**REF2021**

| Institution: University of Bristol |
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| Unit of Assessment: 28) History |
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| Title of case study: Know Your Bristol: empowering engagement with local history and heritage |
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| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2006-2019 |
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**Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:**

| Name(s): | Role(s) (e.g. job title): | Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Robert Bickers | Professor of History | 09/1997-present |
| Tim Cole | Professor of Social History | 09/1995-present |
| Nathan Eisenstadt | Senior Research Associate | 12/2013-present |
| Elizabeth Haines | Vice Chancellor's Fellow | 01/2017-present |
| Josie McLellan | Professor of History | 08/2001-present |
| Robert Skinner | Lecturer in Modern History | 09/2005-present |

| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020 |
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| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N |
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## 1. Summary of the impact

A team of Bristol historians collaborated with the public and voluntary sectors to develop new ways of empowering people to explore, research and co-create local history. People who would not usually have the opportunity to act as history creators – including the LGBT+ community, people with learning difficulties, and residents from deprived neighbourhoods – have been able to permanently preserve their history and explore new ways to tell their stories, enhancing their creative practice and quality of life. The collaboration contributed significantly to the award-winning Know Your Place resource, and it has permanently increased the capacity and improved the services of local authorities, social enterprise and voluntary sector organisations, with over GBP500,000 of follow-on funding for local heritage.

## 2. Underpinning research

This case study builds on a cumulative body of research carried out from 2006 to the present, which innovates in digital research methods and develops new ways of empowering people from diverse backgrounds to explore, research and co-create history.

   (a) **Phase 1: innovation in digital research**
   Since 2006, Bickers and team have developed the Historical Photographs of China (HPC) online archive **[3.1]** – a globally significant collection of over 20,000 images. In the course of this research, Bickers developed innovative technologies to digitise and make visual material available online. What is more, HPC works as a two-way knowledge exchange, crowd-sourcing historical material in private hands, so that the public are co-creating this historical resource.

   (b) **Phase 2: developing and applying crowd-sourcing technologies for communities of place**
   In 2012, Bristol City Council (BCC) sought Bickers' support and expertise in digital crowdsourcing to expand and enhance Know Your Place (KYP), a map-based online tool launched in 2011 to allow residents to learn and share information about historic Bristol. BCC wished to increase user engagement through a 'community layer', where individuals could share information and images about the historic environment. A key aim was to reach neglected communities of place, who would not usually engage with the map (e.g. Hillfields, Lockleaze, Avonmouth). In order to achieve this goal, this second phase adapted the digital humanities methodologies, digitisation and crowd-sourcing techniques developed on HPC to engage new users and locate and digitise new material for the

community layer. This took place via a series of place-based workshops and events
funded by the AHRC **[3.6, 3.7].**

**(c) Phase 3: collaboration with communities of interest to diversify engagement with local heritage**
The next phase of the project (the AHRC-funded 'Know Your Bristol On The Move', 2013-2015) **[3.8]** allowed BCC and the University to further diversify engagement with KYP by working with particular communities of interest whose stories were underrepresented in local archives. This work drew extensively on historical expertise within the team, which allowed the research to reach particular interest groups, for example Skinner's *Journal of Contemporary History* article **[3.5]** on anti-apartheid activism informed a collaboration with Action For Southern Africa, and McLellan's research on LGBT+ history **[3.4]** underpinned a project with OutStories Bristol (a local LGBT+ history group) **[3.9]**.This phase of the research was initiated by a collaborative funding bid by the University and BCC **[3.8].**
As the project developed, the team were approached by other local voluntary sector organisations with an interest in exploring history and heritage. This led to new events and partnerships with organisations including Shalom Salaam (an interfaith arts organisation), Openstorytellers (a group of storytellers with learning disabilities) and Barton Hill Settlement (an inner-city community centre) **[3.10]**.

**(d) Phase 4: participatory methodologies for historical research**
Drawing together the insights of phases 1-3, the team, led by Knowledge Exchange Fellow Nathan Eisenstadt (employed 2013-2016), developed a distinctive methodology for helping groups and individuals engage creatively with local history and heritage. This is a highly original approach which brings together the participatory tools of co-production with historical research. This methodology has two aspects **[3.2, 3.3]**:
- A focus on the importance of relationships in collaborative and co-produced research
- The development of digital, material and methodological tools to facilitate engagement with local history.

## 3. References to the research

3.1 **Bickers R** et al (2017), *Historical Photographs of China* [Online database] https://www.hpcbristol.net/ (live version). Snapshot at December 2020 available on request at https://ref2021.hpcbristol.net/

3.2 **Cole T** and **Haines E** (2017), *Bridging the Gap* [Commissioned Report by GW4/AHRC] http://gw4.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/GW4-Bridging-the-gap-Report_WEB-1.pdf

3.3 **Eisenstadt N** and **McLellan J** (2020). Foregrounding co-production: Building the foundations of research relationships in university-community collaborative research, *Research for All,* **4:2**, pp.242–256, https://doi.org/10.14324/RFA.04.2.08

3.4 **McLellan J** (2012). Glad to be gay behind the wall: gay and lesbian activism in 1970s East Germany, *History Workshop Journal*, **74:1**, pp.105-130, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbs017 [submitted to REF2014]

3.5 **Skinner R** (2014). Bombs and Border Crossings: Peace Activist Networks and the Post-colonial State in Africa, 1959–62, *Journal of Contemporary History,* **50:3**, pp.418-438, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009414552148

**Funding awarded:**

3.6 **Bickers R** (PI), *Know Your Place, Know Your Bristol*, AHRC Research Grant AH/J013323/1, February 2012 – December 2012, GBP**19,800**

3.7 **Bickers R** (PI), *Know Your Bristol Stories,* AHRC Connected Communities Grant AH/K007556/1, February 2013 – January 2014, GBP**42,875**

3.8 **Bickers R** (PI), *Know Your Bristol On The Move,* AHRC Research Grant AH/L007576/1, October 2013 – September 2015, GBP**474,946**

3.9 **McLellan** (PI), *Mapping LGBT Histories with OutStories Bristol,* AHRC Follow On Fund for Impact and Engagement AH/N001729/1, October 2015 – September 2016, GBP**77,439**

3.10    **McLellan** (PI), *SPAN: A Participatory History,* AHRC Research Grant AH/S000542/1, October 2018 – September 2020, GBP**344,938**

## 4. Details of the impact

The impact can be summarised under three main headings:

**(a) Enhancement and expansion of the Historic Environment Record (HER) in the South West of England, leading to improved services and realisation of local authority strategy**

Partnership in this research has allowed Bristol City Council (BCC) to expand and develop their Know Your Place (KYP) online map in ways that would not have been possible without the expertise and innovative methodologies developed by the Bristol research team **[3.1-3.5]**. Since beginning to work with the University in 2012, KYP has grown exponentially: it now covers eight different local authority areas that between them attract about 15,000 page views per month. Collaboration with the research team has enabled the upload of hundreds of points of local information and oral histories: 3,000 early 20th-century postcards from the Bristol Record Office; over 600 photographic images taken in the 1970s and 1980s by BCC's Urban Design team; 122 oral histories and documents in a dedicated LGBT+ Life layer. A team of volunteers based at Bristol Archives, originally brought together by this project, continue to add significant content to the map well beyond the lifetime of the collaboration (1,640 images and counting) (accessed September 2020) **[5.1]**.

Bristol's innovative methodologies have reached neglected neighbourhoods and communities who would not otherwise have engaged with the map (e.g. Hillfields, Lockleaze, the LGBT+ community). **'**Working with communities such as Hillfields and Lockleaze not only added content to the map, it also connected the work that we do to communities that sometimes feel peripheral and marginalised and helped us to tap into local knowledge and begin to understand these neighbourhoods better.' (Principal Historical Environment Officer, Bristol City Council) **[5.1]** It has also allowed the Council to develop a model of partnership working where the community takes ownership of the project and act as custodians of the data.

This makes a major contribution to Bristol Development Plan's Core Strategy (2011), which aims to ensure that 'all new development safeguards or enhances the historic environment' (4.22.1), and the Bristol Heritage Framework (2015). All material uploaded to KYP becomes part of the Historic Environment Record and has material weight in planning-related matters and local planning policies. KYP is frequently used by architects, developers and planning consultants to inform development proposals and planning applications. For example, the 'Know Your Lockleaze' event informed the regeneration strategy and subsequent redesign of Gainsborough Square (2014); a new placemarker at Whiteladies Gate incorporated historical material from KYP (2014); a major residential redevelopment on Regent Street in Bedminster drew on KYP to develop a 'Heritage Based Design Approach' (2020). **[5.2]**

The quality and significance of this impact has been recognised in a number of national awards for KYP:
- the Public Sector category in the Francis Tibbalds Urban Design Awards at the Urban Design Group Conference in September 2014. George Ferguson, then mayor of Bristol commented: 'The participatory approach to placemaking that Know Your Place promotes is helping to enable citizens and communities to have real influence over what happens in their neighbourhood. Through tools like these we are helping to strengthen support for the work of voluntary and community organisations in the city, making sure we focus on achieving the city's objectives.' **[5.10]**
- the Best Heritage Research, Interpretation or Recording Award at the Historic England Angel Awards 2018, with the citation stating: 'the project has democratised the process of recording and sharing heritage. In acknowledging the need for local communities to have their stories heard and recorded publicly, Know Your Place is enriching the public's

experience of their history by providing a tool to peel away layers of the local area and to contribute stories to the archive.' **[5.10]**

### (b) Empowering underrepresented communities to engage with local history and heritage, increasing creativity and quality of life

This research has reached underrepresented communities that would not otherwise have had the opportunity to work with local history and heritage, and has empowered them to design creative and innovative outputs. The AHRC-funded project 'Mapping LGBT+ Histories' **[3.9]** allowed local LGBT+ history group OutStories Bristol to create a mobile app and a multi-layered digital map. On the map users can listen to people's stories, view historic photographs, documents, posters and flyers and read about places and events of significance to LGBT+ life. This allowed OutStories to make their extensive oral history archive more widely available. The map has been accessed 3,476 times since its launch.

The resources are also available via KYP, becoming part of the HER, thereby contributing to OutStories' aims to 'archive the material in relevant public institutions; have material displayed by relevant public institutions; and promote the use of the material telling the LGBT story'. **[5.3]** The app has been downloaded 2,845 times, and a set of linked curriculum resources, designed with local young people from Freedom Youth, have been downloaded 150 times. OutStories consider this 'an outstanding achievement' for a small, entirely volunteer-led group **[5.4].** A Trustee from OutStories comments: 'The benefit to OutStories Bristol is invaluable; it has created a permanent online archive of our history and set it alongside the wider story of the city and region.' **[5.5]** The archive has subsequently inspired the artists Short Back And Sides to create their 'No Stone Unturned' project, which won them a Watershed Bew Talent Residency. This project combines sculpture, music, mobile phone technology and storytelling to repurpose the archive for a place-based piece of public art.

Through collaboration with the Bristol research team, Openstorytellers – a charity run for and by storytellers with learning difficulties – were able to research the history of disability in the South West. Working with archival material on the history of 18th-century Bristolian Fanny Fust has significantly impacted their artistic practice, prompting a move from straight storytelling to a dramatic approach including animation and performance. An illustrator and member of Openstorytellers said**:** 'It felt really spectacular – it helped me understand what it was like in Bristol and Bath. It was brilliant to have my pictures animated, to see Fanny travelling.' **[5.7]** Members of Openstorytellers were also able to build their historical understanding and put their own experiences in the longer history of disability: 'It's nice to do a story that's actually happened…We do get treated more like an equal nowadays than we do back then. I'm quite glad I was born the year I was born in.' **[5.7]** Working with complex historical material has also enhanced members' lives by supporting confidence and personal development. The group leader reported: 'David's father said: "what have you done with David? He's never tied words together for more than 5 minutes. Yesterday he had a conversation for 20 minutes." That's the benefit of engaging with a complicated narrative.' **[5.7]**

### (c) Increased capacity and economic impact in the public and voluntary sectors

Building on the partnership with Bristol researchers, Openstorytellers produced their biggest project to date, winning further funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (GBP50,000) and the Arts Council (GBP69,000). **[5.6]** This has allowed members of Openstorytellers to acquire new skills, gain confidence and take a leading role in the running of the company. As members of the company explained: 'We are making our own touring folder. What we need to take, the mileage, the accommodation.'; 'We are going to put in a bid – to take her on tour. We've been working with a lady on a Thursday to work out the cost of touring. That's completely new for us. We've been learning how to do auditing.' **[5.7]** Furthermore, the success of the project has allowed Openstorytellers to weather a difficult period of transition. Their founder and director comments: 'this project has allowed us to do something magical and extraordinary – but also allowed the charity to survive at a time of austerity.' **[5.6]**

KYP's success underpinned a bid for a Heritage Lottery-Funded project 'Know Your Place West of England', bringing together eight local authorities (Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol,

Devon, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire). This has to date attracted GBP412,923 of funding and 469 days of volunteer work. It covers 7,279 square miles and has an average of 180 community uploads per month. As one project volunteer put it, 'The great thing about it is that it breaks down the wall of archives… it brings the archives into your own home.' **[5.8]**

The methodologies of engagement used during the research have been successfully adopted and replicated by Local Learning, a social enterprise and project partner on 'Know Your Bristol Stories' in 2013-2014. Their extensive and ongoing project 'Meadows to Meaders', developed in collaboration with university researchers, attracted funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council, Heritage Schools and Quartet Community Foundation. A new project, 'Hillfields Homes For Heroes', builds directly on the 2012 'Know Your Hillfields' event, and has been funded by the Arts Council, Heritage Lottery, Heritage Schools and Bristol City Council. **[5.9]**

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1     Statement from Principal Historic Environment Officer, Bristol City Council (2019)
5.2     Excerpts from planning applications – examples of use of Know Your Place in planning process (2014, 2018)
5.3     OutStories Bristol Constitution (May 2017): http://outstoriesbristol.public.s3.amazonaws.com/OSB_Constitution.pdf [Accessed 1 October 2020]
5.4     OutStories Bristol Annual Report, 2016: http://outstoriesbristol.public.s3.amazonaws.com/OSB_AnnualReport2016.pdf [Accessed 1 October 2020]
5.5     Email from OutStories Bristol (July 2017)
5.6     Factual statement from Founder and Trustee, Openstorytellers (August 2019)
5.7     Excerpts from interviews with members of Openstorytellers (2019)
5.8     Know Your Place West, Final Evaluation Report (2017)
5.9     Local Learning, extracts from website (2017-2019)
5.10    Award citations for Know Your Place (2014, 2018)