only criticism being that one person said the film was quite slow.

Berkshire Show

(See [5.1](#)).

Code Club

Code Club brings together enthusiastic volunteer teams with a community venue to run an after-school club for young people aged 9-13, using specially created Code Club resources. It was started in January 2018 and three sessions have been run to date with 7-10 participants.

Code Club has been a success, generating interest from and attendance by both parents and children from a very diverse background and some who have not visited the museums before. Taster sessions have been run at The MERL without costly publicity, with an aim to gauge interest level. The limitation to the growth of the club is the lack of resources in terms of equipment, which will be the next step in the development of the Club.

VR for events

The team took 360-degree photos showing the Abbey ruins and these were shown at events (such as the Berkshire Show and Highdown School event), and 360-degree photos of The MERL galleries were also used at a few events and uploaded to The MERL website.

Public History MA social media project

Adam Koszary and Jess Freeland (Reading Abbey Quarter project) worked with teams of second year students on the Public History course at the University of Reading to create social media campaigns for Reading Abbey. Students worked with the team as well as academic advisors to research, plan and write their content in three groups of 5-7 students. Most teams chose to create blog campaigns, which were completed and presented in February 2018. 12 blog posts, with accompanying Facebook and Twitter posts, were created and will be scheduled on the Reading Museum blog at a future date.

Augmented reality trail

The augmented reality trail was developed in the open-source engine Unity by project partner Luca Ottonello, a PhD student at the University of Reading. The trail is installed on Android tablets, and the user points the camera at trigger images placed around the galleries or garden, each of which show a different 3D model of a Berkshire bird. The user can move around the 3D model as it appears on their camera screen. Users have to identify the birds and mark their location on a map.

It was tested at a Friday Fledglings session (a weekly outdoor learning session for under 5s in The MERL garden). A separate experiment in Augmented Reality was a commission from a local animator using the free app Aurasma. The animator used scenes from around The MERL galleries and inserted animations of animals and objects in motion. User surveys showed that all 14 respondents would use the Aurasma trails in The MERL on their own devices, that 11 out of the 14 were not put off by having to download an App. Respondents rated The MERL's Bird trail more highly than Aurasma (trail had an average rating of 4.5 out of 5 and Aurasma 3.8 out of 5).

Project outcome: Disseminate and share digital practice

Staff and trainees have used social media and blogged throughout the project about their digital adventures. For example:

- [Using Agile Methods](#)
- [Using Trello and Slack](#)
- [Project reflection](#)
- [Highdown School research on 3D](#)

The project team has also identified [nine case studies](#) that highlight the project's variety of achievements and have commissioned a film about the project which will be used on both museums' websites as well as on Youtube, and in any events and talks where the team talk about the project.

The Absolute Unit case study is due to be featured in the Trendswatch section of the [Museums Journal](#), has been showcased at the Museums Association's South East Members' Meeting on 24 April 2018 by Adam Koszary and curator Dr Ollie Douglas, has featured in academic presentations such as the Natural Sciences Collections Association Conference and the campaign will be featured as a case study in the National Archives' Action Plan for the Archives sector. It will also form a seminar on how to create the environment for going viral at the 2018 Museums Association conference.

The MERL has been approached to take over the popular Farmers of the UK Twitter account, to host an 'Ask Me Anything' session on reddit.com and to contribute to The Archers conference.

Project outcome: Demonstrate the value of having paid digital staff

The project has sustained and benefitted from a full time project post, as well as one day a week by MERL's marketing manager and two full-time trainees.

A digital lead role has been embedded into the NPO's project manager position.

The team also paid for casual roles to achieve some outputs of the project, such as Luca Ottonello on his various projects.

Changes to original plans

The project undertook or boosted several smaller community projects rather than create new, large and standalone initiatives due to time available and staff skillsets.

The teams have not tracked time that staff spent on the project, aside from the core project team.

5.4 Our Museums Have Built a Reputation for Digital Workforce Transformation

Project outcome: Remove the barriers to undertaking digital work

Free Wi-Fi was installed at Reading Museum, both for the public and for users of the Town Hall meeting rooms. User analytics have not been provided by Reading Borough Council.

Both museums' websites have been developed and included the integration and sustained use of blogs. Reading Museum has also benefitted from improved photography and MERL's website has incorporated responsive exhibition trails to be launched in late Spring 2018.

Senior colleagues from both Reading Borough Council (RBC) and the University of Reading were brought together in two workshops examining the digital mission of the partnership. The workshops resulted in a variety of outputs from participants, such as the sharing of RBC marketing personas with the team, and include a written digital vision. A fact-finding trip to Bristol Culture and Pervasive Media Studio generated enthusiasm for the promotion of subsidised creative industry workspaces in Reading. A follow-up trip to Bristol was also made to learn more of how Bristol Culture's e-commerce.

Project outcomes: Increased understanding of our priorities / core aims and the confidence to say 'No'.

The team's understanding of the museums' and project's priorities developed as the project progressed. An away day session led to the project's outstanding strands being streamlined, restructured and in some cases being dropped. This reflected the team's acceptance of time left and priorities.

Project outcome: Upskilled and empowered workforce that understands and can use digital technologies that are excellent and quality

As part of the #DigiRDG Project, consultant Fiona Romeo was recruited to audit staff knowledge and skills in digital literacy. The aim of carrying out the audit was to reach understanding and leverage on these findings to

better equip staff and upskilling their digital savviness within the scope of their various and individual roles at both museums.

The Digital Audit report indicated that there was a requirement to provide some means of independent learning on digital skills as the preferred option that staff leaned to. As a result of this, an annual subscription to Skillshare – an online learning platform with classes on a variety of topics – was bought for staff, volunteers and any potential interested students. The Archives team at MERL have since incorporated Skillshare into their monthly training.

The project team organised ‘Digital Den’ training sessions for staff on the following topics:

- Blogs, audiences and outcomes
- Agile training
- 3D scanning workshop
- Blogging
- Film training (3 workshops)
- Content
- Photography
- Wikipedia
- Instagram
- DSLR
- Going Viral
- Trello



Digital Den training

Staff also undertook a range of study visits and trips including:

- Arts Marketing Association’s Digital Marketing Day
- Let’s Get Real
- Erasmus trip to the Netherlands
- Museums Association conference
- Museums + Tech conference
- Moving on Up
- Bristol trip
- 3D Imaging in Cultural Heritage



Study trip to Bristol, hosted by Zak Mensah, Head of Transformation at Bristol Culture

Some staff job descriptions have been updated to include digital responsibilities.

Project outcome: We will have shared our transformation with people / the sector

As covered in [section 5.3](#), the project team has shared their transformation through blogs, social media and events.

Changes to original plans

There is no record of which staff members have taken Skillshare courses or what they studied.

Job descriptions have been added for particular staff, such as the archives team and new NPO staff, but others are still being worked on. Digital training for senior staff was abandoned due to time constraints

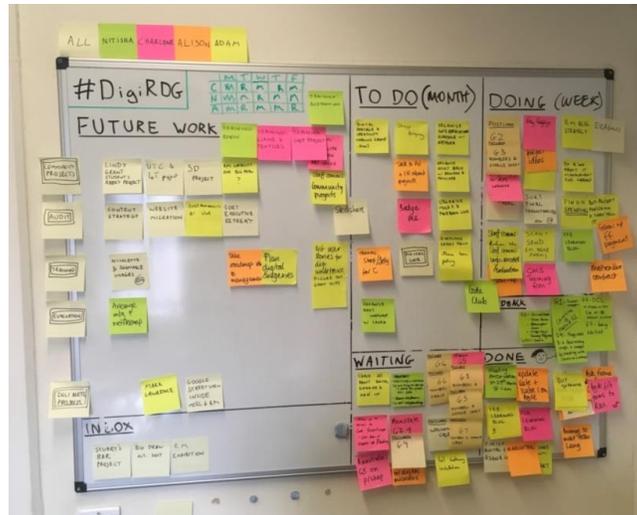
Digital skills and how digital technologies can help staff in their work have been made part of the appraisals process, such as Professional Development Reviews, across both museums.

5.5 Our Museums will have More Sustainable Operating Models

Project outcomes: Increased understanding of how to run a sustainable project. Be more effective with our resources. Be more environmentally conscious.

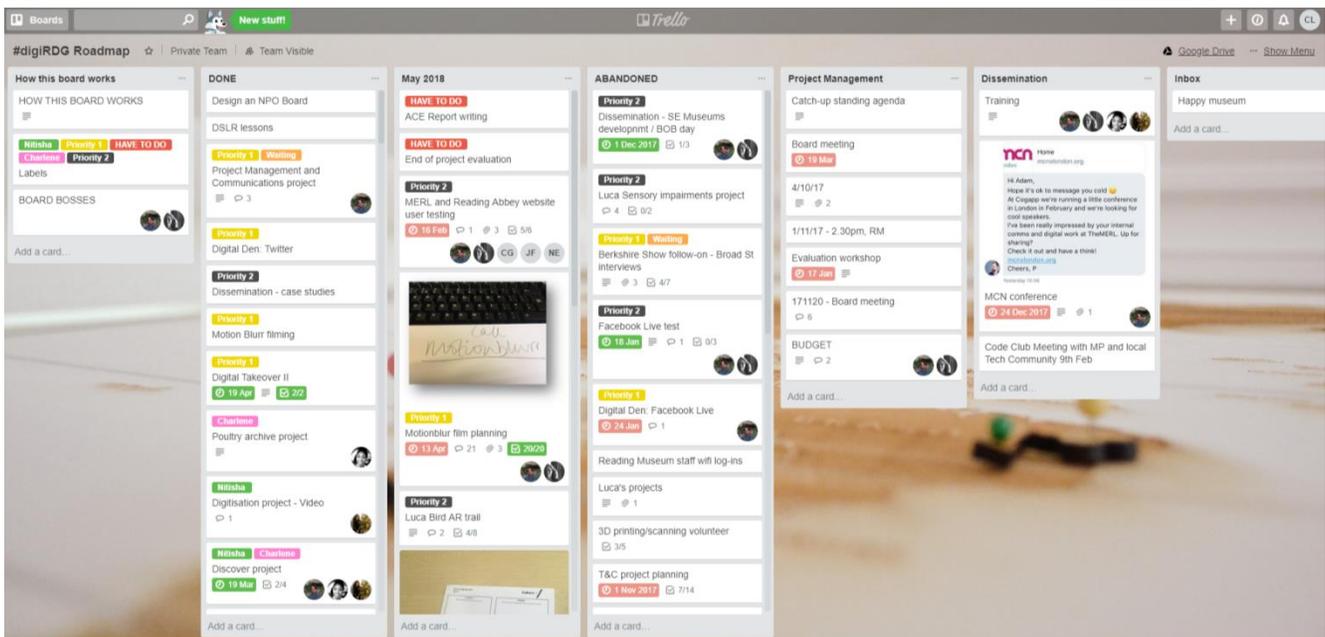
The team was trained in Agile management methodologies by Belinda Waldo, an Agile Business Coach from [Being Agile](#). She delivered an hour's seminar to 28 staff from across the variety of teams at the two museums. This was followed by a half day workshop that 10 members of both museums attended to help them learn more about Agile and apply it to their workloads and workflows with strategic direction, heritage projects, events and exhibitions, curation and marketing activities across the organisations.

Adam wrote a summary about the training and follow-ups the museums carried out as a result in a [blog post](#).



Agile project board

As the use of physical Post-it notes became unwieldy, the project team trialled Trello, a web-based project management application. The team then used it for the launch of the Reading Museum blog (tracking blog posts from Idea to Published), it was adopted more broadly by Reading Museum and then spread to The MERL.



A screengrab of the #DigiRDG Trello board

Changes to original plans

User stories for 5-10 digital workflows were not created due to time constraints.

The digital operations handbook and how-to guides for staff have not yet been developed due to a lack of time, but will be created in the early stages of the NPO programme.

Issuing a requirements document for technology partners of Reading Museum became too complex to finish, so the team has been trying to solve issues case-by-case for now instead.

5.6 Our Museums are Contributing to Sector Workforce Development

Project outcomes: Better understanding of developing and delivering traineeships. Trainees are equipped with the skills to progress. We have disseminated and shared learnings from the traineeships

Two Traineeships were created and completed by Charlene Marriott and Nitisha Ramrekha-Heeramun. The trainees were managed by Adam and were given the chance to be involved with a broad range of museum activities, as well as studying on several Museum Studies modules at the University of Reading. The modules taken were:

- Curatorship and Collections Management 2016/17
- Museum History, Policy and Ethics 2016/17
- Museum Learning and Engagement 2017/18
- Presenting the Past 2017/18

Charlene wrote [a blog post about her experience](#) in December 2017.

The traineeships involved experience in the following key areas which the trainees, Adam and Alison have fed back on:

Social media

One trainee has produced some Instagram and Twitter posts, for example to promote collections in the Mills & Boon project.

Creative digital skills e.g. Photoshop, filming, animation

One trainee built on her prior experience in graphic design and Photoshop to create GIFs (animations), assisting other staff members with trouble-shooting and shooting and editing her own films. Both trainees put skills learnt in the video and audio training sessions to practice at the Berkshire Show and Reading Museum Takeover Day.

Non-digital marketing

One trainee saw through a non-digital marketing campaign from planning through to delivery, creating posters and signs and has helped with sourcing a supplier and organising the arrangement for the distribution of DL leaflets for The MERL. One trainee assisted with some basic non-digital marketing.

Working with local Reading communities

Both trainees demonstrated excellent people skills and worked well to build relationships with local groups. Their experience included working on a family forum, on autism-friendly visits and attending the East Reading festival.

Curatorial work

The trainees have gained a lot of cataloguing experience at both The MERL and Reading Museum as well as helping with an exhibition installation, for example setting up Pig Play and also learning from the Museum Studies courses.

Access and learning work

One trainee contributed well to the Accessible Museum project, and assisted with delivering a workshop for a science fair at the Highdown School in Reading and arranging the 3D printing workshop. One trainee focused on this area during the traineeship, working on the Code Club and Accessible Museum projects and demonstrating a passion for both widening access to the museums and exploring their educational value.

Front-of-house activities

The trainees have gained experience in Front of House duties and helped with the Friday Fledglings toddler group in welcoming visitors and administration.

Working with volunteers

One trainee has recruited and managed a variety of volunteers, and one has worked alongside volunteers as part of several projects and has helped to direct their work.

Agile working

Both trainees have learnt about and used Agile working with the help of digital collaboration platforms such as Trello, which have helped to organise their workflows.

Evaluation

The trainees have helped to carry out, collate, write and present excellent evaluation reports from workshops and events, with both qualitative and quantitative data.



Charlene (left) and Nitisha (right) on a study trip to Holland

5.7 MERL and Reading Museum are Working in a Strategic Partnership

Project outcomes: The two museums have created a mutually beneficial and strong working partnership. The two museums sharing data. Shared evaluation questions/both collecting similar data. Able to demonstrate the value of joint working

The two museums now use common tools for project collaboration (Agile method and Trello) and worked together on the Berkshire Show event.

The shared hashtag #DigiRDG was used extensively on the museums' and staff Twitter accounts when they Tweeted about the project.

In the evaluation workshop and interviews staff felt that partnership-working between the two museums was one of the main impacts and legacies of the project (see [10.0](#) below).

Changes to original plans

The original intention was to use several hashtags to cross-promote the two museums: #MuseumSwap, #QuickestRoute and #TownandCountry. However they were deemed confusing or unnecessary, so #DigiRDG was used on its own.

5.8 MERL and Reading Museum are at the Heart of the Delivery of Reading's Cultural Offer

Project outcomes: Developed a better understanding of Reading audiences. Increased our network within Reading's cultural scene. Able to demonstrate the value of having wider cultural networks. Improved feedback across social media. Increased use of positive feedback from social media in marketing. Positive Trip Advisor reviews.

Team members attended some meetings and networking events with local cultural organisations including [Geek Night](#) and ROAM (Creative Networking for Reading).

The team also worked with local partners to run community events, including:

- Partner with various University departments, rLab, ArtLab and others for the Digital Takeovers
- Creative Arts charity [Jelly Arts](#) for the Brewup event
- 3D printing service [Handy Dan](#) on 3D printing workshops.

Early in the project The MERL agreed with Reading Arts to pay them for a trial period to include a link to one of the museum's events in their weekly What's On emails but subsequently moved to using Mailchimp due to issues including design quality and a lack of statistics from Reading Arts. The team has recently been working with designers within Marketing, Communications and Engagement at the University of Reading to launch an email campaign. Initial responses, including open rates, are encouraging (34.7% January-April 2018).

Changes to original plans

The team did not attend many local cultural networking events, in part due to time, and in part as the museums felt they did not yet have a strong enough offer for others.

6.0 Quantifiable Outputs

6.1 Public and community events

Event	Summary	Outputs	When	Evaluation?
Reading Abbey on Wheels	The #digiRDG team enabled the Reading Abbey Revealed team to use 360-degree photos of the Abbey Ruins for people to view in VR headsets while out at events.	1,730 visitors engaged	2017-2018	Activity tracking sheet
Reading Abbey conservation tour (interviews)	<p>Gateway Memories was a mini project tied in with the reopening of The Abbey. Members of the #DigiRDG team joined the Reading Abbey Community Engagement Officer and the contractors on a tour of the construction site alongside some members of the public.</p> <p>After the tour the #DigiRDG team interviewed three people on the subject of their memories of the Abbey before it closed and what they would be looking forward to the most when re-opened, with the intention of one being selected for public use.</p>	<p>3 interviews conducted.</p> <p>An audio recording of 1 interview is currently displayed at the Gateway for members of the public to listen to</p>	Spring 2017	None
Digital Takeover Lates	Part of the national Museums at Night event held at The MERL. The event was run by the #DigiRDG team with activities and talks encompassing a digital theme.	<p>205 people attended</p> <p>93% would come again and recommend the event to a friend.</p> <p>Five out of the 15 were 18-34 years old – whilst a small sample, if the sample was representative of the attendees as a whole, shows that the event attracted age groups that are normally not so well represented at the museums.</p>	18 May 2017	15 responses to an evaluation survey

		<p>Feedback showed that digital marketing sources of information were successful at attracting visitors, including Facebook, Twitter and email.</p> <p>Only 68 people attended the 2018 event. The reasons for this are believed to be that this event was the third Late in three months and the museums have saturated the market, as well as the day being the first warm day of the year.</p>	19 April 2018	9 survey forms
Friday Fledglings	Testing of AR bird trail with two families.			2 evaluation forms
Festival of Death	A collaborative event with the Institute of Education, including live taxidermy, digital badge making, music etc. Needed far more marketing preparation and buy-in from other staff to make it a larger success.	52 people attended	10 November 2017	-
East Reading Festival	Promoting the Community Treasures event in July and handing out leaflets, as well as running activities including a VR tour of the museum and individual galleries; woolly frame activity – creating frames out of paper plates and wrapping them with wool.	120 people attended	25 June 2017	Evaluation forms completed with feedback about awareness of MERL, the stand and activities, the virtual gallery tour
Highdown School Science Fair	<p>Members from the #DigiRDG team and colleagues from MERL and RM attended the Science Fair at Highdown School in Caversham, Reading.</p> <p>The session was repeated in three one-hour sessions with year 8 classes of mixed abilities. It was made up of three activities relating to Virtual Reality (VR), 3D scanning and 3D printing.</p>	88 people attended	20 July 2017	Teams gained valuable feedback from the students and the supervising teacher which is in the event evaluation report
Family Forum	Colleagues from the #DigiRDG and Audience	5 people attended	4 August	Observation and

	<p>Development Team at MERL held a family forum to get feedback on how families use the museum, especially digital devices and activities within the galleries.</p> <p>Two families were asked to try different activities within the galleries including the interactives: Help! Lambing Time and Seasonal Chef game, the rat trail (a paper based trail) and an augmented reality trail.</p>		2017	answers from parents and children
The Berkshire Show	The #DigiRDG team attended the annual Berkshire Show at Newbury showground, contributing a number of activities to the University of Reading's stand based on the theme of soil.	<p>Interaction with ca. 2,500-3,000 visitors at the University's stand across both days from around 60,000 visiting the Show.</p> <p>The team recorded 13 interviews.</p>	16-17 September 2017	Observation
Code Club	Code Club is an after-school club run by trained volunteers for 9-13 year old children where they learn to create their own games, animations and websites through learning coding and programming languages.	7, 8, 10 participants	30 January 2018 – ongoing	Feedback in emails from parents
Public History MA social media project	Adam Koszary and Jess Freeland (Reading Abbey Quarter project) worked with teams of students on the Public History course at the University of Reading to create social media campaigns around Reading Abbey. Students worked with the team as well as academic advisors to research, plan and write their content.	12 blog posts, with accompanying Facebook and Twitter posts.		
Museum Takeover Day – Reading Museum and Abbey	Children from local schools took over Reading Museum's social media feeds and made their own videos, which were edited by the team.	60 children and 6 adults	November 2017	
DA Brewup	The DA Brewup was an experiment in whether the museums could bring together a group of artists and technologists who would be willing to work together on projects on our collections. The day was run as a design thinking workshop, with three teams and	28 attendees	March 2018	Online survey with 20 responses

	project ideas as a result of the day.			
Augmented Reality trail	The augmented reality trail was tested at a Friday Fledglings event and at the Digital Takeover II event. The trail consists of trigger images placed around the garden or galleries which, when a tablet camera is pointed at them, makes a 3D model of a bird show up on the screen.	One app, two trails	April 2018	14 survey responses

6.2 Staff training

Digital Den training					
Subject	Delivered by	Summary	No. of attendees	When	Evaluation?
Blogs, audiences and outcomes	Anna Faherty	Anna Faherty led a workshop on blogging, including marketing personas and various techniques for writing engaging content.	27	June 2017	-
Agile training	Belinda Waldock	A presentation and workshop delivered by Agile coach Belinda Waldock. The workshop covered the thinking behind agile methodologies and particular techniques, such as the agile boat. The workshop resulted in the adoption of agile approaches across both museums and the adoption of agile kanban boards by staff.	28 training session, 10 for workshop	July 2017	Form feedback
3D scanning workshop	Thomas Flynn, Sketchfab	Thomas Flynn ran this free workshop for a select number of staff, and presented on the general use of 3D scanning for all staff. Those in the workshop used photogrammetry to make a model of a particular object, which they then uploaded to Sketchfab.	23 staff for presentation, 7 for workshop	May 2017	-
Blogging	Anna Faherty, Strategic Content	Anna Faherty led a workshop on blogging, including marketing personas and various techniques for writing engaging content.	25	June 2017	-
Film training (3 workshops)	Mike Paterson	Mike Paterson spent three sessions coaching a small number of staff how to plan, shoot and edit their own films. This included the actual filming of curator Ollie Douglas, which was then edited into a film shown at the Berkshire Show and uploaded to YouTube.	10, 12, 12	July 2017	Form feedback
Content	Adam Koszary	A general presentation covering what content is, the different types for different platforms, and how MERL and RM can tailor their own content strategy.	24	July 2017	-
Photography	Adam Koszary	A presentation covering the basics of the different types of photography, how to frame and compose a photograph and how to work with lighting. Included practical exercises in how to use a smartphone to take good photos.	18	August 2017	Form feedback
Wikipedia	Martin Poulter,	A presentation led by the University of Oxford's Wikimedian-in-residence Martin Poulter, on how other galleries, museums, libraries and archives are	21	September 2017	Form feedback

	University of Oxford	improving access to their collections through Wikipedia; and what Wikipedia and Wikimedia are, how licenses work and the kind of public events MERL and RM could put on.			
Instagram	Adam Koszary	A practical presentation on how Instagram works, how other museums use it and how MERL and RM could use it.	25	November 2017	Form feedback
DSLR	Adam Koszary	A practical session showing staff how a DSLR works, and how they can use it in their own work.	18	March 2018	-
Going Viral	Adam Koszary	A presentation exploring how The MERL went viral on Twitter in April 2018.	34	April 2018	Form feedback
Trello	Adam Koszary	An overview of how Trello works, how it can be applied to the work the museums do, and proposals on how to implement a new system using it.	35	December 2017	-
External training					
Waddesdon Manor	Adam Koszary	A practical session on how to make three different types of animation in Photoshop.	6	August 2017	Form feedback
British Library	Adam Koszary	A practical session on how to make three different types of animation in Photoshop.	7	October 2017	-
Art UK	Adam Koszary	A practical session on how to make three different types of animation in Photoshop.	5	December 2017	-
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust	Adam Koszary	A practical session on how to make three different types of animation in Photoshop.	7	May 2018	-
Alison Hilton's training	General Assembly	An intensive 1-week course exploring Digital Marketing Framework and Strategy, Digital Marketing and SEO, Paid Social and Advertising, Content Marketing and Social, Marketing Acquisition and Conversion Rate Optimisation, Customer Engagement and Retention, Analytics, Data and Reporting, and more.	-	May 2017	-
CASE conference	Adam Koszary	Adam presented on how The MERL communicates research through social media for an audience of Higher Education social media professionals.	28	March 2018	-
Other training					
Modes database training	Nitisha Ramrekha-Heeramun, Charlene Marriott	Elaine Bible and Angela Houghton instructed Charlene and Nitisha in how to create, edit and maintain object records in the MODES database.	2	2017	-

Skillshare course list include the following courses (no data is available on uptake):

- Photography Masterclass: Your Complete Guide to Photography
- Basics of Photoshop 2013: Fundamentals for Beginners
- Learn the Ins and Outs of Illustrator
- Mastering Illustrator: 10 Tips & Tricks to Speed Up Your Workflow
- Basic InDesign: Layouts, Type, and Images
- Dive into After Effects: Learn the Basics
- Graphic Design for Beginners Part 1 - Learn and Apply Graphic Design Principles in Projects
- GIMP for Beginners 1: Install and Use the GIMP: Create Logos and Graphics
- GIMP for Beginners 11: Photo Manipulation, Enhancement and Correction
- Mastering GIF in Photoshop
- The Beginner's Guide to Animating Custom GIFs
- Web Development for Beginners - Introduction to HTML
- Context is Key: Social Media Strategy in a Noisy Online World
- Mobile Photography Basics for Instagram Success
- Instagram Next Level Amazing: Inspiration, Tools and Tricks
- Become a Better Blogger: Content Planning
- Getting Started with Twitter for Business
- iPhone Video Essentials: Creating, Shooting, Editing | Learn with Vimeo
- Learn Video Editing with Premiere Pro CC for beginners
- The Complete Adobe Premier Pro Cs6 Course For Beginners
- The Complete SEO Course Part 2: Optimize Your Content For Exponential Growth.
- First Steps of SEO: Keyword Research and Website Optimization
- Learn SEO to Grow Your Website
- Creative Nonfiction: Write Truth with Style
- Introduction to 3D Printing: An Easy Start to Your First 3D Design

6.3 Staff attendance at conferences and research trips

Event	Summary	Attendees	When	Link to write-up
Digital Marketing Day	Arts Marketing Association's <u>Digital Marketing Day</u>	Alison Hilton, Adam Koszary, Matthew Wilson	December 2016	
Let's Get Real	Culture 24 conference on young people and technology	Adam Koszary, Nitisha Ramrekha-Heeramun, Charlene Marriott, Jess Freeland (Reading Abbey Quarter Project)	March 2017	https://medium.com/@adamkoszary/a-wrap-up-the-lets-get-real-young-audiences-conference-972fd8ab81f9
Erasmus trip to the Netherlands	Study visit and meetings at University of Amsterdam, Europeana, Rijksmuseum	Alison Hilton, Adam Koszary, Nitisha Ramrekha-Heeramun, Charlene Marriott	May 2017	https://medium.com/merl-rm-blogtest/open-licensing-and-frank-interpretation-lessons-from-the-dutch-and-belgians-13ebdfa44db6 https://medium.com/merl-rm-blogtest/welcome-aboard-lets-discover-together-e31a848700c3
Seb Chan: Masterclass & Crit Room	Masterclass with museums sector digital revolutionary, Seb Chan	Alison Hilton, Adam Koszary	June 2017	
Museums Association conference	Themes of audiences, collections and workforce	Nitisha Ramrekha-Heeramun	November 2017	
Museums + Tech conference	Museums and tech in a divided world	Alison Hilton, Adam Koszary, Nitisha Ramrekha-Heeramun , Charlene Marriott	November 2017	https://medium.com/merl-rm-blogtest/chapter-eleven-a-month-of-conferences-and-meetings-df9d9c693286 https://medium.com/@adamkoszary/a-wrap-up-every-bit-of-the-musetech17-conference-b93ab916fee3
Moving on Up	Museums Association's event for early career professionals	Nitisha Ramrekha-Heeramun	February 2018	
Bristol trip	A research trip to visit Bristol Culture,	Alison Hilton, Adam Koszary, Nitisha	October 2017	

	Watershed and the Pervasive Media Studio.	Ramrekha-Heeramun, Charlene Marriott (and larger group)		
3D Imaging in Cultural Heritage	A British Museum event for those working in 3D imaging in the cultural heritage sector.	Adam Koszary, Nitisha Ramrekha-Heeramun, Charlene Marriott	November 2017	

6.4 Local networking events attended

Event	Summary	Attendees	When
Geek Night	Networking and sharing for enthusiasts	-	3 nights attended in 2017
ROAM	Creative Networking for Reading	-	1 night attended in 2017

6.5 Digital marketing

Project data	Summary	Data	Timeframe	Links
MERL Google Streetview	Featuring panoramic views of streets and inside buildings	10,660 views	To December 2017	Blog Result
Reading Museum Sketchfab views	A platform to publish, share, discover, buy and sell 3D, VR and AR content	380	To December 2017	https://sketchfab.com/ReadingMuseum
Reading Museum Sketchfab engagement		68	To December 2017	
Medium blogs engagement		418	To December 2017	https://medium.com/@adamkoszary https://medium.com/merl-rm-blogtest
MERL Soundcloud listens		48	To December 2017	https://soundcloud.com/the-museum-of-english-rural-life
MERL followers		50,713 followers.	At April 2018	www.facebook.com/MuseumofEnglishRuralLife

(Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr)		This represents a 128% increase on the number of followers in January 2017 (22,162 followers).		
MERL engagement (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr)		1,587,067 This represents a 28,185% increase in the number of engagements compared to the average of the previous 16 months	January 2017 – April 2018	
Reading Museum followers (Facebook, Twitter)	-	1,986 followers. This represents a 289% increase since January 2017 (511 followers).	At April 2018	www.facebook.com/ReadingMuseum
Reading Museum engagement (Facebook, Twitter)	-	52,122	January 2017 – April 2018	
MERL Annual Lecture Facebook Live	First Facebook live	Minutes viewed: 2,087 Video views: 2,252 People reached: 15,832 Post engagement (reactions, likes): 53	Facebook Live during event on 6 November	
Reading Museum website views	-	320,965 page views	19 April 2017 – 1 May 2018	www.readingmuseum.org.uk
MERL website views	-	137,739 page views	15/09/17-23/11/17 10/01/17 – 01/05/18 [gap due to Google Analytics issue]	https://merl.reading.ac.uk/
Reading Museum blog views	-	11,930	19 April 2017 – 1 May 2018	www.readingmuseum.org.uk/blog

MERL blog views	-	20,147	September 2017 – April 2018 (November and December taken as averages due to temporary loss of Google Analytics)	https://merl.reading.ac.uk/news-and-views/
Digitisation of Mills & Boon Book Covers	JPEG and Tiff images on the L Drive (with the potential to be uploaded onto the DAMS at a later date) and Instagram/Twitter posts	306 digitised books	By 2018	
Digitisation of Milk Marketing Board films	To be uploaded on the DAMS for wider accessibility	5	2018	
Ladybird Cataloguing	Added to the Adlib catalogue	Catalogued 96 pieces of artwork	2017/18	
Reading Museum Pinterest engagement	Relaunched Pinterest for Reading Museum as an extension to their digital offer and enable their online collections to reach a more diverse audience	A revamped Pinterest page with 10 themed boards relating to the collections and Reading Abbey. 6 followers 462 engagements		www.pinterest.co.uk/readingmuseum
Reading Museum Pinterest Impressions		3,985		
Reading Museum Pinterest Viewers		1,973		
Relaunched MERL e-newsletters	Reading Arts was trialed but moved to Mailchimp as deemed more suitable	Awaiting analytics from Reading Arts. 1 email sent February 2018 – stats?		??

<p>#RDG21 social media campaign</p>	<p>The team funded the time of a University of Reading student, Gracie Price, to plan and run a campaign inviting Reading residents to share images based on a daily theme. The campaign ran over 21 days.</p>	<p>Engagements on original post: 1,216 Number of posts with hashtag: 1,718 (Twitter), 429 (Instagram)</p>	<p>March 1-21 2018</p>	
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7.0 Project Outcomes and Impacts

This section considers the progress in meeting the project’s short-term outcomes under the long-term impacts they feed into.

Where reflections quote Adam Koszary, Alison Hilton, Kate Arnold-Forster and Matthew Williams, these are from interviews carried out in April 2018.

7.1 More Diverse and Greater Audiences are Engaged with our Museums

Reaching the short-term outcomes

Short-term outcome	Outcome met?	Evidence / Comments
Increased understanding of how to be relevant to our audiences	Yes	There have been some pilots, experimentation and new initiatives during the project to appeal to a variety of audiences and research taken place at many events
Increased digital reach	Yes	Increase shown in website, blog, social media statistics, in terms of followers and engagement
Systems to measure diversity of audiences in place	No	An online visitor survey was set up at MERL (with 23 responses), but no coherent and permanent system to measure the diversity of audiences has been put in place in both museums yet

Reflections

The museums have a better understanding of what their audiences want, thanks for the evaluation they have undertaken after events and initiatives such as the Berkshire Show, Digital Lates and the Family Forum. The evaluation from the Digital Lates events show a broad range of ages attended, included many 18-34 year olds who are otherwise less likely to visit museums.

The Code Club is a good example of a new activity that MERL is offering, with excellent feedback from children and their parents, and some participants being new to the museum. Feedback included:

- “I love it!”
- “The Museum is a very comfortable place with welcoming staff.”
- “Zac really enjoyed his first code club and he said it was fun.”
- “My daughter Xanthe and I enjoyed our time in the galleries. It’s a beautiful museum and I can’t believe we have never visited before, so lovely to find a new gem to visit.”
- “Elliot really enjoyed last week’s session and offers no criticism! He found everyone to be friendly and helpful and enjoyed meeting the other children. The only thing he said he would change would be to make the session longer!”

Thanks to the Absolute Unit tweet, social reach for the month of April 2018 was just over 23 million impressions, with over 1.5 million interactions with The MERL’s digital content, 22,000 new followers to The MERL’s Twitter account and 40,000 visits to The MERL’s website. Whilst not solely down to the project, the

project certainly contributed to the development of the success of the campaign. As The MERL Director Kate Arnold-Forster said, it was “not just a moment, we have been building up to it.”

However, the project team has acknowledged that the target number of participatory community programmes was not met, and proving that the museums have diversified their audiences is not yet possible, as systems are not yet in place to prove this. There is however the intention to develop such systems during the NPO programme. A point about the project could have done more on engaging diverse audiences in different ways was also raised in the staff evaluation survey.

7.2 The Quality of our Digital Offer is Consistently Excellent and Relevant to our Diverse Audiences

Reaching the short-term outcomes

Short-term outcome	Outcome met?	Evidence / Comments
Better understanding of how to evaluate what digital activities and products work for our audiences	Yes	From evaluation and surveys from events such as the Family Forum, ASD project, 3D schools project
Increased confidence to take risks	Yes	Evidenced in staff evaluation workshop
Better understanding of what’s relevant to our audiences	Yes	From evaluation and surveys from events
Able to demonstrate that working with communities helps keep us relevant	Yes	The evaluation from community events and activities shows how this sort of work keeps the museums relevant e.g. surveys from the Brew Up event show how the event helped to change visitor perceptions of the museums
Workflows in place to prevent poor quality work being released	In part	The forthcoming Digital Strategy will standardize content creation, and have checks in place to ensure that the museums’ content is of high quality and accessible. This is primarily through vetting content on Trello, but also through monthly social media meetings
Equipment in place to have a quality digital offer	Yes	Equipment purchased, alongside training in how to use it

Reflections

Surveys and feedback from events and project initiatives have provided input from audiences about what digital elements they value and enjoy, although in some cases the research sample sizes were small.

Online survey responses to the DA Brew Up event shows that the event improved the participants’ opinion of Reading Museum:

- 22% (4 people) said it that after the event their opinion of Reading Museum had vastly improved
- 44% (6 people) said it had improved
- 33% (8 people) said it had stayed the same.

The MERL Director, Kate Arnold-Forster, feels that “we’ve become more sophisticated in our understanding of using digital for audiences.”

She also explained that the project “was always about being experimental, working differently.” Staff at the evaluation workshop mentioned the project’s legacies were fewer barriers to trying new things or taking risks and the confidence to embrace projects such as Let’s Get Real.

Staff in the evaluation workshop valued the new equipment, for example the having the opportunity to test VR headsets and justifying the investment, then use in the Abbey project and at the Berkshire Show.

The museums now have an equipment loan sheet listing the new tech equipment that staff can use, and many staff have had training in how to use it.

7.3 Our Museums are Leading in Cultural Digital Engagement and Practice

Reaching the short-term outcomes

Short-term outcome	Outcome met?	Evidence / Comments
Delivered 6 excellent community projects	In part	The contributed to many excellent community projects, although did not deliver 6 community projects on its own. Examples were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Berkshire Show • <u>Highdown School</u> event • Code Club • Brew Up • Digital Lates • East Reading Festival • VR for events
Disseminate and share digital practice e.g. give papers, Museums Computer Group, blogs	Yes	Members of the team have written many blogs about the project and its activities and has started speaking at events about it
Demonstrate the value of having paid digital staff	In part	Feedback at the staff evaluation workshop found that staff members valued having digital staff as experts to advise and support them and suggested the need to carry this on. The NPO project manager will also be the digital lead, although there is as yet no permanent digital role

Reflections

Adam and Alison have explained that the project team aimed to run big participatory community engagement projects. However, instead of delivering six new large community projects, the team got involved with smaller projects and enhanced existing projects such as Our Country Lives, due to a lack of sufficient resources and staff expertise.

The MERL provides monthly summary snapshots that are reported and shared with University of Reading committees. MERL Director, Kate Arnold-Forster, has reflected that “our host organisations [The University of Reading and Reading Borough Council] see us as digitally competent and we have managed to get recognition from them about this” and that The MERL’s new digital expertise is being called on by other areas of the University for project development.

Staff in the evaluation workshop said they benefitted from having a team to go to for help and recommendations, and that Adam, Alison, Charlene and Nitisha became digital experts and they absorbed information and passed it on around the museums.

Project manager Adam will be co-ordinating the NPO and also leading on the digital strand of the NPO. The NPO is also funding Alison a day per week for digital work, to write a digital marketing strategy for both museums. However, there is not the commitment for a permanent, paid staff member with responsibility for digital. As set out in the Digital Audit by Fiona Romeo at the start of the project “The underlying risk in this project is that the core team—the people that will be the most inspired and developed by the project—are not permanent staff. The action plan addresses this by building in mechanisms for knowledge transfer but it may not be enough. Reading Museum and The MERL should try to fund a full-time permanent role working across both museums to provide leadership and capacity for continued digital transformation.”

7.4 Our Museums Have Built a Reputation for Digital Workforce Transformation

Reaching the short-term outcomes

Short-term outcome	Outcome met?	Evidence / Comments
Remove the barriers to undertaking digital work	In part	Many of the barriers have been removed, including purchasing hardware needed, increasing staff confidence and providing training and a dedicated member of staff. However, there is not as yet a permanent digital role, some staff missed out on training and some staff do not feel they have enough time to undertake digital work or to be trained in it
Increased understanding of our priorities / core aims and the confidence to say, 'No'	Yes	The staff workshop and interviews showed that the teams have realised that the project was over-ambitious at the outset, gradually focused the project more on core aims and outcomes that tie in with the Museums' strategic objectives and can thereby more easily say 'no' to things that do not fit in with these
Upskilled and empowered workforce who understand and can use digital technologies that are excellent and quality	Yes	Proof from staff surveys and training feedback
We will have shared our transformation with people/the sector	Yes	Members of the team have written many blogs about the project and its activities. The project manager is in conversation with the Museums Association about speaking at their 2018 conference. This evaluation report will be shared on The MERL and Reading Museum websites, as well as through sector forums such as the Museums Computer Group
Embedded a sharing and evaluative culture	Yes	Staff highlighted in interviews and at the evaluation workshop that the museums have a more sharing culture, both internally (through review and reflection meetings and Trello) and externally (through blogs and speaking at conferences)

Reflections

The bringing together of senior staff from both institutions in the executive coaching has led to greater engagement on other shared projects, such as the Great Places scheme and the Creative Canal project. For the latter, it was a direct result of the workshops that resulted in the Business Improvement District's (BID's) inclusion of converting Reading Prison into subsidised creative industry workspaces.

Reading Museum Manager Matthew Williams stated that the project has been able to “push past barriers of the council to use tablets and smartphones and more people are using social media”, that Digital Dens have made people aware of how to use existing things like camera phones, that staff have more confidence and that the new equipment is being used, for example by casual session leaders who run school workshops and are now using tablets and writing blogs. Alison also gave an example of Clare Pascow making films on the University of Reading’s museum’s art collections for use in the Ladybird Gallery at The MERL.

A staff member in the evaluation workshop said that “we all built expertise that we can share and embed” during the project. Alison has said that “Trello led us to think about what our teams are, what boards should there be” and “that kind of thinking is a change. A year ago we weren’t even talking about teams.”

However the staff interviews and workshop highlighted that there are still pockets of individuals who need more support and encouragement to avoid them being left behind, as they were not able to attend training, they were not so closely involved in the project, so willing to adopt new ways of working, or have not had the opportunity to trial and use their new skills or equipment.

Whilst there was agreement in the staff evaluation workshop that the project had led to a culture change at both museums, one respondent to the staff survey felt that “I am not convinced that on the ground there has been an embedding of a digital culture,” explaining that “If you didn't have access to hardware you couldn't really get involved in a truly digital way of working” and “I have a greater awareness of technologies out there but I really don't feel that my working pattern has changed or my skills increased.”

Websites

Overall, the digital staff surveys show that staff satisfaction with the museum websites has improved (58% of respondents reporting they are very satisfied or satisfied with their museum website in 2018 compared to 48% at the start of the project). Positive comments mainly focus on the look of the website(s) and that they are easy to use / have good navigation. Example comments include:

- “It's easy to use, visually striking and a great improvement on the old one, in terms of navigation.”
- “Good website, with an accessible layout.”
- “I can direct people to it instead of sending them massive emails”
- “It's well structured, current, colourful and engaging.”
- “Much better than previously, fairly easy to use admin”
- “I can find information I need, as I know where to search.”

Comments that refer to improvements that could be made mainly relate to more content needing to be developed and added, in particular for the collections pages (with acknowledgement that improvements are underway). Comments include:

- “some of the collections pages still lack the necessary information to be able to effectively guide users through them and to do archive research enquires”
- “The current MERL website is great for showcasing the museum and what's on, but lacks in information regarding the library and archive collections and how to use and access them.”
- “We are currently in the process of updating the navigation and content for the archive users as we have had some complaints about the current website from that user section”

Other issues mentioned were:

- “The shop page leaves much to be desired”
- “I feel that the 'Community Projects' pages specifically could be kept more up to date and have more information (something that is down to my team as well as the digital team!)”
- “Online database doesn’t work on all mobile platforms”
- “sometimes information goes up that staff don’t know about or the events diary directs to the website to book and it isn’t there”
- “there is still room for improvement - ie. more interactivity/fun elements”
- “Some information duplicated and not straightforwardly accessible”.

Barriers to the effective use of digital technologies at work

The two Digital Audits showed progress on many of the main barriers raised in 2017:

Main barriers given	2017		2018		Increase / decrease in % of respondents mentioning
	No. of respondents mentioning	% of total no. of respondents	No. of respondents mentioning	% of total no. of respondents	
Lack of time	17	43%	22	76%	
Need training	12	30%	5	17%	
Lack of wifi	2	5%	0	0%	
Not in job description / not relevant to job	4	10%	3	10%	
Organisational culture/policies/security	6	15%	1	3%	
Lack of hardware / equipment	3	8%	2	7%	
Base	<i>40 respondents</i>		<i>29 respondents</i>		

The number of survey respondents fell from 40 to 29. Looking at percentages of respondents, the proportion of respondents who named needing training, lack of wifi and organisational culture / policies / security fell.

The number and proportion of people mentioning hardware / equipment and it not being in their job description or relevant to their job, stayed almost static, despite the project investing in this. Comments in 2018 towards the end of the project on this were:

- “Lack of own work specific technology to be able to implement the learnt digital skills and take their use further e.g. tablets/mobile phones etc. Despite being able to borrow devices bought by the project, it's not the same as having your own work device and I didn't want to use my personal device at work for various and obvious reasons. Until everyone is on the same level with regards to having the portable technology it will be difficult to implement the same level of digital literacy across the board.”
- “Biggest problem I find is lack of hardware”

The only barrier that did not decrease, but in fact showed the biggest change, was lack of time. Perhaps as more digital opportunities were presented it became more of a squeeze on people's time? Four respondents who mentioned a lack of time referred to a lack of time for Skillshare training:

- "Lack of time this year has been a massive barrier to my capacity to engage in extending my own digital literacy. I would like to move policies and procedures forward and to streamline and extend the use of digital in managing all aspects of my work but time is the critical factor."
- "Absolutely no time to look at Skillshare which I'm very sad about. This isn't a problem with the project, more a general workload issue. [...] It's very frustrating to not get the most out of what has been on offer."
- "struggle with time to devote to Skillshare training because there isn't a specified time to do the training which you would have with a formal course and other things always crop up!"
- "unfortunately most of the training I was interested in did not take place on my working days so I could not attend. It would have been useful to have training made available in alternative formats e.g. screencasts and handouts, for members of staff who can't attend. Lack of time remained a barrier."

Other barriers raised in the end of project Digital Audit were:

- "Limited licenses for Artifax is a constant problem. A little training on Artifax would benefit new employees."
- "I had imagined that the digital project might help address some of our stagnated and fossilised digital resources and find new ways to make use of these (e.g. old web content, past exhibition data and content, 'shared drive' born digital archives, etc) but these remain unsorted. We are shamelessly generating more digital content with less depth and doing so without dealing with our existing backlogs and materials effectively."
- "Not directed to which training will be most beneficial."
- "our systems here are slow, sometimes I have time to get a cup of tea while my system decides it can file an email for example!"
- "I also feel that certain teams/groups who had a better grounding in digital technologies before the project have been encouraged slightly more than those who perhaps needed more encouragement and support."
- "copyright issues".

Skillshare training

A team member ran staff surveys and emails to staff to understand the volume of usage, ease of use, benefits and suitability of the Skillshare programme by its users and non-users alike. 11 people responded to the online survey. Whilst all 11 respondents said they have registered for Skillshare, only five people have completed courses (four people completing between one and four courses, and one person completing between five and nine courses). Three people cited a lack of time as to why they had not used it.

Topics participants have learnt are:

- Video – 3 people
- Trello – 2
- InDesign – 2
- Photoshop / GIMP – 1
- Illustrator – 1
- Social media – 1
- Infographics – 1

Participants were asked whether they think “holding a group session for Skillshare hour would be useful?”. Two people said yes, three people said no and the remaining five who responded were undecided – saying maybe, or two people saying they have now set aside an hour a week in their calendar to do Skillshare training.

The recommendations by the team member who wrote the report were:

- Increasing and drawing awareness that Skillshare exists as a digital learning tool across both museums when staff require specific training in digital skills.
- The possibility of running a group session on a specific topic can be explored further for those who expressed the desire to do so.
- Devise a way to help people commit time to using Skillshare – through joint learning, peering-up, exploratory topics, better understanding of benefits to them and their organisations.
- Suspension of Skillshare annual subscription if no further significant uptake on courses.

In the staff evaluation workshop it was noted that the Archives team at MERL have incorporated using Skillshare into their monthly training.

Use of technology

The two Digital Audits do not show a significant change in terms of staff use of technology. Staff were asked how they would describe their use of technology out of the following phrases:

- I access services online wherever possible (28% in 2017, 24% in 2018)
- I am open to both offline and online services, choosing whatever is most convenient at the time. (68% in 2017, 72% in 2018)
- I prefer offline services. If there is another way, I avoid using technology. (3% in 2017, 0% in 2018)

Whilst the sample of respondents fell from 40 to 29, the percentage split of responses remained largely the same.

In terms of staff relationships with digital technologies at work, there have been some developments between 2017 and 2018:

- A fall from 10% to 3% (4 out of 40 vs. 1 out of 29 people) of staff agreeing with “I can't use digital technologies very well and it impacts on the performance of my job”.
- A fall from 25% to 17% (10 out of 40 vs. 5 out of 29 people) of staff agreeing with “My institution's policies and/or culture limit my use of digital tools and services”.
- A rise from 23% to 48% (9 out of 40 to 14 out of 29 people) of staff agreeing with “I am satisfied with the level of technology provided at work and can use it well”.

However, the number of people taking the survey fell, so there should be some caution with these results.

There have also been some additional changes, but the results are ambiguous and could be interpreted in different ways:

- A rise from 1% to 31% (1 out of 40 vs. 9 out of 29 people) of staff agreeing with “I can use digital technologies independently but prefer analogue ways of working”. This could be more people saying that they can use digital technologies independently thanks to training, or that having been trained and exposed to more digital technology, more people have decided they prefer analogue ways of working.
- A fall from 65% to 41% (26 out of 40 vs. 12 out of 29 people) of staff agreeing with “I want to keep up to date with technology but need more support to do so”. This could be that fewer people want to keep up to date with technology, or fewer people need more support to do so.

7.5 Our Museums will have More Sustainable Operating Models

Reaching the short-term outcomes

Short-term outcome	Outcome met?	Evidence / Comments
Increased understanding of how to run a sustainable project	Yes	The model used in running the #digiRDG project will be emulated in the running of the NPO. In particular the successful use of a logical model and Trello means that projects will be run more efficiently
Be more effective with our resources	Yes	Use of Agile working and Trello
Be more environmentally conscious	In part	The use of digital technologies has reduced the use of paper within both museums, but the manufacturing process for tablets and other devices may negate this impact.

Reflections

The concept of Agile boards and working in sprints made the museums’ work more visible, structured and scheduled, however the Post-it notes multiplied and started feeling unsustainable. The team then progressed the Agile approach to using online task management tool Trello to streamline and organise their work and this has been embedded and used well across both museums. The Digital Audits show that Trello has been embedded as a tool used regularly in work – no respondents reported using Trello in 2017, whereas 76% of respondents reported using it regularly in 2018. The use of Trello has enabled the museums to move from a paper-based to a digital method of planning workloads and workflow.

Staff feedback on the Agile training session included:

- “I am using my board to manage my personal workflow as well as the ACE project overall and in the short term to manage the planning of a forthcoming event with colleagues.”
- “I learnt 2 practical techniques for managing workloads as an individual and as part of a team. I like the fact that it is very visual but also transparent as other colleagues can see the workload of the team.”

Matthew Williams felt that “overwhelmingly the Agile way of working” is the main area that has worked well – in terms of improving communication, overcoming barriers from the museums’ parent organisations, going from paper to digital, applying it across projects such as exhibitions and the capital Lottery project.

In his [blog post about Trello](#), Adam says: “What Trello has achieved for some teams so far at the MERL and Reading Museum is overview. What was once hidden and scattered is brought together on team boards. You can get an overview of how much one person has on their plate; how many blogs we are writing; the scale of tasks to be done for an event; the progress of a team’s activity.”

One staff member mentioned that the project has helped to deliver work that needed to be delivered – it has freed up their time and provided extra capacity. Another said that the project had provided “digital tools to solve problems.”

7.6 Our Museums are Contributing to Sector Workforce Development

Reaching the short-term outcomes

Short-term outcome	Outcome met?	Evidence / Comments
Better understanding of developing and delivering traineeships	Yes	In the evaluation workshop both staff and trainees reflected on lessons learned with regards to the traineeships
Trainees are equipped with the skills to progress	Yes	Both trainees reported increased confidence, contacts and skills development as a result of the traineeships. Charlene Marriott moved into a new role in May 2018 as an Administrator at the Midlands Arts Centre in Birmingham
We have disseminated and shared learnings from the traineeships	Will be	The two trainees are writing comprehensive blogs evaluating their own traineeships, and this report acts as a form of dissemination for the sector

Reflections

Both trainees have had excellent and broad-ranging practical experience from the project as well as studying with the University of Reading’s Museum Studies department. In the staff evaluation workshop they both reported that the project has provided them with new transferable skills, confidence and the opportunity to meet new people.

The two trainees and Adam and Alison as their supervisors completed online surveys assessing the trainees’ skills and experience in a range of areas at the start and end of the project, and graded these out of 5. Both trainees improved and developed during the project in their skills and knowledge:

Area	Skills including: Digital marketing and social media campaigns Creative digital skills Non-digital marketing Working with local Reading communities Curatorial work Access and learning work Front-of-house activities Working with volunteers Agile working Evaluation		Knowledge including: Subject knowledge relevant to the collections of MERL and Reading Museum Knowledge of museum practice Knowledge of museum theory	
When	Start of project (2017)	End of project April 2018	Start of project (2017)	End of project April 2018
Trainee 1	2.4 / 5.0	3.7 / 5.0	2.4 / 5.0	3.8 / 5.0
Trainee 2	2.0 / 5.0	3.6 / 5.0	2.5 / 5.0	4.6 / 5.0

Examples of comments about the trainees' progression from their managers include:

- "I think both trainees have thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the project and developed as a result."
- "She has in particular explored issues around diversity and representation, and has been unafraid in broaching various topics and issues with colleagues. This confidence is something that the project has brought out of her."
- One trainee "has been an incredibly keen learner and has a good knowledge of best practice [in museums]."

One of the trainees, Charlene Marriott, has moved into a new four-year role beginning in May 2018 at the Midlands Arts Centre in Birmingham as an Administrator in their Music department.

Adam felt that the project gave the trainees "a good grounding" and were a "good success". Alison felt that "they [the trainees] could not have had better all-round experience," although the traineeships could have been more structured at the outset. This latter point was echoed by the two trainees.

The museums have also benefitted in various ways, for example from the practical support the trainees provided. Staff at the evaluation workshop provided examples of the support the trainee provided on the museum websites and also on Takeover Day where the trainees helped develop the approach to this event and make it more effective.

Kate Arnold-Forster said that "we have benefited hugely from having diverse employees – we understand more about different audiences we work with, they've transformed our outlook and I hope we have transformed theirs." Matthew said "the two Diversity trainees have been brilliant" and also felt that the museums have learnt more about the importance of workforce and volunteering diversity which they will use in the future.

Alison: "I think both trainees have thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the project and developed as a result. [...] Their willingness to try anything and everything, to get involved has helped them make the best of the opportunities. [...] I think they have both become well-liked and respected colleagues and I am extremely sad that they are leaving us."

7.7 MERL and Reading Museum are Working in a Strategic Partnership

Reaching the short-term outcomes

Short-term outcome	Outcome met?	Evidence / Comments
The two museums have created a mutually beneficial and strong working partnership	Yes	The project has delivered outcomes for both museums, with new and stronger relationships between staff (identified in the staff workshop), and will be building on this as a NPO
The two museums sharing data	Yes	Sharing data on project management e.g. through Trello
Shared evaluation questions/both collecting similar data	Not yet	The museums are planning on developing this early on in the NPO programme
Able to demonstrate the value of joint working	In part	The project team and staff have fed back many benefits they perceive from joint working, although many are intangible and hard to quantify, measure or demonstrate

Reflections

The project has built on the museums' previous project work together, and informed the NPO programme. Kate Arnold-Forster felt that "the project worked really well as a partnership" was one of the main areas that have worked well on the project and that "this has been the project where people have got to know each other." In the staff evaluation workshop staff mentioned "getting to know new people and working across teams" and "information sharing" as key positives with the project.

Matthew Williams agreed and says the project has worked well as a partnership and there is now more of a "collegiate feel". He also found that the Agile way of working has worked across the two organisations.

However there is an acknowledgement that the museums could have done more projects that were genuinely joined up between the two museums – Matthew Williams mentioned this in his interview and it came up in the staff evaluation workshop.

As previously mentioned, the museums have not set up shared systems to evaluate audiences.

7.8 MERL and Reading Museum are at the Heart of the Delivery of Reading's Cultural Offer

Reaching the short-term outcomes

Short-term outcome	Outcome met?	Evidence / Comments
Developed a better understanding of Reading audiences	In part	Some surveys have been completed at events, but sometimes with small sample sizes and inconsistently collected and without standardised questions
Increased our network within Reading's cultural scene	In part	The museums have made some new contacts within Reading's cultural scene although many are not yet very established relationships
Able to demonstrate the value of having wider cultural networks	Yes	Reading Business Improvement District's BID's inclusion of converting Reading Prison into subsidised creative industry workspaces
Improved feedback across social media	Yes	Both museums have increased their followers and engagement on social media channels
Increased use of positive feedback from social media in marketing	In part	The MERL is in the early days of building on the success of the Absolute Unit tweet, for example introducing a line of t-shirts of the back of it. The Head of Arts Council England, Darren Henley, has tweeted support of the Twitter account, as have numerous other social media influencers, museum directors and those in the agricultural community
Positive Trip Advisor reviews	Yes	As of 20 April 2018, MERL has 114 reviews on TripAdvisor with an average rating of 4.5 out of 5, and is listed as no. 12 out of 92 things to do in Reading. Reading Museum has 303 reviews on TripAdvisor with an average rating of 4 out of 5, and is listed as no. 7 out of 92 things to do in Reading

Reflections

Matthew Williams feels that the project has had an impact locally, citing the project's influence on decision-makers and the example of discussions that took place within the executive coaching sessions as influencing senior politicians on Reading's bigger cultural picture and resulting in changed cultural and digital planning policy on the use of the Reading Prison site, and that the project has created "a ripple effect". However, he also felt that making links with creative organisations in the area was an area that the project did not quite manage.

7.9 Outcomes and impacts – overview

As the summary below shows, the vast majority of outcomes have either been met or partially met, and the only two that have not yet been met will be tackled by the museums at the start of the NPO programme.

Outcomes met	Outcomes partially met	Outcomes not yet met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23. Increased understanding of how to be relevant to our audiences 24. Increased digital reach 25. Better understanding of how to evaluate what digital activities and products work for our audiences 26. Increased confidence to take risks 27. Better understanding of what’s relevant to our audiences 28. Able to demonstrate that working with communities helps keep us relevant 29. Equipment in place to have a quality digital offer 30. Disseminate and share digital practice 31. Increased understanding of our priorities / core aims and the confidence to say, ‘No’ 32. Upskilled and empowered workforce who understand and can use digital technologies that are excellent and quality 33. We will have shared our transformation with people/the sector 34. Embedded a sharing and evaluative culture 35. Increased understanding of how to run a sustainable project 36. Be more effective with our resources 37. Better understanding of developing and delivering traineeships 38. Trainees are equipped with the skills to progress 39. We have disseminated and shared learnings from the traineeships 40. The two museums have created a mutually beneficial and strong working partnership 41. The two museums sharing data 42. Able to demonstrate the value of having wider cultural networks 43. Improved feedback across social media 44. Positive Trip Advisor reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Workflows in place to prevent poor quality work being released 11. Demonstrate the value of having paid digital staff 12. Delivered 6 excellent community projects 13. Remove the barriers to undertaking digital work 14. Be more environmentally conscious 15. Able to demonstrate the value of joint working 16. Developed a better understanding of Reading audiences 17. Increased our network within Reading’s cultural scene 18. Increased use of positive feedback from social media in marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Systems to measure diversity of audiences in place 4. Shared evaluation questions/both collecting similar data

In terms of the project's impacts, the project has already made excellent progress in meeting these already (impacts dealing with longer term change):

Project Impact	Impact met?
1. More Diverse and Greater Audiences are Engaged with our Museums	In part
2. The Quality of our Digital Offer is Consistently Excellent and Relevant to our Diverse Audiences	Yes
3. Our Museums are Leading in Cultural Digital Engagement and Practice	Yes
4. Our Museums Have Built a Reputation for Digital Workforce Transformation	In part
5. Our Museums will have More Sustainable Operating Models	Yes
6. Our Museums are Contributing to Sector Workforce Development	Yes
7. MERL and Reading Museum are Working in a Strategic Partnership	Yes
8. MERL and Reading Museum are at the Heart of the Delivery of Reading's Cultural Offer	In part

Where the impacts have not yet been met the explanations are below:

- 1. More diverse and greater audiences have attended individual events, but as the museums are not collecting visitor data across the board, it is not possible to know the impact on the museums general visitors.
- 4. A lot of staff have benefitted from training and started using new tools, equipment and approaches, but pockets of individuals remain who have not yet benefitted from the training and/or embraced digital, and building a reputation for digital workforce transformation will take time.
- 8. The museums are cultivating a role in the delivery of Reading's cultural offer, but are not yet at the heart of this.

8.0 Case Studies

The following case studies have been put together by Adam Koszary to highlight examples of the project’s achievements:

8.1 Accessible Museum

Impacts	More diverse and greater audiences are engaged with our museum
Outcomes	Increased understanding of how to be relevant to our audiences Increased understanding of how to market effectively to diverse audiences
Outputs	MERL Sensory map MERL Social Story Google Streetview Tour
Target audience	People with ASD
Overview	<p>Through attendance at conferences such as Let’s Get Real, participation in Twitter #museumhour and after canvassing various disability groups in Reading, the team decided to focus on making the museum more accessible to those with autism.</p> <p>This group was chosen as it was clear that online resources were key in preparing those with ASD for visiting the museum. People with ASD are more comfortable visiting a place if they can see what it looks like beforehand, know where there may be areas with loud noises or bright light, and to know what resources or help is available onsite.</p> <p>The project team used this project as a trial of the Sprint methodology, and set apart a week to work solely on this project. The team also worked with Dr Fiona Knott at the University of Reading’s Centre for Autism to decide on which resources were most suitable. The team then worked together to make a Google Streetview tour of the museum, a sensory map of the galleries and a social story showing what could be done in the galleries.</p> <p>The team tested the resources on families with children with ASD, as well as a group from Addington School (a school for children and young people with special educational needs). The resulting resources were released to the public on 28 March to coincide with Autism Awareness Week.</p> <p>The team tested the resources on families with children with ASD, as well as a group from Addington School (a school for children and young people with special educational needs). Feedback from the families included the following suggestions for improvements from the families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Clearer explanation of what happens when each day. And visible.” • “Sensory resources” • “Street view map was too shaky. The idea is really good but i couldn't watch it.” <p>The families also indicated that the following initiatives would make them more likely to visit The MERL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff trained in how to interact and help with those with ASD (3/3 chose)

- Activities designed for those with ASD (e.g. trails) (3/3)
- A quiet opening hour on weekends (2/3)
- Sensory backpacks (2/3)
- A quiet room (2/3)

There is [a survey](#) for improving the resources on the resulting web page.



Taking photos for Google Streetview

8.2a Reading Museum blog

Impacts	The quality of our digital offer is consistently excellent and relevant to our diverse audiences
Outcomes	Better understanding of how to evaluate what digital activities and products work for our audiences Workflows in place to prevent poor quality work being released
Outputs	Blog platform Individual blog posts
Target audience	Local audience Specific audience for each blog
Overview	<p>The project specifically paid for and implemented the blog feature of the new Reading Museum website, which was being developed as the project started.</p> <p>Consultant Anna Faherty was brought in to run two blogging workshops which explored how to generate blogging ideas, best practice and how to write for different audiences.</p> <p>The team built on these workshops by launching their own bi-monthly blogging workshops for Reading Museum staff, where colleagues brainstorm blog ideas, write to marketing personas and refine their titles. These blogs are then scheduled on Trello, and each person has a blog buddy to edit their blogs before publication. Each post comes with two Facebook posts and tweets.</p> <p>Blogs are notoriously difficult to maintain, but Reading Museum staff have consistently produced high-quality blogs, for which they have considered who they are writing for and why.</p>



Blog ideas workshop

8.2b The Absolute Unit

Impacts	The quality of our digital offer is consistently excellent and relevant to our diverse audiences
Outcomes	Increased understanding of how to be relevant to our audiences Increased understanding of how to market effectively to diverse audiences Better understanding of how to evaluate what digital activities and products work for our audiences
Outputs	Social media output
Target audience	Global audience on Twitter
Overview	<p>On 9 April 2018 The MERL <u>tweeted an image</u> of an Exmoor Horn ram with the caption 'look at this absolute unit'. This tweet and the subsequent Twitter campaign went globally viral. The image was found while searching for something relevant to #NationalUnicornDay on the MERL's Digital Asset Management System, using the keyword 'horn'. The image used in the tweet was digitised in 2008 as part of a JISC-funded project digitising the Farmer and Stockbreeder photographic collection in the MERL archive. The caption used is a reference to an existing online meme.</p> <p>The initial tweet and subsequent campaign (including <u>a blog post about the ram</u>) resulted in more than 22,000 more followers to The MERL's Twitter account (128% increase from January 2017); a staggering 28,185% increase of the number of engagements (1,587,067) compared to the average of the previous 16 months; 40,000 visits to The MERL website in April 2018 (no comparison data from April 2017) of which 12,000 were to the blog which had posts about the ram in tweet.</p> <p>The MERL's Twitter account is now par with or exceeds the followers of museums such as Leeds Museums, Pitt Rivers, London Transport Museum and Bristol Museum.</p> <p>The case study is due to be featured in the Trendswatch section of the Museums Journal, has already featured in academic presentations such as the Natural Sciences Collections Association Conference and will be featured as a case study in the National Archives' Action Plan for the Archives sector. The MERL has been approached to take over the popular Farmers of the UK Twitter account, to host an 'Ask Me Anything' session on reddit.com, and to contribute to the Museums Association conference and The Archers conference.</p> <p>The MERL has also launched a T-shirt with the viral image on it and has sold over 300 copies to date (mid-May 2018).</p> <p>To date it is unclear how much impact the tweet will have on physical visitors to the Museum (time will tell), but certainly the increase in digital audiences and engagement is undeniable.</p>



The Museum of English Rural Life ✓

@TheMERL

Following

look at this absolute unit.



3:52 PM - 9 Apr 2018

30,768 Retweets 107,487 Likes



766 31K 107K

 Tweet your reply



The Museum of English Rural Life ✓ @TheMERL · Apr 9

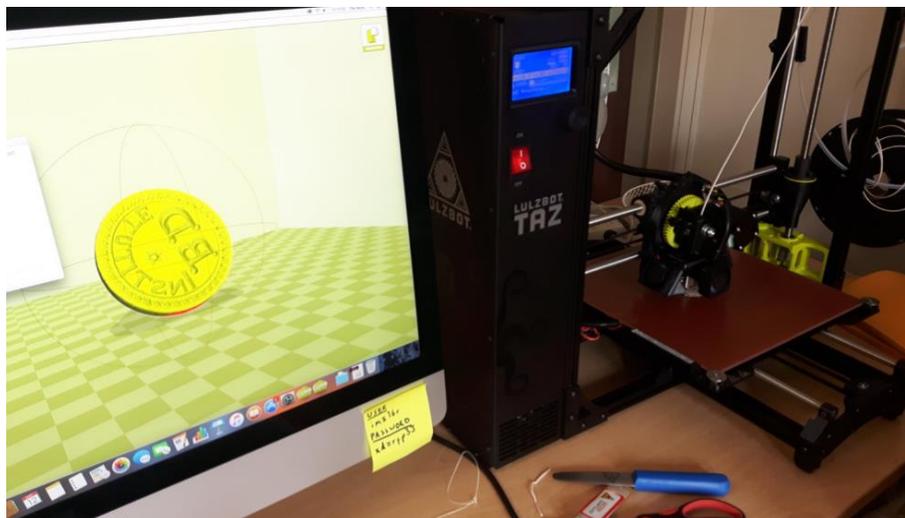
This unit in particular was an Exmoor Horn aged ram, owned by G.F. Thorne, The Barton, Simonsbath, Minehead, Somerset.

(P FS PH1/K90651)

The Absolute Unit tweet

8.3 3D school trial

Impacts	Our museums are leading in cultural digital engagement and practice
Outcomes	Delivered excellent community projects Disseminate and share digital practice [blog]
Outputs	Evaluation report 3D scans 3D prints
Target audience	Secondary school students Teachers
Overview	<p>The team attended the Highdown Secondary school science fair in Caversham to experiment with a variety of different 3D technologies.</p> <p>The team ran workshops for three different secondary school age classes, rotating groups around three activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3D scanning using an iPad app Trnio. Students 3D scanned objects from Reading Abbey, and also explored the British Museum’s collections on Sketchfab • Exploring the idea of authenticity in objects by handling a real medieval tile from Reading Abbey, a 3D printed version and a 3D scan of the object on Sketchfab. Each version of the object was revealed in turn and a discussion had about the pros and cons of each type • Having a student from each group put on a VR headset with a 360-degree image of the Reading Abbey ruins, and have them try to describe to their group what they could see. Students then brainstormed what they would like to experience in VR <p>A blog post has summarised the session and links to the evaluation report.</p>



3D printing at Highdown School

8.4 Digital Audit and Digital Dens

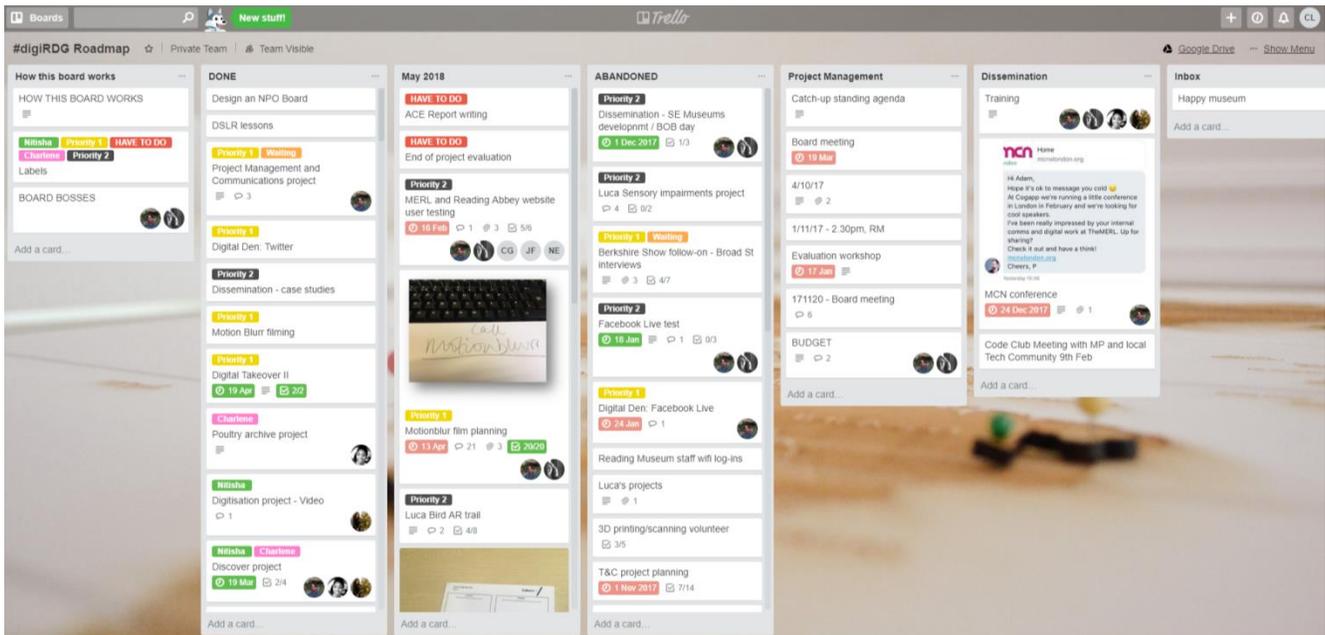
Impacts	Our museums have built a reputation for digital workforce transformation
Outcomes	Remove the barriers to undertaking digital work Upskilled and empowered workforce who understand and can use digital technologies that are excellent and quality The workforce is keeping up-to-date with digital changes Increased confidence to keep up with sector developments
Outputs	Nine workshops Equipment cupboard
Target audience	Staff
Overview	<p>At the beginning of the project a Digital Audit was conducted of staff across both museums, assessing the digital capabilities, skills and confidence of colleagues. The results of this audit informed the action plan for the rest of the project, including the staff training elements.</p> <p>As a direct result of the audit the team instituted a monthly training workshop called the Digital Den, which brings in speakers from the wider sector on topics such as 3D printing and Wikipedia, but also runs internal workshops focusing on topics such as Instagram and photography.</p> <p>Staff from both museums were also given access to Skillshare, an online skills website which allows staff to train at their own pace. While take-up was low during the beginning of the project, Skillshare has now been adopted by The MERL Archive team as one of the main ways they learn new skills.</p> <p>To make sure staff could put their skills to use, the project also invested in a suite of equipment for both museums to loan out, and two phones/tablets per museum connected to the internet.</p> <p>Evaluation has shown that staff welcome the workshops and learn new things, and have put their skills to use in making their own videos, contributing to Instagram, writing blogs, making 3D scans and taking their own photos for social media.</p>



Digital Den training

8.5 Trello

Impacts	Our museums will have more sustainable operating models
Outcomes	Increased understanding of how to run a sustainable project Be more effective with our resources Be more environmentally conscious
Outputs	Trello system of project management Strategy paper
Target audience	Staff
Overview	<p>For this we took sustainability to mean the reduction of paper, but also the adoption of digital products in line with changes to how we work.</p> <p>Trello is now the official system for tracking and managing work both individually and across teams at Reading Museum.</p> <p>Trello makes us more sustainable because it helps us adopt a more digital mindset, where we test early, continuously evaluate and are empowered to make useful changes of direction in our projects. It has filled in some organisational gaps by providing us with a roadmap, a way of tracking blogs and a social media scheduling board.</p>



A screngrab of the #DigiRDG Trello board

8.6 Traineeships

Impacts	Our museums are contributing to sector workforce development
Outcomes	Better understanding of developing and delivering traineeships Trainees are equipped with the skills to progress We have disseminated and shared learnings from the traineeships [will be done]
Outputs	Two traineeships completed Trainees have new jobs [Charlene so far]
Target audience	Museum sector
Overview	<p>The evaluation and write-up of our Traineeship programme will make a useful contribution to the sector’s approach to diversifying its workforce.</p> <p>The team took on board advice from the wider sector to give the trainees ownership of their training and work. The trainees attended regular 1-1’s and reviews to ensure they were getting the experience they needed to move into another job within the heritage sector.</p> <p>One of the trainees, Charlene Marriott, has moved into a new four-year role beginning in May 2018 at the Midlands Arts Centre in Birmingham as an Administrator in their Music department.</p> <p>Adam felt that the project gave the trainees “a good grounding” and were a “good success”. Alison felt that “they [the trainees] could not have had better all-round experience,” although the traineeships could have been more structured at the outset. This latter point was echoed by the two trainees.</p> <p>The museums have also benefitted in various ways, for example from the practical support the trainees provided. Staff at the evaluation workshop provided examples of the support the trainee provided on the museum websites and also on Takeover Day where the trainees helped develop the approach to this event and make it more effective.</p> <p>Kate Arnold-Forster said that “we have benefitted hugely from having diverse employees – we understand more about different audiences we work with, they’ve transformed our outlook and I hope we have transformed theirs.”</p> <p>Matthew said “the two Diversity trainees have been brilliant” and also felt that the museums have learnt more about the importance of workforce and volunteering diversity which they will use in the future.</p> <p>The traineeships, however, were not without their own failures. We missed the opportunity to allow the trainees to meaningfully change how the two museums could become more diverse in a variety of ways – for instance, how they work with communities, how they give diverse voices a say in how the museums operate, the diversity of their digital content etc. The failures complement the successes of the programme to show the way in which other museums could run a similar programme.</p>



Trainees Charlene (right) and Nitisha (left)

8.7 Executive coaching

Impacts	MERL and Reading Museum are working in a strategic partnership
Outcomes	The two museums have created a mutually beneficial and strong working partnership
Outputs	Two workshops One trip to Bristol One article [forthcoming]
Target audience	Staff
Overview	<p>Senior colleagues from both Reading Borough Council (RBC) and the University of Reading were brought together in two workshops examining the digital mission of the partnership.</p> <p>The workshops resulted in a variety of outputs from participants, such as the sharing of RBC marketing personas with the team, and include a written digital vision. A fact-finding trip to Bristol Culture and Pervasive Media Studio generated enthusiasm for the promotion of subsidised creative industry workspaces in Reading. A follow-up trip to Bristol was also made to learn more of how Bristol Culture's e-commerce.</p> <p>The bringing together of senior staff from both institutions has led to greater engagement on other shared projects, such as the Great Places scheme and the Creative Canal project. For the latter, it was a direct result of our workshops that resulted in the BID's (the Business Improvement District) inclusion of converting Reading Prison into subsidised creative industry workspaces.</p>



Executive coaching workshop at Pervasive Media Studio, Bristol

8.8 Digital Takeover Lates

Impacts	MERL and Reading Museum are at the heart of the delivery of Reading’s cultural offer
Outcomes	The two museums have created a mutually beneficial and strong working partnership
Outputs	Two Digital Takeover Late events
Target audience	Local cultural stakeholders Local communities
Overview	<p>The MERL has been running Late events to attract visitors in the 18-30 age bracket since 2016, and the #DigiRDG team organised one on the theme of digital for May 2017.</p> <p>There is currently no other event aimed at this age bracket in the cultural scene of Reading, with a wide mix of activities, talks, music, drinks and the opportunity to visit the museum after hours. The #digiRDG team brought in project partners including members of the local hackspace rLab, academics from the University of Reading, the University’s ArtLab, local arts group Jelly and many more. The event attracted 205 attendees for the evening.</p> <p>All but one of the guests said that they would either come to another MERL Late or recommend it to a friend. One participant comment was “The atmosphere was great and the mix of people quite fascinating. Obviously the digital theme lends itself to interactivity and, I suspect, a cool crowd.”</p>



Digital Late event, May 2017

9.0 Lessons Learned

9.1 Project scope

A clear lesson that the project team and museum directors agree on is that the project was too ambitious in its aims, or as Adam says “we took on too much.” Adam says there were four big strands which each could have been a project on its own – community, culture, marketing and traineeships – and says a lesson learnt is “don’t try to achieve too much.” Alison ended up spending more than the one day per week scheduled on the project and feels that she should have been seconded, covered or backfilled to pick up what she was no longer able to do in her main marketing role, since some of the marketing work suffered as a result of the time spent on the project. Kate said that there was not enough capacity to do it all, and that some of the projects were dependent on being able to build on external relationships which take longer to cultivate.

Linked to this was the need to have had “more clarity at the start about what we felt we were doing” (Matthew Williams) and that the project should have taken the decision to drop some elements of the project earlier than they eventually did (in December 2017). Alison Hilton agreed, that the team “should have organized reviews for bigger pictures earlier.” With the NPO Matthew says that the team will need to have regular meetings and quickly be able to spot what is going well and not, and whether they need to revisit anything.

Alison reflects that “I thought we’d do these big showcase projects but actually where we’ve been more successful is in getting involved in a smaller way in existing projects and how a few more digital skills or a dimension would improve them” and “Our skillset meant it was easier to enhance existing projects rather than do new that would have needed an audience development officer.” Some of these were opportunities that came up, and not planned as part of the project. For example Reading University history students were researching anarchy and they were shown the project’s equipment (such as an iMac, camera). As a result they made a film which was subsequently shown to the Vice Chancellor.

9.2 Project management

The project team found the logic model “essential” (Adam) and that using it as a review tool to check back and check on progress was useful (Alison).

Kate Arnold-Forster feels it would have been useful to have a longer time to develop, run and reflect on the project due to its complexities.

Lessons learned identified in the staff evaluation workshop also included themes on project management:

- More realistic project planning
- Continuous project review

9.3 Communication

The staff workshop raised the issue of needing better communication about when to do things.

Adam: “we could have done a bit better with internal communication. A lot of people have a different interpretation of what digital means (e.g. training, a tablet). Not everyone saw the reports. We could have given more talks but it’s hard to get people together.”

Adam noted that “bringing the whole organisation with you is important. We did a lot of hearts and minds work in the beginning”. People were worried about it the project at the start, for example about using Twitter.

Kate also feels that it was hard with “projects operating as projects” – it was challenging at times as the project was about the whole organisation, so hard for the project team to capture the attention of everyone and for people to spend time on the project. The lesson for the NPO which is a programme is that “we try to explain it’s embedded across the organisation.”

9.4 Training

Many of the lessons learned that were shared during the staff evaluation workshop related to digital training:

- Record and reuse and repeat training
- Planning training in advance, giving people more notice
- More routine and repeated training
- Plan with your teams on how to use training
- Feature digital in inductions
- Make sure no-one is left behind
- Problems around training and time – have a staff development hour
- Need mandatory, tailored, useful training
- Dedicated time for training
- Champions to train colleagues

9.5 Traineeships

There was agreement from staff and the trainees that the traineeships could have had more structure at the outset, although to some extent the traineeships were intentionally flexible in order for them to be shaped by the trainees' own interests. The trainees needed a lot of direction and guidance at the outset and it was the first time Adam and Alison have had management responsibility, so they could maybe have had more support (Kate).

10.0 Project Legacies

The project's legacies are listed below, under the categories that staff came up with in the staff evaluation workshop which used the ToP Consensus Workshop method:

10.1 Defining the purpose: Digital engagement

Staff at the evaluation workshop contributed the following examples:

- Acquire digital tools and skills to use them – transforms public engagement
- A menu of digital activities that have been tested and could be repeated e.g. clubs
- Widening external audience – social media, blogging, monetisation? 'The power of social media'
- New online audiences
- Blogging and social media. Repurposing existing content for blogs
- Reading Museum website and blog
- Reading Museum blog

10.2 Internal cultural change

One of the strongest legacies that came up in the evaluation workshop was centred on a culture change at the museums, with examples given as:

- Change of culture: positive attitude towards change
- Confidence to embrace projects e.g. Let's Get Real
- Change of Culture: more open mindset towards tech (staff / Reading Borough Council / University of Reading)
- Culture of training and learning
- Fewer barriers to trying new things (take risks)
- Successful museum traineeships
- Ideas for implementing future training sessions

Examples cited by the project team include Adam saying that the project has "tackled a lot of structural issues that wouldn't have been tackled otherwise, for example standards of project management." And Kate commented that the project "brought about behaviour and practice change." Linked to this is Kate's assertion that "we definitely feel we've been changed after this project," that MERL's "image has really changed," the project "forced us to work differently after re-opening" and that "it has shifted us in how we see ourselves."

Adam said the project has been "disruptive" and "we haven't solved everything but we have shaken things up." In a blog post he wrote: "By getting people to work on Slack and Trello we are embedding a way of working that is collaborative, open and iterative. I think this is what I've heard referred to as the digital mode of working, but all I know is it breaks down silos, makes our work visible and makes us more democratic."¹

A digital culture has been embedded beyond the project team – for example evidenced by the widespread use of Trello, the use of the new technology, the widespread contributions to blogs and social media. A monthly

¹ <https://medium.com/merl-rm-blogtest/communication-communication-communication-slacking-and-trelloing-in-our-museums-85efa1cb55d2>

digital working group involving the project team and other staff members was set up which will carry on for various projects during the NPO programme.

However the project trainees and several archive staff who have taken on the new digital culture are due to leave shortly, taking their digital expertise with them. The project team are intending on completing handbooks and how-to guides in the coming months, to facilitate easier and more independent use of digital and technology, and this will help to counter the risk of digital expertise leaving the museums, as well as the incorporation of digital responsibilities into job descriptions across the board.

10.3 External perceptions and relationships

Staff at the evaluation workshop contributed the following examples:

- Changing perceptions of the museums – moving with the times
- Building new relationships
- More working with leaders in specific industries e.g. film / audio / blogging
- Influencing cultural change and improvement in Reading
- Co-production.

10.4 Partnerships

Staff at the evaluation workshop contributed the following examples:

- MERL & RM collaboration: knowing people / personal relationships, widens skills' pool, Trello
- Partnership between The MERL and RM
- Starting NPO from a better place.

Kate Arnold-Forster said that the project “has proved that we [The MERL] can work effectively with Reading Museum” and that the project has been “an important testbed for the NPO”.

Alison Hilton said that having the NPO programme starting back-to-back with the #DigiRDG project means it can “run seamlessly” which “helps with embedding everything.” Matthew explains that “now we know that we want the programme manager of the NPO to be a digital lead [...]digital is there in the centre of the NPO.”

10.4 Digital tools

Staff at the evaluation workshop contributed the following examples:

- Digital communication tools: reduced meetings and emails, improved project planning and efficiency
- Trello: a new way of structuring work, projects and programmes
- Trello: a shared platform for working across two organisations
- Project management tools – Trello
- Trello: collaboration and communication, online (available), fulfils a need
- Digital tool to use in all work – doesn't stand alone
- An arsenal of new technology

10.5 Digital skills

Staff at the evaluation workshop contributed the following examples:

- Staff training on how to use arsenal of new technology
- Embedding digital skills
- A more shared level of understanding of digital
- Digital at the start of things – not an afterthought

A staff member shared that she felt there were “amazing transformations in people.” There are some great examples of how staff have benefitted from training in digital skills and how these are being built on and embedded. For example, the Archives team has incorporated Skillshare into their monthly training, and Charlene Marriott’s new skills helped her secure a new job.

11.0 Building on legacies

Staff who attended the evaluation workshop came up with the following ideas for how the two museums can build on the #DigiRDG project:

- Have staff time / roles dedicated to digital – not an add-on
- RM and MERL collaboration
- Outreach can now be delivered professionally
- Share the team’s skills (e.g. YouTube how-to videos)
- Equipment that can be used
- Challenge or opportunity for mainstreaming: training; communications; recording outcomes; statistics; collective responsibility; tools, skills, confidence; designated role to monitor / mandate training
- Holistic approach
- Structured training plan
- Involve libraries and archives across Reading
- Revisit Town + Country project ideas and include in NPO programming
- Monetise – e-commerce
- Digital marketing – plan and implement

The museums are in a good position to further embed a digital culture, method of working and skills and expertise thanks to the NPO programme that is now starting. As Alison said: “we’ve spent 18 months testing things out and experimenting. We now know what works.” This work will benefit from the consistency in having Adam Koszary continuing as a digital lead and champion working across both organisations.

Where the #DigiRDG project has not met all of its objectives or outcomes, there are plans to tackle these in coming months. For example, the teams are planning to set up a new visitor survey for the NPO that aligns with the data that Arts Council England needs; and marketing manager Alison will be funded by the NPO to write a digital marketing strategy for both museums.

12.0 Conclusion

12.1 The project

The #DigiRDG project was an ambitious and multi-faceted project which was refined and developed as it progressed.

The vast majority of the project's outcomes were delivered, with some underway or delivered to some extent, and those that were not delivered being rolled over into the NPO programme – for example standardising visitor data collection.

12.2 The project team

The enthusiasm and determination of the project team has shone through, as has their willingness to share their experiences and lessons learned with the wider museums sector in numerous in-depth and honest blog posts and now as the project has concluded, at events and conferences, helping to spread their lessons learned throughout the sector.

The project team showed a pragmatic and flexible approach as the project developed, honing in on the museums' and staff's key strengths, prioritising activities and focusing on completing these. For example, the project undertook or boosted several smaller community projects rather than create new, large and standalone initiatives due to time available and staff skillsets. The team acknowledges that the project was over-ambitious at the outset, that they were at times too thinly spread and that time constraints thwarted the delivery of all the intended activities and outcomes. The issue of a lack of time also affected the wider group of staff, many of whom reflected that a lack of time had hampered their ability to take part in digital training run as part of the project.

The team concedes it would have been beneficial to drop some activities (for example developing Future Learn courses) earlier than they eventually did (December 2017 review meeting). As the project developed, they identified the most successful and relevant ways to make an impact and work smarter, for example by contributing and improving existing events and activities rather than creating new ones from scratch.

12.3 Staff

Most staff members have also shown an appetite for digital, embracing the new possibilities and opportunities digital brings. However, some pockets of individuals remain who have not taken part in training for various reasons or been closely involved in the project so are at risk of being left behind unless they receive more support and encouragement (something which will be tackled in the coming months).

As a result of the project's experimentation and willingness to try new things and evaluating their endeavours, staff now have a better idea of what works and what does not work, which can translate into a running start in delivering the NPO programme.

Staff have developed their digital skills and confidence and also now have a library of equipment to draw on. The team's approach to digital also seems to have evolved. In the staff workshop a point was raised about including digital at the start of things, not as an afterthought, and as project manager Adam Koszary said: "digital should support everything rather than being an end in itself." And as The MERL museum director Kate Arnold-Forster said "you don't have to be enormous to do this sort of thing" – digital can be implemented and championed by any sized organization.

The staff workshop demonstrated unanimity in the identification of the project's main impacts, lessons learned and legacies, despite staff representing different departments and having different experiences of the project. A major impact identified in the staff workshop and in interviews with the project team and museum directors was that of a culture change in the museum, for example a more open mindset towards technology, a confidence to embrace projects, a culture of training and learning, and fewer barriers to trying new things and taking risks.

12.4 Culture change

Certainly many of the key project outcomes relate to the museums internally – this culture change, skills development, the equipment library, the experimentation and lessons from this. Staff have hailed the adoption and roll-out of Trello as a project management tool a success, as it has helped to structure and streamline work and facilitate easier sharing, collaboration and communication within and between the museums. At the presentation of the project's evaluation to staff, staff reflected they were more likely to say “yes” now, to trust colleagues and have more confidence in taking risks.

12.5 Audiences

The project has run or contributed to a wide variety of events and community activities for a range of different audiences, with good successes and useful feedback. Many events engaged with new and more diverse audiences, for example the Digital Late Takeover, BrewUp and Code Club. However, the project did not develop a system to measure the diversity of the museums' audiences (which will now be done during the NPO programme, using The Audience Agency's Visitor Finder programme), and there is therefore no evidence yet that there has been a step change in the diversity of the museum's audiences across the board. The exception being The MERL's online audiences, which have hugely expanded and diversified thanks to the viral social media hit The Absolute Unit.

It seems fitting that this success came at the end of the project, as it sums up and symbolises many of the project's main achievements which played a part in this social media feat: enthusiasm and passion, team effort, preparation, an understanding of what audiences want and how to respond to this, confidence, timeliness, as well as resourcefulness and opportunism.

12.6 Going forward

The project is well on the way to tackling all of the elements in the problem statement it identified at the outset:

“Our audiences are not as diverse as we'd like and our digital behaviour is not as effective as we'd like, which could lead to irrelevance, being left behind and, ultimately, not being sustainable.”

However achieving this does not end with the project's completion, it is an ongoing journey which will need to be built on and sustained.

The real test will come in the coming years when time passes, staff change and new technologies and applications emerge – is the culture change embedded with The MERL and Reading Museum, and can it be sustained? Unlike many short-term projects which come and go with project staff who then move on, The MERL and Reading Museum have a great opportunity to continue to build on the success of the #DigiRDG project thanks to the NPO programme which involves the two museums continuing to work together, and a digital lead role for the project manager. In fact, there is more of a digital presence in the NPO programme as a

result of the project. As staff members said, the project has been “an important testbed for the NPO” and “we’ve spent 18 months testing things out and experimenting. We now know what works”.

Some final quotes from staff members which provide a good conclusion to the project and report are:

- “digital should support everything rather than being an end in itself”
- “digital at the start of things, not as an afterthought”.

13.0 Appendix: Logic model

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES		IMPACTS
		Short-term (achieved by the end of the project)	Long-term (achieved in 3-5 years)	
Link participatory programmes for harder-to-reach audiences back to the theme of town and country	2 participatory programmes for harder-to-reach audiences with 'town and country' theme	Increased understanding of how to be relevant to our audiences	Increased relevance to our audiences Increased number of on-site visitors Increased diversity of audiences Increased online engagement Our marketing is effective for diverse audiences	1. More diverse and greater audiences are engaged with our museum
Explore Town and Country values to link collections to current issues: - Identify potential project partners - Develop a content plan for the project social media - Berkshire County Show stand - The Great Debate - Develop a course outline for FutureLearn - Temporary exhibition gallery, Reading Museum	Potential project partners identified e.g. Happy Museum Project, Common Cause 1 content plan developed Attendance at Berkshire County Show 1 Great Debate 1 outline for FutureLearn course written and proposed 1 temporary exhibition gallery at Reading Museum			
Create a series of Pinterest boards for teachers (Reading Museum only) - Develop a content plan based on existing education resources - Launch the first boards - Include in all marketing materials for schools	Pinterest boards created, launched and marketed; 1 content plan developed			
Advanced training in digital marketing for project lead	General Assembly Course/Target Internet completed			

		diverse audiences		
Relaunch The MERL email program: - Select accessible web-based service - Reconfirm existing subscribers and promote to targeted lists of Reading Arts and University of Reading subscribers - Drive sign ups from social media and the website - Capture email addresses and post codes for on-site visitors	6 e-newsletters sent TBC number of new subscribers (Existing subscribers = 2000) ?% (TBC) of existing subscribers reconfirmed 80% of post codes captured	Increased digital reach		
Generate more content for Facebook (particularly through Facebook Instant Articles and Facebook Live)	Blog integrated with Facebook Instant Articles Pilot of Facebook Live			
Work with the FOH staff with aim of having self-selecting visitors survey in the welcome area	System to measure diversity of audiences	Systems to measure diversity of audiences in place		

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES		IMPACTS
		Short-term (achieved by the end of the project)	Long-term (achieved in 3-5 years)	
Digital advisory board	1 digital advisory board created 2-3 events organised	Better understanding of how to evaluate what digital activities and products work for our audiences Increased confidence to take risks Better understanding of what's relevant to our audiences Able to demonstrate that working with communities helps keep us relevant	Better understanding of what works and what doesn't so we can better understand what digital to invest in. A paid digital person will monitor audiences and relevance in relation to digital. Established a way of getting regular feedback from audiences to help keep us relevant.	2. The quality of our digital offer is consistently excellent and relevant to our diverse audiences
Continuously evaluate new initiatives	1 evaluation report; 3 review and reflection meetings; continual evaluation throughout project	Workflows in place to prevent poor quality work being released		
Library of hardware to support training and digital engagement programmes (agreement governing use)	Equipment purchased (list TBC)	Equipment in place to have a quality digital offer	A commitment to resourcing a quality digital offer will be embedded at the museum	

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES		IMPACTS
		Short-term (achieved by the end of the project)	Long-term (achieved in 3-5 years)	
Community projects	6 community projects	Delivered excellent community projects	Best practice embedded at the museums	3. Our museums are leading in cultural digital engagement and practice
Identify case studies	At least 6 case studies identified, including at least 1 film case study	Disseminate and share digital practice e.g. give papers, Museums Computer Group, blogs	Being recognised as being good at digital engagement	
Project team working on digital projects	Amount of time project staff spend on digital and skills required; job description for digital staff role	Demonstrate the value of having paid digital staff	Paid digital post	

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES		IMPACTS
		Short-term (achieved by the end of the project)	Long-term (achieved in 3-5 years)	
Install free wifi at Reading Museum	Free wifi installed	Remove the barriers to undertaking digital work	A culture of digital is embedded in the museums Our museums will be adaptable to further digital change Less project-based work; more embedded work	4. Our museums have built a reputation for digital workforce transformation
Develop the websites: - Integrate blogs - Improved photography (Reading Museum) - Responsive exhibition trails (MERL)	Two websites developed At least 2 day photographs in a number of areas (Reading Museum) 2 responsive exhibition trails (MERL)			
Executive coaching	1 leadership retreat			
Digital production training	Number TBC Skillshare courses undertaken by staff 3D training delivered by Museum in a Box Evaluate staff training using Skillshare dashboard			
1:1 coaching in digital presence for museum Heads	10 monthly sessions with project lead	Increased understanding of our priorities/core aims and the confidence to say, "No". Upskilled and empowered workforce who understand and can use digital technologies that are excellent and quality	Induction and continual digital training programme embedded at the museums. The workforce is keeping up-to-date with digital changes The workforce is proactively looking for new digital ways in which to work Increased confidence to keep up with sector developments	
Digital skills surgeries	10 monthly sessions with project team and guest speakers			
Update job descriptions for all staff to embed digital responsibilities	Address digital skills and engagement as part of regular appraisals process Issue updated job descriptions			
Identify case studies	At least 6 case studies identified			
		We will have shared our transformation with people/the sector	Embedded a sharing and evaluative culture	

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES		IMPACTS
		Short-term (achieved by the end of the project)	Long-term (achieved in 3-5 years)	
Adopt agile project management methodology	On-site workshop with Being Agile	Increased understanding of how to run a sustainable project	The lessons learnt on his project will have helped us to secure future funding	5. Our museums will have more sustainable operating models
Document daily and weekly digital workflows	Create user stories for 5-10 digital workflows	Be more effective with our resources	Continually making the best use of our resources	
Issue new requirements document to technology partners (Reading Museum)	1 new requirements document created and issued	Be more environmentally conscious		
Develop digital operations handbook for staff	1 digital operations handbook developed			

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES		IMPACTS
		Short-term (achieved by the end of the project)	Long-term (achieved in 3-5 years)	
Two traineeships	2 traineeships created and completed	<p>Better understanding of developing and delivering traineeships</p> <p>Trainees are equipped with the skills to progress</p> <p>We have disseminated and shared learnings from the traineeships</p>	<p>The museums continue to offer traineeships</p> <p>The museums are able to advocate for having trainees</p> <p>The museums are recognised in the sector as having an excellent traineeship model</p>	6. Our museums are contributing to sector workforce development

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES		IMPACTS
		Short-term (achieved by the end of the project)	Long-term (achieved in 3-5 years)	
Use common tools and services for project collaboration	2 tools in place e.g. Glasscubes, Slack, Asana	<p>The two museums have created a mutually beneficial and strong working partnership</p> <p>The two museums sharing data</p> <p>Shared evaluation questions/both collecting similar data</p>	<p>Embedded a culture of partnership working (leading to NPO bid)</p> <p>Increased understanding of each other's organisations</p> <p>Process for joint working embedded at the museums</p>	7. MERL and Reading Museum are working in a strategic partnership
Shared hashtags to cross-promote the two museums: - #MuseumSwap - #QuickestRoute - #TownandCountry	3 shared hashtags created and used by both museums	Able to demonstrate the value of joint working		
Joint project (#Reading: Town & Country)	Project completed			

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES		IMPACTS
		Short-term (achieved by the end of the project)	Long-term (achieved in 3-5 years)	
Attend meetings and networking events with local cultural organisations	Meetings / events attended at: - Reading Arts and Heritage Forum - Geek Nights - Cultural Quarter meetings	<p>Developed a better understanding of Reading audiences</p> <p>Increased our network within Reading's cultural scene</p> <p>Able to demonstrate the value of having wider cultural networks</p> <p>Improved feedback across social media</p> <p>Increased use of positive feedback from social media in marketing</p>	<p>The museums have an offer that's relevant to Reading audiences</p> <p>The museums actively participating in wider cultural activities in Reading</p> <p>The museums seen as 'go-to' cultural destinations</p>	8. MERL and Reading Museum are at the heart of the delivery of Reading's cultural offer
Work with local partners to run community events (e.g. Jelly)	Work with (number TBC) community partners	Positive Trip Advisor reviews		
Feature weekly adverts about MERL in Reading Arts Weekly What's On & ad-hoc emails for specific events, such as Lates	1 advert per week; Reach 16,000 people via Reading Arts Weekly What's On			