

Regional Development Challenge Fund

Digital Resource Development Team Changing the way museums work

August 2004



Regional Digital Resource Development Team

1. Summary

Through the appointment of two project officers with appropriate knowledge, skills and experience, the project will support:

- The digital publishing of exhibitions, publications and learning resources
- Training and skills development for paid and volunteer staff in partner museums in digital/web publishing

Digital publishing will help to:

- Preserve the fruits of research and collecting undertaken for temporary exhibitions, and making them permanently available
- Engage visitors
- Find wider audiences
- Increase the reach of museums and availability of material
 - Geographically
 - Over time

Development opportunities for museum staff will help build:

- **Skills:** the knowledge required to create their own digital resources in future
- **Confidence:** to build on those skills, expanding their abilities into new areas
- **Knowledge:** of what the technologies can (and can't) achieve, how they work, and how they may fail
- **Understanding:** the technologies underlying the provision of web content
- Leaving staff also better placed to commission work from suppliers without being overwhelmed by jargon

Long-term sustainability will be enhanced, especially for smaller, volunteer-reliant partners:

- Keeping down costs by promoting the use of affordable software solutions
- The promotion of simpler, low-cost solutions, appropriate to the scale of the particular project and the partner organisations

The team approach will promote collaboration and the sharing of best practice, and provide a mechanism for strategic action to secure further benefits and enhance the long-term sustainability of the partnership.

Details of lead organisation and partners

East Lothian Council Museums Service has had considerable experience in leading projects of this type, having been the lead partner in two large digitisation projects funded by NOF-Digi (as a partner in the RLS super-consortium): SHELF (a partnership of five local authorities) and Scotland's East Coast Fisheries (a

partnership involving every LA on the east coast, together with the National Archives, the University of Aberdeen and the Scottish Fisheries Museum), which between them produced some 13,200 digital resources, 80 education resource packs and 6 web site 'essays'. The latter can be seen at www.historyshelf.org. The service has also been involved in a number of other major digital projects funded by Scran, as well as pioneering the use of mobile phone technology for guided tours (see <http://tour.prestongrange.org/>).

Almond Valley Heritage Trust will be a source of significant support for the project. The Trust has been involved in the production of digital interpretive media since the mid-1990s, and through a succession of projects, have developed a range of gallery interactives, and delivered two multimedia essays for Scran. An Interpret Britain and a Scottish Museum of the Year award were received for these works. The Trust has recently completed 'Commercial Breaks', a project co-funded by SMC and HLF to involve children in the production of multimedia products, and maintains an extensive website, illustrating the work and activities of the museum.

A list of project partners can be Appendix 1, but includes the following local authority museums services: City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Fife, Scottish Borders and West Lothian. Independent museums and other institutions throughout Scottish Borders, the Lothians and Fife have indicated their desire to participate.

2. Strategic background

'The Scottish Executive is committed to ensuring that technology is used innovatively to support high quality, efficient public services in Scotland.'
(Information Age Government in Scotland)

As noted in the SMC ICT Strategy for Museums, *'Scottish museums have led the way in the use of ICT to deliver creative and cutting edge electronic services'*. But a survey of ICT usage and training needs by SMC indicated that for most museums use of and training in ICT remained at a basic level. Substantial scope still exists for developing the use made of ICT, and in particular to disseminate skills and knowledge to those partners currently making little or no use of ICT in delivering services.

A national emphasis on the use of ICT in museums will be reflected in the increasing priority given to ICT by SMC through its grant programme and advisory work. Developing regional partnerships in ICT has the potential to deliver outcomes of national significance.

This project will also contribute to national research and best practice to the following strategy areas:

- Understanding user needs and expectations
- Publishing museum resources on the web
- Supporting museums
- Sharing skills

Learning and Teaching Scotland

- “LT Scotland’s mission is to work with others to ensure provision, for everyone living in Scotland, of high quality opportunities for learning... LT Scotland is committed to promoting the effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) in education and learning. E-learning activities are central to our organisation and we are involved in a number of projects.” (*LTS web site*)

Digital publishing

Digital publishing enables cash-poor organisations to present their collections and research materials very widely at relatively small cost. While the last five years have seen a huge growth in the provision of content online, it has been generally the bigger institutions that have been able to take advantage of the technological opportunity. The focus has also been on the creation of publicly-searchable large-scale databases of collections, rather than the creation of themed, targeted learning resources, and with the presentation of newly-generated content.

A key aspect of this project will be the repurposing of existing content currently held by partners into publicly-accessible formats. An example of this is the Art & Design teacher pack produced with funding from Excellence in Education through Business Partnerships for the *Land of Shadows* exhibition. Over 5,000 copies of this pack have been downloaded in PDF and HTML format from the exhibition web site, a targeted distribution on a scale that could not have been achieved with a traditional print publication.

Closing the Technological Divide

Many smaller museums lack the skills and confidence to make full use of the opportunities presented by ICT, though this is an area where smaller institutions can make significant contributions, since the intellectual resources already exist and there is no need for large expenditure on capital equipment. The project will help partners to make more effective use of their resources, and in the use of technology to bring the level of the smaller or less-technologically-aware museums up to the level of the larger/more aware ones.

Community planning

Local authority partners will be required during the lifetime of this project to ensure that museum services are represented in joined-up service delivery. As there is a significant skills sharing aspect of this project the local authority

partners will have the opportunity to consider the issues raised in contributing to the framework and contribute proactively to a national agenda.

The project will allow partners to discuss common issues of concern. One of the opportunities will be to identify together how best to promote the role of museums in cultural, educational and tourism strategies.

The learning aspects of the project's work can feed directly into the community learning plan process and the touring exhibitions part into tourism strategies.

See also Appendix 2, *PEST Analysis*.

Summary

This project has the potential to deliver a range of both regional and national priorities. Most importantly it builds the capacity of museums to contribute to a wider agenda at a critical time for ICT in museums.

3. Project details

Digital technologies open many new opportunities for making museum collections accessible and understandable through publications, exhibitions, websites, and other interactive media. The partners have embraced these opportunities to varying extents, but all have identified training and development needs that cannot be addressed from existing sources. The creation of a regional digital resources team will provide a mechanism to share skills and resources, offer advice and support, and increase the overall capacity of the sector to appreciate and apply the benefits of digital technology, as well as producing a range of resources for the public to use for education and enjoyment.

Outcomes of the project

Planned outcomes for the project are:

- Enhanced skills base of museum sector paid and volunteer staff in the development, production and commissioning of digital projects
- Improved capacity to generate or specify digital media
- A substantial quantity of freely-available digital resources for public use for education and enjoyment from at least 12 projects, including, but not limited to, online exhibitions; education packs for teachers; education materials for school pupils and lifelong learners; interactive learning experiences; and downloadable publications
- Development of new, more efficient, methods of working
- Creation of a mechanism for sharing skills and other cooperation
- Creation of learning resources which extend audiences, and increase accessibility
- Opportunities to lever-in additional support
- Establishment of the project website as a continuing resource to the group, both for sharing knowledge and for promoting projects

- A regional digital publishing group, and
- Continuing partnerships in the production of digital educational resources

Activities

The project will undertake an audit of existing capacity, assess partners' development needs and objectives, and identify opportunities for one or more pilot projects for each partner, designed to extend understanding and resources in key areas. These projects would be appropriate to the scale and needs of each organisation, and might also offer opportunities for collaboration between a number of partners. Some examples of such pilot projects might be:

- Equipping a small independent museum to generate text and graphics for temporary exhibitions
- Publishing temporary exhibitions on line
- Creation of simple interactive learning experiences for exhibitions and web pages
- Use of digital media in the creation of touring exhibitions
- Commissioning and specification of digital products
- Enabling a group of museums to produce themed education packs for teachers
- Supporting the creation of education materials for school pupils and lifelong learners
- The production from existing resources of downloadable publications
- Two of these projects will be touring exhibitions, together with their digital versions, as pilot projects demonstrating the whole process from conception, through planning and development to delivery and long-term preservation

In each case the project staff will work closely with relevant museum(s) to deliver the pilot projects and ensure transfer of knowledge and resources. Management and meetings of the forum will provide opportunity to exchange ideas and knowledge, to promote creativity, and act strategically. A forum website will document progress of the project, showcase outcomes, and provide links to partner's sites. Opportunities may exist to lever-in further support to address general ICT training needs.

Milestones

a. Prior planning

- Initiation of recruitment process
- Planning for initial Management Board meeting
- Finalisation of Project Agreement for the partnership

b. Year One

- Recruitment of project staff (note that the project will not officially begin until the Project Staff take up their posts)

- Needs assessment and from this develop annual project plan
- Develop the forum group and develop the management group
- Secure agreement to Project Plan
- Set up the project website, including online forum/bulletin board
- Complete and evaluate year one projects
- Project staff and Executive Committee meet to review and evaluate project plan

c. Year Two

- Complete and evaluate year two projects
- First collaborative touring/web exhibition begins touring (tour may continue beyond the end of year three)
- Establish regional Digital Publishing Group; hold first annual meeting of the Group
- Project staff and Executive Committee meet to review and evaluate project plan

d. Year Three

- Complete and evaluate year three projects
- Second collaborative touring/web exhibition begins touring (tour may continue beyond the end of year three)
- Identify funding for future partner projects
- Secure ongoing funding of partnership web site
- Second annual meeting of Regional Digital Publishing Group
- Complete development of exit strategy
- Project staff and Executive Committee meet to review and evaluate project plan, produce final report to Management Board
- External evaluation of project (with assistance of SMC Regional Development Manager)

Developing lasting partnerships

a. Partnership working

The project will create a sustainable and inclusive partnership in the field of digital publishing through

- The creation and development of a forum group for sharing skills, ideas and knowledge of best practice
- the creation of a Management group for the project to identify good practice in partnership working and explore the potential of partnership with non-museum partners in the lifetime of the project
- using the opportunities presented by the creation of the forum group and the management group to lever in additional support to the project
- regular meetings, project launches, training days and seminars
- an annual 'conference' for the group to share ideas and celebrate successes

- developing ideas for future projects and identifying opportunities presented by technological developments
- using new technology to facilitate group meetings and group working
- building links with external agencies, such as tourism bodies and the education sector

b. Skills development

The project will produce an enhanced skills base of museum sector paid and volunteer staff in the development, production and commissioning of digital projects through

- training days and seminars
- sharing skills via regular meetings and through the web site forum
- and participation in digital publishing activities

c. Service development

The project will produce a substantial quantity of freely-available targeted digital learning resources for schools, the further education sector and lifelong learners, including, but not limited to

- stand-alone web exhibitions
- web versions of existing temporary and permanent exhibitions
- downloadable publications in a variety of accessible formats
- resource packs CD-Roms for distribution through schools and libraries
- online activities allowing visitors to explore collections and enhance their knowledge and understanding

Partnership Agreement

The Project Partnership Agreement will be signed by an authorised signatory from each partner. The exact form of words of the agreement will be agreed between partners, but will be based on the agreement used in the NOF-Digitise funded Scotland's East Coast Fisheries project (part of Resources for Learning in Scotland), suitably amended. A copy of this agreement is enclosed.

Exit strategy

The development of a detailed exit strategy will form part of the project plan to be approved by the Management Board. To ensure that the benefits of the project are carried forward beyond the end of the funding, the project will aim to ensure that:

1. the Digital Publishing Group is established
 - a. to carry forward new projects without the support of the Project Officers
 - b. to provide support and advice for members
 - c. to provide a forum for the dissemination of new ideas and the generation of new projects

2. Two or more collaborative projects submitted or ready for submission for funding
3. dates for future meetings are set
4. an annual conference is established

4. Costs of project

Project Budget

1. Staffing

2 x Project Officers APV for three years at an average of: **£30,800pa** inc on-costs
Plus £4,200 travel and subsistence
Plus £4,000 recruitment costs

Total **£214,000** over three years

2 .Equipment

Equipment: 2 x laptop with CDRW, 2 x printer, 2 x scanner, 2 x software: **£4,000**

3. Projects

Specific **£82,000** over three years, which may include, but need not be limited to:

- Collaborative web exhibitions produced with assistance of Project Officers
- Projects produced without Project Officers
- Single-museum projects
- Multi-partner projects, including two touring exhibitions together with their accompanying digital materials and web versions
- Web publishing of books/booklets/journals
- Web provision of downloadable education resources for
 - Teachers
 - Pupils
 - Lifelong learners
- Online interactive educational and recreational content
- Provision of digital content on physical media such as CD or DVD for loan (possibly through libraries)
- Equipping a small independent museum to generate generate text and graphics for temporary exhibitions
- Training courses targeted at specific identified needs
- Projects will vary greatly in scale, means of delivery, subject area and intended audience
- Short term contracts for specific projects
- Additionally, a project web site will be set up, allowing partners to share information, experiences, resources and good practice; to document the progress of individual projects; and to

3.1 Breakdown of estimated project costs

- Project costs include travel and subsistence for training days (£5,000)
- Consumables (e.g. storage media & stationery costs) (£1,500)
- Marketing and promotion (£7,500)
- Contract staff for specific projects, including freelance contracts; provision of software; registration of domain names, initial hosting fees; specialist services (e.g. training, graphic design, programming/scripting) (£48,000)
- Touring exhibitions (£20,000 – 2 at £10,000 each)

Total expenditure: £300,000

4. In-kind contributions:

- Lead partner staff time – management (£5,000 pa), admin support (£3,600 pa), support from East Lothian Council departments (including Personnel and Finance) £1,500 pa – total: £10,100 pa
- Partner staff time – £150 per day (estimate £45,000 – ½ person per day from the entire partnership)
- Office accommodation – £1,500 pa

Total in-kind: £76,600 over three years

Budget Breakdown Year-by-year

Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Staffing	70,400	70,000	73,600
Equipment	4,000	0	0
Projects	11,500	35,000	35,500
In-kind	20,600	29,600	29,600
Total	106,500	134,600	138,700
Total grant	85,900	105,000	109,100

Note that in-kind has not taken into account the value of resources and materials made freely available by Project Partners over the Internet. A value for these resources will be calculable at the end of each individual project, and for the project as a whole upon completion.

Management and staff

Overall direction of the project will be vested in a Management Board consisting of representatives from all the project partners. An Executive Committee of the Board (some 6 – 8 members) will meet regularly to receive reports from the Project Team and to approve the project plan and any developments therein. The Executive Committee will also be able to co-opt members in an advisory capacity from external agencies (e.g. Learning & Teaching Scotland, Visit Scotland, Scottish Enterprise). The Executive Committee will meet every two months, and

the Management Board at least twice a year. See also Appendix 6, *Communication*. Sub-groups of the Management Board may also be formed to focus on specific subject areas (e.g. digital imaging, accessible design, digital print publishing).

The SWOT and Risk Analysis (see Appendix 3) have identified key management considerations for the Board. These will be updated annually as part of the planning process.

The team will consist of two project officers, who will be employed by East Lothian Council, and line managed by the Council's Museums Officer, who will also be the Budget Holder for the project. The project officers, together with the Museums Officer, will develop the project's detailed forward plan for approval by the Management Board. The project officers will work with partners, both individual museums and groups of museums, to complete individual projects identified in the overall Plan. This will involve a range of activities, from the direct production of materials to support, advice and assistance, depending on the nature of the specific project.

Approach to Partnership Working

A critical outcome will be a plan (developed in year three) for continued partnership working in the area of ICT and museums. The project will take an inclusive approach; all those organisations who have expressed a commitment to the project (irrespective of current level of ICT knowledge/understanding) will be involved in the development and delivery of projects relevant and appropriate to their needs and ambitions.

Throughout the course of the project there will be regular meetings of the whole partnership, including an annual conference on priority themes; a project email newsletter; one or more online discussions. The Management Board will have a standing item on partnership development.

In year one, as part of the audit and planning process, small groups will be brought together to brainstorm ideas for specific partnership projects. New technology means that these need not be geographically-based, but could be founded on other common business needs.

In year two these small groups will be developed as working groups which will also become peer-support groups and a mechanism for delivering project outcomes.

In year three there will be further development of the working groups as a basis for sustainable partnership working beyond the lifetime of the project.

Communication

The Executive Committee of the Management Board will produce a communications plan for the project. This will identify how to:

- publicise project successes and activity to project partners, (and the wider partnership), external stakeholders and potential funders
- communicate Executive Committee and Management Board decisions effectively
- encourage information sharing between the partners
- use new technology for effective communication

Because of the wide geographical spread of the partnership, the project will aim to make use of technology to facilitate communication and participation, including email, bulletin boards and online forums, phone and video-conferencing. This will have the additional benefit of reducing the costs of participation for individuals and institutions.

There will be a dedicated web site for the project for the purposes of communication with and between partners, including the above-noted bulletin board/forum, and for the promotion of the project to a wider audience.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

Within the project plan, a series of milestones for deliverables will be developed. The progress of the project will be monitored by the Executive Committee of the Project Board who will meet regularly to receive reports from the Project Officers.

First line budget monitoring will be through East Lothian Council's Finance Department, with regular reports to the budget holder, and budget holder access to online reports.

All project materials will meet relevant statutory and quality guidelines and will comply with appropriate standards (e.g. DDA, WAI, web standards).

A feedback system will be developed to gather responses from participants in the project, both as a measure of the level of success and a means of improving/developing the project during its course.

Evaluation

The Regional Development Manager at SMC will work with the Project Officers to develop an agreed approach to evaluation and to develop an effective evaluation plan.

The purposes of the project evaluation plans will be to answer key questions arising from the RDCF criteria. These will be:

- What partnerships have been developed and how successful have they been? Which partnerships will continue and in what format?
- What has the sector learnt from the partnership working which will enable future partnerships to be more successful?
- How has the project contributed to national and regional agendas? Which ones and what has been the result?
- Which aspects of the project would benefit from additional publicity/advocacy
- Has the exit strategy been successful? Which projects are continuing and in what form?
- How has the project built capacity in the museum sector? What is the evidence of this?
- How has the project engaged with community planning?
- What are the unintended outcomes of the project?
- What learning for SMC, for the Scottish Executive and for the wider cultural and heritage sector is available from the project?

In addition to the evaluation undertaken in conjunction with SMC, the project's Executive Committee will undertake ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the progress and content of the project.

The Project Plan will include:

- a) Guidelines for project monitoring
- b) Proposals for involving beneficiaries and stakeholders in project evaluation
- c) Requirements for three monthly reports to be available to project partners and for a regular agenda item on evaluation at Management team meetings
- d) Annual telephone questionnaire based on key evaluation questions
- e) Proposal for external evaluation in year three
- f) Proposals to use regular project activity eg training courses, meetings as opportunities for evaluation and to collect data from these opportunities

Appendix 1

Project Partners

East Lothian Council

City of Edinburgh Council

Fife Council

West Lothian Council

Almond Valley Heritage Trust

Museum of Fire

Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh

Royal Scottish Academy

Linlithgow Heritage Trust

The Scottish Mining Museum

Andrew Carnegie Birthplace Museum

The Scottish Fisheries Museum

Paxton House Trust

University of Edinburgh

Heriot Watt University

University of St Andrews

Linlithgow Union Canal Society

Hopetoun House

The Friends of North Berwick Museum

Talbot Rice Gallery

Lamp of Lothian Trust

The Bennie Museum Trust

Appendix 2

PEST analysis

Political

- National commitment to ICT progress and development eg Common Framework for the Information Age Government in Scotland
- SE stated priority of ICT for museum development and SMC ICT strategy
- National commitment to inclusive learning and access eg community learning plans, commitment to social justice
- Commitment to ICT in education eg initiatives from Learning and Teaching Scotland
- Freedom of Information requirements

Economic

- Additional funding for ICT in Scottish museums and potential of funding from the cultural review
- Potential funding for continued regional development work

Social

- Ageing population – more demand for digital services to meet the older market
- Increasing importance of museums for the older active retired
- Touring exhibitions to encourage repeat visiting and broaden scope of subjects covered
- Increasing use of digital resources in schools and by lifelong learners
- New ways of communicating eg using video-conferencing for meetings

Technology

- Broadband for Scotland
- Opportunity to deliver museum services using new technology: via the web, PDA, and mobile phone (and Smart Phones).
- Using technology to facilitate existing operations: advertising, print publication, exhibition development and production, collections management

Appendix 3

SWOT/Risk analysis

Strengths	Opportunities
In-house expertise Builds on range of related projects by ELC Museums and Almond Valley Geographical spread of partners Range of different types of partner institutions Enthusiasm ELC corporate support, including financial and personnel systems Timely – SMC IT Strategy	ICT Strategy Developing skills and knowledge Building lasting partnerships New projects for future funding applications (eg from Awards for All) Link to tourism development Link to MA developments re: future of collecting Smart phones/other mobile technologies
Weaknesses	Threats
Number of partners to satisfy Potential size of management group Future funding environment Reliance on specific key individuals/key personnel for delivery	Partner drop-out Lack of commitment from individuals Difficulties with securing agreement on planning /decision-making processes Changes in technology Technophobia

Risk analysis

Problem	Mitigation
Number of partners to satisfy	Many projects will be collective – all partners will have the opportunity to take part in at least one project
Size of management group	Management group will have smaller executive body
Future funding	Exit strategy will include planning for funding of future projects beyond the end of this project
Reliance on key personnel for delivery	Physical presence of staff is not required – consultation can be by phone or email; project will develop skills of other staff to cover for any staff turnover during the project
Partner drop-out	Total number of partners is large, so some drop-out does not threaten viability; new partners may join during the course of the project
Lack of individual commitment	No-one can be forced to take part! Use training, demonstrations and partnership working to build enthusiasm
Difficulties with agreement	Procedures for decision-making will be set out in the partnership agreement
Changes in technology	Use of open standards; use of open source software where appropriate
Technophobia	Training and support will be provided; projects will be tailored to partner needs, and with a view to future sustainability