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Multimedia Online Archival Practice: What New Historiographical Opportunities Does It Present?

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**PhD Thesis Addendum to:
Multimedia online archival practice: what new historiographical
opportunities does it present?**

1. Citizen-curator:

I consider my role in the *Pebble Mill project* as a 'citizen curator'. I am selecting, organising, looking after, and presenting the history of the community which has grown around the *project*. To curate is to care: a curator is the keeper or custodian of a collection, derived from the Latin 'curare', to take care of. 'Taking care' is a crucial aspect of the role, and extends to the care of the artefacts which are entrusted to me, the care of the history being told, and having a duty of care towards the *project's* participants. It is an ethical position involving a sensibility of care and a responsibility to the community. Caring for the materials and also the contributors, and their memories, suggests a shift from museum curation around the care for artefacts, to the wider care for the participants as well, as part of a 'living heritage', involved in the production of a living history. When projects involve oral histories, and continued interaction with an active community, extending a duty of care to include the contributors is entirely appropriate. This indicates a development in the curation role, and the necessity of a flexible approach which can respond to the demands of the project, rather than following traditional curatorial practice.

Citizen-curation is a manifestation of engaged citizenry, and shares similarities with the better-documented examples of citizen-science, as well as community or alternative media and public history; it is part of what James Curran describes

as 'a new culture, that is critical, selective and participatory' (2003: 227).

Jonathan Silvertown defines the citizen-scientist as a volunteer who collects and sometimes even processes data as part of a scientific study (2009: 467). In a similar vein Clemencia Rodriguez coined the term 'citizens' media' to encompass community, radical, participatory and alternative media, highlighting the transformative effects from participants to active citizens (2003: 190). Such citizens provide labour, skills and enthusiasm at no monetary cost. However, the scale of activity differs hugely between projects; for example a citizen-science project may simply involve volunteer bird-watchers in their garden for an hour, as part of the Royal Society for the Protection of Bird's annual 'Big Garden Birdwatch', whilst running a hyperlocal news site, or curating a community history project like the Pebble Mill one, requires sustained commitment on a daily basis, and is akin to a job, having (self-imposed) responsibilities and deadlines.

There are many positives of working with a broad spectrum of both amateur and professional practitioners; we can draw, for instance, from public history projects, where work is pursued outside the academy, by a combination of historians and lay people, often in a heritage context with a local remit (Tosh, 2014). Ludmilla Jordanova considers public history as part of the radical history tradition, being community-based and open to all (2006: 127). This democratic approach presents certain advantages; John Tosh observes that those outside academia, such as museum curators, conservationists and TV producers can bring fresh ideas, new methods of enquiry and channels for encouraging popular participation (2014: 192). Including those with different backgrounds and

experiences is likely to benefit a project, potentially taking it in new or unexpected directions. Such work is providing established fields with fresh areas of study. Hilary Geoghagen argues that a new pattern of historical geography is emerging, extending existing scholarship and presenting different possibilities for practice and research (2014: 107). She is particularly interested in how researchers working outside the academy make sense of the materials of history, devoting their time in 'championing, collating, collecting, conserving, hoarding, interpreting, recording and representing the material record of their particular interest' (2014: 105). Involving enthusiast communities harnesses previously untapped skills and labour, but can also lead to a change of method or a different vision. I would argue that the work of citizen curators in community history projects has the same potential to develop innovative methods and practices, which has implications for scholarship in the field.

Being part of the community is beneficial for the citizen curator, meaning that there is a shared history and understanding. The project becomes *our story*, which *we* are going to tell together, engendering a sense of trust, rather than an outsider coming in to exploit *our history*, capitalising for their own ends on *our* memories and *our* artefacts. If the citizen curator is not from within the community, then it will take time and effort to earn the trust of the community, before the project can begin to blossom.

There is both an inward and outward facing role for the citizen curator: they present the external face of the project, whilst working internally with the

community. On one level they are the official representative of the project, whilst having taken on this role voluntarily, often unilaterally and without consultation, they therefore have no more legitimacy in representing the community's history than any other group member. I am aware of my own position in making this observation, and whilst self-appointed, I have never encountered resistance from anyone to me taking the lead in documenting the community's history, and being its unofficial representative. This may be due to my approach to the community, and how I facilitate engagement, as well as the fact that I am part of the community.

The citizen curator is a multi-faceted and complex role; they are the enabler and facilitator of the community's participation. They need to be able to envisage what the project will encompass, and devise a plan of how to achieve the vision. The curator must be creative, in order to shape and visualise the project, sufficiently technical in order to construct or commission whatever infrastructure is required, and social and collaborative enough to actively involve and bring together a community around the project, in addition to having sufficient time to accommodate the workload.

Advice for others

When first establishing a community project, it is not necessarily obvious where, or even how, to begin. It sounds relatively straightforward to construct a project plan, and assume you work logically from stage one to stage two, and so on, but the reality may not be so linear, nor so clear-cut.

I believe it is important to begin with a vision of what you want to achieve, but it is important to be flexible enough to allow your project to develop in directions which you might not anticipate. Asking yourself some questions will help define your idea:

- What is its purpose and aims? What might it look like? What will it include? What resources (time, money, skills, materials, support) do you have? What is the timescale?
- Why do you want to do this? Why will other people be interested?
- Who is it for? Who might contribute?
- How will you get others involved? How can you progress your project? How long might it last?

You might need to undertake some preliminary research in order to be able to answer some of the questions above, but this will put you in a good position to be able to make progress. Once you are satisfied there is the appetite and resources for your project, one of the next priorities will be to develop whatever infrastructure is necessary. For me, this involved commissioning a website design, with associated social media sites, and then learning how to construct blogs and posts on the sites.

The focus of the project should be on the enmeshed activities of collecting materials and facilitating the community. The building of the community will frequently lead to the unearthing of new artefacts, materials and memories, in what becomes a beneficial symbiotic relationship. In my experience social media

platforms have been the most productive way of establishing the community. I asked my Facebook 'friends' to 'like' the project page, and in turn their friends saw the page, and also joined. The 'sharing' of posts is also significant in bringing new people to the site, so plugging into your own networks, and those of relevant people you know, is crucial.

Once the project is operational then the activity needs to shift from building the community to encouraging and engaging it. This necessitates regular posting, and frequent invitations to contribute. I've found that posing questions and asking for additional information elicits a higher degree of engagement, and that 'liking' or replying to comments and messages is important, so that participants know their contribution is valued.

When you see how the project is operating that can be an appropriate time to think about policies and strategies. With my project I shied away from devising written rules, but norms developed in response to incidents, such as only allowing people to join the Facebook group if they had a connection to, or interest in Pebble Mill, and deleting posts which did not relate to Pebble Mill, after people with no interest in the history joined and posted on the site.

One of the challenges that can occur is conflict becoming apparent within a project; in running the *Pebble Mill project* I have observed occasional hostility between different groupings within the community, or tension between staff who worked at Pebble Mill and outsiders, and negativity or abuse towards individuals featured on the site, due to incidents in the past. Deciding how to

manage conflict can require careful thought, particularly if an intervention is necessary.

2. Reframing pragmatism:

I developed my practice of establishing, building and maintaining the *Pebble Mill project* with what seemed to me a pragmatic or commonsense approach, but which I realise in hindsight draws much from my programme-making experience. On reflection, the reason for not establishing this link earlier, is due to another parallel with programme-making, that the emphasis for me is on the creation of the product, rather than on the process of creating it, with the process being perceived as simply the mechanism required to achieve the end goal, and not the focus itself. This is, however, to miss the fact that it is the process which is crucial, as identifying, articulating and spreading the practice is what will benefit other projects, allowing others to share in what has been learnt here. The product, the idiosyncratic archive created, is important, but it is the identification of the methods, which have been tried and tested with relative success that will have value for others.

There are specific areas of activity where skills learnt in television programme-making have been directly transferrable to my citizen curator role. Researching in television production frequently involves finding information, stories, contributors and locations. It includes online searching, locating and reading

documentation, but also talking to people in order to discover another piece of the jigsaw puzzle. Once mastered, the skills used to find these elements can be applied widely and become habitual. In the *Pebble Mill project* I use research skills to find contributors with interesting stories to tell, I negotiate with participants, persuading them to take part in the project, perhaps to be interviewed on camera, or to write a blog post, or to post up or send me artefacts, which I can then re-mediate.

Television production is all about collaboration, and although most of my activity on the *Pebble Mill project* is spent physically alone, I am still collaborating with participants; I am emailing, messaging or phoning contributors, I am checking facts, liaising with others who I suspect might have information, or someone else's contact details, who might know more. I also utilise producing skills, those of shaping a story, of editorially deciding how to frame it, where to begin and end, and how to tell the story. These editorial skills are used in evaluating sources, and making judgements about veracity and authenticity. As a producer I would regularly write scripts and devise interview questions, and I am employing these same skills, albeit in a different context, when I write a blog post, or draft questions for a video. The adaptation of skills has been predominantly unconscious, and demonstrates the importance of transferrable skills. The majority of people wishing to carry out the role of citizen curator will not have my background in television, but may have developed similar skill-sets from their own professional, academic, or other experiences.

Other skills are also needed to carry out the citizen curator role, especially in an online context. Technical expertise is required, particularly online skills in being able to construct blogs technically as well as editorially, tagging key words, embedding hyperlinks and video or audio from complementary platforms like Vimeo and SoundCloud, uploading photographs, organising online content, and publishing posts on social media. As long as the curator is computer literate these skills can be learnt and will improve with use. Depending on the type of content being assembled other technical skills will be necessary, for instance camera, audio and editing skills. Again, I have drawn on my programme-making past for my practice in this area.

The skills mentioned so far have concerned the creation and dissemination of project materials, but once content is published then the softer skills of moderation are required. These skills are judgement related, for example, should an abusive comment be deleted? Should a reply be made to a comment? If conflict is visible should you intervene, or ignore it? Should you aim to diffuse conflict or not? How should you respond to a personal written attack? There are no right or wrong answers, but there are more and less sensible courses of action. Unfortunately there is little advice available in this area, largely because the context and circumstances are individual and nuanced, which is why personal judgement becomes crucial. In my experience deciding how best to tackle these issues becomes easier the longer you manage a project, and I would advise giving yourself time to make these judgement calls, rather than reacting instantly, unless there is a serious incident which demands a quick response.

The skills outlined here have some correlation with academic historiographical practice, but there are significant differences. The research skills described chime with academic practice: those of sifting through historical materials, of finding documents, information and people, and deciding which to utilise to construct the history. The editorial skills of interpreting the history, of fact-checking and writing up in an appropriate manner, are also those of the professional historian. Where the methods diverge is in the level of collaboration and engagement with the relevant community. It would be unusual for an academic historian to build and nurture an online community, interacting with the members on a daily basis, using them as a trusted source of history, and moderating their contribution. The majority of historians would not require the technical skills that I use habitually, and indeed most oral historians choose not to use video, perhaps due to the technical demands.

My practice, and the combination of skills I use do suggest ways in which academic historiographical practice could change. If historians embraced these methods, then teamed with their greater degree of subject scholarship, the field could develop in new and interesting directions. It is to be hoped that some academic historiographers will be open to adapting their current practice to take account of new possibilities.

3. Power:

The citizen curator is in a position of power, they are taking care of a collection, deciding what belongs in that collection, how it is preserved and importantly

they are the gate-keeper of it, making judgements on who has access and in what circumstances. Bailey et al note that the Internet can be 'ab(used) by those who hold the power, to give participants the illusion of participation' (2008:106). I am conscious of the privileged and powerful position I am in, and feel a responsibility to use this power wisely, with the best interests of the community and the project at heart. The position of power distinguishes the curator from the community, even if they are embedded within it.

The curator is a guardian of history, wanting to do the best for the objects in their care, the 'object-love' they hold for their collections makes their work space an affective and evocative place (Geoghagen & Hess, 2015: 460). My work may lack the materiality of the museum storeroom, but there is still a sense of 'object-love', even if those objects are almost always digital. I want to care for the collection as best I can, but have a very different approach to gate-keeping, as disseminating the archive openly and publicly is at the heart of the project. This does not mean, however, that there are no controls in place. There is moderation, although the operation is light-touch. In terms of the website, the first time a person comments, I as administrator have to approve it, thereafter that commenter is approved. This avoids the publishing of spam or abusive comments. On the Facebook page, as administrator I can delete any inappropriate posts, but I have found that it is generally more effective for the online community to police itself. In the past contributors have realised when a comment they have written is inappropriate and have edited it themselves, or other members of the community have made it clear through the use of an emoticon when a comment makes them angry or upset.

Curation requires the selection of material, meaning that some material is discarded or unexplored; this process circumscribes the history being told. There are some unsavory aspects to Pebble Mill's past that the community chooses not to remember publicly, for example, allegations of inappropriate sexual behaviour, or the dismissal of staff. The online community has never discussed these subjects, and I do not feel that it is appropriate for me to push them to confront them, although individuals have on occasion mentioned them to me privately. I feel that I would be stepping outside my role if I behaved more proactively here, and I would risk alienating members of the online community. This does raise questions concerning the nature of the history being told, which risks presenting a sanitised version, reflecting nostalgically on the past, rather than addressing difficult issues. I would argue that I am led by the community on what is included in the history, and would not describe the *Pebble Mill project* as an objective history, rather it is a subjective account written by and for the community who has created it. If the history was an academic account of BBC Pebble Mill then these issues should be included, but when it is a community-driven endeavour, then it should include what the community chooses to share.

There is a tension between the desire to articulate all aspects of Pebble Mill's history, and the sensitivities towards unsavory aspects of it. An example of this is the case of husband and wife radio presenting team, Tony Wadsworth and Julie Mayer. The couple were convicted of historic child sex abuse, and sentenced to five years in jail in 2017. I have kept images of the couple from their Radio WM days on the Pebble Mill website, but there is no mention of their conviction. They have rarely been mentioned on the Facebook page since the conviction, but they

were notably in November 2017, during *Children in Need*, a campaign which the Wadsworths were historically actively involved in. One person implied that their conviction tarnished *Children in Need's* reputation, whilst another replied that, despite their crimes, we should not forget the good they did. I thought this was a mature and measured response, reflecting that even people who have made serious mistakes in their lives can also have achieved good. I did not intervene in this exchange, and did not copy the comments across to the website. This is one of the rare occasions where the community chose to discuss a contentious issue.

In deciding what should and what should not be included there are questions over which comments or information should be preserved, and which should be discarded. Some decisions are very easy to make; if a personal comment is made about someone's private life, it is straight forward to see that a line has been crossed, and that the comment should not be copied across to the website, and should potentially be deleted from the Facebook page. However, there is an area of semi-public/private comments, where the issue is more nuanced, and where it is easy to make a wrong decision. Nick Couldry describes areas of the Internet as a 'private subzone of public space', and this is where ambiguities arise over what participants perceive as public or private (2003: 51). I've found funerals to be particularly sensitive subjects regarding the public/private divide, and where I have learnt by my mistakes. Frequently I'm alerted to the deaths of former colleagues, and given funeral details by two former colleagues who run staff email groups. I often post the details on the Pebble Mill website and Facebook page, as people may wish to attend a former colleague's funeral. However, it is

easy to intrude on a family's grief, as I discovered when a widow contacted me, after being offended that I had posted details of her husband's funeral. She felt I was encouraging people to take advantage of her hospitality, which was not my intention. I apologized and removed the post. Since then I have adjusted my practice, and now only post funeral details on the Facebook page, keeping posts about the deaths of BBC staff on the website very neutral, concentrating on their BBC history, and avoiding details about their deaths. This incident illustrates the need to adapt one's practice in the light of experience, and to be aware of the duty of care towards individuals. There are ethical boundaries which require careful consideration, especially in balancing the tensions between privacy and reputation, against community interest and historical record.

The community through their voluntary participation are contributing much of the labour in the project, and without them the project would be some smaller and less significant. Their contribution is similar to the work of the 'citizen-scientists' mentioned earlier. None of the participants have ever mentioned their contribution as 'work' or 'labour' to me, and I doubt that they consider it as such. Because the majority of activity takes place on social media, and is carried out alongside participants' personal social media activity, it is considered as an extension of this, particularly since they are commenting to their friends and former colleagues, rather than thinking that they are volunteering in the writing of an academic history.

I have observed that a division of labour has organically emerged between community members. Individuals may become regular posters of material, or regular commenters on posts, others police comments, alerting me if a comment is inappropriate. These roles are entirely self-directed, but indicate a healthy community dynamic where individuals feel empowered to contribute in whatever way they decide, within the confines of the project. This implies a democratic community, which is borne out in terms of the voices heard in the project. Tanja Dreher emphasises the need to listen to disempowered and marginalized voices (2010), and encouragingly it is frequently those with below the line roles in broadcasting who make the largest contribution to my project. The artefacts I receive are much more likely to be from scenic hands, make-up artists, engineers and post-production editors than from producers and directors. The below the line staff often worked at Pebble Mill for long periods of time, whilst above the line staff may have moved around production centres more regularly. Below the line staff also seem to have taken many more photographs, perhaps they had more time available, but they also seem to have taken a particular pride in their work and now have a desire to share their memories. The *Pebble Mill project* provides them with a multimedia solution to having their voices heard.

I am conscious of a gendered aspect to my role and the care I take towards the participants. It is significant that two former colleagues of mine, one, a sound supervisor, who runs an email group for former Pebble Mill staff, and the other, a production assistant, who organises regular Pebble Mill retirees coffee mornings,

are also female. The desire to keep in touch, and facilitate community interaction is in our case a female trait; this is an aspect which warrants further research. Whilst contributors to the *Pebble Mill project* seem split equally between genders, the individuals who 'take care' of the community are predominantly female. It is also notable that the people who have assembled scrapbooks documenting their working lives, and shared them with the project, have all been female. I liken their curating of artefacts, and indeed my own, to being keepers of the family photograph album, which we proudly share with whoever is interested.

4. Value of the *Pebble Mill project*

The *Pebble Mill project* has a very different quality to an institutional archive, essentially because of the grassroots involvement of the community, but also through the open dissemination of the collection and invitation to contribute. Institutions, historians and other community projects can learn from the experiences of it.

The project has relevance in terms of historiographical practice, which could influence the work of academic media or public historians. Historians, and particularly public historians, would benefit from assessing how they could harness the resources of communities relevant to their own work, in the unearthing of historical materials, and providing contextualisation around artefacts. Specifically, I regard the *Pebble Mill project* as a resource that historians can use, enabling them to link artefacts and online discussion to

national and international debates. This has proved the case, with academic Gavin Schaffer consulting me concerning contributors for his *The Vision of a Nation* book (2014). I was able to put him in touch with key interviewees, who feature in the finished work, and indeed on the front cover.

In terms of challenging historians, the project raises questions regarding the need for academic historians. If communities can tell their own histories, what is the role of the academic historian? This notion is addressed by some academics, for example, Tosh identifies that academics take second place to local enthusiasts in community-led public history projects (2014: 212). However, despite academics taking 'second place' in public history projects, a central figure is required to articulate and disseminate that history, whether this is a citizen curator, or an academic.

Institutional archives and official accounts can also learn from the citizen curator approach, particularly in relation to how communities can provide complementary historical materials, and which methods work for interacting with them. The BBC specifically can benefit from new sources of information concerning its broadcasting history, and access to artefacts which hitherto have not been valued by them. In addition they now have access to memories and people who can tell the institutional story in a human fashion. The *Pebble Mill project* demonstrates the areas of the Corporation's activities which workers continue to care about, even if the institution may not. The BBC has found the project useful as a source of artefacts, which they have on occasion asked me to use, and conversely they have asked me to take care of materials not wanted for the BBC's Written Archives. As Bailey et al note, collaborations, which respect

individual identities, between mainstream and alternative media, can be mutually beneficial (2008: 156). As a citizen curator, I encourage such partnership working.

The project questions the approaches of institutional archives through allowing, and encouraging open access to its artefacts and information, aspects which are often restricted by official archives. The project challenges traditional copyright controls, rights often guarded by institutions. When intellectual property rights are uncontrolled by the institution they relate to, there is the potential for reputational damage.

Those planning to create their own community histories, through building idiosyncratic archives can borrow the methods which have proved successful for the *Pebble Mill project*. The *project* can provide communities with a template of processes and approaches which have worked here, and demonstrates what can be achieved. However, because an approach works in one set of circumstances, it is not guaranteed to be successful in all community projects, and indeed the size of the project, and the labour which has gone into it might be off-putting to an embryonic project.

It is to be hoped that the *Pebble Mill project* and the methods I have utilised in building it, will prove a valuable resource for historians, institutional archives and future community histories.

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What new historiographical opportunities are enabled by multi-media online archival practice?

Abstract

This thesis harnesses the practice of creating and running the Pebble Mill website (<http://pebblemill.org>) and associated @pebblemillstudios Facebook page, to explore a new historiographical method, which embraces the functionality of online interactivity to tell a democratic community history, through the contribution of the community themselves. It demonstrates a new collective approach to the writing of contemporary history, and identifies a paradigm shift in oral history work.

The subject of the project: Pebble Mill, was the BBC broadcast centre in Birmingham, which opened in 1971, and was demolished in 2005. It produced around ten per cent of BBC television and radio output in its heyday, and employed around 1,500 staff. The aim of the website and Facebook page is to celebrate and document the programme making from Pebble Mill.

The *Pebble Mill project* has created an openly accessible online archive of more than 1,600 multi-media artefacts, the majority of which have been donated by members of the online community which has grown up around the project. The digital archive includes video, audio, photographs as well as written blog posts.

The research is at the intersection of different academic fields and draws on literature from oral history, memory studies, archival practice, online participation, and museum display, in order to inform the practice.

The thesis examines suitable ethical frameworks to apply, but concludes that no one framework is currently available which addresses all aspects of the practice.

The findings chapters explore how the online participation of the project is facilitated, as well as considering why photographs appear to be a very effective medium for encouraging online engagement. The final findings chapter analyses the opportunities and challenges presented by video as a medium for oral history gathering and dissemination.

The thesis concludes that online platforms enable new practices in the writing of living histories. It is hoped that other projects adopt similar methods to those which have proved so successful for the *Pebble Mill project*.

What new historiographical opportunities are enabled by multi-media online archival practice?

Chapter 1

Introduction and the Context of the Project

This thesis examines how multimedia online archival practice can provide us with new opportunities for historiography. Over the past seven years I have developed and run a community archive, via a website and Facebook page; the thesis explores this activity with the aim of drawing out generalisable practices which may help others with similar endeavours.

Traditionally historians have researched documentary sources in order to write history. They have visited archives, and other collections of historical material, examining a host of different sources to construct a representation of what happened in the past and why. The sources they use and the institutions they visit are often those founded by the establishment, institutions perhaps set up by powerful patrons or organisations with a particular view of the world. The resulting histories are usually those of the people in authority: of monarchy and government. There are of course historians who specialise in social history and even the history of living people, often using oral history methods, but it is seldom the people themselves who write that history.

With the advent of social media, interactivity has become mainstream on the Internet, enabled by Web 2.0 technologies behind. Web 2.0 refers to the second

generation of online platforms which allow for interactivity, with dynamic rather than static web pages. The phrase was popularised by Tim O'Reilly at the 'O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 conference' in 2004. The functionality enabled by Web 2.0 includes interacting via social media, as well posting user-generated content, commenting and collaborating (O'Reilly, 2005). The ability to publish and share material freely, openly and widely, has impacted hugely on many fields, for example news reporting, advertising, video viewing, music listening, to name but a few. Industries have had to adapt their practice in order to respond to new challenges. However, there are ontological fields where the impact has been less obvious, and less explored, for instance in oral history work. Social media presents new possibilities for the democratic telling of history by communities themselves. Platforms built on the electronic interaction between individuals, such as Facebook, are at the forefront of this phenomenon; however, the potential uses of social media for historiographical work are yet to be fully realised, and have not been widely discussed by academics. This thesis seeks to contribute to this conversation by exploring how Facebook can be used in building a community memory text, which contributes to an 'idiosyncratic archive'.

The thesis is explored through the practice of a website, <http://pebblemill.org> and its associated social media presence:

<https://www.facebook.com/pebblemillstudios>. As the creator and curator of this project, I will be examining my own practice, and drawing conclusions about what we can learn from the case study that is generalisable to other democratic online community history projects. The website was established in 2010 with

the purpose of documenting and preserving the memories of programme making which had gone on at BBC Pebble Mill between 1971-2004; it is linked to a Facebook page. Both the website and Facebook page have grown into what could be described as 'textual memory products' (Keightley & Pickering, 2012): media artefacts are shared on the site, combined with contextual information and first hand testimony. An active online community has grown around project, which now numbers over 1500 users. The participants share information, memories and artefacts via social media, with the project.

My research explores how we can document and share the memories of those working within a particular creative industry: BBC Pebble Mill, during the last quarter of the twentieth century. It asks the question of what historiographical practice is best suited to documenting and sharing the memories of BBC staff about the programmes they worked on, in the context and timeframe of BBC Pebble Mill. On a practical basis the customs and practices of operating this type of project via Facebook are analysed, which holds relevance to other similar endeavours.

The objective is to evaluate how effectively a particular community based online archive, the *Pebble Mill project*, can help us preserve and share oral histories more widely. It will examine the purposes of such an online history in relation to the participants and their memories, in order to create a popular and purposeful online history of BBC Pebble Mill, based within a tradition of oral history.

1.1 Outline of the Thesis Chapters

The thesis will explore the process of multimedia online historiography through the practice of the *Pebble Mill project*, rather than analysing the actual history itself. It will take the following form:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Context of the Project

This chapter explains how and why the project came into being. It includes some background about BBC Pebble Mill itself and explains the mechanics of the project website and Facebook page. It also briefly examines other projects, noting their similarities and differences.

Chapter 2: Literature Review I: Oral History and Memory

The chapter reflects how the literature concerned with oral history and memory studies relates to the *Pebble Mill project*, examining what can be learnt from the review and how the historiographical practice can be influenced by it.

I introduce here the concept of a paradigm shift in oral history telling. I call this new paradigm, the era of 'collaborative, online oral history'. It is a phenomenon which I have observed through the operation of the practice element of my research: the *Pebble Mill project*. This paradigm shift is instrumental to the thesis, presenting the argument that online interactivity empowers individuals

to collaborate in constructing and sharing their own community oral histories. This argument is expanded upon in the findings chapters.

Also noted in this chapter are gaps in the literature around online community history practice, and the value of video as a medium for oral history. These gaps are addressed in the findings chapters.

Chapter 3: Literature Review II: Archive and Museum Practice

The literature reviewed in this chapter addresses what constitutes an archive, and the drive behind creating one. It focusses on online archives, and particularly 'idiosyncratic archives', which are frequently the product of community or individual enthusiasm, and complementary to institutional archives. The chapter ends with a consideration of what can be learnt from museum display, particularly digital exhibits, to inform the project.

Chapter 4: Ethics

This chapter explores the potentially complex ethical issues which impinge directly on the *Pebble Mill project* and its associated research. This includes issues around the collection of material, including interviews, and particularly the public dissemination of material. The chapter explores what ethical frameworks are available to be drawn from, but notes the absence of any one framework which addresses all aspects of the project.

Chapter 5: Engaging with the Online Community

This first findings chapter considers what we can learn through the project in terms of how engagement and collaboration works with the online community. It examines the roles individuals adopt within the community, the norms which have developed, and the level of activity within the online community.

Chapter 6: Photographs as a Stimulus for Online Community Engagement in Memory and Oral History Work

This second findings chapter examines why photographs specifically prove so valuable as a catalyst to online engagement. It explores where the photographs displayed on the website and Facebook page come from, the professional context of their production, and how they are read when re-mediated as part of the project.

Chapter 7: Video as a Medium for Oral History Recording and Display

This final findings chapter explores my practice of recording video oral histories, and examines what the advantages and challenges of using video are, rather than audio only methods. This chapter includes an analysis of the additional information that video can provide, over audio only, in a traditional oral history interview scenario, as well as the requirement to use video in reconstructions of how production equipment operated.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This final chapter draws together the threads which emerge from across the thesis, and examines what principles and practices are generalisable from the *Pebble Mill project*, and applicable more widely.

1.2 The Practice Artefacts

The practice element of this thesis is presented in several forms. Both the <http://pebblemill.org> website, and the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pebblemillstudios> are dynamic texts. They draw elements from different platforms and bring them together as a single, interwoven text. This means that they are best interrogated, examined and interacted within the context they are intended to be used in, that is, online. For the purposes of submission both texts are required to be submitted as static artefacts. There are various approaches to doing this, but none are totally satisfactory, and all have limitations. I am therefore submitting different forms of the practice, but would urge examiners to rely on using the website and Facebook page in an online context.

The website is presented as files on a memory stick using the programme: *HTTrack*. These files include the pages and posts for the website, but are not displayed in an attractive and interactive fashion, and some of the photographs are missing.

The Facebook page is presented as a 'web-archive' file on the memory stick, but again, this is not particularly user friendly, and loses some of the interactive attributes of the online experience.

I have submitted file copies of all the videos I have produced for the website, as .mov, M4V or MP4 files. These again, lose the context of the online page they are embedded within, with the associated text and user comments, but work as stand-alone videos.

The off-line versions of the media texts lack some of the functionality of the online sites, so it is preferable to refer to the online versions.

1.3 Context of the *Pebble Mill Project*

Before I left the BBC, I had been developing a BBC 4 series about the history of the North Sea oil and gas industry. This resulted in a three-part series was called *Crude Britannia: The Story of North Sea Oil* (2009, BBC4); it was an archive-based series, which included much first hand testimony. Whilst I was researching the content and contributors for the series I came across an oral history project carried out by researchers at Aberdeen University, called *Lives in the Oil Industry*. The project consisted of numerous oral interviews with men and women who had worked in the oil industry, at all levels of responsibility. The interviews had been transcribed, although audio files of some of the interviews were available.

The interviews were a valuable research resource, and enabled me to trace many suitable contributors for the television documentary.

In some ways the decline of the off-shore oil industry mirrored changes that I observed first-hand in terms of broadcast production in the Regions. Large-scale programme making in the Midlands Region has diminished in volume since the Millennium. This is true for both the BBC and ITV, and was particularly visible in Birmingham, with the reduction in network programmes being made by both BBC Pebble Mill (later renamed BBC Birmingham), and Central Television, for the ITV network. I was conscious that the industry was evolving, and that production methods and the culture of production was changing. As with the oil industry, there was a danger with older members of staff retiring, and in due course, dying, that the former industry practices might not be captured, and that the programmes that had been made in the Region might not be remembered. I realised that I was uniquely placed to address the problem of the histories and memories of Pebble Mill being unrecorded and threatened. The solution was an oral history project, the *Pebble Mill project*.

1.3.1 Scoping the Project

At this stage the scope of the project was far from clear, but the desire was to create a collection of video interviews with key programme makers from BBC Pebble Mill.

Pebble Mill was probably best known for its Daytime programming, particularly *Pebble Mill at One* (1971-86, BBC1), but it also created many long running factual series, like *Top Gear* (1977-ongoing, BBC2), *The Clothes Show* (1986-2000, BBC1), *Gardeners' World* (1968-ongoing, BBC2), and *Countryfile* (1988-ongoing, BBC1), as well as housing the 'Immigrants' Programme Unit', which later became the 'Multi-Cultural Programme Unit', and later still, the 'Asian Programme Unit', so there was a rich and varied range of programme makers to choose from.

Pebble Mill was the first combined radio and television broadcast centre to be built in Europe (BBC, 1962), and at its height had a complement of around 1500 staff, producing 10% of BBC radio and television output (Wood, 2005). The broadcast centre was also renowned for many of its dramas, particularly those produced in the 1970s and 1980s, by the English Regions Drama Department (ERD). After a conversation with a former executive producer at Pebble Mill, I was given a list of influential drama programme makers, who, if they were willing to be interviewed, could form a significant start in the creation of an oral history archive. I managed to track down contact details for the Head of the ERD Department during the 1970s, David Rose, and emailed him, asking whether he would be prepared to be interviewed. He replied favourably, and put me in touch with other producers and directors. In June and July 2009, a technician colleague and I, carried out six video interviews with David Rose, Michael Wearing, Peter Anson, Tara Prem, Barry Hanson and Philip Saville. We edited excerpts of the videos together with clips from some of the dramas mentioned, to form a 25-minute film. The film was shown at the 2010 MECCSA (Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association) conference.

1.3.2 Funding

In summer 2009, there was a call for applications to the Regional Screen Agencies' Digital Archive Fund, which I responded to, applying for a grant through Screen West Midlands (Screen WM). In the application form, the purpose of the project was summarised as follows:

Aims

To create public access to an archive of video histories of television production at Pebble Mill and to create conditions for this resource to be used by as wide a range of groups as possible and by so doing to expand its scope and range of content over time.

Outcomes

1. The development of a website that will act as a portal to access the video interviews and allow users to engage with and contribute to the archive through forum postings and to access additional resources.
2. An initial promotional event to launch the website, raise the profile of the archive and to encourage audiences to engage with the process of capturing regional media histories. The event would be organised in partnership with either/and, the BBC/ Birmingham Central Library.

3. A further Open Access Event hosted by the Birmingham School of Media around archiving, history and regionality that would bring together scholars, practitioners and members of the public to discuss issues around the intersections between the media, the past and a sense of identity and place.

The funding application for £10,000 from Screen WM was successful. The proposed budget concentrated most of the spending on a large screening weekend event, in the summer of 2010, with the creation of the website only being budgeted at around £750, for five days of a web designer's time.

An additional funding bid of £2000 was successful in spring 2017. This award was from the George Shiers Trust, a fund administered by the Royal Television Society. The funding is to employ Media students and recent graduates to work with me in recording video oral histories with retired programme makers. It will enable the recording of at least 10 more oral history interviews.

1.3.3 The Screening Event

The screening event in July 2010 proved successful. Partnerships were negotiated with the Midlands Arts Centre (mac), for hosting screenings, and with the BBC, which enabled us to screen modern dramas, as well as the historical material, that the project was centred around. The location of the mac was ideal, being only a few hundred metres from the former Pebble Mill site.

The BBC were initially wary of becoming involved, as the project did not fit with the forward-looking philosophy of the Corporation, instead it harked back to historic material. At one stage they suggested that they take over the whole screening event, which I was resistant to. Fortunately, after a meeting I had with the Head of Drama at BBC Birmingham and the local Head of Communications, we found a compromise, which enabled the promotion of current, as well as historic drama output. With the funding I had, I was able to employ a production manager, with a local Arts festival background, who was able to arrange all the necessary permissions with the British Film Institute, and obtain copies of the films we wished to screen. Through the BBC partnership, I was able to obtain publicity photographs, and copies of some of the films which the BFI could not supply.

15 drama screenings were held across the weekend, with at least 400 people attending overall. Many former Pebble Mill members of staff came along and supported the event. The screenings included *Nuts in May* (1976, BBC1), *Penda's Fen* (1974, BBC1), *Licking Hitler* (1978, BBC1), *Gangsters* (1975, BBC1), *Empire Road* (1978, BBC2), *The Muscle Market* (1981, BBC1) and *Shakespeare or Bust* (1973, BBC1). Two discussion events were also held, one forward looking at the

development of talent and screen drama in the Midlands, and one looking back at how Pebble Mill became a powerhouse for British drama. The second event was hosted by Lez Cooke, then at Manchester Metropolitan University, and included David Rose (Head of ERD 1971-81), Tara Prem (Producer ERD), Peter Ansorge (Producer ERD), Michael Wearing (Producer & later Head of BBC Birmingham Drama Department), Michael Abbensetts (Writer, *Black Christmas* and *Empire Road*). The session explored how the English Regions Drama Department came about, and considered some of the key dramas to be produced in the 1970s.

The screening event generated a lot of interest for the overall project, resulting in several articles in the press, and a piece on *Midlands Today*, the BBC local news programme.

There was a second screening event and conference entitled: 'Film Heritage, Digital Future: Practice and Sustainability for the Film Archive Sector', which was the third delivery outcome on the initial project plan, and organised in conjunction with another archiving project within the Research Centre of the School of Media at BCU. This event was smaller in nature, and was held in March 2011. Screenings at this event included: *A Touch of Eastern Promise* (1973, BBC2), *A Box of Swan* (1990, BBC2), *Joe the Chainsmith* (1958, BBC), and one of Pebble Mill's two film releases, *Fellow Traveller* (1991, BBC2). Programme makers, including producers, Tara Prem and Peter Ansorge, and screenwriter, Michael Eaton, attended and introduced the screenings, and participated in question and answer sessions after their films were shown. The event was free, and held at the School of Art, part of BCU.

The funding conditions of the Screen WM money did not allow for the 'creation' of archival materials, i.e. the video oral histories themselves, but they did allow for the dissemination of those materials via screenings and crucially, the building of a website. Therefore, the emphasis of the project was on promoting public engagement, and education, rather than creating an archive per se.

The application for the funding identified the absence of any publicly accessible archive which documented Birmingham's television production history, it noted the contribution to cultural heritage that making such an archive accessible could provide, and the likely interest both locally and nationally that a video history of production at Pebble Mill could create.

From conversations I had with the Fund manager at Screen WM, it was clear that the Regional Screen Agency's priorities lay in the screening weekend, and that they saw the website as beneficial, but not the core activity. This explains why the budget was skewed towards the event. Even at this stage, I envisaged the website as having a longevity, and therefore an importance, that the screening event could not enjoy.

1.3.4 Creating the Website

I launched the Pebble Mill website in June 2010, a couple of weeks ahead of the main screening weekend. Some of the first blog posts were excerpts from the English Regions Drama Department interviews, which I had recorded the year before. These were split up, so that they related to specific drama productions, and the BBC moving image clips removed (due to copyright reasons).

The website was designed by a post-graduate student, and is a customised WordPress template. WordPress is a free open source, online blogging tool, and content management system. Users can choose between working within an existing website template, or customizing one. The template the Pebble Mill website uses is based on Sarah Neuber's, *MultiMedia Reloaded* theme. It is substantially different from the original in terms of the design, and some of the core files were changed by the post-graduate student, to fit the project better, but most of the main features apply.

The website was designed as a dynamic site with the capacity to have multi-media files embedded in it. A Vimeo account was set up to host video content, a Flickr account for photographs, and a Sound Cloud account for audio content. Each post on the website is a blog, and can have audio, video or stills embedded within it. Written material is typed directly into each blog post, or cut and pasted from Word documents. Additionally, photographs can be uploaded singly into a blog post on the site directly, rather than using Flickr. A Facebook and a Twitter account were also set up to help boost the website reach.

The website comprises of a number of 'Pages', including: 'Blog'; 'Transmission Lists' (these were added later in 2012, and list all the television Drama transmission dates for Pebble Mill productions, divided by decade); 'About', which explains the aims of the project; 'Home', which includes a banner, navigation bar, featured blogs, short description of the site, and a chronology of recent blogs; and 'Contact', which provides a contact form, for users to get in touch, which generates an email directly to me. Each post is then assigned a category, so that it is easier to find by users. The categories have a hierarchy, and include sub-categories, they are: 'Blog', with sub-categories, 'Photographs' and 'Videos'; 'Building', with sub-categories, 'Memories', 'Photographs' and 'Videos'; 'Featured', which makes a blog appear permanently on the 'Home Page'; 'Radio', with 'Local' and 'Network' sub-categories; 'Television', with 'Drama', 'Factual', 'Regional' and 'Transmission List' sub-categories; 'Uncategorized', which is where blogs that are not placed elsewhere go by default, and 'Video', which is where all videos can be found. Blog posts can be tagged to appear in multiple categories.

The website includes a number of 'plugins', which improve the functionality and appearance of the site, these include a 'spam' filter, contact form template, menu-bar template, a tool to create tables, a database optimizer, automatic backups, an image file size reduction tool as well as Google Analytics, to track the usage of the site. The plugins require updating from time to time, and the site 'dashboard' alerts the administrator when this needs doing. New plugins could be added if desired.

1.3.5 Creating a Blog Post

Before this project I had no experience of blogging, or of running a website, and had little concept of what might be entailed. I, naively, thought that I would simply hand over the photographs and videos that I had either been given, or made, to the web designer, he would upload them to the site, and that would be that. I assumed that the pages, once created, would be quite static. I encountered a steep learning curve!

The web designer showed me how to create a blog post, and wrote me a short guide, filled with useful information, logins and passwords. This was to prove invaluable, and gave me all the detail I needed to begin populating the website.

In order to create a blog post, I decide on the subject and choose a photograph or other artefact to base it around. Blogs without some kind of visual look less appealing, so wherever possible a photograph is included. I vary the topics of blog posts across a week, so that there is something different each day for users, and I time blogs to coincide with anniversaries or events. For instance, one day it might be a written blog about a contributor's BBC career, the next I might choose a photograph from a particular programme, the following day might be an excerpt from an oral history video I have recorded, and then there may be an event to preview. Each blog has a title, relevant written information, and where possible, a photograph. If there is video or audio, I embed it from 'Vimeo', or 'Sound Cloud' platforms, having previously uploaded material there. I then add the 'categories' that reflect the content, and 'tag' words, to enable easier searching, before previewing, and then publishing the post. I tag proper nouns

appearing in the post, including programme titles, individuals included, as well as any specific equipment mentioned. Tagging is extremely important, as it facilitates a user search. Additionally, when a user selects a blog to read, all the tags in the entire site appear as a list of hyperlinked words on the right-hand-side of the page, in alphabetical order, with the font size denoting the number of times the tag has been used. Hence, a popular tag, for example, 'Pebble Mill', appears prominently, and if you hover over the word with your cursor, then the number of times it has been used will be displayed. If a user clicks on a tag, they will be navigated to a page which shows a thumbnail photograph, brief information and links to all posts using that tag. This ensures that the site can be navigated around in different ways: through typing in the search box, through searching the categories on the navigation bar, or through selecting tags.

Within the first year of the website going live it was receiving around 250 hits a week, with users spending an average of around four minutes on the site. The number of hits is now around double that figure, with many more page views per visit, although visit times now tend to be shorter. This information comes from weekly Google Analytics reports. From examining the usage of the site, it is clear that the number of visitors drops off markedly if new material is not being posted up. Therefore, I try to post up a blog each weekday, about different topics. I thought at first that I might quickly run out of content, but this has not yet proved the case, because of the wealth of material I am given.

Users can add comments to individual blog posts, but anyone posting comments must be approved by me, as administrator, before the comment is seen by other

people. This is to safeguard against spam comments, of which there are many, despite the anti-spam plug-ins, or abusive messages. After someone has been approved once, his or her future comments are published immediately.

After the screening event and building of the website, I had some of the initial Screen West Midlands funding left, and so decided to add the Pebble Mill television drama 'Transmission lists' to the website. I was able to pay a contract member of Birmingham City University staff to work on this development of the website. I had been given a list of all the television drama transmissions by a former colleague in post-production, and in fact a version of the same list, although not covering as wide a time period, is available at the BBC Archives in Caversham, and in Appendix 2 of Lez Cooke's PhD (2007, p. 209-14). The transmission lists are displayed on the website by decade, covering the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s. There are over 1,500 transmitted drama productions on the lists, and these are searchable by the month, year, strand, title, writer, producer or director. The drama titles can also be linked to blogs on the website which relate to that production, making it potentially a very useful resource, and one that can be added to, as more blogs are created.

Inputting all the transmission data took many, many hours of quite tedious labour, and the ongoing task of linking the transmission lists to individual blogs is also quite time consuming. However, having a searchable transmission date database, linked to the blogs, provides a valuable part of the website, and one that I suspect is currently under-utilised.

I do have some transmission data relating to factual and entertainment programming from Pebble Mill, but this is less complete, and much larger in scale, than the television drama lists, and is not something that I have had the resources to put on the website at present. This is perhaps a task for the future.

1.3.6 Facebook

The web designer suggested that an ancillary Facebook group could be established, and linked to the website. At the time I did not see this as a significant addition, but was content to include it. The designer set up the template of the Facebook group, and I set about 'adding' 'Friends', from my personal contacts. As the website began to take shape the Facebook 'Friends' grew in number, as people requested to join the group, when they saw their friends were members, or were commenting on the group's page.

The group was set up to act as a driver to the website, and also with the notion of creating an online community, able to facilitate more informal conversations, and wider discussions than was possible through the 'Comments' section of the website. By the end of the first year of running the website there were over 300 'Friends' in the group, which I considered a success. To maximise the number of people seeing, and commenting on a blog, each time there was a posting on the website, a link and a message was posted on the Facebook group. Members of the Group seemed to feel more comfortable commenting via Facebook, than they do on the website itself. This is due to the fact that Facebook is particularly suited to informal commenting, with most users of Facebook doing this

habitually in a social context, around friends' photographs, or activities, and so commenting on the archive posts is seen as an extension of this. The Facebook community quickly proved themselves invaluable as a source of information. I found that I could ask the community for help in, for instance, identifying people in photographs, giving information about working on a particular show, or telling me about a particular piece of equipment. If I posted a question on the group page, within a very short space of time comments and information would come back to me, and that information could be used to update a website blog post.

Most of the Facebook community is made up of people who used to work at Pebble Mill, and in many ways has similarities to a reunion site. Members of the group have enjoyed being re-connected with people they used to work with face to face, and who they have perhaps lost contact with over the years. There are, however, members who are connected to Pebble Mill in other ways; quite a number are the children of staff at Pebble Mill, and are interested to find out more about their parents' careers, and others simply enjoyed the programmes that were made at Pebble Mill, and are interested in the history of the broadcast production centre. I did not establish a formal criterion for people being able to join the group, although informally I used not to approve people who either were not already 'friends' with someone in the group, or did not message me with a reason for wanting to be part of the online community. This was because occasionally people not connected with Pebble Mill would post a comment on the group page, which did not relate to Pebble Mill, or the wider industry in any way. When this happened, active members in the online community would ask

for the comment to be removed from the group page, which I was happy to comply with. To avoid this happening, it seemed sensible not to approve people without some sort of connection or interest in BBC Pebble Mill.

When I first began operating the website I assumed that all the posting on the site would originate from me, and it was quite a surprise when individuals from the Facebook community began posting their own photographs on the Pebble Mill Facebook group. I was keen that these artefacts should be transferred to the main website, where they would be searchable, and more stable, than on a platform where I had less control. I took the step of asking whoever posted up artefacts, if I could copy them across to the main website. The vast majority of members posting photographs or videos have been happy for me to copy them across, and where they were not, I have not done so. Sharing content on Facebook, seems more informal, perhaps less permanent, and less visible to members outside the group, than the website, and some users have felt that their photographs were suitable for Facebook, but not for the website; these were perhaps photographs from parties, or of 'souvenirs' taken from Pebble Mill when the building was closed, prior to its demolition, and where publishing them on the website could prove embarrassing for individuals involved.

It quickly became clear that the comments that users were adding to the Facebook group were a valuable resource, which would enhance the website. I began the practice of asking users if I could copy their comments across to the main Pebble Mill website. This consent process proved rather time consuming and cumbersome, and therefore I added in a couple of sentences to the 'Profile'

section of the Facebook group, saying that it was my practice to copy across some of the comments posted on the group, and that if users did not want me to use their comments in this way, that they should let me know, and I would abide by their wishes. I choose the comments which add useful information to the original website posts, and provide context, being careful to avoid comments which might infringe privacy or might prove defamatory.

The Facebook group has proved extremely useful to the *Pebble Mill project*. Much of the traffic to the website, around 40%, comes via Facebook, so it is an effective driver of users to the main site. However, this is not the primary importance of the Facebook group, the crucial factor is that it has enabled an online community to become established around the project, an engaged online population who regularly comment on blog posts, and add their own photographs or artefacts, where they have them.

The Facebook aspect has altered the initial concept of the project, and made it into something far more interesting, and far more useful for people outside of the academy. The website and Facebook group has become a democratic, community archive, rather than the more traditional oral history concept originally envisaged. The project has developed and grown organically, through the creation and engagement of the online community.

1.4 Other Similar Projects

I have searched online for similar sites to the *Pebble Mill project* and have found a number of archival projects using some, but not necessarily all of the features of the Pebble Mill one.

- Granadaland

This site provides a collection of over 70 audio oral histories from the staff of the Manchester based, ITV production centre, Granada. The histories have been transcribed, and the audio for some of the interviews is also available.

Additionally, there are some photographs on the site, and video clips from Granada idents, but there are no written blogs, and importantly, no social media presence. The territory is very similar to the *Pebble Mill project*, covering a similar period in broadcasting history, and having a similar purpose of preserving memories of the programmes made and the production culture, but the methodology is different, in that the content primarily comes from the historians, rather than being led by the community of users. The website for this project is for the dissemination of the oral histories recorded, rather than the collecting of diverse oral history material through an online community.

- John Peel Archive

The *John Peel Archive* website categorises John Peel's prolific record collection, and is in the process of digitising it and making parts of it accessible online.

There are videos and audio clips with various musicians exploring the collection, which is an innovative way of interacting with the archival materials and making

it engaging for visitors to the site. The Facebook page contains a number of photographs and videos from the archive; however, it generally seems to be used for disseminating archival activity, rather than generating and harvesting material from the online community. The Facebook page was established in April 2012, with regular postings several times a week. There are some requests for users to send in material, but I have noted an absence of the kind of online conversations which are apparent on the Pebble Mill Facebook page.

- Birmingham Music Archive

This website collects media artefacts relating to the Birmingham popular music scene, particularly ephemera and memories around particular venues and performances. There is also an associated Facebook group with over 1,400 members, established in January 2015. Users can upload comments and artefacts easily to both the website and Facebook group, and the value of sharing is highlighted on both. The ethos of this site is similar to the *Pebble Mill project*, in that collaboration with the online community is at the core of the project, and the artefacts displayed are curated on the site.

The curator of the *Birmingham Music Archive*, Jez Collins is an academic at Birmingham City University, and has written several papers and book chapters about online archives, and fan activism.

- BECTU History Project

BECTU (Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union) established an oral history project in the late 1980s, as a way of documenting members' working lives and working practices, in order to preserve a 'bottom-up' history. Members of the Union were conscious that industry workers possessed a vast store of knowledge that was largely ignored, and at risk of being lost (Dawson and Holmes, 2012, p. 435). The project is run by industry workers, for and by themselves. The philosophy and collective production method is similar to the *Pebble Mill project*, albeit on a national scale. They have now amassed around 650 interviews, some on audio cassette and some on videotape. The interviews are in the process of being transcribed and digitised. Work on this valuable archive is on-going, with new recordings being added. The emphasis has concentrated on the creation and enlargement of the archive, rather than its dissemination. However, some of the transcripts and recordings are available online, and a recently redesigned website means that the interviews are now searchable, additionally there is a desire to transcribe more material. There is no social media dimension to the project, and no ability to comment on the content of the interviews. It is interesting that this project has decided to routinely use video for the oral histories, whilst many other projects shy away from it as a medium. This may be because the Union members include those with film and video production skills. I asked one of the organisers of the project, Sue Malden, why they had decided to use video, and she said that whilst they were aware that it might deter some participants, that it seemed like a more engaging medium because of being able to see facial expressions and being able to display artefacts.

- Alexandra Palace Television Society

This site is for the Alexandra Palace Television Society, Alexandra Palace being where the first BBC television broadcasts were transmitted from. The link takes the visitor to a holding page. The project website was not active at the time of searching. This highlights the potential vulnerability of websites and projects which rely on the dedication of a few active individuals, meaning they can quickly become defunct.



The Alexandra Palace Television Society

New site launching soon.

Figure 1 APTS holding page, accessed 18th May 2017

- The Elstree Project

The Elstree Project is a collaboration between University of Hertfordshire and the volunteer group, Elstree Screen Heritage. It is an oral history project, and has conducted around 70 interviews with film makers at Elstree, including high profile actors like Sir Roger Moore and Barbara Windsor, but also with editors, camera operators, carpenters and other crew members. The project has resulted in a book being published, a museum exhibit and also a documentary being

broadcast. The website seems only to include a few excerpts from the interviews, rather than the full interviews or transcripts. The purpose of the site seems to be document the activity of the project, rather than to engage with users, for example, comments are not enabled on postings. The last blog post on the website was in October 2015; it is therefore unclear whether the project has run its course, or whether it is on-going. There is social media activity connected to the project, with Twitter and Facebook, but this does not seem to be particularly active currently, with the last Facebook post being made in July 2016. There are around 780 followers of the Facebook page, and whilst there are posts with a few comments, there is not the same intensity of online conversation that I have observed on the Pebble Mill Facebook page. There does not seem to be the same kind of active virtual community present on the page.

- ITN 1955 Club

The ITN 1955 Club was established in 1989, as a social organisation for people who had worked at ITN for at least two years. It currently has over 300 members who pay an annual subscription. The club organises several face-to-face events each year, and a monthly newsletter. There is a five-person committee, which is probably one of the reasons for the club's longevity, because there is a succession mechanism. The website is visible to all, and includes some photographs of contemporary social events and a handful of videos, some historic, and some contemporary videos with retired ITN staff. There does not seem to be an associated social media presence, and there is no interaction from members on the website. The purpose of this site is different to the Pebble Mill

one; it is a reunion site, rather than an oral history project, and the few video artefacts are not the focus of attention. It is inward looking, seeking to serve its membership, rather than to share this history more widely. However, the committee structure is a sensible way of aiding longevity.

- Tech-ops

This site is run by a former BBC Television Centre (TVC) cameraman called Bernie (he does not give his surname); it began in 2002, and was transferred into a WordPress site in 2010. He describes his project as a 'Tech-ops history in stories and pictures'. There are a number of photographs on the site, and musings about contemporary television versus historic television, as well as comments, which seem to have been transcribed from face-to-face conversations at reunion lunches for TVC technical staff. The purpose of the site seems to be similar to the *Pebble Mill project*, and there certainly seems to be a community who interact offline, and who provide photographs and other archival material, in the same way that the Pebble Mill community do. However, there is no interaction on the actual site, and no social media presence associated with it. The other issue with the site is the inability to search for particular content, which makes it difficult to navigate around.

- TV Studio history project

The TV Studio history project has been set up and run by a television lighting director called Martin Kempton. It provides a very detailed history of London's

various television studios, and has involved the collaboration of around 200 people, who have contributed photographs, plans and other information. The site is predominantly text, and is similar to an online book, with different chapters. The project does not have any associated social media presence, and annoyingly, does not have a search box. There is some similarity in terms of subject matter with the Pebble Mill site, but the approach is different, and although many individuals have contributed to the project, it feels like the labour of one person.

These projects demonstrate that other groups and individuals are also harnessing the potential of online platforms for historiography, although each has a slightly different purpose and method. Only the *Birmingham Music Archive* has interaction with the online community at its core, akin to the *Pebble Mill project*. What is noteworthy though, is that the majority of the *Music Archive* posts have little online discussion by way of comments, which may be due to having a more diverse virtual community, who do not necessarily know of each other outside the social media arena. In the main, the other sites referred to are not capitalising on the potential of social media as a historiographical tool, either they do not have social media linked to their site, or they are not regularly posting on social media and encouraging community interaction. We can infer from this that the administrators of these sites do not appreciate how social media could increase the interest and engagement in their projects. They perhaps do not participate in social media personally, and may view it with suspicion, or as an unwelcome chore, whilst not realising the potential of this untapped resource.

This chapter has set out the scope of the thesis and the structure of the written element of it, giving a brief description of each chapter. It has also explained how the *Pebble Mill project* came about, and how it has developed since its inception. The design and functionality of the website has been described, as has the relationship between the website and the Pebble Mill Facebook page. The end of this chapter has drawn attention to projects which share similarities to the Pebble Mill one.

Chapter 2

Literature Review I: Oral History and Memory

The previous chapter explained how and why the *Pebble Mill project* came about, including the motivation behind its creation: the desire to write the living history of an important era of broadcast production in the BBC Midlands English Region. Building on the experience of setting up the *Pebble Mill project*, I wanted to undertake practice-based research in order to discover how we can best document and share the memories of people working within a particular creative industry workplace: BBC Pebble Mill, during the timeframe the building was active: 1971-2005. The research seeks to explore what historiographical practice is best suited to creating a popular and purposeful online community archive.

This chapter examines the body of literature concerned with oral history and memory studies which is relevant to the *Pebble Mill project*, considering what can be learnt from it, and applied to the project

2.1 Oral History

The in-depth interview, carried out with ordinary people, is at the core of oral history, but scholars disagree on what else is included or excluded, and definitions are fluid and open to interpretation. Proponents, like Paul Thompson, understand oral history as the history around living people; he sees it as giving life to history and broadening its scope, '[o]ral history gives history back to the

people in their own words' (1978, p. 220); Valerie Yow defines oral history in more physical terms as the recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form, including the taped recording itself, the typed transcript, and the research method of in-depth interview (2005, p. 3), whilst Alice Murray stresses oral history as a process, rather than a product (2000, p. 106). Norma Scott builds on Thompson's definition, seeing oral history as collections of histories from people, using talk, rather than written form, and usually including their early life experiences, in order to provide context for later events (2002, p. 127). In contrast, Stephen Humphries is looser than Thompson or Yow in his definition of what constitutes an oral history. The work can take many forms; it can, be a spoken autobiography, but might also be written, poetic, photographic, or take the form of a play, or exhibition. This diversity of approach he sees as an important element in ceding control of projects to small collaborative groups, 'to build a living local culture which produces knowledge by and for itself' (1984, p. 4). This approach is similar to Paul Arthur's view of the concept of digital biography and life writing, which has become possible with the advent of Web 2.0 digital technologies, and which includes a mixture of written, visual and audio material (2009, p. 47), and indeed, I would argue that we are experiencing a widening of the scope of what constitutes oral history with the advent of digital technologies.

I adopt the looser definition of researchers like Stephen Humphries (1984) and Paul Arthur (2009), who interpret oral history as the history around communities of living people, but potentially including spoken word and photographs, as well as written text. This seems the most relevant approach for

the kind of online community archive that the *Pebble Mill project* is. If I adopted a more purist view, including only audio recordings carried out by myself as an oral historian, then the richness of the project would potentially be lost, especially the empowerment of the community to dictate what is added to the archive. Although the *Pebble Mill project* was inspired by a traditional oral history project, *Lives in the Oil Industry*, until I read the literature relating to oral history I did not consider that the way the project had developed as coming under the definition of oral history any longer, or only in terms of the video interviews. It is gratifying, therefore, that some scholars advocate a looser, more umbrella definition, which encompasses the whole of the project.

Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson in *The Oral History Reader*, detail four key paradigm shifts in the development of oral history, providing a very useful outline of how the field has changed over the last seventy years. The first paradigm shift, just after the Second World War, marks the renaissance of oral history as a method for historiographical research. The second shift was in response to critics in the 1970s, historians like Patrick O'Farrell, who questioned the reliability of human memory, the subjectivity of the interviewer and the nostalgia of the interviewee, and felt that oral history methods led to 'myth' rather than history. Advocates of oral history, like Alessandro Portelli, argued that the narrative form, the subjectivity and the 'different credibility' of memory, were actually the strengths of the method, rather than its weaknesses. The third transformation, in the late 1980s, involved a shift in the approach to the objectivity of the oral historian as interviewer and analyst. Influential scholars,

like Valerie Yow, questioned positivist notions, and encouraged reflexivity in researchers, and an awareness of the interactive process between narrator and interviewer. The fourth paradigm shift is marked by the digital revolution, making audio-visual recordings accessible online, and enabling anyone to make creative connections within oral history collections, using audio-visual material as well as text (Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 1-8). This chronology reflects the differences in the earlier definitions of oral history, from the purist reliance on the in-depth oral interview, usually taped, to the digital interpretation, which allows for a broader scope of source materials, including video, and written text as well as oral recordings. It also highlights the main issues concerning oral history: the unreliability of memory, and the lack of objectivity in the researcher.

It seems self-evident to position the *Pebble Mill project* within the fourth paradigm shift that Perks & Thomson identify. However, the first edition of Perks and Thomson's *The Oral History Reader* was published in 1998, and the second in 2006, when the impact of interactivity had yet to be fully realised; what they were stressing was the ability to disseminate material via digital platforms, rather than engage the user in a more empowered manner. Social media sites like Myspace, LiveJournal and GeoCities were active at this time, but it was before Facebook had widened its scope beyond universities in autumn 2006, (Facebook, 2006). Perks and Thomson were not considering the interactivity of social media as a way of creating new oral histories, ones authored by the participants themselves. The world they refer to, is a vastly different one from the present day, where the ability to comment, co-author, post photographs,

video and audio in reply to an initial post, can enrich online oral history projects immeasurably.

Steve Cohen, cognitive psychologist and project evaluator, put forward the idea of a further paradigm shift caused by developments in digital technologies in 2013. His argument was that publishing oral histories online fundamentally changes their consumption: that sharing them with billions of potential users raises questions concerning the difference between listening to audio, rather than reading transcripts, and that summarising and metadata become crucial, as do the aesthetics of sites and their content (2013). Whilst Cohen's observations correlate with my experience of operating the *Pebble Mill project*, he is only seeing a fraction of the potential of web technologies. His paradigm shift is focussed on dissemination, and neglects the collaborative possibilities for content creation, which is the far more exciting and dynamic development facing oral history work going forwards. Therefore, I believe we are currently experiencing a new paradigm shift which is significantly different from, and more wide ranging than Cohen's. I am calling this new paradigm the era of 'collaborative, online, oral history'. Communities can now be empowered to take ownership of telling their own history, in their own way, without reliance on historians or institutions to write it for them. It is therefore a democratising shift in oral history creation, giving power to individuals, groups and communities. This paradigm shift is caused by the possibilities of interactivity, and it is evidenced by the *Pebble Mill project*. When I began the project I had failed to appreciate the potential of social media to create oral histories, and saw it initially as simply a vehicle for dissemination, in much the same way that Perks

and Thomson describe the fourth paradigm shift. It was only through developing the project that the exciting possibilities of the community building the oral history itself, became apparent. The *Pebble Mill project* relies on the community to shape the project through the comments they add, the discussions they have and the new material they post. The creation of focussed online communities, and interaction with them at a grass roots level, enabled by Web 2.0 functionality, alters the traditional oral history model quite profoundly; this warrants further research, particularly in the exploration of the new paradigm I have identified. This concept will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6, 'Engaging with the Online Community' and 'Photographs as a Stimulus for Online Community Engagement in Memory and Oral History Work', of this thesis.

2.1.1 *Validity of Oral Testimony*

Questions have been raised about the validity of oral history testimony, and about how it compares with documentary sources. The argument is that because human memory is unreliable, in contrast to documentary sources which are fixed and accurate, that oral history testimony is therefore, invalid. However, this position is rejected by many oral historians, who argue that oral histories have a psychological truth.

In the late 1970s the Italian oral historian Alessandro Portelli refuted criticisms over the reliability of oral testimony, arguing that it was in fact its orality, subjectivity, narrative form and the 'different credibility' of memory, and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, that are its strengths, rather

than its weaknesses (see Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 32). Portelli suggests that Western culture's 'awe of writing has distorted our perception of language and communication to the point where we no longer understand either orality or the nature of writing itself' (Portelli, in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 33). At the heart of oral testimony, he sees narrative, and observes a generic difference between 'factual' and 'artistic' narratives, and between the description of events, and feelings or imagination (Portelli, in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p.35). Therefore, the essence of oral testimony does not necessarily rely on the accuracy of dates and precise facts, but is more of a social history, which documents the narrator's perception of an event, how it impinged on them, and what it meant to them. Portelli argues that oral sources are always psychologically true, even if the factual accuracy is less reliable.

Bertrand and Hughes describe oral histories as an 'expression of a point of view, which complicates analysis and interpretation' (2005, p. 148). Seeing this as a complication, is perhaps to miss the strength of the individual perspective given in the oral testimony. Coming from a post-modern perspective, Alice Murray talks about her own development as an oral historian, and how she no longer counts on discovering definitive facts about a narrator's life, but realises the need to analyse the 'constructions and interpretations of the past', and 'the larger historical context', realising that oral histories are no less 'reliable' than other sources, but like all sources need checking (Murray, 2000, p. 113). This conceptualisation is very helpful when applied to the *Pebble Mill project*, facts such as dates and places can be checked through triangulation, but recording the

living history of an individual contextualises the institutional account, and provides us with a powerful alternative perspective.

Also on the question of reliability, Thompson (1978) and Humphries (1984) emphasise that there are no absolute rules to indicate the validity of oral evidence, but that researchers should check for internal consistency, and cross-check with other sources where possible. Taking a defensive stance, they point out that all historical sources are fallible and subject to bias, and that in some contexts, oral evidence is the best, whilst in others it is complementary or supplementary. One benefit over other sources, that Thompson points out, is the fact that because the narrator is a living source, that anything misleading or unclear can be checked with the interviewee, in what is a two-way and collaborative process.

The traditional criticisms levelled at oral history regarding questions of the reliability of human memory and the subjectivity of the interviewer are highly relevant and need to be considered within the *Pebble Mill project*. Contributors to the Pebble Mill website and Facebook group/page may well make mistakes about factual details such as dates or locations, but the spirit of their contribution will remain valid; they exhibit that alternative credibility that Portelli draws attention to. The narrative of the information given will be true, even if small factual errors remain. On a number of occasions, the factual accuracy of blog posts or comments on the Pebble Mill site has been questioned by other users, but rather than seeing this as a negative, I have been able to carry out further research to try and clarify details and remove inaccuracies. The

online community here acts as a fact checker, in a way that could not have been predicted by early oral historians. In the same way that social media allows you to crowdsource information, it also enables you to crowdsource facts. This concept is explored further in Chapter 5, 'Engaging with the Online Community'.

2.1.2 Subjectivity in Oral History, and the Interviewer and Interviewee Relationship

Subjectivity was the second major criticism, aside from reliability, that positivist historians in the 1970s and 1980s levelled at oral testimony. Valerie Yow, from the late 1980s onwards, argued that a new approach was needed to oral history, one which encouraged an awareness of the interactive relationship between the interviewer and interviewee and considered how the interviewer influenced the narration, becoming a key part in what is a collaborative process: posing particular questions, in a particular way, pursuing certain pathways, reminding and probing the narrator. She encouraged reflexivity in researchers, in order to consider how their approach affected the interview, the data gathered and the interpretation of it. Citing Victor Turner, she argued that a researcher can have 'an objective relation to one's own subjectivity' (Yow in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 59), by which she means a self-awareness of one's own position, influence and innate bias. She challenged the notion that the researcher should be objective, and non-involved, instead noting that the best research is carried out by people who were very much involved, and therefore well motivated and committed to the project (Yow, 2005, p.68). Subjectivity is something I am very aware of with my own position, because I am a participant researcher, being a member of the

community I am working with, and therefore, I need to be reflexive about the impact this can have, both positively and negatively. I suspect that if I did not have the background and experience as a staff member at BBC Pebble Mill, I would not be able to gain the access to contributors, and enjoy their trust, in the way that I do. The fact that I often know the people I interview quite well beforehand, and frequently have worked with them professionally, gives a particular kind of relationship, and one where I would argue that I am more likely to be able to ask the right questions to elicit interesting responses, however, I am also likely to take certain things as self evident, when a outsider would see that they warrant discussion.

Applying the need for reflexivity, Murray's research explores the effect that her relationships with the activists she was working with had on the interviews she recorded with them (2000 p. 112). Yow provides the analogy of a 'tug' going on within the narrator, and between the narrator and interviewer, as he or she decides how much to disclose or keep silent on within the interview, and as the interviewer decides how much to probe and challenge (Yow, 2005, p. 108). The pull and push of the interview situation is highly complex, and brings in questions of the power interplay between the interviewer and interviewee, which is dependent on many factors, such as status, knowledge, gender, race, age, class and even interview location. Daniel James develops this notion further and articulates a tension between oral testimony as an empirical data-gathering method, and as the production of a collaborative narrative produced by interviewee and interviewer (James, in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 86). He warns of the dangers of taking too literal a reading of the interview evidence, because of

the effect the interviewer may have had on the creation of the text, and advises awareness of what is happening when an oral historian produces a text that claims to speak about, and for, another (ibid, p. 95). The issue of researcher reflexivity is therefore of great significance here, in considering how the interview text has been influenced. The task of interviewing is a complex one, it is a voyage of discovery, according to Studs Terkel, where the interviewer must experiment, improvise, and create the right environment for disclosure, asking, 'And what happened then?' rather than challenging the narrator (Parker, in Perks & Thomson, 2006).

Scholars emphasise the collaborative nature of collecting oral testimonies, it is a creative and co-operative process, an interaction between the interviewer and the narrator. Humphries advocates projects being undertaken by small groups who are given as much control as possible over the entire production (1984, p. 5), but as James points out, frequently the original text, the transcribed oral text, and the visual image will be overseen by others and 'escape the control of community interpretation' (Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 99). This loss of control by the interviewee calls into question ethical issues over permissions. Practice amongst oral historians varies, as McHugh (2012, p. 42) notes, most narrators are given a release form to sign, which allows them to specify certain conditions to the interview, and best practice gives them the opportunity to review, correct or withdraw material. This procedure puts a huge onus on the researcher to keep in contact with interviewees, and risks them not being able to disseminate arguably the most crucial sections of a testimony. The Popular Memory Group, part of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of

Birmingham, see the relationship of interviewer and interviewee as grossly unequal, where the historian is positioned as the most intellectually active, whilst the narrator becomes a 'source' who simply provides information (Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 52). This position simplifies the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, and the power imbalance noted is not always present, especially when the interviewee is a confident media professional as many of the people who I interview are. Frequently, I am interviewing people I used to work for, and who were senior to me, which affects the dynamic. However, in terms of control, I am the one recording and editing the interviews and deciding which parts to use or discard, and when and how to disseminate them, and so, therefore, I have the majority of power, particularly after the interview is recorded. The ethics around consent and publication are explored in more detail in Chapter 4, 'Ethics'.

Another issue regarding the interplay of interviewer and interviewee arises when the testimony is disseminated. Often when oral testimony is published, either in the original or transcript form, the voice of the interviewer is removed, and the interview appears as a seamless flow from the narrator. As Portelli points out, when the researcher's voice is cut out, the narrator's voice is distorted (Portelli, in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 39). The distortion is quite subtle, but the impression is given that the narrator's interview is a stable text, and not one that has been influenced by the interjection of the interviewer. In terms of the edited interviews I produce, I usually remove the questions I ask during the interview, to improve the flow and professionalism of the finished

product, and therefore Portelli's observation is one that can be levelled at the methods I use. This practice is something that was habitually carried out in my broadcast career in television production, and is the *modus operandi* that I have perpetuated since moving into academic work. However, there is an argument that I should adapt this practice, particularly with the more traditional oral history interviews that I sometimes carry out, allowing the user to witness the whole exchange between interviewer and interviewee, or providing different versions of the interviews for users to watch. This area is interrogated in more detail in Chapter 7, 'Video as a Medium for Oral History Recording and Display'.

2.1.3 *Narrative*

Oral testimonies are often termed 'life stories', the telling of the 'story' is an important aspect for the interviewee or narrator, a way of making sense of the events from an individual perspective in a public, or semi-public arena. Narrative is a crucial component of oral history, along with description, explanation and reflection (Yow, 2005, p. 15). Citing Catherine Riessman, Yow observes that narrative is a necessary structure for making meaning, and that it is also necessary that researchers do not disrupt that process by breaking the story up, but instead analyse how the narrative was constructed (*ibid*, p.17). The narrative is not a fixed text, and would change if the narrator was given different cues from the interviewer. With the oral histories I record, I try not to disrupt the narrative, but follow it chronologically, asking questions to prompt the narrator about their broadcast career. Depending on the type of interview and the way it is being filmed, then it is sometimes difficult not to stop and start it, potentially breaking

the story up. This is particularly the case for practical demonstrations of now defunct production equipment, especially if the camera needs repositioning for a close up or wider shot.

Just as the oral histories are not fixed texts, neither is the Pebble Mill website where the recordings are displayed. Whilst the site is being added to, by the host, and potentially the users, it is certainly not fixed, and again the context changes, depending on external events, as well as the content of the posts added.

In Draaisma's view it is not simply the cues given by the interviewer that change the narrative, but indeed the very fact of there being an audience, in the form of the interviewer. He observes that there is a difference between a private memory, and one reported to someone else, and that in becoming public, the memory is no longer a record of a particular event, but becomes "fitted into themes, motives, story lines" (2004, p. 197). The memory therefore becomes mediated, it becomes a narrative, rather than a private recollection. This effect is exacerbated when the narrator is aware that the interview is going to be publicly displayed, which is a feature I have observed in my video interviews. This is not necessarily problematic, and in fact results in a more engaging end product for users of the published oral histories. The adoption of a performance mode by interviewees is explored in more detail in Chapter 7, 'Video as a Medium for Oral History Recording and Display'.

Paul Cobley, argues that narrative has become a key concept in social science research, particularly where it pertains to personal histories and biographies, and the “framing of identity”, (2014, p. 212). However, scholars, when discussing the narrativity of oral history testimony are not considering narrative theory in the same way as a literary historian, or film studies theoretician might, rather they are seeing narrative as a “specifically human form of semiosis” (ibid p. 212), a way of making meaning out of past events. Storytelling can relate mundane or significant events, and is deeply bound up with interpersonal communication, and the relationship of the teller with the listener. Citing Charon, Cobley explains that the narrative cannot be considered a carbon copy of the actual events, but has an aesthetic dimension, a particular, authored perspective as well as a consideration of the listening audience. The story told can easily become subtly changed and embroidered, even though perhaps only subconsciously, falsehoods might be added, revisions made, facts altered (ibid). This presents challenges for the social science historian, and needs to be carefully considered when assessing research data derived from oral testimonies.

Cobley applies theories of narrativity to historiography, as well as to fictional forms: that historians include narrative forms in their writing to show the causality of historic events. Citing Bennett (1990), he concludes that the writing of history is not necessarily recording a ‘knowable truth’ but is instead a representation informed by archived historical documents (2014, p. 29-30). He also points out other aspects of narrative, which are relevant to community archives, and online histories, arguing that narrative is vitally important in terms

of storing memories, and integral to forming identity (ibid, p. 106). Oral histories preserve and share those narratives, and articulate those identities. Cobley briefly considers the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on narrative, and concludes that, 'social media have not wrought a transformation of narrative any more than email or telephone did' (p. 186). This assertion may no longer be tenable, as the Internet has the potential to build non-linear meta-narratives, unlike the telephone or email, where user comments build on an original post democratically, to co-author a narrative, and where a myriad of blogs or posts can articulate small parts of a much bigger story, which users can access in a self-determined order, adding their own experiences along the way.

Theories concerning hypertext are relevant here, a term which was coined by Theodore Nelson in 1965, pre-dating the advent of social media and Web 2.0 by several decades. 'Hypertext' describes a non-linear writing mode, where users follow links and associated paths through a library of online texts, to which they could also contribute (Solway, 2011, p. 341). This definition foreshadows what happens habitually now with many online texts, and particularly with blogging sites. Hypertext enthusiast, George Landow, emphasises the power of the reader in this scenario, that e-text blogs can employ users as 'reader-contributors' who can create a 'social text that takes the form of a cloud of commentaries surrounding individual entries or hanging off from them' (2009, p. 444).

Websites, are capable of articulating a non-linear meta-narrative, in a way which empowers the reader in creating an individual reading of the text, and a pathway through the content, that resonates with post-structuralist notions, and hypertextual principles. The website becomes a complex, non-linear narrative,

where the user finds their own path, moving from one micro-story to another, guided by their own interests, the categorisation, and tags embedded in the site.

The concept of a website being a non-linear narrative is an attractive one, which chimes with the collaborative history writing produced via the Pebble Mill site. Each post on the project website has a narrative embedded in it: each oral history interview has a beginning, middle and end, as does each written blog, or annotated photograph; many are micro stories, but all contribute towards telling the macro-narrative: the history of Pebble Mill itself, which in turn contributes to the over-arching story of broadcast production in the late 20th Century in the United Kingdom.

2.1.4 A Social History

For many researchers, oral history is seen as a democratising process, which can give voice to sections of society whose stories are seldom heard, allowing communities the confidence to write their own history (Thompson, 1978). As Norma Scott describes it, we have the possibility of seeing “history from below” (2002, p. 127), and indeed all socio-economic levels of the population can be included (Yow, 2005, p. 10). Taking a socialist perspective, Thompson focuses on the social purpose at its heart: history as a force for change. Other oral historians take a similar view, Humphries emphasises the value of having a social purpose as a motivation behind an oral history project (1984, p.5), and Scott sees a goal

of community empowerment, demonstrating the ability to identify their own problems, and suggest solutions (2002, p. 127).

Where oral history testimony is particularly valuable, is in linking macro and micro histories: of seeing cause and effect, '[i]t is only by tracing individual life-stories that connections can be documented between the general system of economic, class, sex and age structure at one end, and the development of personal character at the other,' (Thompson, 1987, p. 220). A similar thought is echoed by Frisch; he argues that oral history can be a powerful tool for exploring the process of historical memory, of enabling people to make sense of their past and connect their individual experience with its social context (1990, p. 188). This is part of the democratising of history, of being able to understand a wider history, through the story of the individual, rather than history purely telling the stories of powerful figures in authority. As Scott puts it, in oral history we can hear from the participants in historical events, rather than just observers of them (2002, p. 122). The CCC's Popular Memory Group, question the generalisability of the particular experience, asking in what sense an individual witness provides evidence for a larger social change (in Perks & Thomson, p. 51), such evidence may, or may not be representative.

The power of oral history is not simply in terms of documenting the previously untold testimony of ordinary people, but in its impact of helping people understand their place in the world:

the real justification of history is not in giving an immortality to a few of the old. It is part of the way in which the living understand their place and part

in the world. Landmarks, landscapes, patterns of authority and of conflict have all been found fragile in the twentieth century. By helping to show how their own stories fit into the changing character of the place in which they live, their problems as workers or as parents, history can help people to see how they stand, and where they should go. (Thompson, 1978, p. 225)

This educational impact is seen not only in the oral history interviewees themselves, but more widely in those who hear the testimony, in its re-mediated form.

With the *Pebble Mill project* there is a demonstrable social purpose: to commemorate and document a particular, and neglected, period of historical television production and practice in the English regions. I would argue, however, that additionally there is a wider social purpose, comprising of intertwining issues concerning civic pride, creative culture, and a collective, and lost identity. Thompson also emphasises the need to link macro and micro histories, and again I consider that the *Pebble Mill project* does this. The programmes remembered on the site are usually networked programmes many of which resonate with audiences of the era, and therefore fit in to a larger history. The production practices of the time were ubiquitous across the United Kingdom, in both commercial and BBC programme making, and therefore, although the different reminiscences relate to BBC *Pebble Mill*, they document a much wider picture. Across the project I endeavour to include a range of voices from different aspects and positions of responsibility within television production.

A wider purpose for reception of the project is for users to begin to understand the continuum of programme making, and the culture of production from the last

quarter of the twentieth century to today. There is the possibility for an educational impact on users of the project, as well as a potential reflexive benefit for interviewees involved in telling their professional life stories. The website and Facebook Page do have a social purpose for both a specialist and mainstream audience: those who worked at BBC Pebble Mill, who perhaps feel part of a defined online community, and those who are simply interested in television history more widely.

2.1.5 Dissemination

Oral historians frequently see the interview as the beginning of a process: the gathering of data, which then needs to be made accessible through transcription, and interpretation, followed by wider dissemination. Often it is the transcription that is published, rather than the source material itself, and for oral historians like Humphries working in the 1980s, transcription was vital in order to provide easy access to the ideas and information contained (1984, p. 41). However, the final presentation of the oral history could take a number of forms, but should use the original interview material:

the voice can as no other means bring the past into the present. And no doubt its best use will always be in a particular, specially prepared context, like such a museum display, or in a radio programme, or arising from a creative educational project. (Thompson, 1978, p. 222)

Thompson sees the oral history interview as an aural recording, rather than an audio-visual one. He shies away from video recordings and sees radio, rather than television, as a natural medium for oral history. He feels that the

superimposed images required by television would dominate over what was being said, and that, fine cutting would not be possible in an interview without a separate visual sequence, which would distract and convey its own meaning (1978, p. 206). This thesis will interrogate this view by examining the practice of the *Pebble Mill project* in Chapter 7, 'Video as a Medium for Oral History Recording and Display'.

The act of editing and re-mediating the oral history interview does not seem to cause Thompson a philosophical concern, rather what seems to preoccupy him is the purity of the text: the closeness to the original voice without additional trappings, in its consumption by the listener. Siobhan McHugh concurs with Thompson's opinion that,

oral history benefits aesthetically from being creatively treated for radio, and is thereby made more accessible – and surely a major purpose of recording oral history is to have hitherto forgotten or marginalized voices heard, rather than languishing in library vaults to be perused mainly by scholars (2012, p. 38).

Making the oral testimony widely accessible is crucial for maximising its impact. The emphasis on the importance of the spoken voice is significant here: that oral sources remain aural, and that the actual text is the recording, rather than the transcript. Portelli, cited by McHugh (2012, p. 36) is very clear to emphasise this point, 'audio IS the text'. Transcripts cannot convey the tone of voice, the accent and inflection, nor the emotion. Joanna Bornat builds on this point, noting that the nature of oral history is interrogative, and a written version of the same event would be a pale imitation in comparison, it would lack the spontaneity and individuality of the collaborative interaction of interviewer and narrator (Bornat

in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 461). Researchers like Murray (2000) advocate a wide dissemination of oral testimonies, and it therefore seems ironic that many oral history collections are surprisingly difficult to access (High, et al, 2012). Whilst it seems self evident that using the original recording will be more evocative and informative than a transcript, concluding that aural material is superior to video may be an untenable position given the development of social media practices, and consideration should also be given to Sipe's view that moving footage with diegetic sound has advantages (in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 409). I choose to record the interviews that I carry out on video, partly because of my own industry background in television production, but also because being able to see, as well as hear the interviewee provides additional information, as well as the fact that some of the interviews I record, involve practical demonstrations, which would be virtually meaningless without the visuals. This is an area yet to be explored adequately by oral history scholars, and one where I can make a contribution.

2.1.6 Digital World

Canadian researchers, Steven High et al advise that we need to consider how to combine oral history and new media, to ensure that the potential of important projects is fully realised. Emergent and digital technologies are opening up new possibilities for accessing memories and transmitting them to various audiences, and new forms of media are changing the ways we think about and do oral and public history (High, et al, 2012). As Helen Klæbe and Marcus Foth explain,

digital technologies have the power to change the 'relationships between old/new; public/personal; and collective/individual' (2006, p. 5). They offer new possibilities for the creation of community, and the expression of community history, meaning that like-minded individuals can become part of a collective, to share publicly previously personal memories and artefacts.

The advent of digital media has heralded a paradigm shift in oral history, making both the creation and accessibility of interview materials far easier. Increasingly affordable technologies enable anyone to record good quality audio and video, and then convert it into a range of multimedia forms of scholarly and popular discourse (Hardy in Perks & Thomson, p. 394). Echoing Thompson and Portelli's emphasis on the supremacy of the original form of the testimony, Michael Frisch argues that digital technology is making it 'more and more feasible to hear, see, browse, search, study, select, export, and make use of audio and video extracts from oral histories directly' (Frisch in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 110).

Digitisation has meant that all artefacts, whether video, audio, photographs, or written text, are essentially the same when expressed in digital form, and can be searched and organised equally easily. More than this, any part of the data can be accessed in a non-linear way (ibid, p. 103). These advances have tremendous implications for oral history projects, and mean that the aurality of oral history is returning, after the former dominance of the transcript. Frisch sees this as an opportunity to bring the end user closer to the raw testimony, without the need for researchers and programme makers to serve up oral history as a 'cooked' dish in the form of a documentary, re-mediating the material (ibid, p. 111). In this way users can create their own non-linear narrative: 'the very notion of

documentary as product – is displaced by a notion of documentary as process’ (ibid, p. 113), empowering users to search, engage, understand, and share oral testimonies.

Oral historians have traditionally favoured audio over video (for example Thompson and Portelli), and even contemporary researchers like Charles Hardy stress that the ‘articulation of thought and memory are first aural, not visual processes’ (Hardy in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 399), but there is some evidence that oral history and video recording have potential synergy. Oral historian, Joel Gardner, was advocating video as a useful means of gathering evidence as early as the 1980s. He saw it as a complementary and supplementary medium to the audio interview, rather than an all encompassing replacement for it (Gardner, 1984). Interestingly, Hardy speaks more positively about the use of digital media, including video, in oral histories in later work, stressing the importance of expanding collecting practices beyond the spoken word, and using still and moving images, as well as sound for multi-media recording and dissemination. He, and co-researcher Douglas Boyd ask for a pragmatic approach to collecting, and one which draws on the different traditions of oral history, folklore, documentary and ethnography, to create multi-format materials (Boyd & Hardy, 2012 p. 1). This multi-disciplinary approach to collecting materials signals the emergence of a new and broader discipline, beyond a narrow definition of *oral* history. Video as a medium is growing in ubiquity due to advances in digital technologies, with many consumers watching several screens at any one time; this presents opportunities for oral historians, which have been articulated by academic and producer, Peter Kaufman. He argues that oral history, should now

become 'video history', partly to compete in a video age, but also because it allows us to record further dimensions of the interview experience (Kaufman, 2013, p. 3). Dan Sipe, likewise, argues that moving images with diegetic sound provide superior evidence for oral history, but that video seems to inhabit a twilight zone, where some historians acknowledge its value, but few analyse or comment on how the relationship can work (Snipe in Perks & Thomson, 2006). He sees oral history as having a pivotal role to play as historians come to realise the potential of video both in recording evidence, and in communicating historical narrative and interpretation (ibid, p. 413). Steve Cohen builds on this perspective, he sees video as a valuable format for oral histories, but notes that, 'not everyone knows what to make of it, or whether it belongs in oral history' (Cohen, 2013, p. 166). He emphasises that as oral history becomes a visual medium, that aesthetics will become increasingly important (ibid, p. 165). The issue of aesthetics is not a new one, in the 1980s Joel Gardner emphasised that 'a slick, pretty production usually wins out over a solid one that is not well produced', and he urged oral historians to ensure that their videotaping met professional standards (Gardner, 1984, p. 110). If a video is aesthetically lacking it is likely to result in fewer views, and potentially negative feedback. Questions around aesthetics might be an alienating factor for some traditional oral historians towards video interviewing: that not only would they be required to learn to operate video cameras, but to become conversant with the norms of video production in terms of choosing backgrounds, shot sizes, framing, overlay footage, cutaways and particularly editing, on top of their core research and interviewing skills. What is unclear is whether the traditional oral historian's reliance on tape recording, rather than audio/visual recording is due to technical

challenges, or to the perceived benefits, aesthetic, philosophical, and around concern for interviewees, which audio only can provide, over combined sound and picture recording.

There is an interesting issue here, which identifies a gap in the oral history literature in relation to the opportunities and challenges of using video. The literature I have read about the use of video in oral history work does not analyse the specifics of how video enhances the history being articulated. Ostensibly a video recording should be richer, enabling you to see an interviewee's body language, understand spontaneous gestures, pauses, the mise-en-scene of the interview set up, the physical positioning between the interviewer and interviewee, as well as how the material has been manipulated in post production, and edited before being disseminated. The benefits and challenges of recording video oral histories are explored in Chapter 7, 'Video as a Medium for Oral History Recording and Display', where I analyse the value of the additional information video affords oral historians, both in static life experience interviews, and in dynamic reconstructions of now defunct production equipment.

Digital tools have altered the ways that stories of all kinds are produced, disseminated and consumed; everyone can now contribute, resulting in a fundamental change in how we understand media and policy relating to it (Bratteteig, 2008, p. 278). Open online access, if desired, is now within the scope of many projects, widening participation, and allowing the user to interact with the original oral history material. This is certainly an important aspect of the

Pebble Mill project, where the vast majority of material in my possession is posted openly online, for anyone interested to see and comment on.

Many of the technical challenges over recording audio-visually have been ameliorated by the development of modern digital camcorders. The cost of buying good quality equipment has reduced considerably, and it is now much more straightforward to store, edit and publish the material produced. The means and reduced costs of production have brought video making within reach of many motivated communities or individuals.

With the advent of Web 2.0 we have seen a rise in 'digital storytelling', the workshop practice founded by the Center for Digital Storytelling in California in 1998, to build and empower communities by encouraging them to record and share their own stories, because of new opportunities for sharing on social networking sites, and through the emergence of new forms, for instance blogging, using either simply text or with video (Lundby, 2008, p. 3). It is not clear whether scholars make a distinction between oral history which happens in an online space, and digital storytelling, and indeed the term 'digital storytelling' is contested, with some authors using the term in a generic fashion, to describe any form of interactive storytelling using digital technology, whilst others use it specifically to describe the collaborative film making workshop practice of the Center for Digital Storytelling. It could be argued that digital storytelling need not always be factual and autobiographical, although it generally seems to be. However, the main distinction lies in the purpose and the process, with oral history usually being an active process on the part of the oral historian rather

than the participant, with them collecting the material for preservation, whilst the digital storyteller tends to be an active protagonist themselves, telling their own story in their own voice, metaphorically and often literally. The emphasis on 'storytelling' implies a shaping of the story, for re-telling, and the notion of an imagined audience. We use narrative as a way of making meaning from past events, and understanding characters in our environment; narrative, therefore, becomes important in forming personal and collective identity (Erstad & Wertsch, in Lundby, 2008, p. 29). The cultural mediation tools that are used for telling these personal narratives change over time, such as we are now observing with online digital technologies. The important interaction is 'the relationship between human mental functioning and the cultural, institutional and historical situations in which this functioning occurs' (ibid, p. 36). This, thus, is the exploration by the digital storyteller of the memory of an event within the cultural, institutional and historical context that they inhabit. There is a sense of the personal story being set within a wider context, and being shared with a wider community.

Some scholars have identified tensions and conflicts with these forms of digital expression; for instance, Kirsten Drotner notes a paradox between the celebratory tones focusing on the democratic potential and new forms of civic visibility enabled by them, and the potential risks involved in disclosing personal information online or accessing unsolicited content (in Lundby, 2008, p. 61). In analysing the process of cultural mediation, Nancy Thumim identifies four areas of tension, 'the purpose of the projects; the construct 'ordinary person'; the construct 'community' and; the definition and achievement of quality' (in

Lundby, 2008, p. 86). The purpose of the project may be multi-layered, including the individual participant's desire to tell their story, as well as wider institutional or project goals and drivers, which may be in conflict with each other. How 'ordinary', or not, are the participants? What constitutes 'ordinariness'? And is this an issue within a particular project? How do we define 'community'? Is this a collective entity which already exists, or one which can develop through reaching out to those who have an affinity with the project? And finally, with notions of 'quality', are we talking about the technical quality of the digital stories, or the quality of the story and the way it is told? All these points can be argued from different perspectives, and may impact on projects in various ways.

Another contestation is the notion of authorship. Interactive digital stories disrupt the relationship of author-text-reader, because of the additive nature of authorship here, and the possible collaboration resulting in a plurality of authors, and an unstable text, all of which herald a radical new era of storytelling (Friedlander, in Lundby, 2008). However, I would suggest that the situation is even more complex than Friedlander observes, as different authors within an interactive exchange have different levels of authority, and control. Some may be able to add to a text, but then may not have the power to edit that addition further, or necessarily publish it.

An important aspect of digital storytelling is the fact that the self-representations are valuable in that they produce a media output different from those created by media professionals, demonstrating that media and culture can be used for different purposes by different people (ibid, p.102). Hartley develops this point,

citing Carpentier (2003), he identifies that digital storytelling bridges a gap between everyday cultural practice and professional media (in Lundby, 2008, p. 198). This creative output from non-professionals has the potential to build cultural capital.

The literature around digital storytelling has influenced my reflection on some of the interviews I am in the process of recording for the project. I had not considered previously how narrators shape their autobiographies for re-telling, using narrative as a way of making meaning from the past, and its importance in developing notions of their identity. I have been conscious, because of comments made during the interview process, of how interviewees think about the wider context of their story, within the institutional framework of BBC Pebble Mill, and are sometimes nervous of sharing their stories online, particularly for their peers to view. There is a tension here, between wanting to preserve and share their stories, with the anxiety about how that narrative might be perceived by others. Strictly speaking, the interviews I carry out would not be termed 'digital stories' by some scholars, because I, as interviewer, director, camera operator and editor, am heavily involved in shaping the story, and the individual narrators are not choosing how their finished product is presented. However, I would argue that what I do bridges the same gap between everyday cultural practice and professional media, that Hartley (in Lundby, 2008) assigns to digital storytelling.

The literature relating to oral history has a shifting emphasis over the decades from the 1970s onwards, particularly with the impact of digitisation, although it

should be noted that the over-riding principles of democratising history, recording a living history, and documenting the lives of ordinary people remain as constants. The justification and validity of collecting oral testimonies as a historiographical method has become more accepted and less contested over time, and the current emphasis centres on the ramifications that digital technology has had on the field, in terms of both recording oral histories, and in disseminating them. Despite the ease with which video can now be used to capture oral histories, the implications, and arguably, the benefits, which this could bring have not been adequately explored by oral history scholars. This is an area which warrants further work by academics working in the fields of both History, and Media. With new technologies the position of the oral historian has arguably changed subtly, with the community being able to take more autonomy, if it wishes, although many projects still seem to need the impetus of the historian to instigate and facilitate the project. Individuals are now able to record and publish their own histories, in a way in which was hitherto impossible. The growth of social media and the potential for interactivity has undoubtedly brought new possibilities for oral history projects, especially in terms of collective and collaborative authorship, as well as enabling memory work to be carried out in a manner which is both meaningful for the individuals involved, and has a wider significance in the documenting of a community.

2.2 Memory Studies

Creating oral histories depends on accessing the memories of individuals and communities, and it is the frailty of human memory that caused historians to question the validity of oral history as a reliable historical method. Issues of memory, and the research around it are deeply entwined with oral history practice.

Silke Arnold-de Simine describes memory research as being:

concerned with the analysis of memory narratives and debates with the aim of investigating the interpenetrative relationships between memory and identity, social belonging and ideology. Memory research investigates among other things, how memories make themselves heard by being embedded in a narrative and media framework, communicated and publicly endorsed (Arnold-de-Simine, 2013, p. 19).

This seems a wide ranging and helpful definition, which touches on the ways that memory can be articulated, mediated, and aired in a public forum. It is easy to see the links between memory research and the recording and dissemination of oral histories.

Oral history projects rely on people's capacity to remember their past experiences, but human memory is not fixed and is apt to fail, reminiscences tend to be partial and can be lost or distorted over time. Draaisma observes that autobiographical memory is more likely to be disrupted than other types of memory, particularly by different forms of amnesia (2004, p. 226), this is of particular concern to the oral historian. Copley emphasises the advantages of written discourse over oral sources because of the imperfections of human

memory, and the propensity to omit or compress events (2014, p. 31). Written sources have the advantage of being fixed, and easily storable, although they often lack some of the other qualities of oral histories, such as being able to interrogate the source, and the collaborative nature of the interview process.

Oral history has a different emphasis to reminiscence, although both involve work with memory. Joanna Bornat likens them to two sides of the same coin. Oral history is principally concerned with the historical perspective of the content of the memory, whilst reminiscence is focused on the value of remembering for the individual (in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 457). Oral historians tend to concentrate on the long-term autobiographical memory of particular incidents, but we need to remember that different types of memory are linked: that auditory, visual and motor memory may also impact on oral history testimonies, and should not be ignored. Oral history and reminiscence have a complementary nature, but inherently different purposes.

The *Pebble Mill project* is history project, rather than being centred on the value of reminiscence for the participants, and to the extent that this does occur, it is an unforeseen and additional benefit. The different types of memory beyond the autobiographical, such as auditory, visual and motor, which can impact on oral histories are very relevant to the *project*. The motor memory, of how to operate a piece of equipment is particularly relevant, especially in the videos I have conducted of people demonstrating how a piece of machinery worked. This work is explored in more depth in Chapter 7, 'Video as a Medium for Oral History Recording and Display'. Motor memory seems to be little affected by the passage

of time, meaning that the demonstrations of historic technical programme making processes should be possible for crafts people even though they may not have handled a particular piece of equipment for a large number of years.

Psychologists mention a 'reminiscence effect', which needs to be considered when oral history interviews are conducted. Draaisma notes the work of Francis Galton in identifying that as we approach our sixties, our associations tend to return to our youth (2004, p. 4). The period of our lives where we remember most seems to cover roughly a decade, centred around the age of twenty, this Draaisma calls the 'reminiscence bump'. The size of this 'bump' increases when interview subjects were asked to describe some of their most vivid memories, rather than being given cue words to stimulate memories (ibid, p. 175). The reason for the 'reminiscence bump' is debatable, it could be due to our minds being at their physical peak in early adulthood, or that this is the period where we are likely to experience many events worth remembering, but perhaps more significantly, it is the era of our lives where our personality and identity are shaped (ibid, p. 194). The observation of the 'reminiscence bump' is a useful one for oral historians, it confirms the value of talking to older subjects about the events of their youth, and it is reassuring that these are likely to be the experiences remembered in the sharpest relief. However, there is also a risk that this might skew an interview towards the events of early adulthood and neglect what people experienced later in their lives. Draaisma observes that the passing of the years speeds up as we age, especially after forty, that "[o]bjective slowing down creates subjective speeding up" (ibid, p. 224), and whilst the body

physically begins to slow, that the passage of time is perceived as faster. He also notes other interesting phenomena about the relationship of our memories to our lifespan; that we lay down time markers, of significant events in our lives, and that we perceive these as happening more recently than they actually did, and remember them more vividly, than the routine occurrences, which we tend to forget. These markers become fewer in middle and later age. Another observation is that whilst we can travel backwards and forwards through the memories of our lives, that we can only remember a particular event forwards, in a chronological fashion (ibid). We learn that memory is not a single entity, but a complex web of partially stored and recalled experiences, which shift and alter, some episodes we forget entirely, others we remember we have forgotten, and others still, can be coaxed back with prompts and cues.

There is discussion in academic circles about whether memory is the material stored in our minds through experiences, or the process of retrieving a recollection of a particular incident: the actual act of remembering. If it is the latter, then memory is active and dynamic and can only exist in the context of the present. Bartlett, the renowned Cambridge psychologist, whose landmark text *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (1932), is still relevant today, agrees with this notion, claiming that the act of remembering introduces the past into the present, producing a 'reactivated' site of consciousness. Therefore, it is not the past itself that we are remembering, but our attitude towards it, filtered and organised by our subsequent experiences. Thus we see the past, through the prism of the present, coloured by our lives in the intervening period. Arnold-de Simine reminds us that memory research

does not 'focus exclusively either on the effects of the past on the present (the determinist approach) or on the ways the present shapes understandings of the past (the constructivist approach)' (2013, p. 19), rather it is the combination of the two, in a push/pull relationship. The CCC's Popular Memory Group describe this as 'the past-present relation', where the past is active in the present, which has political implications (in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 46). As Portelli notes, memory is not a passive repository of facts, but an active process of meaning creation. The changes wrought by memory are arguably as useful to the historian as memory's ability to preserve the past (in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 37-38). The change in perception of events over time is one of the reasons why historians cast doubt on the validity of oral testimony as historical evidence, but Yow advocates that psychologists' research can be used to argue that oral testimony can be informative about actual events (2005, p. 57). Draaisma, in his book *Why Life Speeds Up As You Get Older*, cites a nineteenth century psychologist, Theodule-Armand Ribot, who identified three elements of memory: the storing of the event, the recall of the event, and its location in the past. He argued that the first two elements were critical, and if either became lost, then the memory itself was destroyed; whilst if the third is lost, he writes "the memory ceases to exist for itself, without ceasing itself to exist" (2004, p. 232). Therefore, in losing the temporal location of the memory within the span of experiences, we risk losing its relevance to other events and experiences and potentially its potency.

The concept of memory being an active process, filtered by our subsequent experiences, and our position in the present, is very relevant to the *Pebble Mill project*. The fact that the Pebble Mill site has been demolished, and production in BBC Birmingham is now a tiny fraction of what it once was, gives a particular skew to how former staff members reflect on a seemingly 'golden age' of production in the Regions. The events of the last decade in terms of diminishing television production in BBC Birmingham will undoubtedly colour the perception of the past by some participants in the project, and whilst this could arguably reduce the objective historical accuracy of the history documented, I would suggest that including the memories of people who actually took part in making the programmes discussed within the project adds a value to the physical documents that often initiate a blog post, providing an additional and complementary narrative to the one presented by historic documents alone.

Scholars identify a difference between individual and collective memory, although definitions are relatively fluid. Collective memory, according to Yow (2005, p. 54), is made up of official memory and popular memory, where official memory is a version of events put forward by people in power, in contrast to popular memory, which is advanced by those without official sanction, but who may hold cultural power, for example poets, storytellers etc. Both forms of memory impinge on oral testimonies. Individual memory is shaped by the influence of collective memory, but similarly may diverge from it. The CCC's Popular Memory Group in the early 1980s explored the relationship between popular memory and the writing of history, concluding that historiography should extend beyond the limits of academic history-writing, and encompass 'all

the ways in which a sense of the past is constructed in our society'. They noted that not all historical representations in the public sphere were 'dominant', and that some were marginalised and ignored (Popular Memory Group in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 44-45). They saw oral history as most likely to elicit the perspective of popular memory in historiography, a process where the tensions between competing historical and political aims could become apparent. This view assigns a validity and worth to oral history testimony, which some historians previously disputed.

The *Pebble Mill project* records a combination of popular, official and individual memory on the website, and additionally because of the interactive nature of being able to add comments on both the website and ancillary Facebook page, there is the facility to spark and record memories in other users, which adds to the collaborative nature of the project, as well as building an engaged online community. The interplay between individual and collective memory is evident on the *Pebble Mill project* website. The oral history interviews I collect tend to be from individuals, as are the written blogs that users give to me. Interviewees' memories will have been shaped by the 'official' BBC institutional view of events, as well as the popular view, perhaps influenced by work colleagues, members of the public and commentators, and of course, also included are their own individual reminiscences of working on a particular programme.

The oral histories which make up the content of the *Pebble Mill project* are re-mediated via the website and Facebook group, inviting further comment and discussion from individuals in the online community. The increase in the

mediation of memory on a peer-to-peer basis through social media illustrates Hoskins' (2009) view, that new memory forms and cultures are being created through digital technologies, and that the distinctions between individual, collective and popular memory are becoming increasingly blurred.

We increasingly 'borrow' from the memories of others, especially when those others are also members of groups we belong to, we situate ourselves relative to their past experiences. Social media aids this remembering, both in terms of our individual memories, and the collective ones. Keightley and Pickering have coined the phrase, the 'mnemonic imagination', which they use to describe the process of encoding our past experiences into 'textual memory products' (2012). They argue that it is impossible to split memory from imagination, and that an individual 'engages imaginatively with what is retained from the past and... continuously rearranges the hotchpotch of experiences into relatively coherent narrative structures' (ibid, p. 43). Cultural texts, such as workplace photographs, help stimulate memories, and though they may represent the experiences of others, we position ourselves in relation to them (ibid, p. 109). This concept relates to the *Pebble Mill project* and potentially explains how the site engages users. The Pebble Mill website and Facebook page constitute 'textual memory products': a collection of materials which mediate the experiences of others, and which allow us to renegotiate our understanding of a particular past, and our relationships with the individuals and groups depicted. There is, therefore, a blurred relationship between the individual and the collective memory. The concept of the 'mnemonic imagination' is explored further in Chapter 6,

'Photographs as a Stimulus for Online Community Engagement in Memory and Oral History Work'.

Developments in memory studies are part of a larger change in how we perceive time, and the relationship between past, present and future; Marek Tamm argues that we are now living in an age of 'presentism', where the past persists in the present, rather than being seen as separate, and that this creates new historiographical possibilities (2013). The growth of a popular memory boom caused by Web 2.0 technologies is in large part responsible for this change. The rise of new technologies has shaped a 'digital media ecology', where digital memories deal with the past's relationship to the present (Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, Reading, 2009). Hoskins believes that digital technologies are causing a paradigm shift in the way that memory is recorded and shared. With the advent of 'second generation' online services, such as social media and social networking sites, which enable interactivity by users, memory is increasingly being 'mediated'. Social networking which allows for peer-to-peer, 'connections and collectivities present potentially an array of new memory forms and cultures' (Hoskins, 2009, p. 30). Hoskins argues that a 'social network memory' is being created, and that the established categories of 'memory as individual, collective or cultural.... become less distinct and less adequate in explaining not just their interpenetration but also their contestations' (2009, P. 40). This perspective on memory forms is aligned to my observation of a new paradigm also enabled by social media: the era of collective, online, oral history. Hoskins' observation about new forms of memory work is the process which allows the new oral histories, I have identified, to be produced. Memory is being mediated,

becoming more of a semi-public and shared activity, especially around social life and collective experience. Amy Holdsworth, citing Susannah Radstone, describes this as a deepening 'memory crisis', where the distance between an event happening and it being represented online is diminishing: a symptom that we are becoming obsessed with remembering every event, and publishing it online. This 'crisis' is fuelled by television's fascination with memory, and nostalgia for past TV, which is ironic given its propensity to not always retain its own historic programming. Online television archives are a manifestation of this trend (Holdsworth, 2008, p. 137-142). Sites like YouTube, and TV Cream act in effect as an unofficial television archive, a place for creating nostalgia, and stimulating memories in individual users, although without the careful cataloguing and rigorous contextualisation of a more formal archive. These online spaces begin to contest what we mean by an archive. On the Pebble Mill site what is lacking are the original programmes, and therefore the emphasis is on context and relating programmes and production to individual memories. A sense of nostalgia persists, but there is careful categorisation and contextualisation.

The relationship between memory and archiving is a contested one; there are tensions between the informal and the formal; the unofficial and the official; the aural and the documented; the individual and the institutional; private and public. Fundamentally they are interdependent, but sometimes at different stages in the process and both only capture partial glimpses of the past. Flinn et al, citing Piggott 2005, point to archives playing an important role in 'the process of memory production – they are often the tools or building blocks upon which memory is constructed, framed, verified and ultimately accepted (2009, p. 76).

The memory may become formalised and documented, for instance through an oral history recording and transcription process, which may then be housed in some sort of archive; conversely a document or other stimulus within the archive might reawaken a memory in the archive user, thus adding more value and a potentially richer context to the archive holding. The notion of what constitutes an archive is a complex question, and one open to different interpretations by scholars. The following chapter explores these and other issues in the literature concerned with archival practices and museum display.

2.3 Conclusion

Oral histories document living lives, rather than archived documentary evidence, and therefore rely on accessing participants' memories. Memory studies is a relatively well researched field, with scholars examining the different types of memory we have, including biographical memory, cultural and collective memory, muscle and motor memory. Of particular relevance to oral historians is Draaisma's 'reminiscence-bump', the ability of older people to remember in sharp relief the experiences of their young adulthood, this phenomenon lends weight to the validity of oral histories. The social media phenomenon of 'memory caching', the propensity to preserve memories of our everyday experiences via platforms like Facebook or Twitter, leads scholars, such as Susannah Radstone, to refer to a 'memory crisis', an obsession to remediate our lives in a semi-public form online. This memory caching uses the same form of commenting and interacting via social media that online community archives, such as the *Pebble*

Mill project utilise, and end users probably do not differentiate between commenting on a community online history archive, and on their own and their friends' Facebook walls. There is more work to be done in academic circles on the use of social media and the 'prod-user's' influence on memory work more widely.

There are step changes observable in how oral history is perceived and operates that have been witnessed since WWII, culminating in the digital revolution which Perks and Thomson, identify as the fourth paradigm shift (2006), but with the further advances in digital technologies and the opportunities for interactivity, I argue that we are now seeing a previously unidentified fifth paradigm shift: the era of 'collaborative, online oral history', which will be explored in more depth in Chapter 6, 'Photographs as a Stimulus for Online Community Engagement in Memory and Oral History Work'.

Much of the oral history literature concentrates on the historian, and the interviewee, and there seems to be little written about the experiences of the end user. With the relatively newly acquired ability to comment, add information and interact on a number of levels with online oral history material, the relationship between the source material, the host and the end user becomes a very different one. This change influences the dissemination and presentation of oral histories in all its forms, and shifts the emphasis from the original participants to the end user, in a way that has yet to be researched fully by scholars. Chapters, 5, 'Engaging with the Online Community', and 6, 'Photographs as a Stimulus for

Online Community Engagement in Memory and Oral History Work' will analyse these issues in relation to the *Pebble Mill project*, whilst also being generalisable.

There are identifiable gaps in the literature reviewed in this chapter, perhaps the most significant, with relevance to the *Pebble Mill project*, is the absence of literature analysing the opportunities and challenges presented by video for oral histories, and the richer nuances that viewers may glean from them: a medium largely ignored by traditional oral historians. I have yet to find sources which consider what we can deduce from the body language, eye contact and demeanour of oral history interviewees, nor about the physicality of them demonstrating how some obsolete piece of equipment worked, or revisiting a particularly significant location. Chapter 7, 'Video as a Medium for Oral History Recording and Display', aims to redress this gap, through analysing what can be gained through the use of video in oral history recordings.

Chapter 3

Literature Review II – Archival and Museum Practice

This chapter reviews literature concerning archival and museum practice. It begins by considering Derrida's work on the desire to archive documents, and the order that must be imposed on them, to be useful for the future, before drawing on Foucault and Packer's ideas of the whole 'apparatus' of production being integral to the archive, and Spigel's writings about the scope of the archive. The majority of the chapter focusses on the development of archives in the online space, and the consequent development of Dougherty and Schneider's 'idiosyncratic archive', where individuals are able to establish their own, often unofficial collections. This democratises the process of documenting our past, and leads to the rise of community archives, which are seen by Andrew Flinn as a form of activism, against the partial histories preserved in institutional archives. The final part of the chapter concerns what we can learn from museum display, especially in the age of digital curation, and virtual displays. The importance of explaining the context of an object or artefact, to a visitor, and the role of the museum in curating oral and living history displays, are also examined.

3.1 Archival Practice

There is a dichotomy between the cultural theorists' view of the archive, and the perspective of archival practitioners: a philosophical view versus a more practical interpretation of what the archive is.

Jacques Derrida in his seminal presentation, and subsequent essay, *Archive Fever*, takes a Freudian stance on the archive, about the drive to preserve our past, pitted against the 'death drive' to destroy it: two contradictory forms and forces. The word 'archive' comes from the Greek *arkheion*, the house of the magistrate, the place where the legal documents were kept and interpreted. It is an institution not just for the security of documents then, but where an order is imposed on them, a place of repetition. It is a conservative place (both of conservation, but also politically conservative), where decisions are made about what to keep for the future. Derrida argues that the question of the archive is not a question of the past, but of the future, about what is worthy of being kept and remembered (1995). Lynn Spigel develops this point further, noting that attempts to save the past are tied to fundamental loss and destruction, and that the deliberate erasure of the past is as important to consider as what remains and is conserved (2010, p. 53). It is easy to forget what has been discarded, and why, but important for the archival scholar to consider the omissions as well as what is preserved.

In deciding to establish the *Pebble Mill project* I was motivated by the desire to preserve the memory of BBC programme making in Birmingham, whilst key participants were still alive to share their reminiscences. Arguably I was exhibiting Derrida's 'archive fever' (1995), wanting to collect together artefacts, documents and recorded memories, interpreting them and keeping them safe for the future. The fact that the BBC were reducing programme making in Birmingham, and have now in fact transferred all factual network production to other centres, accelerated the sense of urgency in doing this. This chimes with Spigel's observation about attempts to save the past being tied to issues of loss and destruction, which in the case of the Pebble Mill studios being demolished was indeed a physical loss for Birmingham, as a landmark, and a centre for cultural creativity. Derrida talks about the desire of wanting to be the first archivist; this too can be related to the *Pebble Mill project*. Since there seemed no BBC interest in preserving the history of Pebble Mill, and no one else, that I knew of, was considering embarking on such a project, I sensed a vacuum that I could fill.

Derrida emphasises the need to impose a structure on the archive, one which interprets the documents: classifying, naming, and imposing a hierarchy on them. There is a strong desire to be the first archivist, the one who institutes the archive, establishing it and exhibiting it. For him the archive has exteriority, it is where the private becomes public (Derrida & Prenowitz, 1995). It is not a place where the past can be truly encountered though, '[i]t is spectral *a priori*: neither present nor absent "in the flesh," neither visible nor invisible, a trace always

referring to another whose eyes can never be met' (ibid p. 54). It is an echo, a ghost, of a past present. Derrida describes us being, '*en mal d'archives*: in need of archives,' that we have an irrepressible, repetitive and nostalgic urge for the archive, a desire to return to the beginning (ibid). This psychological approach explains the need in us to archive, choosing what is to be remembered, documented and categorised in order to influence the future, rather than simply memorialise the past.

To qualify as an archive, rather than as a mere collection of artefacts, there must be a structure. The Pebble Mill website does have a defined structure, and is also outward facing and searchable through metadata tags. The posts are grouped under different self-explanatory categories e.g. 'Building', 'Television', 'Radio', etc., and within these categories are smaller sub-categories, e.g. 'Drama', 'Factual', 'Regional' etc., although this is not necessarily as rigorous a catalogue as a traditional institutional archive might have, it is straight forward for a user to navigate. The combination of metadata tags combined with a 'search' facility is increasingly important, and does enable the whole Pebble Mill online archive of over one thousand six hundred artefacts to be searched quickly and easily through the use of key words.

Traditionally we think of archives as institutional places committed to the preservation of documents and artefacts, but scholars interpret what is meant by the 'archive' in different ways:

The archive in Foucault's work is nothing so literal as rows of dusty shelves in a particular institution, but rather involves the whole system or apparatus that enables such artifacts to exist (including the actual institutional building itself). In this model, the "archive" is already a construct, a corpus that is the product of a discourse. (Bate, 2007, cited in Packer, 2010, p.90)

Packer follows this approach to the archive, which is significantly more all encompassing, though somewhat less tangible, than the traditional view. Although he appreciates the impact the Internet has had in enabling a range of materials to be collected and searched in innovative ways, this is not the growth of the archive that interests him. What he is advocating is asking why and how communications and media matter. He applies what he calls an "apparatus" understanding, which has implications for the archive. The "apparatus" is a term developed by Foucault and Agamben, which includes the whole system of production and consumption, and the power and knowledge relationships inherent within it. Media content is not necessarily the focus for Packer, instead there is a wider mapping of the surrounding systems, the methods of production, the technologies involved, the backroom strategy, its consumption, as well as chance (Packer, 2010, pp. 100). This concept is one which can be applied to the Pebble Mill archive, which includes production processes, the technology behind the production, as well as the experience of working on the production, and images from the production, but rarely (due to copyright issues) the production artefact itself. For Packer, the archive is a place where linkages between knowledge and power are mapped. Lynn Spigel develops this concept in a way that is perhaps more useful for the television historian, she sees the archive as turning the non-space of television into a literal home for it, giving a physical presence to 'ghost images from the air.' She stresses the importance of the

archive including the paraphernalia behind television, the set designs, the consoles and remote controls, and crucially, the audience (Spigel, 2010, p. 54).

For her the architecture of the archive is:

both a literal pursuit of housing TV – of making buildings for it – and also a more figural process by which we turn the fleeting, affective, and often irrecoverable experiences of a medium’s past into the objects of contemporary media practices, cultural fantasies, and historical pursuits (Spigel, 2010, p. 71).

It can be both a physical and a virtual experience, where we try and conserve not only the programmes themselves, but the seemingly impossible conjuring of what it was like to experience them at the time of transmission, and simultaneously we subject them to comparison to modern media, and modern media methods. Spigel seems to concentrate on the archiving of the audience’s perspective of television, and the texts themselves, but neglects the historical culture of production.

The *Pebble Mill project* does not encompass all of the wider parameters of Packer’s ‘apparatus’, although it does provide an interesting insight into some of the methods of production and backroom operations, which might not be documented in more traditional institutional archives. We also catch glimpses, through the content on the Pebble Mill website, of the politics and power relationships between the institutional centre of the BBC, and one of its regional outposts. The website certainly addresses Spigel’s concern for housing the paraphernalia behind television, the set designs, and the technical equipment, although, perhaps crucially, not the audience, since the blogs concentrate on the production, rather than the consumption of programmes.

The importance of power relationships in Packer's work is echoed in Susan Douglas's observations about the inherent bias of archives, which are often built on assumptions around race, gender and class (Douglas, 2010, p.13), a point expanded upon by Rachel Moseley and Helen Wheatley, who see archiving as a feminist issue. They identify 'gendered gaps in the archives and histories of British television'. Women's television has traditionally been seen as more 'everyday', and 'not high on the preservation agenda'. They note 'a lack of concern with preserving television's "ordinary" programming culture', those programmes which tend to be aimed towards a female audience, for instance, daytime television, and factual entertainment. Their aim is for the 'relative absence' of women's television in publicly accessible archives to be addressed for future historians (Moseley & Wheatley, 2008).

BBC Pebble Mill produced a wealth of what Frances Bonner terms 'ordinary television' (2003), often high volume, low cost programming, much of it for BBC Daytime. This type of programme, including 'makeover' shows involving ordinary people, tends to have a female skewed audience, and is often neglected by television historians. I would argue that the *Pebble Mill project* goes some way to addressing the gendered gaps identified by Moseley and Wheatley, through documenting long running, relatively low budget factual programmes.

3.1.1 *Online Archives and Participation*

Dougherty and Schneider provide a three-stage chronology of changing archival forms, which they call Archive 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. Archive 1.0 is the traditional legacy archive, which Arthur typifies as a system to legitimise, credentialise, authorise and stylise historical investigation (2011). In this traditional model the archiving was performed by archivists to enhance the status of the archive patron. This seems rather a simplification of the purpose of traditional institutional archives, many of which, for example the BBC Written Archives at Caversham, hold records and other documents which are frequently referred to by current members of the institution, and others, because of the valuable information they include. From the 1960s onwards we see the emergence of Archive 2.0, where the archive tends to be organised via databases to enable users to access, search and retrieve information; cataloguing is still carried out by archivists, but now for the benefit of users, rather than the patron. The next significant shift is to Archive 3.0: a repository 'motivated by access and enrichment', where objects are no longer treated 'as "moments" torn from the continuity of past actions' (ibid, p. 259). Web archiving comes into this categorisation. Dougherty and Schneider describe a merger between the concept of a 'naïve archive', one free from the values of intended use, and the 'idiosyncratic archive', created to support a particular project. Idiosyncratic archives are frequently the preserve of an individual collector, and although often instigated to illustrate a particular study, may have additional, wider, if sometimes unforeseen, purposes (ibid, 2011). I would position the *Pebble Mill project* firmly in the Archive 3.0 category; an 'idiosyncratic archive' has been

created as a core activity of the project: an eclectic online collection of work- place photographs, written blogs, video interviews, and ephemera, with an underlying ethos of access and enrichment to serve the online community, which has grown up around the project.

The advent of Web 2.0 technologies demonstrated through sites like TV Ark, Internet Archive and many others, are changing the archival ecology, sometimes resulting in less institutionalised and centralised repositories (see Garde-Hansen et al, 2009; and Prelinger, 2007). We observe a shift in both archives and archival practice, from the institution to the individual, and a rise in Dougherty and Schneider's 'idiosyncratic archives'. This concept chimes with Andrew Flinn's concept of the community archive, where documents and memories from particular groups are preserved in conjunction with that community. The Internet has for many such initiatives, become the most effective place for the collecting, storing and disseminating of these collections (Flinn, 2007). In terms of archival practice some scholars have identified challenges for archivists. Online users of archives are largely anonymous, and may be unfamiliar with how archives are organised and accessed; they potentially present difficulties for professional archivists as to how best to serve their needs. Amanda Hill notes the necessity for easily accessible guides to online holdings, which interpret the materials and weave a narrative around them, and that the skills required to write such guides may differ from those which archivists have been trained in (2010, p. 142). Expanding on the importance of interpreting and creating a narrative around records, researchers Duff, et al, have observed that archivists

may not be sufficiently aware of how users make sense, and attribute meaning, to the records they find (2011). Thus, online archives demand different approaches from archivists, and a more user-centric model, with a more accessible and informal tone.

Away from institutional online archives, we see individualised and often amateur collections of videos on platforms like YouTube, which could be considered an informal archive, and which certainly provide a wider and more searchable repository of cultural memory, than would be found in objective histories. For Lynn Spigel this do-it-yourself archive started not with the creation of online platforms, but several decades earlier, with the invention of the video recorder, which enabled 'armchair archivists' to save TV for themselves and for future generations (Spigel, 2010, p. 62). YouTube constitutes a new mode of media access and despite its limitations, shows the Internet's potential to display rare and ephemeral texts (Hilderbrand, 2007, p. 54). Ironically many of the texts which sites like YouTube preserve are not digital and new media, but analogue, old media texts, which exist in physical form elsewhere. We can observe here an interdependent relationship between old and new media, where the old media is remediated by the new. With this ubiquity something is lost, and old TV becomes a conversation piece, an object of the present, rather than having the aura of history (Spigel, 2010, p. 70). It loses status as a historical artefact, and becomes absorbed into popular memory and nostalgia. However, the democratisation of the archive presents new opportunities for collaboration with users, but opens up questions about who will decide what is worth preserving from our culture for the historians of the future (Gleick, 1999). Susan

Douglas sees the creation of one's own multimedia archive as a pragmatic necessity for the Media historian. The Internet makes this process easier and faster, but that comes at a price, and there are still many archival gaps to be filled and written about. She argues that it is only when you create your own archive that you learn how biased and incomplete archives can be (Douglas, 2010, p. 13). The *Pebble Mill project* is in essence a do-it-yourself multi-media archive, of the type that Susan Douglas suggests. I acknowledge that there are gaps and biases within the collection, for instance there is little content relating to network radio content, which was a significant department at Pebble Mill. This omission is not intentional, although it may be a consequence of my own television background, resulting in the creation of a television-centric archives.

Archivists are professionals, trained and skilled in the processes of acquisition, categorisation and preservation; enthusiastic amateurs entering the field will have different motivations, skills and experiences, and may make different choices about the value of artefacts. The archive needs to be systematic about how materials are selected for inclusion, and how a chronology is constructed and maintained, without this, historical or topical gaps may not be apparent (ibid, p. 8). This systematic structure and rationale is less likely to be present in the amateur archive, and as Fickers notes very few of the millions of online audio-visual sources are accompanied by sufficient contextual information (2012, p. 7). Historical artefacts are more abundant now they can be mediated online, but their value is often limited by inadequate contextualisation in the meta-data that accompanies them. In order to address this issue, Flinn

recommends that professional archivists should collaborate with community archives, in order to provide expertise, and share best practice, whilst not taking over control of the collections themselves (2007, p. 169). This is a laudable aim, but it is a difficult one to facilitate, as traditional archives have their own pressures on resources, and their own remit to pursue, and from the community aspect, there is likely to be suspicion. Relating this to my own position, I would happily accept advice from archival experts, as long as it did not impinge negatively on my current practices, but I would be reluctant to relinquish the collection of artefacts relating to Pebble Mill, which I have accumulated, to an institution like the BBC Written Archive, thereby losing creative control of the project.

With the advent of Web 2.0 we see the rise of the 'prod-user', an amalgam of producer and user, often an enthusiastic amateur and perhaps the builder of their own 'idiosyncratic archive'. Axel Bruns identifies 'produsage' as providing a new post-industrial model of production, where the production value chain can be very different, and need not include producers, distributors or consumers in the same manner:

[T]he same technology which makes possible many-to-many communication and distribution of content also enables peer-to-peer modes of organizing the collaborative engagement of communities in shared projects: this means that users can now communicate and engage directly with one another on a global scale, entirely bypassing traditional producers and distributors of information (2008, p. 14).

The bypassing of traditional mass market approaches to media production is reinforced by other scholars. According to Henning, new-media theorist, Lev Manovich, does not regard interactivity as the defining characteristic of new

media, rather he distinguishes between old and new media in cultural and societal terms, from the Fordist era of mass standardisation, to the post-industrial, information age (Henning in Macdonald & Basu, 2007, p. 36). The production patterns are less fixed and more flexible in the 'information age' and consequently, Bruns sees 'produsage' as a potentially disruptive phenomenon, and one which could have huge impact, heralding 'a new participatory culture, for new structures of social interaction and organization' (Bruns, 2008, p. 398). This could lead to a revolutionary shift where society reduces its reliance on hierarchical structures and adopts the more informal, 'heterarchical' networked systems of online communities (ibid, p. 396). 'Heterarchical' is a term coined by Bruns, as a counter to 'hierarchical', to illustrate different, more diverse, societal approaches, which rely less on traditional, authoritative structures. 'Produsage' seems to thrive in networked communities, which develop their own collaborative culture, where participants comment and critique each other's work, pooling their individual contributions to form a composite whole, which is greater than the sum of the individual parts. The individuals within these communities often share a passion and a commitment for a particular subject, or place or interest. YouTube and other video sharing sites would be an example of this kind of community. Hilderbrand quotes a market analyst in the New York Times, saying '[i]t's not about the video. It's about creating a community around the video' (2007, p. 54). I would argue that it is both: preserving and making the artefact accessible is important for its own sake, whilst having interested people to share it with, is gratifying, and takes it beyond the realm of the individual enthusiast. 'Community' is, as Elizabeth Crooke describes, 'a multi-layered and politically charged concept' (2010, p. 16), which shifts in meaning according to

context. To be described as a community, members must have something in common that binds them together, a culture, belief, background or experience; but who is included or excluded from a community is rather more complex, as is who qualifies as community leaders, and what power and authority they have in representing their communities. The concept of 'community' is explored at the beginning of Chapter 5, 'Engaging with the Online Community'.

Axel Bruns's concept of 'prod-user' (2008), is one that I find useful, and which can be applied to both my own position as creator and moderator of the online archive, and to the online community, who so frequently share their photographs, memories and comments, to enrich the project further. This provides a democratic and inclusive community aspect, which has characterised the nature of the project. The community aspect of the project seems to confirm the potential that enthusiasts like Bruns advocate for 'produsage', and fits with Hilderbrand's emphasis that it is the community around the video, that is important, rather than the video per se. The importance of the online community was not one that I appreciated at the outset of the *Pebble Mill project*, but became obvious the longer the project continued, and the more it grew. It is only through the advent of Web 2.0 technologies that the means to produce and disseminate content online in a peer-to-peer mode has been made possible. Without this technology the project would have taken a very different form, and would have been unlikely to reach the breadth of audience it has. It is perhaps ironic that the project concerns the content produced by and culture of production of a mass broadcaster, but employs an inexpensive, non-specialist, and non-professional

means of production and publication itself, remediating through digital means content from an analogue era.

Flinn et al, have noted the rise of the community archive, which they see as a form of activism that challenges the partial histories presented by mainstream archives. Such collections are complementary to institutional archives and often include new artefacts, such as recordings, as well as collected historic materials. The participants share a common desire to document and preserve their own history, and the fact that they are able to be custodians of their own archives means that they have power over what is preserved and what is discarded, as well as how it is presented, and who can access it. (Flinn et al, 2009). This process democratises historiography. The community archives which Flinn is referring to may not ordinarily be online, as with the *Pebble Mill project*, but the process of the community adding new artefacts, and deciding what is kept and what is not, is the same. The online platform facilitates the community engagement, but it is the fact that the community has a large element of control over the telling of its history, which is key, rather than the platform it is hosted on.

Traditional archives tend to favour preservation over access (Prelinger, 2007, p. 114), in contrast to online archives, which tend to privilege access. Prelinger asserts that although legacy moving image archives are still performing the bulk of preservation work, that they have conceded leadership in access to web services. Open access, whilst desirable on a number of levels, comes at a price,

especially to the original content creators who frequently have their copyright infringed by online video sites. We see a generational divide on attitudes towards cultural property, with young people frequently expecting to have content instantly accessible and free at the point of use. Additionally, there is a risk that sites such as YouTube, Internet Archive and others, lead to a public misconception about what archives ought to be doing, and what they actually do (Prelinger, 2007). Hilderbrand shares this view, and mentions the fears of archivists, not only of low quality, unauthorised texts being circulated, but of raising unrealistic expectations concerning access, and even questioning the need for traditional archives (2007, p. 54). He also raises the copyright question, seeing rights issues as regulating video access and having the potential to erase media memory (ibid, p. 57). Bruns explores the question of intellectual property rights from a different perspective, pointing out the inadequacy of existing rights to protect the collaborative creative work of networked communities themselves. He argues that current copyright and patent laws favour existing rights holders and discourage the culture of sharing which is at the nexus of produsage communities, where innovation thrives on available knowledge, and that these frameworks are no longer adequate (Bruns, 2008, p. 396). Issues around how copyright concerns impinge on the *Pebble Mill project* are explored more fully in the following chapter regarding ethics.

Online digital technology seems to be having an impact on the way in which proponents operate and particularly how they interact with others. We see the emergence of what Tara McPherson terms 'blogging humanists', and 'multimodal

scholars', people interested in the possibilities of participation promised by digital technologies: new forms of connection and peer to peer conversation, which may reconfigure the relationship between the author and reader. Different scholarly outputs on the screen are likely to be produced by these digitally literate 'multimodal scholars', and there is the potential for new kinds of social behaviour and collaboration, allowing for creativity and critique (McPherson, 2009). These notion resonates with my own position of creating and running the *Pebble Mill project*. I can see the potential of networked communities, in collaborating and adding value to the history that I am writing and documenting.

Prelinger sees this new brand of digital scholars and preservationists expanding into neglected areas of moving image history, areas characterised by populism, and community-based projects where communities can be built through collections, and technophilia (2007, p. 118). My own practice chimes with this view. In terms of the material created, Anne Friedberg notes a new depth offered by digital content, where the computer screen is both a 'page' and a 'window', where pages layer on other pages and connect to other content, and where text can be combined seamlessly with images, sounds and video. These digital pages need not be merely a translation of print culture, but 'born digital' content, conceived not as printed text, but as multi-media spaces full of new possibilities (Friedberg, 2009). The Pebble Mill site does combine these different media, and although many of the images and audio are not the 'born digital' content that Friedberg highlights, the analogue content translates very well to an online platform. This notion of the multimodal text is also explored by digital storytelling scholars like Nelson and Hull, citing Leeuwen (2005) and Olson

(1977, 1994); they identify a semiotic melding of forms, for example orality and literacy, or music, creating new communicative artefacts and unstable genres (2004, p. 126-7).

There is much enthusiasm amongst scholars about the possibilities of online archives, but there are also warnings:

The twenty-first century archive faces the necessity of reinventing itself without pandering to the fashions of the moment. It must accept the existence of diverse archival models and practices that may extend or rebuke legacy practices. It must critically and tactically embrace emerging technologies that can be both friend and enemy and will likely continue to be disruptive (Prelinger, 2007, p. 118).

Perhaps the most challenging issue facing online archives is the lack of permanence of Internet artefacts. Web objects are continually updated and overwritten, without earlier versions necessarily being preserved and searchable (Dougherty & Schneider, 2011, p. 253). This is something I encounter on an almost daily basis with the *Pebble Mill project*, as I edit and update already published blog posts, correcting any mistakes, and adding in new information. There is no trace of this editing for the end user, although I can see the number of times I have edited a post on the administrative dashboard. As a producer of content this is not a significant concern for me, but it could be for historians using particular websites. A web object lacks the temporal location and fixity of a film, printed or broadcast text, we often do not know when the artefact was created, nor if it has been updated or altered. The nature of what a website is, comes into play here; Brugger defines a website as: 'a coherent textual unit that unfolds in one or more interrelated browser windows, the coherence of which is based on semantic, formal and physical performative interrelations' (Brugger,

citing himself, 2011, p. 287). He argues that a website has a very different delimitation to a printed text or film, and is closer in some ways to broadcast media, as the cohesion of a website is established almost solely by semiotic means, but that unlike broadcast media it is not linear, with a marked beginning and end (2011, p. 287).

Online archives rely on particular technologies and modes of storage, which are liable to change and become obsolete in the near future, and frequently there is no physical artefact to refer back to, only its virtual, spectral image, which may become unlinked, disconnected or deleted at any time. Dougherty and Schneider observe that to keep pace with the speed of content production and destruction online, that preservation practices tend to amass content, and make it technically accessible, over archival sensibilities of categorisation and accuracy (2011, p. 261). There is particular concern from scholars such as Kimberly Barata, about the vulnerability of born digital records; she identifies challenges including legal issues, intellectual property rights, institutional roles and relationships, as well as technical and metadata difficulties. From empirical research, she discovered that few archives hold substantial numbers of electronic records in their collections, and that if the issue is not addressed by archivists then important historical data could be lost (2004).

Linked to the notion of the impermanence of the Internet object is the potential impermanence of the networked community, and the individual or group of activists at its core. Observations have been made by scholars like Flinn et al

about vulnerability of community archives, which are often driven by a small number of committed individuals. If these individuals cease to participate for any reason, then the continued existence of the archive is in jeopardy (2009, p. 80). The difficulty of finding a mechanism for continuing these idiosyncratic archives beyond the involvement of their founders should not be underestimated. At present there seems to be no widespread or systematic way of achieving this, and these newly accessible histories risk quickly becoming inaccessible once more. This potential loss of archives relates back to Derrida's 'archive fever', there is a drive to create archives, but not all of them will be sustainable, and if a continuing use cannot be found for a particular site, then there will be a degree of natural wastage.

There are real issues around how we preserve online, community archives, which fall outside of institutional control. The *Pebble Mill project* is a vulnerable web object. If I lost interest in the project, or could no longer maintain and add to it, it would probably cease to exist, and all the historical information that has been gathered by me, and the online community, would be lost. However, the same fate could befall a similar physical, as opposed to virtual, project, although technical obsolescence would be less of an issue. If WordPress went out of business, or was sold to a competitor, in the way that Posterous was to Twitter (see Laughlin, A. 2013), then transferring the website content to a new site would be a huge undertaking. Posterous was a blogging platform which was founded in 2008. Much of the operating team was later hired by Twitter, and the platform was shut down in 2013. This led to frustration from bloggers who had

invested time and effort into building their sites on the platform over several years.

Equally the online community itself could disintegrate, if Facebook changed its nature, or its popularity, and it would be hard to establish a similar group on a different platform. Whilst the Internet Archive's 'Wayback Machine' (Internet Archive, accessed 2014) performs a valuable service in preserving and retrieving historic Internet pages, it is not the answer to web impermanence, as that would need to take a form outside of the Internet, and potentially a physical or fixed entity, as opposed to a virtual one. In the future, hopefully, there will be technical advances to archive websites more fully, but this is uncertain, and in the meantime valuable historical born digital content is likely to be lost. This should not be viewed as an entirely negative phenomenon, loss is an integral part of history, and without it there would be an unmanageable amount of data for historians to draw upon. It could even be argued that accidental selection as opposed to the selection by design of traditional archives has benefits, because of being unsystematic, and it therefore leaves more clues for the historians of the future.

Whilst individuals in online communities are now able to collaborate in entirely new ways, the human trait for sharing information and working creatively together seems to hark back to a pre-industrial age, Bruns sees it as 'reconnecting with older models of folk culture and DIY production ... which had been sidelined by the rise in mass media and mass culture' (2008, p. 401). The growth in 'produsage' communities should then perhaps reinforce notions of

altruism and active citizenry, where participants are not working out of a profit motive, but out of a sense of wanting to contribute freely to enlarging knowledge and understanding for its own sake.

Professionals working within archival and museum practice would draw distinctions between the archive and the museum, particularly in terms of purpose and display; for the networked enthusiasts running community archives the distinctions 'between archives, museums, and other 'unofficial' heritage activities' are perhaps less clear, and less meaningful (Flinn et al., 2009, p. 74). For community archivists then, perhaps museums, institutional archives, and informal heritage sites, (such as community online archives), are all working in similar territory, on similar subjects, and facing similar challenges; all have the desire to preserve the material of the past, and enable it to be used in the present, and potentially influence the future.

3.2 Museum Exhibition Practice

3.2.1 *Digital Curation*

Archival and museum practice share the notion of curation, although they place emphasis on different elements within the curatorial process. Since the Millennium we have seen the growth of digital curation, as an interdisciplinary, umbrella concept. Dobрева and Duff describe digital curation as including the selecting, maintaining, using, preserving and adding of value to digital assets (2015, p. 97). This is a broad definition which includes many of the practices of

those who work on community online archival projects, as well as those who are employed by custodial institutions, such as libraries and archives. It is a developing field which applies archival principles to the preservation of a digital object and its context, in order to maintain its integrity and authenticity. Digital curation is a process usually involving technical software, undertaken by professionals in archiving, library and information fields, however Costis Dallas has identified the emergence of digital curation 'in the wild' (2015). He is referring here to amateurs curating Web artefacts, due to the nature of projects they are involved in, or because of particular interests they have. My work on the *Pebble Mill project* would come under this categorisation. I did not actively consider the digital curation aspect when establishing the project, but developing a system which worked for me and the community around the project, was a necessity. Individuals working 'in the wild' often lack the methodologies and tools of the professional sector, and seem to be largely ignored by it. In order to address this disconnect, Dallas proposes a pragmatic approach which aims to 'represent' digital curation 'in the wild', and to 'intervene' in ways that encourage appropriate curatorial practices (ibid, p.442). This would require extensive research about the diverse practices of 'curation actors', before suitable systems could be developed which suited both amateur and professional digital curators, and would be an extremely challenging task. Dallas argues that the current professional approach concerns the relationship between human agents and digital information, rather than considering the process as concerning the building of knowledge, and he therefore advocates a move away from this prescriptive stance, to a descriptive one, which has a broader basis and can include the context, motivations and aims of the curation. This position has

the benefit of capturing the significance of what is happening 'in the wild', and learning from the practice there, whilst helping this sector regarding suitable methodologies and systems. As a 'citizen curator' operating 'in the wild', I would welcome this kind of intervention.

The term 'digital curator' is a contemporary development, which shows the influence of digital technologies in changing and creating new roles. Its derivation was obviously from the role of the museum curator, and many of the tasks are related. The work of the curator has been described as the safeguarding of cultural heritage, of researching into and adding to collections, and of staging exhibitions (Heinich & Pollak, 1996). These activities also describe my work, and that of individuals who operate projects akin to the Pebble Mill one. We care for and preserve the artefacts in our collections, building the collection, researching into it, as well as displaying it to the public, in a manner which mirrors the museum curator's role.

3.2.2 Museum Display

Oral history has had a long relationship with museum exhibition, Paul Thompson saw the potential back in the 1970s for the illustrated lecture, in which taped excerpts could be combined with slides, or for an exhibition in the corner of a museum (1978, p. 207). However, sound installations in the 1970s and 1980s were often beset with technical problems with cart machines and other analogue tape technologies (Hardy in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 396). In contrast modern technologies of surround sound and multi-channel installation have produced

discussion of what aural history exhibitions could achieve, and how different auditory elements could be mixed and juxtaposed (ibid, p. 398); the potential for stimulating museum exhibition is certainly now achievable. This is something, which Silke Arnold-de Simine articulates well:

The museum has undoubtedly become one of the vital social institutions responsible for transforming living memory into institutionally constructed and sustained commemorative practices which enact and give substance to group identities and foster memory communities. Instead of predominantly housing collections, they have become places of recollection, not so much driven by objects but by narratives and performances (Arnold-de-Simine, 2013, p. 1-2).

She views museums as hybrid institutions which have to serve multiple masters: the communities who use them, as well as funders, and historians; however, the possibility of engaging visitors in new ways and with memory based exhibitions is an exciting one.

Museum display usually centres around tangible objects, and whilst some museums have been instrumental in collecting and presenting personal testimonies, particularly where artefacts are absent, others have been resistant to this practice. Stephen Caunce makes the point that a museum display of tools or household utensils, for instance, becomes almost meaningless without an explanation, and that the best group to provide that explanation are the people who used them (1994, p. 3). This explanation of the object obviously need not take the form of an oral history, or first-person testimony, although that would be an engaging way of presenting the information. With the advent of digital technologies some scholars have noted a shift away from museums focussing on objects themselves, to concentrating on the stories around the objects (Vajcner,

2008, p. 3). These observations suggest that it is the contextualisation of the object, through its human operation, that adds meaning and therefore, value to it, when displayed. David Dean questions whether the object on display can communicate in and of itself, or whether it is the story behind the object which is the main point, and that the conclusions will be different depending on the circumstances, but that these questions are important to consider when organising an exhibition (Dean, 1994, p. 5). In some cases, the objects are of primary importance, whilst in others the information is the crucial factor, but that for most exhibitions there is a greater or lesser blend of the two. What is important is the journey that the visitor takes through the exhibition. Museum exhibitions have been likened to theatre, with the implied *mise-en-scene*; or alternatively to narrative, with each display adding an element to the overarching story. The visitor is not passive, but becomes a co-narrator, choosing the path through the exhibition, and deciding where to place most emphasis (Bal, in Macdonald and Basu, 2007, p. 73-5). This idea of the visitor constructing their own path through a display, strikes a chord with users of online archives like the Pebble Mill website, where participants embark on a non-linear journey, guided by searches, category browsing and meta-data tags.

Citing a museum curator, Anna Green notes the view that objects are what makes a museum, and that trying to illustrate history without objects would be something else entirely. This opinion is given more weight by Stuart Davies's observation that 'oral history occupies an ambivalent, uncomfortable and vulnerable position in museums' (Green in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 417). Green herself, was successful in organising an oral history exhibition at the

Frankton Museum in the United States. The exhibition aimed to present a diverse range of oral testimonies, encouraging visitors to reflect on their own memories and contribute their own responses (ibid, p. 419). There were a number of technical issues, both with the quality of the initial recordings, and with how the installation would be made accessible and audible, whilst minimising sound bleeding. This case study shows what is possible in this sphere, and illustrates the potential that museum exhibition has for oral history display.

3.2.3 *Museums and Digital Technologies*

Community history projects can certainly learn from museum theory and practice more widely, rather than from specifically how museums stage oral history exhibitions. Traditionally it has been museums, as places for study, reflection and learning, that have collected, preserved, researched and publicly displayed objects (Dean, 1994), although with the advent of Web 2.0 many of these functions are possible in online projects. Some museums have embraced the possibilities enabled through the Internet, and rather than simply producing their brochure in a digital form, have created online exhibits, accompanied by contextual material (Vajcner, 2008, p. 3). This notion is enlarged upon by Michelle Henning, when she talks about museums being 'remediated' by new media, via virtual museums. She sees 'parallel museums' being created online by existing institutions, but also other websites which could be understood as museums. The *Pebble Mill project* could be likened to a virtual museum, and has the same ethos, of wanting to share artefacts with an engaged community, and of encouraging *active* visitors. Henning also identifies a secondary remediation via

the introduction of new media and computer technology into museum exhibition and archival practice within the physical space (in Macdonald and Basu, 2007, p. 27). Silke Arnold-de Simine advocates the value of new digital technologies as narrative devices to draw visitors in to an 'imaginative encounter with the past' (2013, p. 10). She also notes a tension between memory and history, where history tends to be aligned with knowledge acquisition and modern western societies, whilst memory is associated with pre-modern, non-literate societies. She sees this as an over-simplification, when in fact knowledge acquisition is itself a 'combination of cognitive and affective processes', (2013, p.18). The *Pebble Mill project* combines history and memory, the history is preserved in the Pebble Mill website, whilst the Facebook page facilitates the memory work, but the memories are then interwoven back into the history, on the website, hopefully providing an 'imaginative encounter with the past'.

New media is certainly influencing museum practice, particularly through enabling wider participation through online display and through greater interactivity in the physical museum. Jorgen Christensen notes that the use of new technologies have changed the way that meaning is made around exhibited objects. He describes the primary object on display as the 'hypotext', and surrounding this are 'paratexts', which add additional meaning to it, in effect providing context to aid a visitor's understanding of the exhibited object (Christensen, 2011, p.17). He argues that through the museum's use of new technologies, often through interactivity, that the visitor has an increasing role in building the 'paratext', and that the museum visit includes a negotiation between

the visitor's contemporary world and the past of the exhibited object. He concludes that the use of technologies has 'weakened the autonomy of the exhibited artefact', but strengthened visitor participation in an exhibition, and also in the building of meaning around an object (ibid, p.27). It is the 'visitor's' role in the formation of meaning around an artefact which has relevance to the *Pebble Mill project*, as much of the information around a media artefact that I post up is supplied by the users, usually via Facebook, and indeed, the vast majority of artefacts displayed as part of the project are supplied by the users. This becomes a collaborative process when members of the allied Facebook community add more information, memories and reminiscences to the original post, in the form of comments.

Similarities can also be drawn between online community projects and museum practice in terms of understanding audience needs and expectations. Henning, citing Neurath's 1933 work, *Museum of the Future* advocates museums extending beyond the confines of the physical institution to broadcast into people's homes, thereby ridding themselves of the ambitions of donors and directors and concentrating on the visitor experience (Henning, in Macdonald and Basu, 2007, p. 35). Most people prefer active participation over passive observation, but the idea of the 'active' visitor is in no way new; avant-garde exhibition experiments from the 1920s and 1930s depended on this notion, which was tied to a socialist vision, which has subsequently been lost from our own time (ibid, p. 36). People tend to gather information through images, sensations or words. Language, either heard or read, takes the most mental processing, whereas visual stimulus

is the strongest and most memorable, whilst taste, touch, smell and hearing are the most immediate and associative (Dean, 1994, p. 26). Online projects obviously cannot cater for taste, touch or smell; but they can provide interactivity; images – static or moving; and written or spoken words, as well as other audio. Aside from the specific sensory stimuli, exhibitions need to provide a context or framework in which the objects sit, because, '[m]emories are stored as frameworks, patterns, and associations (ibid, p. 28). Online projects are perfectly capable of providing the context and framework to rekindle and retain memories.

3.3 Conclusion

As demonstrated in this review, there is a large body of diverse and interdisciplinary literature which addresses different aspects of online community history archives, but little which examines the subject specifically and in its entirety. The fields of literature I have studied coalesce in the online community archive space. The fields could be likened to the overlapping circles of a Venn diagram, with the central intersection being online, interactive community archives.

From the literature on archival practice we can observe a relevance in the philosophical discussions about the nature of the archive as a place of preservation, and the impact of digital technologies which is changing archives and archival practice, in enabling the rise of the informal 'idiosyncratic archive'.

There is a tension between the traditional and the idiosyncratic archive, and more work is needed on how institutional archives will rise to the challenge of the online world, both in terms of preserving 'born digital' content, and in its collections being accessed online. The disruption caused by the idiosyncratic online archive is explored in some of the literature, but there is little examination of how institutional archives view this threat, and might respond to it. The fragility of the informal online archive is highlighted by scholars, such as Flinn et al (2009), and Dougherty and Schneider (2011), who raise concerns, but as yet there seems to be no answer about how best to preserve them.

There is undoubtedly shared territory between the online archive and the virtual museum, and much can be learnt by the one, from the practice of the other. The virtual nature of both, arguably brings them closer together. We see from the literature that the emphasis on engaging display is greater from the museum perspective, whilst the online archive concentrates more on information retrieval. The virtual museum wishes to appeal to a more general user, whilst the online archive is catering to a more specific one. Scholars like Silke Arnold-de Simine (2013), see the potential for museums to move away from simply housing collections, to being more outward looking centres for community engagement built around collective narratives. This would seem to bring their work closer to community archival projects. The *Pebble Mill project* has similarities with a virtual exhibition, a place where the user can browse and find their own route through the collection, watching videos, listening to audio, and reading through recollections; they can take a logical journey through one of the categories, or search the collection through using key words.

The online space has had a profound impact on the intersecting fields of oral history, memory, archival and museum practice, in a way in which has been partially, but not fully explored by scholars.

The literature I have read addresses many of the areas for consideration around my research question, but none tackles it directly. There is arguably little in the literature about online community history projects, and the issues surrounding them, other than the work done by Flinn et al (2009), in their consideration of community activist archives. This could be for a number of reasons. The developments of Web 2.0 have led to a real opportunity for creative online projects, but change has been rapid and has disrupted the status quo, and it takes time for scholars to respond. It may be that scholars have not realised the potential importance of the impact here, and this present study may be the first to open up the issue for proper consideration.

Chapter 4

Ethics

This chapter explores the ethical issues which impinge directly on the *Pebble Mill project*, and its associated research; these issues are potentially complex and intertwined, requiring decisions to be made with some precision, and consideration for the consequences. The areas of potential concern include the collection of material, including interviews, and particularly the public dissemination of material. Issues requiring careful thought include: informed consent; privacy, of contributors and others; potential harm, including legal concerns over potential libel or defamation; copyright; my own position as a researcher; ethics surrounding social media and website interactions; the exploitation of materials produced through the project; and the consequences for future research, using the project materials.

In considering the ethical position of the project, I examine some of the best practice from similar fields, adding observations with particular relevance to the *Pebble Mill project*, and the issues which have been encountered through running the project. Due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the project, the ethical policies adopted draw from the different practices involved; for example: oral history best practice in the recording and dissemination of material, and the ethics around community participation and Internet interaction with respect to online engagement.

Although there is no one definitive ethical framework to adopt for an online multimedia project, I have found *Social Media Research: A Guide to Ethics* by The University of Aberdeen, a useful document, particularly in advising on the issues around using social media data in academic research. Additionally, I have found the position expressed by Sarah Pink, in relation to visual ethnographers, to be helpful. She argues that beyond the practitioner's own ethical conduct, there is a demand to develop an understanding of the ethical context(s) in which they are operating, 'a reflexive approach to their own ethical beliefs, and a critical approach to the idea that *one* ethical code of conduct could be hierarchically superior to all others' (Pink, 2001, p. 37). This approach acknowledges the complexities of operating across different fields, where plural moralities sometimes apply, and therefore that it is not always possible to adopt a fixed ethical position.

4.1 Oral History Ethics

The Oral History Society provides an ethical framework, which includes much helpful guidance for practitioners (Oral History Society, 2012). They stress the need for project leaders to consider the purpose of the interviews to be collected, and their possible future uses, for instance: academic research, education, archival use, publication or broadcast. It is paramount that the purpose is relayed and discussed with potential interviewees, before they consent to be interviewed, and that the implications of taking part are fully explored.

Whilst the oral history ethical framework is useful, it was not developed for the constituency of contributors that I am working with. It assumes contributors are potentially vulnerable, and the subject matter they are disclosing, sensitive, in a one to one, confessional atmosphere. In contrast I am dealing with former broadcast industry professionals, who were often in positions of power, and who understand from the outset that the videos recorded are intended for online publication. However, this does not mean that the consequences of the material being available via the Internet, should not be explored.

In the interviews I have carried out thus far, I have made it clear to interviewees, verbally, how I intend to use the recordings, and that the intention is to publish them online. Most interviewees are members of the project's Facebook community, and are therefore already aware of how the interviews are used, but this is not necessarily the case. Despite the fact that contributors are aware that I am there, interviewing and recording them, sometimes because of the relaxed nature of the interview, they forget the video camera is actually on, and get carried away with the conversation. This is a phenomenon noted by ethnographers, Hammersley & Atkinson; they found that it was common for participants to forget about the research aspect once they came to know the ethnographer as an individual (1995, p. 265). Whilst it may seem strange that a contributor might forget that the camera is actually recording, at least one contributor has mentioned to me afterwards, that it felt just like we were chatting and that she had forgotten about the camera. On the one hand I consider it as a positive if a contributor 'forgets' about the recording, because it means that they are engrossed in the conversation and their testimony is likely

to be natural and open; however, conversely it might mean they make unguarded comments, which they might later regret. To address this issue I now check with contributors at the end of the recording, to make sure that they are happy for me to use everything they have said.

The Oral History Society also emphasises the importance of finding a safe and appropriate way of preserving the material in both the short and longer term, for example as part of an archive holding, and that this should be agreed in advance, because of the wording that consent documentation may need to include, prior to the interview being recorded. For the *Pebble Mill project*, I hold all the material personally, either physically, or electronically on my backed-up, password protected computer, or on hard drives, as well as the vast majority of it being published online linked to the website from the associated Vimeo account. Since the oral histories I am recording are not always traditional long-form life stories, in audio and transcript form, I did not consider that any library or archive would be interested in holding them, and because the recordings are openly available online, there is little to be gained in terms of access, in them being housed in a traditional archive. However, since being awarded the funding from the George Shiers Trust in spring 2017, the BECTU History Project have been in contact, and asked for copies of the new oral history interviews I am recording. I am delighted to collaborate with them, and consequently, I am using their information and consent forms, in addition to my existing ones. I will send them the completed video interviews, after minor editing.

The Oral History Society outlines the following responsibilities for oral historians:

- *a duty of confidentiality (though not necessarily anonymity) towards informants and participants*
- *a duty to protect participants from harm, by not disclosing sensitive information*
- *a duty to treat participants as intelligent beings, able to make their own decisions on how the information they provide can be used, shared and made public (through informed consent)*
- *a duty to inform participants how information and data obtained will be used, processed, shared, disposed of, prior to obtaining consent*
- *a duty to wider society to make available resources produced by researchers with public funds (Oral History Society, 2012)*

In relation to the *Pebble Mill project*, I treat contributors' contact details confidentially, and do not disclose them to third parties without specific consent.

On several occasions people have approached me to be put in contact with someone who has been featured on the Pebble Mill website. In these cases, I always approach the contributor and ask if they are happy with me passing on their contact details to the requester, and usually they are delighted to be reacquainted with some friend from their past. This is certainly not something I anticipated when I established the website, but it is relatively straightforward and an often rewarding consequence of running the site.

With the video interviews I record, I cannot grant anonymity to participants.

There would be little point in videoing someone who is not happy to be identified, and pixilating their face, and distorting their voice would be crass. The nature of the material I am recording does not tend to be contentious or particularly sensitive, and if someone did not want to have their comments or material attributed to them then I would choose a different medium for the

exchange, for example a written blog. Anonymity has not been an issue with the video interviews I have carried out thus far.

Regarding the duty to disseminate materials widely when produced using public funds, there was initial public funding for the Pebble Mill project via a Regional Screen Agencies' Digital Archive grant; this funding was only in place for one year, and it is unclear if there is a continuing obligation to make resources widely available, although the whole ethos of the project is towards publishing material freely online. I will continue to make all the archive materials openly available and searchable for the lifetime of the project.

The Oral History Society also give some common sense advice about the choice of location for an interview, but in my experience agreeing a suitable location does not tend to present obstacles. Usually the best place to carry out what can be quite a personal interview is the interviewee's home. They are likely to feel at ease here, and it makes arrangements simpler from their perspective. It is also likely to be relatively quiet and undisturbed, depending, of course on who else might be there.

From the interviews I have carried out several interviewees have preferred to be recorded at the University rather than their own home. In my opinion it is important, to abide by interviewees' wishes where possible: they do not have to take part, and are being helpful to the project in terms of their contribution, and therefore, unless their wishes compromise, or impact on the project in some negative way, then it is prudent to be accommodating.

4.2 Legal Implications for Published Interviews, Blogs and Comments

The publishing of interviews, blog posts, and even online comments, has legal implications which should not be ignored.

There are certain legal considerations which interviewees should be made aware of, before, during or after the interview. The principal media laws, which are relevant here, are defamation or libel, and copyright. These also apply to written blog posts, photographs and online comments.

A libel is a 'published false statement that is damaging to a person's reputation; a written defamation' (Oxford dictionaries, accessed 2015).

A statement only becomes libellous once published; it would be slander, if spoken, rather than published. The Oral History Society suggest that interviewers are conversant with what constitutes a defamation, and advise interviewees, if they feel that an interview is becoming or likely to become, defamatory, and if necessary curtail the interview or close down that portion of it (Oral History Society, 2012). In reality, unless the interview is being streamed online, or published immediately in some other way, this seems like an over reaction, as the defamatory comment can be edited out afterwards, and if particularly contentious, destroyed, or more likely, simply not published. There is an issue here though of legal questions curtailing oral histories, particularly as a defamatory comment may also be a true one.

In the video interviews I have recorded, I have not yet come across interviewees making defamatory statements, although one participant made some critical comments about a former colleague, which she later regretted and asked me not to post on the Pebble Mill website. I abided by her wishes.

Written responses to blog posts on the main Pebble Mill website, or associated Facebook page, also need to be monitored. Generally, comments posted on the Pebble Mill website tend not to raise any libel issues. However, I did receive a long comment in response to a photograph on the website of a BBC1 Daytime makeover show, from a former presenter of the series, who was replaced on the programme after an incident allegedly involving racist language. The presenter named the production team member who made the original complaint against them, as well as the executive producer and the Controller of BBC Daytime at the time, and made mild threats against them. The presenter clearly felt aggrieved about what had happened, and particularly about the way that they had been told that they were being replaced. I decided not to approve this comment, because of the allegations discussed and the mild threats made. Whilst it adds an insight into how the BBC tackled this kind of incident at the time, which probably is not widely known, the potential repercussions outweighed the positives, in my view. However, in not approving this type of comment I am circumscribing the history of Pebble Mill that is being told, which omits some of the more unpleasant aspects of the past, presenting a potentially distorted view. I could have heavily edited the comment, but I would have had to go back to the presenter to do that, and I did not want to enter into a protracted discussion about the rights and wrongs of what happened. This incident highlighted for me

the potential legal issues, and the responsibility required, in running this kind of online project, and the effect these can have on the history that is told. It was reassuring on this occasion that the website was set up to require that the comments from any new contributor have to be approved by me, prior to publication. This is a very sensible fail-safe to have in place, and one that I would recommend to other people moderating small websites.

On another occasion, a comment was posted on the website in response to a blog post written by the commenter's father. It was an emotional personal attack on the father for leaving his former wife and children, and beginning a new relationship. I did not publish the comment as the content was personally exposing, did not add to the subject being blogged about, and would have been extremely hurtful for him to read. On this occasion I felt I had a duty of care to protect the blog post author, as I had asked him to write the blog at a particularly vulnerable time. The incident highlights the need to take a pragmatic decision on a case-by-case basis, guided by ethical principles. Pink states that ethical decisions are usually made with reference to personal and professional codes, and take into account the intentions of other parties (2001, p. 37); although she is referring to ethnographers, I think the same principles apply here.

Most of the comments in response to Pebble Mill website blogs appear on the linked Facebook page. People seem more comfortable posting comments on Facebook, and do so more readily than on the actual website. However, the informal nature of Facebook can lead to some unguarded comments. My normal practice is to copy comments across from Facebook, back on to the main Pebble

Mill website. This is in order to preserve the comments, to have them attached to the blog post they relate to, and so that they are searchable. Facebook seems to be viewed by users as a platform of the moment, where comments posted may be ephemeral, even though they are published, and open for public view on Facebook pages, and generally remain on the site, albeit in a form that is difficult to retrieve in future. Facebook has also changed over the years and our sense of the site and opinion of what we have written on it over the years can change retrospectively as well. Comments we wrote several years ago may surprise us now, and we often forget that they have been published and may resurface. Due to the difference in perception, and the context of use, between a Facebook comment and a website comment, there is an ethical issue over informed consent, and I have to be careful about the comments I choose to copy across to the website. There is an inherent tension between the desire to preserve valuable and informative comments in a searchable form, and the poster's expectation regarding the use of their comments. As Boyd and Crawford emphasise, researchers cannot claim their actions are ethical, simply because the data is publicly accessible (2012, p. 672). In this case, the data (the comment) is publicly available, and it is in the context of the original post, but it is now transferred to a different platform, which is where the ethical issue is encountered, which means that particular care has to be taken. There have been incidents where material on the Facebook page has been inappropriate, and potentially an invasion of privacy. For instance, I published a blog including a number of photographs from a drama series made at BBC Pebble Mill. One of the make-up designers on the series posted a comment about working on the drama, and how sad it had been when the lead actress had suffered a miscarriage on

location. I had made the decision not to copy this comment across, because of the privacy issues involved, and fortunately the make-up designer realised that the comment was inappropriate and deleted it from Facebook shortly afterwards.

There have been other instances of comments posted on the website, or Facebook page, which I have approved or copied to the website, despite the fact that they are highly critical of colleagues (see the example regarding *Witchcraft* (BBC2, 1992) in Chapter 6, 'Photographs as a Stimulus for Online Community Engagement in Memory and Oral History Work').

These examples highlight some of the responsibilities faced by moderators of any website. Each blog post and its responses can bring unexpected challenges requiring a degree of judgement on whether to publish or not. On the one hand you do not want to be over cautious and fail to publish interesting and thought provoking comments, but on the other, you do not want to lay yourself open to legal confrontation, or to causing offence or upset. It can be a difficult balancing act, where each occurrence needs to be judged on its merits and risks.

4.3 Copyright

Copyright is a contested area, which requires careful thought and a coherent strategy.

Different layers of copyright pertain to different activities within the *Pebble Mill project*. There are copyright implications around the video interviews I record,

around photographs and sound clips published on the website, around written blogs, and finally around comments in response to blog posts, either on Facebook or on the website itself. The most challenging copyright issues for the project are around the use of some third party images and audio files, where the BBC almost certainly hold the copyright, and a calculated risk of copyright infringement is being made, given that no BBC clearance has been sought or given. This material was produced using public funds, is not being exploited commercially on the site, and is being used for purposes of criticism and review, and therefore I perceive this as a measured risk. This issue is discussed in more detail later in this section.

Regarding the copyright of specially recorded video interviews, this copyright would usually be shared between the person, or organisation, carrying out the recording, and the interviewee themselves. The Oral History Society advice here is to remind the interviewee of the fact that they hold the copyright of their recorded words, and that this can be either retained or assigned to someone else. For online projects they recommend that best practice is to go back to the contributors for further confirmation (Oral History Society, 2012). This seems like an unnecessarily cumbersome procedure, unless the material is particularly sensitive. With the video interviews I have recorded, I have asked contributors to sign a consent form (see Appendix i), which passes their portion of the copyright on to the *Pebble Mill project*. This means that I do not need to go back to the contributor for any further confirmation before publishing, although when interviewees have asked to see the clips I have edited from their interviews, prior to them being published online, I have abided by their wishes. The

contributor consent form is based on the BBC contributor consent form, and references the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988; in signing it, contributors are waiving their moral rights in the recording, and allowing for the editing and publishing of it in all media, throughout the world, without time limit. As the people I am interviewing have worked in broadcasting, they will almost certainly have come across consent forms professionally, and have, therefore, not viewed the form with surprise or suspicion. The interviewees know that the intention is to publish their interviews online, either wholly or in part, and most will have seen examples of other contributors' interviews on the Pebble Mill website. Therefore, consent to record, and use the interviews in connection with the Pebble Mill project, has not proved problematic. Some ethnographic academics might interpret this position as potentially unethical, for example Dauphinee cites Lincoln and Guba's (1989) argument, that when contributors lose control over the research materials they have participated in producing, that 'they have been robbed of some essential element of dignity' (2010, p. 269). I do not think that this is the case with the publishing of the video interviews on the Pebble Mill website, because the contributors understand that the interview material will be published before the interview even takes place. In fact, I would argue that publishing the interviews empowers the contributors, rather than stripping them of some degree of dignity.

In order to protect the intellectual property rights of the videos I have produced, relating to the project, I have added a Creative Commons licence statement to them on the website. Information on Creative Commons licences is available from (Creative Commons, accessed 2015). The licence I have adopted stipulates,

'Attribution, Non-Commercial, No Derivatives, International' use. In other words, whilst I am happy for other people to share these videos, where they are useful for other projects, I would like the Pebble Mill website to be credited, and equally I do not want other people to use my work for their own commercial profit, as that seems outside the spirit in which the videos were produced, and inappropriate. I also do not want others editing, mixing or otherwise manipulating the material. In actual fact, it would be difficult for me to stop this kind of practice, since once something is published online, no matter what stipulations you might put in place, in practice it is relatively easy for people to ignore these wishes and manipulate the material in any way they choose.

The copyright issues regarding the remediation of other materials on the Pebble Mill website is more complex and problematic than the specially recorded video interviews. The intellectual property rights of many of the photographs on the Pebble Mill site are unknown, or unclear, and for some, the copyright is held by the BBC. The majority of copyright holders are content for their material to be publicly accessible on the website, especially when credited, largely due to the non-commercial nature of the site, but I have not sought the permission from the BBC to use its copyrighted material. The use of a copyright disclaimer seems sensible, as does a policy of taking down any post where a copyright holder objects to its use. I have adopted a practice of either attributing copyright, where I am aware of who holds it, or where I am unsure, adding a descriptor saying, 'copyright resides with the original holder, no reproduction without permission'. This statement would be unlikely to protect me against a breach of copyright

law, but makes it clear that I do not own the copyright or licence use of the artefact.

There was an incident where I was asked to either take down, or attribute copyright differently. This related to a photo I had been given by a regular contributor to the Pebble Mill project, of a vintage audio machine called an EMI TR90. I had assumed, albeit wrongly, that the copyright belonged to the person who gave me the image, and only realised the mistake when the owner of the photograph asked me to either remove the image, or attribute the copyright to him, and provide a link to his vintage machine business. Once I had ensured that the photograph was indeed his, I was happy to change the copyright caption, and to provide a link to his website. This incident highlights different individual's perceptions of what is fair use, and what is an infringement of someone else's copyright. The contributor who gave me the image originally probably did not see copying the image as a breach of intellectual property rights, rather as a helpful illustration of a defunct piece of vintage broadcasting machinery. In contrast the owner of the image saw it as an infringement of his copyright, and potentially a missed business opportunity; however, he did not want payment for the image, and the link might potentially bring more visitors to his site.

Below is a screen shot of the now correctly captioned photograph:



Photo by Stuart Blacklock of the BBC EMI TR 90, with trolley

Photos by Stuart Blacklock of http://www.vintagerecorders.co.uk/VR_View_Page.asp?IDS=131 no reproduction without permission.

The EMI TR90 was the standard audio tape machine for radio and TV studio and OB use. They usually lived on green trolleys as they were very heavy and were built like battleships. However they were the backbone of all BBC audio recording, editing and replay for many years from the late 1950s up until the 70s when they were beginning to wear out! Most of us learned our trade on these. The wheel like structures at the top of the photo are the tape reel adapters for using on the big 10 inch reels of tape. Without these gizmos the ordinary 7 inch reels would fit onto the machine.

Pete Simpkin

Figure 2 Screenshot of updated TR90 authorised photograph and user comment

As discussed in Chapter 3 (see Bruns, 2008), it can be argued that copyright laws favour existing rights holders and discourage the culture of sharing, which has become so integral to online community interaction, and that such frameworks are inadequate in the Internet age. The example above partially supports this view, although this case was easily solved, with a suitable copyright caption, and appropriate online link, which in fact cements the notion of sharing.

With other photographs the photographer is not always known; this is often the case when someone gives me an informal photograph featuring themselves, or photographs I have been given by third parties. I am increasingly relaxed about using the photographs which have been given to me, even when I do not have the direct permission of the copyright holder. The *Pebble Mill project* is clearly non-

commercial in nature, and if a copyright holder objects to a photograph of theirs being used, I can take it down, if they contact me.

Some of the copyright on photographs, grabs, magazine articles, on the site will be held by the BBC. Whilst the BBC appears averse to moving images from programmes appearing on third party websites, they seem more tolerant of still images. Thus far, I have not been approached by anyone at the BBC to take down any of the content on the website. In fact, I have actually been given material by the BBC to place on the website, and curate. The BBC Drama Village, in Birmingham, who currently make *Doctors* (2000 – ongoing, BBC1), were redecorating their offices and wanted to remove some publicity photographs of earlier dramas, for example: *Cruel Train* (1996, BBC2), *Pickwick Papers* (1985, BBC1), *Sophia and Constance* (1988, BBC2), *Vanity Fair* (1987, BBC1), *Jane Eyre* (1983, BBC1), and *Oliver Twist* (1985, BBC1). They asked if I would be the new custodian of the photographs, and I was happy to oblige. Whilst I do not hold the copyright of these images, the BBC itself were giving me the images to use and keep safe. On another occasion a different BBC department asked to use photographic images from the website for in-house purposes.

In other cases, I have been given permission by the photographer of publicity stills of BBC Pebble Mill programmes, to use the images on the website, but I do not have permission from the BBC. In such cases, publishing the material and being prepared to take it down if challenged, is a pragmatic decision. Bruns' argument, that copyright laws favour existing rights holders, mentioned in the

literature review, is relevant here, and illustrates how legislation dampens the creative opportunities based around sharing.

In terms of justifying the use of un-cleared copyright material, including photographs, grabs from titles sequences, and audio or video clips, a fair dealing defence is feasible.

Quoting parts of a work for the purpose of criticism or review is permitted provided that:

- *The work has been made available to the public.*
- *The source of the material is acknowledged.*
- *The material quoted must be accompanied by some actual discussion or assessment (to warrant the criticism or review classification).*
- *The amount of the material quoted is no more than is necessary for the purpose of the review. (The UK Copyright Service, 2009).*

This advice was updated in October 2014, when the law relating to copyright was reassessed, and the notion of 'fair dealing' was extended to the audiovisual, and conditions were relaxed slightly for educational and research purposes. The fair dealing information now asks whether 'using the work affect[s] the market for the original work?' and 'is the amount of the work taken reasonable and appropriate?' (Intellectual Property Office, 2014, p. 10). The Pebble Mill website and associated Facebook page would seem to qualify for a fair dealing defence, reinforced by the unofficial television archive site TV Ark using this argument (TV Ark, accessed 2013). The copyrighted material has generally been made available to the public; the source is acknowledged by me, where known; there is discussion around the material, including user comments; and the quantity of material used is not excessive, and does not affect the market for the original work. This is not a route I have taken up to now, because there is a certain level

of inherent risk, but it would certainly seem to be an interesting way of enriching the online archive.

Having worked for the BBC for many years, I am aware of the importance and complexity of copyright regulations, however, through publishing regularly online, I have become rather more relaxed about possible copyright infringement, and more inclined to take a calculated risk if the intellectual property rights of a particular artefact are unknown. If copyright restrictions were relaxed new possibilities for the archive would open up. I would welcome the opportunity of posting up video clips from some of the myriad of programmes produced at Pebble Mill on the website. It is frustrating that copyright laws favour the rights holder, over would-be users, and this is particularly the case with BBC material, which has been paid for by licence fee payers, who can largely no longer access the programmes produced with their money beyond the transmission window. There have been small scale attempts to increase the accessibility of the BBC archives, for example through the 'BBC Store', which is unfortunately closing in November 2017 (BBC News, 2017), and the 'Reminiscence Archive' project, a prototype system aimed at helping dementia sufferers through access to historic programmes from periods they remember (BBC, 2016). The project is explained in a blog by Jake Berger, Product Manager of the BBC Archive Department, whose team has developed the software (Berger, 2017). However useful and innovative such projects are, they do not address the fundamental issues which restrict open access to BBC archived programming. A properly funded BBC archive, which had the resources

to clear the rights for non-commercial use, would be a new way forward. Such an initiative would open up huge potential for the likes of the *Pebble Mill project*.

The copyright position over user comments, posted either on the website itself, or the Facebook page, is another area for consideration. Users would seem to retain the copyright of the comments they have written, either on Facebook or on the website, although they may not have control over those comments once published. By posting a comment there is arguably a licence implied for allowing its reuse within the context of the platform it was posted on. The following information was found on an Australian legal advice site:

If someone makes comments on your blog they are probably giving you an implied licence for at least that display on the comments page, and any other incidental reproduction or associated copying. However, for clarification you could add a Creative Commons licence to your blog comments page stipulating that in posting comments they agree to license them to you. (Arts Law Centre of Australia, accessed 2015)

The jurisdiction may be different in different parts of the world, and may be more complex still if what looks like a UK site is hosted on a server based in another area of jurisdiction.

On Facebook, if someone changes their mind about something they have posted, they can remove it, whilst this is not the case with a comment to the website, and a user would have to contact me about editing or removing a comment they had added to the Pebble Mill website. In contributing a photograph or video to Facebook any user is granting the organisation a 'non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide license' (Facebook, accessed 6th February 2015). Many users will not realise that they are giving Facebook this permission,

and may not welcome the possible exploitation of their material in this way. The position over the intellectual property rights of user comments is not mentioned by Facebook in their legal terms, but it would be sensible to assume that any licence granted by users would also cover these. It is strange that Facebook do not mention comments, but perhaps they do not consider them as creative work, and therefore not copyrightable.

4.4 Issues Around Consent Regarding Online Artefacts

With the *Pebble Mill project*, I am frequently copying across comments from the Facebook page, on to the website, in order to preserve them, add the information they contain to the original blog, and to make them searchable, but this practice raises rights and ethical considerations. The Facebook page is openly available to anyone who searches for it, and therefore comments are already in the public domain, but there are issues about whether a member of the Facebook community in commenting there, is giving consent for their comment to be copied across to the main website. I have explained in the profile to the Pebble Mill Facebook page that this is my practice, in order to preserve the comments, and so that they are searchable. However, many users may not read the profile page, and might comment unaware that I may copy that comment. The concept of 'informed consent' has been highlighted by some academics as an ethical concern (see Townsend & Wallace (2016), Banks et al (2012)). In the guidance given by the Centre for Social Justice and Community Action at Durham University, the advice is to ensure that contributors are given information about the purpose of the research and how their contribution will be used (Banks et al,

2012, p. 10). This is relatively easy to achieve with a consent form for a video interview, but more difficult when the contribution is in the form of a short online comment, especially if the information concerning future use, whilst accessible, may not be read by the participant.

An additional ethical issue is raised in the use of attributed comments in the research concerning the *Pebble Mill project*. I include screenshots of comments in this thesis, and in other research outputs from the project, such as conference presentations. Taking screenshots means that comments cannot be anonymised, but for the most part I do not consider it necessary to anonymise these comments, because the subject matter is usually neither sensitive, nor controversial, and the contributors are, predominantly, not vulnerable, and the material has already been published publicly. Additionally, seeing the way the comments are displayed on the social media site can be important in understanding the context of the interchange, and commenters may actually want their comments attributed.

The editing of people's written contributions, for spelling and grammar, factual accuracy, and editorial decisions over length and relevance, need to be thought through. There are arguments for and against the practice of editing someone's material: in editing it at all, are you diminishing the contribution in some way? Should the contributor be approached about the changing of minor typographical errors, or is it patronising to do so? In practice, I tend to correct the spelling and grammar of the comments I copy across, and do not contact contributors about this, as it seems unnecessarily petty. I am careful not to alter

the sense of a user's comment. Such issues are considered on a case-by-case basis, as they occur, but drafting a moderation policy might well be useful for projects, especially to ensure a consistent approach and the application of prior learning.

I have had an instance where a former staff member from Pebble Mill was happy to have a photograph published on the website, but did not want to have it credited to them. The photograph was of the nameplate of the Pebble Mill steam engine, which they had bought at auction. The reason they did not want the photograph credited is that they did not want it known, via an online search, that they had bought the nameplate, in case of theft. It was straight-forward for me to publish the photograph, but not attribute the copyright.

Another ethical issue regards the depiction of people in photographs. Whilst I may have been given permission by the copyright holder to publish a photograph on the website, I do not have the consent of other people shown in the image. This is potentially problematic. The subject of a photograph may not want what they considered a private 'snap', published and seen widely, although they do not hold the intellectual property rights. Many of the photographs that I am given are from social functions, such as in the BBC bar, or at parties, and subjects may have moved on in their lives, or be shown with people, or in situations, they might be embarrassed about now. Elizabeth Dauphinee argues that what is considered public or private is not necessarily clear-cut, and depends on your individual perspective (2010, p. 267). Whilst no one featured in a photograph has yet objected to its use in the project, this could potentially

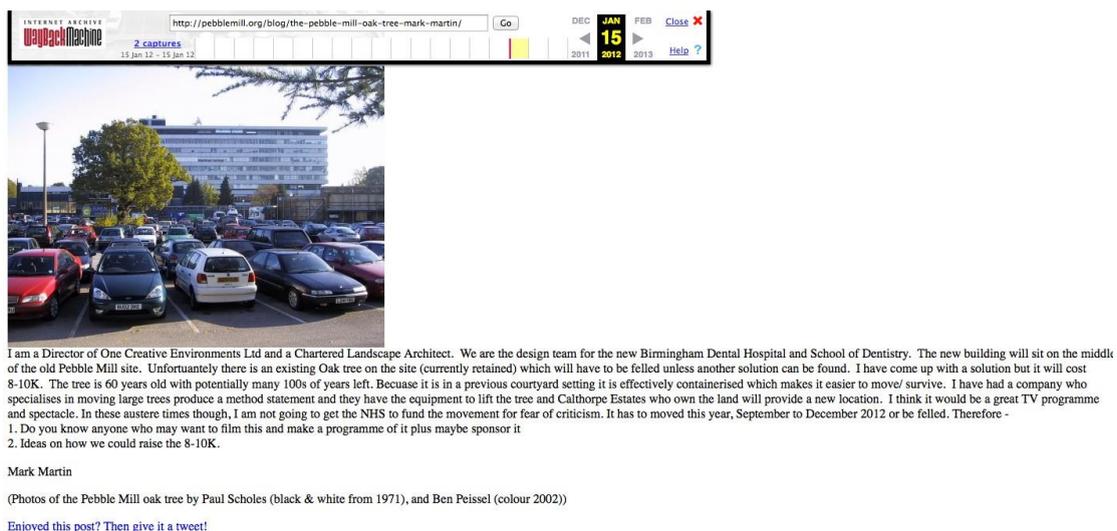
become an issue, and I would have to consider the relative merits between keeping it on the site, and abiding by their wishes.

4.5 Take Down Policy

Some organisations have a stated 'take down' policy. The British Library, who hold many oral history collections, and publish some materials online, for instance, recognise that occasionally mistakes may be made regarding copyright attribution and permission to publish, invasions of privacy, or the inclusion of defamatory material. It invites users who identify any of these issues to raise them with the institution, and after investigation, material may be removed from the website, if a solution cannot be found between the different parties concerned (The British Library, accessed 2015). The National Archives have a similar policy, although the tone of their notice is more robust, with the assumption that information published on its site is in the public domain already and will only be removed in exceptional circumstances (The National Archives, accessed 2015). Smaller websites, without the accountability of publicly funded institutions, and without the same resources, tend not to have as clearly articulated policies regarding taking down material. However, similar principles should apply, and if a user or contributor complains, with sufficient evidence, about the publishing of material which infringes copyright, privacy or has potential legal issues, then altering, or potentially removing that material is a prudent course of action.

Besides from the request to take down or change the copyright of the photograph of the EMI TR90, mentioned earlier, there has been one other request to take down a blog post. The blog related to an oak tree in the car park at Pebble Mill. In 2012, the site was being redeveloped, and I was contacted by Mark Martin, a landscape architect from the design team. The tree needed to be moved, to accommodate the new building, and Mark thought that it might be an interesting programme idea for *Countryfile* (BBC1), or *Gardeners' World* (BBC2), to help organise moving it. He was happy for me to post his message on the Pebble Mill website, along with a photograph which I sourced, of the tree in situ.

(See retrieved version of the original blog post below)



INTERNET ARCHIVE
Wayback Machine
2 captures
15 Jan 12 - 15 Jan 12

http://pebblemill.org/blog/the-pebble-mill-oak-tree-mark-martin/ Go

DEC JAN FEB Close X
15
2011 2012 2013 Help ?



I am a Director of One Creative Environments Ltd and a Chartered Landscape Architect. We are the design team for the new Birmingham Dental Hospital and School of Dentistry. The new building will sit on the middle of the old Pebble Mill site. Unfortunately there is an existing Oak tree on the site (currently retained) which will have to be felled unless another solution can be found. I have come up with a solution but it will cost 8-10K. The tree is 60 years old with potentially many 100s of years left. Because it is in a previous courtyard setting it is effectively containerised which makes it easier to move/ survive. I have had a company who specialises in moving large trees produce a method statement and they have the equipment to lift the tree and Calthorpe Estates who own the land will provide a new location. I think it would be a great TV programme and spectacle. In these austere times though, I am not going to get the NHS to fund the movement for fear of criticism. It has to moved this year, September to December 2012 or be felled. Therefore -

1. Do you know anyone who may want to film this and make a programme of it plus maybe sponsor it
2. Ideas on how we could raise the 8-10K.

Mark Martin
(Photos of the Pebble Mill oak tree by Paul Scholes (black & white from 1971), and Ben Peissel (colour 2002))
[Enjoyed this post? Then give it a tweet!](#)

Figure 3 Retrieved version of the <http://pebblemill.org> blog post about the threatened oak tree

After the blog was published the story was picked up by local bloggers, who became quite vocal in trying to save the tree. They investigated whether there was a tree protection order in place, but the developers in fact did have permission to cut down the tree. *(See some of the tweets below)*



Figure 4 Screenshot of twitter feed campaigning to save the oak tree

A couple of months later I was contacted again by Mark Martin, asking me to take down the original post. Apparently it was causing professional embarrassment to the redevelopment project, as the blog was one of the first items coming up on a Google search of the new dental hospital build. I had been given the content for the story in good faith in order to try and find a way to save the tree, but the fact that it had been picked up by others had increased its prominence, and taken the story in a direction not envisaged by either Mark Martin, or myself. I did not wish to cause Mr Martin embarrassment, especially as he was trying to preserve the

tree, and therefore, I deleted the post. In hindsight, I should have kept a copy, but I did not, and therefore had to resort to the 'Wayback machine' (Internet Archive, accessed 2014), to retrieve a version of the original.

This incident highlights the unexpected directions that online interactions, and community engagement, can take, in this case resulting in repercussions for how the original blog post was viewed, and resulting in embarrassment for the contributor. A formal 'take-down' policy, such as those in place on the British Library and National Archives websites would not have required the removal of this blog; it was not infringing copyright, or privacy and was not defamatory. However, removing the post seemed like the most sensible approach in the circumstances. After all it had served its purpose, and although the tree was ultimately cut down, a community issue had been raised, and an attempt had been made to save the tree. A pragmatic view needs to be taken with these kinds of issues, which require considering on a case by case basis.

4.6 My Position as a Researcher

My position as a former colleague, academic researcher, and in some cases, friend, to many of the contributors to the Facebook page and website, does have ethical implications. There are issues of power and trust, which were mentioned in the literature review in connection to the Popular Memory Group and their assertion of unequal power dynamics between interviewer and interviewee. As explained there, the power dynamics are relatively complex as several of the programme makers I have interviewed are former bosses of mine, which puts a

different complexion on the relationship. Whilst I am in control of the recording, editing and publishing of the video interviews, the personal power dynamics are more nuanced. I am not dealing with vulnerable contributors, unaware of the implications of publishing material online. These are people involved in broadcasting, who have knowledge and understanding of the positives and negatives of being involved. My relationship with contributors is undoubtedly helpful in gaining access to interviewees, and in sourcing other material for the project. It also helps in developing trust, and I am convinced that it would have been more difficult for someone without my background to establish the project and gain and level of access and engagement, which has been relatively straightforward for me. Another factor relating to my position is that because of my former professional career, I am likely to have an inherent bias and subjectivity in relation to the BBC as an institution, and towards specific production cultures, programmes and individual programme makers. This subjectivity is inescapable and must be acknowledged. It could be argued that it is a positive rather than a negative, as I have insight and personal knowledge, which gives me a better-informed perspective.

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion there are ethical considerations which impact on the collection of materials, particularly video recordings, and consents and safeguards that should be put in place. Through researching the advice from the Oral History Society, and through the experience of operating the *Pebble Mill project*, I have

updated my practice and written an information sheet to be given to participants about the parameters of the project (see Appendix ii). This is in response to comments from contributors, for instance, them forgetting I was filming, and in my desire to be an ethical and reflexive practitioner.

The publishing of videos, photographs, written blogs and audio recordings online has implications regarding copyright, privacy and potentially defamation. Non-commercial, and collaborative projects may be able to adopt a more relaxed position regarding the sharing of un-cleared copyrighted material, as long as they are prepared to remove material if a copyright holder raises an objection. A fair dealing defence is applicable, if the copyrighted work is demonstrably held up for critique or review.

The copyright and control over the re-use of online comments, is rather less clear-cut than the use of media artefacts, such as videos and photographs, and care should be taken to edit and re-use them in a sensitive and appropriate fashion. A pragmatic approach should be adopted when users ask for blogs or comments to be revised or removed, and each case should be judged on its relative merits.

Where there are requests to re-purpose material beyond the scope of the project, good practice would suggest returning to the contributor to ask permission for this additional use.

Whilst there is no one ethical framework that is fit for purpose in online, collaborative, multimedia projects, as I have demonstrated, there are a number of important principles which can be applied from related fields, pragmatically, in the context of ethical conduct by the researcher and practitioner. An ethical approach guided by the researcher's values, seems to be a sensible position to adopt in the absence of an ethical framework for online projects. Developing a set of ethical guidelines for online multimedia projects, in collaboration with colleagues and interested organisations would be a useful addition to the advice currently available, and is something I will consider drawing up in the future, in an effort to support people instigating similar types of community projects.

The following chapters examine the operation of the *Pebble Mill project* more generally, with the aim of examining what we can learn that is generalisable for other projects.

Chapter 5

Engaging with the Online Community

How far can the users of the *Pebble Mill project* be considered as a 'community'?

This chapter considers what we can learn from the project in terms of engaging and collaborating with the group of online users which has grown up around the website and particularly the Facebook page. It explores issues around identity, and how a work place history might contribute to former workers' individual, collective and cultural memory. It also assesses whether an online community can be viewed as a cohesive group, and how we might measure this property.

Through the use of both quantitative and qualitative data, there is an examination of who contributes to the Facebook group, and how they interact.

The norms which have become established around the project, including the roles individuals have adopted, and the 'rules' which have developed, are considered.

This chapter examines how participants contribute to the project, and makes some deductions about why they do so. It analyses the process and rationale for participation rather than exploring the oral history that users are helping to build.

5.1 Online Communities

Community can be defined as a bounded space where individuals, groups and organisations interact in social networks, where there is a sense of belonging and shared practices, where attributes such as cohesion, resilience and vulnerability pertain (Baker et al. 2013; Partington, 2005; Patterson et al., 2010; Williams, 1999). Traditional notions of community tend to be rooted in a physical place, but the concept of community is a social construct, and communities, groups of people who share some sort of collective identity, can exist outside of a defined locale. One definition of a 'virtual community' is, 'a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks' (Rheingold, 1994, p. 57-8). Although this definition was written a decade before Facebook, or Twitter, were established, it is still applicable in the modern era of social media platforms. Virtual community can be described as a collection of people who communicate online, have a common interest, and share resources and information to fulfil the community's needs (Wang et al., 2001, p. 409; Hsu et al, 2015, p.483; Ridings et al., 2002, p. 273). This builds on Raymond Williams' notion of community, being not simply a bounded location, but having as its essence, something in common, which provides a sense of collective identity (Wang et al., p.410). In fact, these academics go further and suggest that a virtual community is not so much an 'entity', but a 'process' defined by the interaction of its members, stating that it only exists because it is defined and acquires meaning through its participants (ibid, p. 411). This is a very important point, and stresses the unforced collaboration that must take place for a virtual

community to flourish. The challenge for those whose work is built around virtual communities is how to foster and nurture them. For the Pebble Mill online community, the 'process' is the sharing of knowledge, information and electronic artefacts, which then promotes a shared experience, and the sense of belonging to a larger identifiable group, and without this sharing there would be no online community. I have found that it is important to encourage participation through my own practice, for instance, posing questions in Facebook posts, that hopefully individuals will answer via a comment. I am careful to always 'Like' a user's comment, unless it is inappropriate, again in order to encourage interaction, and to show that I read and value each comment left.

Virtual communities emerge as a natural consequence of people coming together to discuss a common interest or concern (Ridings et al. 2002, p. 271). However, this observation neglects the apparatus which has to be constructed in order to facilitate the community engagement. People do not come together without a mechanism, a particular online space, where they can interact, and they both need to know about this space and have the desire to be involved in it. There needs to be a shared interest to bring people together and sustain the community, combined with the framework in which it can interact, and without both these elements a virtual community cannot exist.

Whilst virtual and traditional, face-to-face, communities clearly have many similarities, they also have important differences. Ridings et al., citing Sproull and Faraj (1997), note three variances between the two: firstly, the obvious lack of a physical location for online communities; secondly, that non-contributing

members may be virtually invisible online; and thirdly, that logistical and social costs of participation are lower in virtual communities (ibid, p. 274). From this we can see certain advantages of the virtual over the face-to-face interaction: such as convenience and immediacy. Conversely there are also disadvantages, such as the reliance on computer technology and Internet connections, as well as the primacy of written messages, with their inherent inability to sense nuances of body language, tone of voice, and the challenges of detecting irony. The emphasis on online participation precludes certain would-be members of a specific virtual community, particularly older people who are less likely to use social media platforms habitually, or digital technology more broadly. It is difficult to know how many people will be disenfranchised by a project choosing a particular online platform. In this chapter I am concentrating on the Pebble Mill online community itself, and am not examining the community which might be available if all interaction was face-to-face. Questions about the primacy of written messages and their potential shortcomings, are also not explored here, as this is beyond the scope of this study, although the importance of the visual in posts is the subject of the following chapter.

The notion of invisibility warrants further exploration. Whilst in face-to-face communities some members may be less visible than others, for example, the elderly or disabled, who may not leave their homes frequently, in virtual communities invisibility can be entirely benign, for example people not actively engaging with a site, or conversely, it can have more sinister overtones. There may be 'lurkers' and 'trolls', observing, collecting information freely given by others, and perhaps changing or twisting that information, and using it against

someone at some future point. Fortunately, the *Pebble Mill project* has not been a victim of trolling, but this has become a serious issue for some virtual communities. Trolling is defined as ‘the act of deliberately posting inflammatory or confusing messages on the Internet in order to provoke a vehement response from a group of users’ (Cassandra, 2008, p. 8). There has been scholarly discussion concerning trolling, over who has the right to speak and be listened to, which contributes to the debate about the ethos and politics of the post-Internet digital culture. Whilst trolling is often destructive and negative, it can also be seen by some as a game, but one which is ‘underpinned by shared understandings of truth, legitimacy (the situational set of normative forces that frame the conduct of conduct), and what would count as their violation’ (Fuller, McCrea, Wilson, 2013, p. 3-4). Activity by trolls has an undercurrent of the subversive, of the anarchic, which questions the mainstream, but Fuller et al. suggest that such behaviour can be contained by a community with the necessary ‘agency and authority’ (ibid, p. 3). The way that most communities counter trolling attacks is through moderation. Some sites have clearly defined policies, but others, for instance the Pebble Mill site, have adopted strategies over time in response to unwelcome comments, which are discussed later in this chapter.

Facebook presents specific challenges regarding trolling behaviour. As Tero Karppi observes, Facebook itself does not mention trolls or trolling at all in its ‘Help Center’ or its rules and regulations, but through its management of online personas it does have the means to punish users who have misbehaved (Facebook, 2013). Facebook only allows users to have one personal profile, and

asks them to use their real name, although many people (including benign users anxious to preserve their privacy) do not actually comply with this request. This makes it easier to trace potential trolling behaviour. Facebook can ban inappropriate users. Trolls however, can manipulate Facebook's policy regarding online personas, by either altering their own user profile, for instance adopting the name 'No One', or by repurposing the names, details and images of others, and using them in antisocial ways. Karppi points out the paradoxical nature of the Facebook troll, that they are 'both the amplification and the corruption of Facebook's mission statement 'to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected'' (ibid, p. 293). They certainly participate and share, perhaps more than other users, utilising the technology to engage with an audience. However, behind Facebook's mission statement is a sense of positivity, of building a community, in contrast to the troll's apparent mission of disruption and provocation.

The reason that the *Pebble Mill project* has escaped trolling may be due to a number of reasons: I am not particularly visible as an individual on the Facebook page, the site does not tend to state controversial opinions, or include particularly emotive or personal information, but more significantly there may be a carry over of professional norms because the majority of users worked together at BBC Pebble Mill, which may give the community an added layer of cohesion and protection.

There have been instances of unwelcome comments on the Pebble Mill website website, but because the site was set up so that I have to 'approve' all comments

from new posters, these instances have been easy to contain, through simply not approving the comment. There is however, quite a fine line between what one person considers 'trolling', and what another might regard as fair comment. For instance, a husband and wife presenting team on Radio WM, Tony Wadsworth and Julie Mayer, were charged in January 2016 with sex offences against four children in the 1990s (BBC News, 8/4/2016). They were convicted of these offences in June 2017, and imprisoned (Burgess, 26/6/2017). There are several Radio WM related photos of the duo on the Pebble Mill website, and on 9th April 2016 a comment was left on one of them, awaiting my approval. The comment simply said 'paedos'. This was the only such comment that I received, and no similar comments were posted on the Facebook page, which is potentially more vulnerable, because anyone can post a comment without approval. Interestingly, the poster of the comment must have had second thoughts, because when I next went on the website to delete the comment, it had already gone. I do not consider this comment as a 'trolling' incident, rather as an abusive comment. I suspect that the Facebook page was not targeted for similar comments because it isn't searchable in the same way as the website, and there would be other Facebook pages which are more directly relevant to the couple.

There has been no mention of the Wadsworths recently on the Pebble Mill Facebook page, despite their charging, and subsequent trial and conviction being widely reported. This is one of the instances of the community not wanting to discuss or remember certain aspects of its past, by choosing not to comment. I have observed this phenomenon of collective silence around other incidents. For example, there were historic instances of sexual harassment, from members of

staff and celebrity guests, which I was aware of when I worked at Pebble Mill. These have never been discussed on the website or Facebook page, although they were mentioned by several women when I carried out a survey with individuals about the changing role of women in television production. This reinforces the argument that the community does not wish to collectively remember some of the more unsavoury aspects of the past in a public forum, although privately individuals acknowledge them.

The vast majority of interactions on the website and the Facebook page are constructive and informative, in contrast to the negative one above. Most of this interaction takes place on Facebook, as the platform is part of many community members' everyday activity, and a space where they are accustomed to comment, and feel comfortable and in control of the process. The following section explores how this interaction operates.

5.2 How Online Communities Function

Much of the literature compartmentalises communities as either virtual, or face-to-face, but in reality, they frequently involve an overlap of both. For the *Pebble Mill project*, the community aspect is a case in point. BBC Pebble Mill was a physical space, which whilst now demolished, still holds a sense of place, for the people who worked there, Birmingham inhabitants more generally, and members of the audience who were aware of where some of their programmes were made. Many members of the Facebook page know each other offline, as well as online, and indeed many still meet up at regular social events. This

duality of face-to-face and virtual communities may be one of the factors which protects against trolling, as most members know, or know of each other offline. Additionally, their interactions online may still be governed by norms developed during their, face-to-face, working lives at BBC Pebble Mill. There is likely to be some flattening of the hierarchies inherent within the organisation, as the participants age, pursue different careers and retire. The interchanges are usually, although not always, respectful, depending on the imagined audience and fellow participants. The online discussions are sometimes light hearted, and occasionally a little rude to former colleagues, where assumptions are made that they are unlikely to be members of the Pebble Mill Facebook community.

The next part of this chapter shows examples of the interactions that take place on the Facebook page, in response to posts made by me, and analyses what can be deduced through them. In examining how these interactions work in practice, we can appreciate the value of social media in accessing community histories.

Here is an example of an amiable online conversation, where assumptions have been made about who is, or more importantly, is not, likely to read it.

I posted the following photograph on the Facebook page, following the death of Arthur Binnie, a popular Deputy Editor of *Pebble Mill at One* (BBC1, 1972-86), in February 2016.



Figure 5 Photograph of Arthur Binnie's retirement, from Jane McLean, copyright unknown

The photo was taken during Arthur Binnie's retirement party circa 1985. He is sitting centrally with production assistant, Jane McLean, camera left, and presenter, Marian Foster, camera right: a man surrounded by a number of female members of the team, from cleaner to presenter. It demonstrates something of the gender politics of television production at the time. After the posting of the photo, the following discussion took place, trying to identify various people in it. The interchange is irritatingly displayed slightly out of chronological order by Facebook.

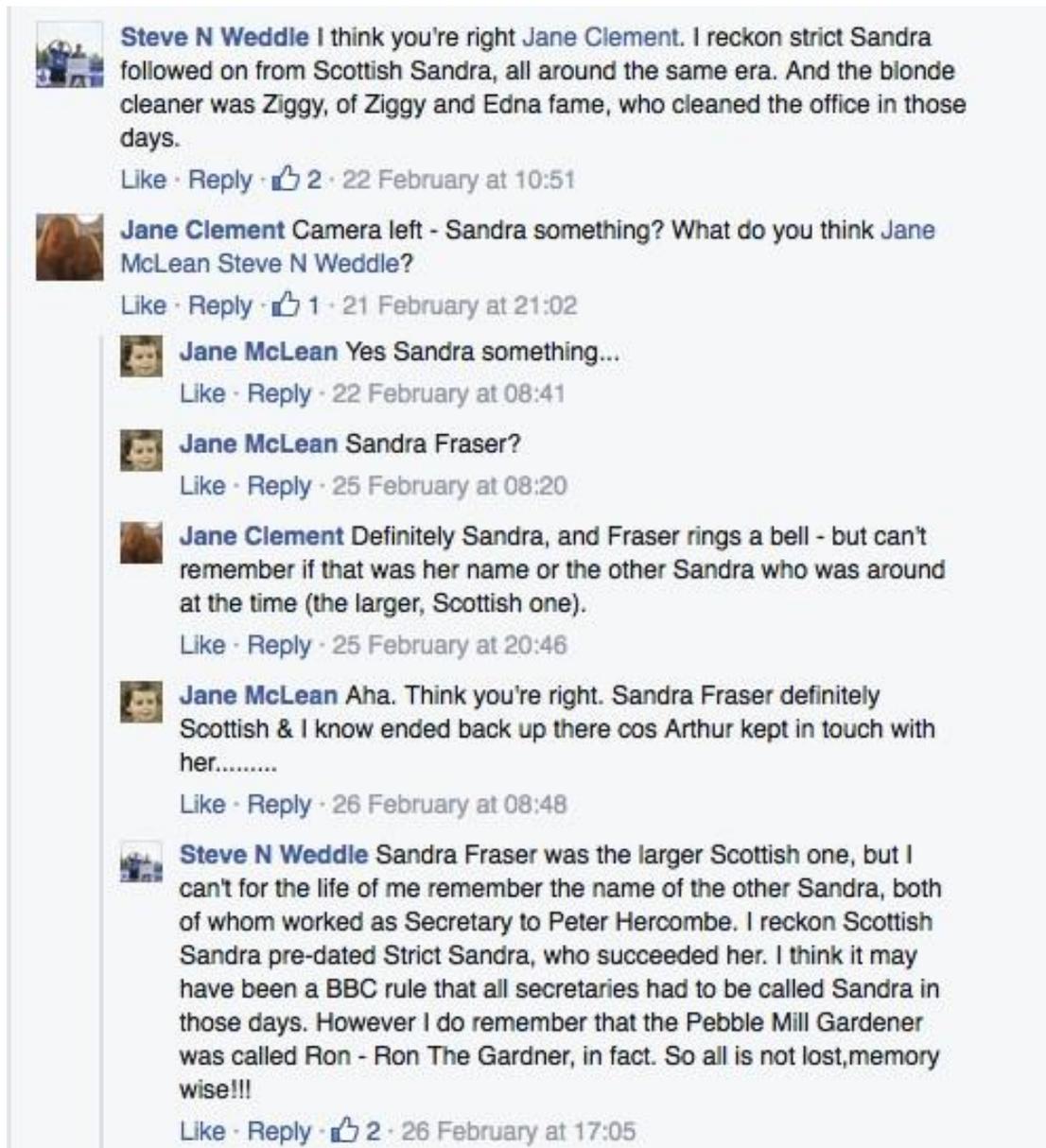


Figure 6 Exchange on Pebble Mill Facebook page, February 2016

In terms of professional hierarchy, Steve Weddle was a producer on *Pebble Mill at One*, who went on to be Editor of the subsequent lunchtime magazine shows: *Daytime Live* (1987-90, BBC1), *Scene Today* (1990-2, BBC1) and *Pebble Mill* (1992-6, BBC1), Jane Clement was a researcher and Jane McLean was a live gallery production assistant. The conversation is one between close colleagues and friends, and there is no sense of the professional hierarchy, as collectively they try and work out which 'secretarial Sandra' is sitting camera left of Jane

McLean – ‘Strict Sandra’, or the larger ‘Scottish Sandra’. They behave as if it is a private conversation, rather than one which the Sandras could be observing, and potentially offended by. There are shared semi-private observations, such as the comment about the cleaners, Ziggy and Edna, which are meaningless to people who did not work on *Pebble Mill at One*, as well as wider jokes about all BBC secretaries at the time being called Sandra, and more seriously, about the difficulties of remembering as we get older. There is a distinct performative aspect to this interaction. This type of online conversation could not take place between people who did not know each other well in a face-to-face context.

In other Facebook exchanges the professional norms are more apparent, although the undercurrent of shared and quite intimate experiences made public is again present. By professional norms, I am referring to the notions of what is considered normal practice of how colleagues, or in this case former colleagues, interact with each other professionally and socially. This is enmeshed within the professional hierarchy, as well as how well colleagues know each other, and the level of mutual respect they have. The excerpt below was in response to a titles’ grab of the UKTV motoring magazine show: *Top Gear Gti* (1999-2001, UK Horizons), which I posted on the Pebble Mill website, and Facebook page in March 2016. In the online conversation we see both the more formal and professional conversation regarding how innovative the production team had been with the limited budget, between the series producer, Alan Miller and the productive executive, Tracey Bagley, juxtaposed to the shared experiences on location of the researchers, Sarah and Michelle. Both threads display professional norms, but they are different norms, the one more business like,

respectful and careful in terms of tone, whilst the other takes much less account of the potential audience and reveals vulnerable shared moments. What the conversations have in common is a sense of nostalgia for times gone by, and the enjoyment the team had, despite the various challenges.



Alan Miller The show was by UKTV standards quite well funded but BBC overheads certainly ate into that budget big time. We cut costs by shooting and editing everything ourselves. Everyone did their bit,. Driving tracking cars, rigging in car cameras, writing runni... [See more](#)
Unlike · Reply · Message · 2 · 23 March at 08:59

Sarah Wilkin Hodgson Did we even have a budget?!! It was fab fun though.....apart from when I blew the tyre on the tracking mondeo car.....can you remember the weeing (Louise Brady) incident Michelle in the Honda Jazz when we were stuck in traffic in Madrid?.....and how ill I was in Barcelona.....!!!! Xxx
Unlike · Reply · Message · 2 · 22 March at 23:05

Michelle Davis Yes I remember Madrid!! That was a crazy 24 hrs 😊 and yes I remember Barcelona, you were so poorly. Do you remember me fixing the minicam to the Audi TT (you were presenting) and it fell off and smashed to pieces on the A345?! Managed to save the rushes though - sorry Alan Miller! So many memories - thanks Vanessa Jackson!
Unlike · Reply · Message · 2 · 22 March at 23:11

[↪ View more replies](#)

Alan Miller Hi Tracey. We certainly played around with the budget to get the most out of it. I am sure I could not have done the various "deals" which allowed us to work the way we did without your inestimable help. I always thought of you as a crucial part of the team.
Unlike · Reply · Message · 1 · 24 March at 08:46

Belinda Essex And Alan Miller you let Sarah Wilkin Hodgson come on holiday with me even though she'd already just come back from one. It was a great team!
Unlike · Reply · Message · 1 · 23 March at 19:46 · Edited

[↪ 1 Reply](#)

Tracey Bagley May I add ... Yes you all did a great job and quite frankly at times I know it proved challenging. Alan Miller, I recall going through that budget with you and you then taking me through all the technical aspects of the self shooting / self editing ! The innovation Happy days ... Hope all well. X
Unlike · Reply · Message · 2 · 24 March at 01:34 · Edited

Figure 7 Exchange on Pebble Mill Facebook page March 2016

The online space is for many in the Pebble Mill community a natural extension of their offline activity, and not a totally separate entity. This differentiates the Pebble Mill online community from other purely virtual communities. The amalgamation of face-to-face and virtual may make interpretations of community rather less clear-cut, but in actual fact this interplay of different modes and platforms within a community seems to be how sustainable communities develop in what might be termed an 'organic' fashion. Platforms will come and go and communities can migrate across them, but social media holds some particular advantages as far as interaction goes, especially for members of the community who are geographically dispersed. However, the appeal of social media is not simply because of geographical factors, as Sherry Turkle explains, online networks 'defend us against loneliness even as we use it to control the intensity of our connections' (2011, p. 13). Social media platforms are a convenient way of us keeping in touch with a particular community that we may also be a part of in the offline world, allowing us to dip in and out, without committing the time and effort of face-to-face meetings. What seems to appeal to us about interacting through networked platforms is the ease of being able to communicate with people we know, to have an instant audience, when we want to, albeit on quite a superficial level, and then desist when something more interesting grabs our attention.

A sense of shared identity is an important facet of community; members of the Pebble Mill online community have, on occasion, expressed their feelings regarding the group; here is a comment from one active member of the Facebook

page: 'what we have here on this site/community/group/family is PRICELESS!!' (participant's punctuation). It is clear from this post, and others like it, that members feel part of an identifiable group of like-minded individuals; likening the users to a 'family', demonstrating the strength of what Robert Putnam terms, bonding social capital, the social interactions we have with people who we know, and who are similar to us. He likens bonding social capital to a 'sociological Super Glue' (2003, p. 2), a medium which binds us together, with people who have similar backgrounds, interests or experiences. He notes that creating robust social capital takes time and effort, which often happens face-to-face between small groups of people (ibid, p. 9). It is distinct from 'bridging' social capital, which refers to the links with people moving in different circles to ourselves.

Exploring and reinforcing our own sense of identity, and our individual identity as part of a collective identity, also seems to be an important aspect of being part of an online group. Sherry Turkle articulates this, saying that we use the materials that we have to achieve the best we can in each period of our lives; we rework unresolved issues and reflect on missed opportunities. The Internet provides spaces where we can do this, allowing us to explore our identities, whether we are adults or adolescents (ibid, p. 152-3). In the Pebble Mill community participants are interacting with each other, harking back to a period of their lives where they were perhaps proud to work as part of a creative industry.

The proliferation of social media has facilitated the growth of virtual communities, due to the properties of different platforms. Kietzmann et al.,

drawing on work by the blogger Gene Smith, define social media through seven building blocks:

Presence – The extent to which users know if others are available

Relationships – The extent to which users relate to each other

Reputation – The extent to which users know the social standing of others and content

Groups – The extent to which users are ordered or form communities

Conversations – The extent to which users communicate with each other

Sharing – The extent to which users exchange, distribute and receive content

Identity – The extent to which users reveal themselves

(2011, p.243).

These constructs are helpful in terms of understanding the different parameters interacting on social media platforms. With online communities certain of the parameters, such as 'groups', 'conversations', 'relationships' and 'sharing' would seem to be more prescient than others, such as 'presence'. Citing Gene Smith (2007), Kietzmann et al (p. 248-9) state that different social media platforms combine the building blocks in different proportions, with Facebook concentrating on 'relationships', followed by 'presence', 'identity', 'reputation' and 'conversations'. This interpretation of the relative importance of the building blocks for Facebook community pages is not borne out by the experience of operating the Pebble Mill page and migrating the live community online, where I believe that 'groups', 'conversations' and 'sharing' have primacy over the other facets, although 'relationships' and 'identity' are also strong. I suspect that Kietzmann et al. are concentrating on Facebook's personal profiles, rather than their collective offerings in terms of 'groups, and 'pages'. I would argue that Facebook's personal and collective profiles have different attributes, and are regarded differently by Facebook, for instance Facebook views 'pages' as a potentially commercial proposition, which is probably one of the reasons why

they promote 'pages' over 'groups', (see later in this chapter where I describe how Facebook closed down the Pebble Mill Facebook group, and stipulated that it could only be reactivated as a 'page').

Tied in with notions of 'reputation', is trust. This is viewed by some academics as a key element in facilitating online participation within communities (Ridings et al., 2002). Trust can be divided into two dimensions, firstly a person's expertise, in terms of being able to provide trusted advice, and secondly their benevolence and integrity in providing genuine information, and potentially confiding personal details. Riding et al.'s study concluded that trust was an important element in both the giving and receiving of information through a virtual community, and that trust was increased through perceived responsive relationships which could develop through the interactions of community members (ibid). Trust is also intertwined with authenticity, and status within the community. For the Pebble Mill online community, I perceive contributors who worked at Pebble Mill to have a different, more authentic, status within the group, from those who did not; although frequently those whose parents worked at the broadcast centre, and remember visiting as children, are welcomed into the community. Adult children frequently post on the Facebook page when a parent has died, and receive messages of condolence from their parent's former work colleagues, indeed they sometimes become active participants on the page itself, often wanting to collect memories of their parent's working lives. Here is an example of a comment from a son, after I had posted up a message he had sent me about the death of his mother, who had been a presenter on Radio WM.



Figure 8 Comment from Pebble Mill Facebook page, 9th February 2015

If I had not worked at Pebble Mill, then I suspect that people might be less keen to share their memories and photographs with the project, because of issues concerning trust and authenticity. In fact, when I first began the site, I remember being approached via email and asked who I was by a former BBC *Top Gear* series producer, as my name is not immediately apparent on either the website or Facebook page, in order to check my credentials.

It is clear that users contribute to sites like the *Pebble Mill project* for a number of reasons, and academics have sought to delineate these motivations. Wang et al. (2001) propose a model around the functional, social and psychological needs of online community members. 'Functional' needs include information and entertainment; 'social' needs include relationships, interactivity, trust and communication; whilst the 'psychological' needs include identification, belonging, involvement and relatedness (p. 414). The functional angle appears relatively straightforward, there is a satisfaction in being able to impart knowledge, which others are seeking, and do not have access to. This includes providing information, perhaps identifying people in photographs, or giving

programme details, but also in publicising up-coming events which may interest the group. The social aspect seems to be a strong driver for participation. There is a desire to interact socially with former colleagues, or with like-minded people who share a common interest; this might include reminiscing about a particular programme or shared experience. The psychological motivation is perhaps more complex, and is entwined with notions of belonging, of wanting to feel part of a community with a shared interest, of having some element of a collective identity. For a community like the Pebble Mill group, tied in with the psychological aspect is the sense of nostalgia, of being reminded of the past, which seems all the rosier with the passage of time. There is a sense of loss, with the demolition of Pebble Mill, of things being taken away from 'us', and of remembering and memorialising these times through participating in this community.

However, these functional, social and psychological needs/purposes are not discreet, but intertwined, for instance in providing information about a photograph appearing on the Pebble Mill Facebook page, there is little *need* to provide that information, but there is a satisfaction in being able to contribute to the conversation, adding a piece of knowledge that others may not have access to, thereby feeling valued and part of the community, and adding to the collective history; therefore, the functional, social and psychological aspects of contributing are bound up together. On some occasions the functional purpose might appear to have primacy, for instance in letting participants know about the funeral of a former colleague, but this becomes the catalyst for sharing memories of working

with this colleague, or the programmes they worked on, and thus the social and psychological needs emerge.

The fact that the users of the Pebble Mill page participate in it suggests that they value being part of this online community, and this value has been demonstrated more tangibly through some of the comments posted by participants at various times, especially when the community was threatened with disbandment, when Facebook deleted the group, as I shall now explore.

5.3 Facebook's Community Pages

Facebook has the most traffic of any social media platform, with 43.33% of all Internet users visiting each day, in comparison to second placed Twitter, with only 7.72% per day (Hus et al., 2015, p. 483). This, combined with Facebook's usability and functionality, makes it the most suitable current platform for the Pebble Mill online community. Appealing attributes include the ability to post a variety of electronic artefacts, including video, photographs, blogs and links, and particularly the ability to create 'groups' and 'pages', for communities. Facebook define a community 'page' as being 'a Page about an organization, celebrity or topic that it doesn't officially represent' (Facebook, accessed October 2015). The lack of official recognition is pertinent here, and suggests a bottom up approach, empowering individuals motivated by a genuine interest in a topic; it also has a subtly subversive quality. 'Pages' are publicly accessible by anyone using Facebook, and a user's status update will appear on the 'page', regardless of that individual's privacy settings (Facebook, accessed October 2015). Many users

have apparently expressed disquiet about this lack of privacy (Strand, 2011), which seems at odds with the personal choice around personal profile privacy settings, although in reality many casual users of Facebook may not be conversant with the privacy options available as they are not necessarily immediately apparent. The danger here is that a user's comments are more widely available than the writer initially intended, which might cause them future embarrassment.

This section has examined how the Pebble Mill online community interacts on Facebook, but the bigger question is how we can instigate and nurture nascent virtual communities in the first place, facilitating the process of sharing, as without an online community there will be no interaction; this question is explored in the following section.

5.4 How Do We Grow and Develop Online Communities

The *Pebble Mill project* relies on having active, and interactive users and contributors and without this, the project would stagnate. This interaction primarily takes place on the Facebook page. Users seem to feel at ease with adding their own material to the Pebble Mill Facebook page, rather than approaching me via the website, and emailing me photographs, because it is the practice they are habituated to in terms of maintaining their personal Facebook feeds. With half the population of the United Kingdom being on Facebook (E-marketer, 2016), using the site is part of many users' daily activity, and therefore interacting with the Pebble Mill Facebook page is convenient, comfortable and

'normal'. There is a 'push' and 'pull' effect observable here between the website operation and the Facebook interaction: the Pebble Mill website is a place controlled by someone else, a place to visit, but where participants' comments must be approved, in contrast to Facebook which contributors will be using for other interactions and where they feel in control of the comments they post. This sense of Facebook as a safe space for interaction with friends, is what makes it such a useful platform for collaborative, online oral history.

A proportion of the interaction on Facebook appears inconsequential, with some comments adding little in the way of additional information. There is, therefore, a question concerning the relationship between the volume of traffic, and the quality of interaction, and considering whether there is a correlation between the number of views and the number of comments adding new information. I would argue that whilst particular comments prove especially valuable in providing new historical information, that even apparently trivial comments reflect users wanting to be part of the conversation, and finding being actively involved with the online community as important to their sense of identity.

It is important to consider which strategies are likely to be successful in order to grow and develop online communities, and how can we engage meaningfully with them. According to Wetzel there are two ways of engaging with online communities, the easier being to find an existing community and begin to participate, or more challengingly, create your own community in order to position yourself as an authority and drive users to your website (Wetzel, 2011).

Wetzel is a social blogger for insurance companies, so the motivation for

engaging with the online community that he advocates is financially driven and therefore very different from a non-commercial rationale, but the same salient issues around building a reputation within the community, respecting members of the community, and establishing trust, apply. Without these tenets an online community is unlikely to thrive. However, Wetzels approach is rather simplistic, and does not reflect the reality of many communities. With the *Pebble Mill project* there was no established online community that could be joined, but due to my existing personal social media links, I was able to initiate the group, inviting 'friends' to join, and they in turn could suggest others. This enabled the building of an active community within a relatively short timespan. The online community, drew on connections that had been instigated by face-to-face relationships.

Alison Michalk, also coming from a business perspective, expands on how best to engage with the online community. She criticises a 'broadcast model', where the Facebook administrator schedules posts, as unhelpful, because it doesn't engender 'conversation', rather she sees 'member-to-member' conversations as a signifier of community health (2013, p. 1). Considering my own practice, I do schedule daily posts, but when I post the link to the website on Facebook, I write the Facebook entry slightly more informally, and frequently use the platform to pose questions relating to the post. This is partly to try and start a conversation with users, but also to generate more information to feed back into the original post. Additionally, the content for the post will most likely have originated from a member of the online community, who is named in the post. Rather than using a one way 'broadcast' model, I find the scheduled post is the catalyst for the

'conversation', it is the spur to action and not detrimental. It is the way it is used, and the invitation to feed back, that is important in engaging the online community. Without scheduled posts the Facebook traffic might fail to reach a critical mass, and users might cease to be engaged with the project. For instance, I have observed that traffic to the Facebook page diminishes when there are no scheduled posts, for example, when I am on holiday, and therefore I advocate the scheduling of posts, to maintain momentum. It is particularly encouraging when users prompt a conversation themselves by posting up material on the Facebook page, and a dialogue ensues without my intervention, and I see this as a sign of members feeling a sense of 'ownership' in the online community.

5.5 Rules, Roles and Engagement

Scholars have noted that a system of norms, rules and conventions grow up around communities, both traditional and virtual (see Michalk, 2013; Wang et al., 2001; Wetzels, 2011, Ridings et al., 2002). They mention the need for successful communities to manage and self-moderate posts (Michalk, 2013), and some go further and suggest the need to have policies around joining and participating in online forums, addressing security, privacy, sanction against non-compliant posts and so forth (Wang et al, 2001, p. 412). Several academics also emphasise the unwritten codes and rules which apply (see Wang et al., 2001; Wetzels, 2011, Ridings et al., 2002), although they seldom elucidate on why and how these conventions come about, which is potentially an interesting aspect in the establishment of online communities. With the Pebble Mill community, the

norms and conventions have an additional layer of complexity because of the norms and conventions which applied at BBC Pebble Mill itself as a workplace. There were hierarchies within production, technical and service areas, as well as within their interactions with each other, that are still in evidence, (see Facebook conversations discussed earlier in this chapter). These norms are difficult to disentangle from those that have grown up around the Facebook page community itself, which is obviously drawn from a wider population.

Sherry Turkle likens finding friends on Facebook to a more democratic version of Victorian calling cards, where a visitor would leave a card, and hope for a return visit, but she notes that the rules are not clear, and users need to develop their own terms of engagement (2011, p. 181). In developing the Pebble Mill online community, I have resisted drawing up policies regarding participation: I worry that they would be perceived as unnecessarily bureaucratic, and that they would be likely to limit user interaction. When the Pebble Mill Facebook group was first established, I was required by Facebook to approve people who wanted to join. I developed an unwritten rule that I would accept them, as long as they either had an existing 'friend' who was already in the group, or demonstrated a valid reason for wanting to join the group, for example that they had worked at Pebble Mill, or that they had a family member who had, or were interested in the programming. This was to avoid people joining the group who were not actually interested in the subject matter, and who might be joining to 'spam' or disrupt the group in some way. I did not consider a joining policy when the group was first set up; it did not occur to me to do so, but as the project progressed I reacted to incidents, such as when I allowed people to join who did not have an obvious

interest or connection, and they subsequently posted spam comments, and therefore I adjusted my policy to make these incidents less likely in future. The Facebook 'group' was changed to a 'page' by Facebook in November 2013; one of the repercussions of this was that I, as administrator, lost control over who could join the online community, because anyone with a Facebook profile can 'Like' a page, and join it, so having any kind of joining policy would have become redundant at this stage anyway.

Ridings et al. (2002, p. 279) note that members of online communities are likely to pass sanction against contributors whose comments do not conform with the conventions which have developed around the group. On several occasions I have been alerted by comments posted by habitual contributors about inappropriate or irrelevant content in other posts. Serial contributors, who have invested much of their time and efforts in helping to build the project, have effectively become 'policemen' for it, and will quite rapidly ask me to delete a comment or message they deem unhelpful, or irrelevant. This development of collective responsibility around the moderation of the social media activity is supportive, and I would argue symptomatic, of a healthy, and engaged community. There are a handful of such participants, who email me directly to alert me of any problems with the website or Facebook page; for instance, when there have been technical server issues making the website temporarily unavailable, often the first I know of the issue is through one of these 'super-contributors'. These users also, on occasion, make suggestions about ideas for the project, for instance, one contributor proposed that I tried a particular photograph for the page's header. The adoption of this additional layer of user

responsibility is entirely self-directed, and is very welcome. It is not a phenomenon that was observable at the start, but one that I became aware of around a year after the outset of the project. If users have not been included in actually setting up a particular project, but become active participants from quite early on, they need to test out the limits of their involvement, through offering material for posts, adding comments, making suggestions, and passing sanction when they perceive that someone has stepped outside the project's remit. This testing out takes some time, which would explain why it was not apparent immediately. If this activity is positively welcomed by the site administrator, then they are likely to continue and even expand their self-appointed 'super-contributor' role, but if they are rebuffed or ignored, they may reduce their activity. In the running of the *Pebble Mill project*, I have responded quickly and positively to members of the community, when they make direct contact, taking their comments into account. With the suggestion of the header photograph, I did change the image to the fish-eye, wide-shot of Pebble Mill, which is still in use, and the individual was correct, it did work well. The 'super-contributor' was pleased that I had acted on his suggestion, and has continued to be a very active member of the community.

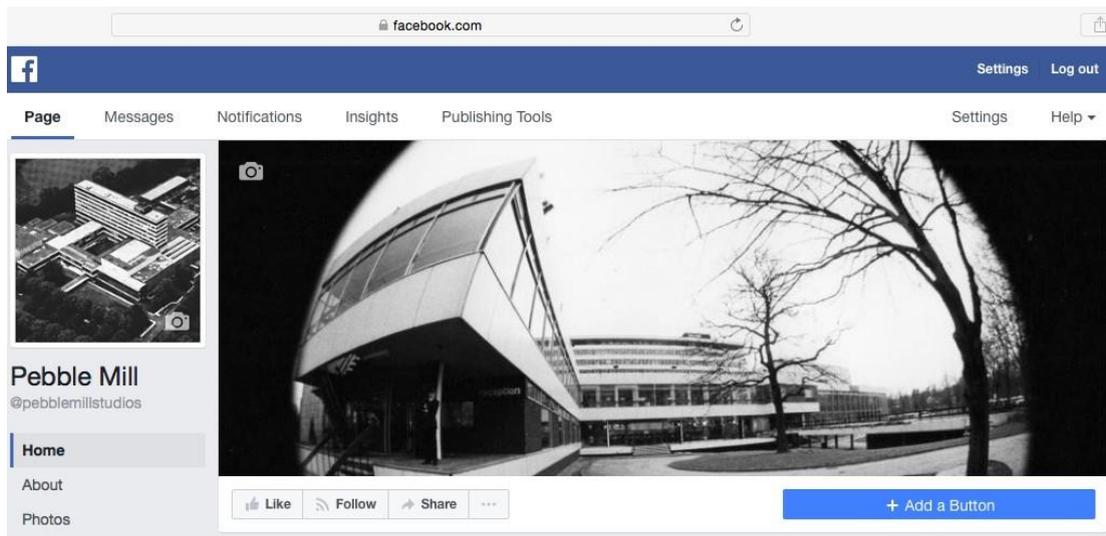


Figure 9 Fish-eye, wide-shot of Pebble Mill in Facebook header

This phenomenon chimes with Wang et al.'s observation that members of online communities naturally take on different roles within the group, becoming moderators or mediators, opinion givers, guiders of discussion, general participants, or lurkers, who silently observe, but contribute very little (2001, p. 412). The roles members of the online community take on can make a positive or negative contribution. The same is true of the role of the administrator; the person running the site must act positively by fostering and encouraging collaboration, for instance by 'Liking' or replying to comments, by asking for blogs to be written, by using the material posted by others, and by listening to the suggestions of users; this will nurture the building of an active, engaged community.

The undertaking of different user roles is clearly observable on the Pebble Mill Facebook page. We can determine a hierarchy of involvement. There is a group of active individuals who post up their own photographs, or posts about subjects that they think will interest the community. These members of the group are of

particular value, and without them the project would soon run out of contributions, and would lose much of its richness. Below this level of engagement, there are a number of regular contributors who will tend to comment on posts several times a week, adding new information, or emphasising some aspect of a post, and letting me know if I have made a mistake over a fact or spelling. There is an overlap between these two groups of active participants, with many of the serial posters, also being serial commentators. Below this level of involvement, there is a larger group of members who regularly 'Like' individual posts, but tend not to comment on them, alternatively, they may post up material occasionally, but not consistently. 'Liking' a post requires less time and effort than writing a comment, and these can be seen as a sign of support, rather than a meaningful interaction. We also have 'sharers', who distribute a particular post to their own Facebook network, thus enlarging the number of people viewing it. This can be particularly helpful in terms of bringing new members to the group, and publicising its activities. The largest group of members is those who rarely, if ever, contribute actively, and who may only have a passing interest in the page, or who are interested but rarely use Facebook.

The pyramid of engagement is very visible in the statistics which are accessible for the page via Facebook's 'Insights' tab. Facebook provide useful statistical data, which shows 'Likes', 'Reach', and 'Engagement' (made up of 'Likes', and 'Shares and Comments').

The data below (fig. 10) shows the total number of 'Likes' for the Pebble Mill Facebook page for 13th November 2015, as being 1,391, this in effect is the

membership of the online community. The graph displays the increase in 'Likes' over 2015, for the page. The data demonstrates that the Facebook community is still growing, albeit at a slow rate, suggesting that it has probably reached its natural level of engagement. There is also a marked drop of around 30 users 'Un-liking' the page at the end of March, before the numbers pick up again. We can observe that there are more people joining the page, than leaving it, but the numbers joining are in ones or twos per week, so this is not a case of large-scale movement in either direction. The reason for the drop in March 2015 is explicable by a change in policy from Facebook, when they decided to remove all 'Likes' from inactive accounts, in order to make the number of 'Likes' more accurate for business pages (Facebook, 2015). They explained that this would result in a small dip in numbers, as is noticeable on the Pebble Mill page. This is an example of how organisations like Facebook can control and alter the data with page administrators having little power to influence decisions.



Figure 10 Total Page Likes for Pebble Mill Facebook page (Jan-Nov 2015)

Figure 11, shows post reach: that is, the number of individuals who viewed postings from the Facebook page on a particular day, in other words the number of people who had posts displayed on their Facebook feed on that day. This provides us with a useful measure of passive engagement, by which I mean,

users who have taken the time to 'Like' the page initially, and take an interest in it, perhaps in terms of reading the posts, but are not active in terms of 'Liking' a post or commenting on it. There has been some research into the practice of 'Liking' Facebook posts. Wu and Lo, in their study of why users "Like", "Comment" and "Share", found that the motivation to "Like" was related to both enjoyment of the post, and to maintaining interpersonal relationships. Their data suggests that users with high self-esteem, and emotional stability clicked "Like" to signify their enjoyment, whilst users with lower self-esteem and less emotional stability clicked "Like" to please others (2014, p. 339). The motivation behind a "Like" is therefore not clear, as users do not necessarily actually *like*, a post when they click "Like", although the "Like" still acts as an endorsement to the post, and is shared with their network of 'friends'. Facebook has redefined the meaning of the word 'like', through their development of the "Like" button (ibid). However, even within Facebook's realm there is a difference between 'Liking' a Page, thereby effectively joining that page and having its updates appearing in your news feed, and 'Liking' an individual post, and endorsing it. In terms of my own practice, I click "Like" on each individual user comment on a post that I have made, in order to show that I have read the comment, and appreciate the fact that the user has participated on the page. I am therefore not necessarily actually 'liking' the comment, but am marking the interaction of the user with the site in a phatic manner, this is part of fostering engagement and encouraging users to feel part of the group identity. Facebook, through the 'Like' button have provided an abbreviated form of social acknowledgement, which is a crucial aspect of the 'social' in social media.

The 'Post Reach' data displays the activity on a particular day and should not be confused with the with the individual reach of a particular post, which might have been first posted on a particular day, but which may be viewed by people over a number of days.



Figure 11 Post Reach for Pebble Mill Facebook page (Jan-Nov 2015)

Facebook allows us to drill down further and observe the active engagement with users in more detail. *Figure 12* displays the interaction with users in terms of numbers of 'Likes', 'Comments' and 'Shares', from January to November 2015, on posts. There is an obvious correlation between the shape of the graph for 'Post Reach', and the shape of the graph for 'Likes, comments and shares', with the activity spikes tending to occur on the same parts of the timeline. The spikes illustrate that on some days many more people are having a Pebble Mill post appear on their timeline, than others. This is due to a number of factors: the number of people within the online community who went on Facebook that day, the number of comments on a post that day and the number of people who 'shared' a post with their friends, who may be outside the Pebble Mill community. We can conclude that the higher the reach for a post, the greater the

amount of active engagement. We can also note a further correlation between the number of post 'Likes' and the number of comments, with the number of comments generally being around 16% of the number of 'Likes', and the number of 'Shares' usually being lower than the number of comments. I examined the individual post data for a year's worth of activity (from September 2014, to October 2015) and there are some posts where the number of 'Comments' was significantly larger (maximum 32%), or indeed smaller (minimum 1%), than 16% of 'Likes', but no instances where 'Comments' exceeded 'Likes'. It seems logical that this is the case, as it is much quicker and easier to simply 'Like' a post, instead of going to the trouble of writing a specific comment about it, and indeed many users will engage with reading or viewing a post, but may not have any knowledge of the subject matter, and therefore may not be able to contribute actively. There are both risks and benefits with this: on the one hand this is where the project can have an educative effect, enlarging users' knowledge of the programme making at Pebble Mill and the cultures and practices of production, but on the other hand, if too much activity is beyond a user's experience or interest, they may cease to engage with the page.

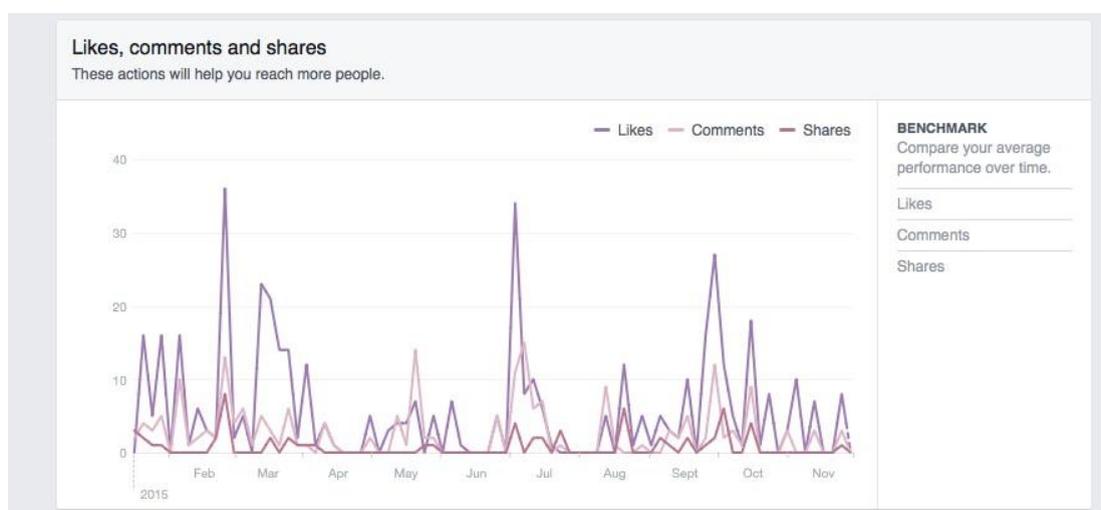


Figure 12 'Likes, comments and shares', for posts on the Pebble Mill Facebook page (Jan-Nov 2015)

I wanted to see if there was a correlation between types of post, and the resulting activity, in order to be able to encourage more engagement. Facebook enables administrators to view post-ranking data over a specified time period; the information also includes the type of post, the date, and a short excerpt from the post for identification. Extracts from the data are shown in *Figures 13* and *14*.

All Posts Published
16 August 2015 to 13 November 2015

Reach: Organic/Paid Post Clicks Likes, Comments & Shares

Published	Post	Type	Targeting	Reach	Engagement
28/10/2015 21:00	Hi, I don't know if anyone can help with this request that has been posted on the Pebble Mill Facebook page: "Ca	Text	Global	104	4 1
21/10/2015 19:16	http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/cafe-21/ Hi, here is a blog about the Asian series: Cafe 21, which went out in 1997	Image	Global	183	15 3
25/09/2015 18:44	Hi, Here are details, from Annie Gumbley-Williams, of the funerals for Roy Ronnie, Bryan Harris and Tony Wigle	Text	Global	191	22 1
15/10/2015 22:40	http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/50-years-of-bbc-asian-programmes/ Hi, here's a copy of an article from https://w	Image	Global	209	24 9
27/10/2015 21:29	http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/telecine-reconstruction-with-jim-gregory/ Hi, here's a blog about a telecine reconstr	Image	Global	238	61 11
12/11/2015 22:05	http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/not-a-lot-of-people-know-that/ Hi, here is a titles grab from 'Not a Lot of People Kn	Image	Global	254	21 0
02/11/2015 21:13	http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/midlands-today-from-the-conservatory/ Hi, here's a notice, courtesy of Andy Walt	Image	Global	284	52 17
29/10/2015 20:24	http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/wake-up-with-waddo-mug/ Hi, here is a 'Wake Up With Waddo' mug - made to pr	Image	Global	288	28 13
16/09/2015 20:15	http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/midlands-today-news-desk/ Hi, this news desk is apparently an old Midlands Toda	Image	Global	291	30 6

Figure 13 Facebook Posts published data (lowest ranking) Aug-Nov 2015

13/10/2015 19:34	 http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/sam-coley-interviews-ben-peissel/ Hi, here is part of an interview which Sam Cole			667		135 14	
21/08/2015 21:57	 http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/john-bland/ Hi, for those of you who haven't seen Shirley O'Mara or Sharon Pem			728		159 10	
02/09/2015 18:56	 <code><iframe width="400" height="500" frameborder="0" src="http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p030rnqs/player"></i</code>			779		197 26	
30/09/2015 20:22	 http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/roy-ronnie-midlands-at-si-x/ Hi, yesterday was Roy Ronnie's funeral in Gloucester			792		136 20	
09/11/2015 21:30	 http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/fred-hammond-gosta-gren-commissioner/ Hi, here is a great photo from Jim Gre			814		167 18	
21/09/2015 20:58	 http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/bryan-harris/ Bryan Harris, Programme Organiser, and Assistant Manager of Rad			893		167 18	
22/09/2015 21:32	 http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/roy-ronnie/ Hi, unfortunately it's a sad week for news of former Pebble Mill collea			928		177 28	
05/10/2015 20:33	 http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/dave-brazier-sitting-in-for-the-pope/ Hi, now I know that this photo isn't actually fr			1.1K		210 33	
14/09/2015 20:37	 http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/paul-woolston-in-lichfield-cathedral/ Hi, here is a great photo of cameraman Paul			1.5K		429 45	
06/10/2015 21:26	 http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/gtc-award-to-pebble-mill-camera-department/ Hi, here's a photo from Roger Millin			1.5K		511 42	
29/09/2015 21:28	 http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/dave-brazier-on-a-music-ob/ Hi, here is a photo, from Richard Stevenson, of lege			1.6K		418 39	

Figure 14 Facebook Posts published data (highest ranking) Aug-Nov 2015

From this data it is possible to draw some conclusions about which posts are likely to engender the highest engagement. The lowest ranking posts include 'Status' posts, where I simply write a message on the page, but with no photograph, or link to the Pebble Mill website. 'Status' posts are often used by me to pass on a request, where someone has asked me for information about a particular show, or person, or to publicise an event. The reason for low engagement may be due to the lack of additional content: that there is no photograph or blog to comment on. Of the other low ranking posts we can observe that they tend to relate to non-mainstream programmes or activities, including some of the Asian programming, or niche production activities, for example, telecine. Conversely, the most popular posts all include people, rather than objects or programmes. Obituaries for long serving members of staff seem

to be extremely popular, but so do photographs of production teams, or memorable individuals who are still very much alive.

The most popular post on the Pebble Mill Facebook page by a huge margin, was published on 3rd October 2017; it received a reach of almost 47,000 people, around double the next most popular, and approximately 30 times the 'membership' of the Pebble Mill page. What is puzzling about the post is that it did not elicit a high level of engagement, receiving ten likes, and nine comments, and was not 'shared', which is usually the case with such high numbers. I suspect that some of the people who 'liked' or commented must have very well developed networks themselves, to account for the reach. The low level of active interaction suggests a wide but superficial engagement. The post was a screen grab of presenter Vicki Butler-Henderson presenting to camera at Brands Hatch. Due to the small number of comments it is difficult to surmise the reason for the popularity of the post, but perhaps it was the combination of fast cars and an enthusiastic and knowledgeable female motoring presenter.

Post Details

Pebble Mill
Published by pebblemillstudios@gmail.com [?] · 3 October at 19:59 · €

Hi, this photo shows Vicki Butler-Henderson presenting on Fifth Gear. Female racing driver, Vicki, was a presenter on Top Gear, until the show was cancelled by the BBC in 2001 in its original form, when she, Tiff Needell and Quentin Wilson went on to present Fifth Gear for Channel 5 in 2002. The series was made by ex-BBC Birmingham staff, and hired some of the facilities, such as post production.

Thanks to Ian Collins for making this screen grab available.

Vanessa



46,984 People Reached

19 Likes, Comments & Shares

10 Likes	10 On Post	0 On Shares
9 Comments	8 On Post	1 On Shares
0 Shares	0 On Post	0 On Shares

231 Post Clicks

23 Photo views	0 Link clicks	208 Other Clicks ⓘ
--------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------------

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

0 Hide Post	3 Hide All Posts
0 Report as Spam	0 Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

46,984 people reached **Boost Unavailable**

Miro Popovic, Brian Novak and 8 others 7 Comments

Like Comment Share

Figure 15 Vicki Butler-Henderson presenting at Brands Hatch circa 2002

The most popular video post was in May 2017, with a reach of 23,000. It was a video clip of the regional news programme, Midlands Today from 1997, of presenter, Alan Towers, explaining why he was leaving the BBC after 25 years.



Pebble Mill

Published by pebbf.enillstudios@gmail.com 1?1 • 3 May at 19:57 • (-

<http://www.pebblemill.org/.../alan-towers-resigns-from-midlands.../>

Hi, here is a clip from Midlands Today in 1997. when Alan Towers resigned live on air. He had apparently asked to say something at the end of his final episode. but I don't think this is what everyone had envisaged.

`<iframe src="https://player.vimeo.com/video/177540339" width="640" height="513. frameborder="0" webkitallowfullscreen mozallowfullscreen allowfullscreen></iframe>... See more`



23,082 people reached

Boost Unavailable

Like

Comment

Share

John Norris, Louise Drover and 171 others

Top comments

116 shares



Write a comment...



Becky Towers My LEGEND of a father! He's been gone 9 years this month. Funny that you posted this. He always finds a way to let us know he's still around! Dido Towers Rachael Towers Dan Towers xxx

Uke - Reply Message 46 3 May at 12:01s

View previous replies

Figure 16 Alan Towers's final Midlands Today bulletin, 1997

It was a clip which had been posted on the video platform, Vimeo rather than one I had recorded and uploaded personally, and I copied across the embed code, and wrote some text explaining the context. The clip was in effect Alan Towers resigning live on air. He had asked the production gallery if he could say a few personal words at the end of the bulletin, but they had no idea he was going to share his thoughts on BBC management. These are his words, “when I joined the Corporation it was led by giants, now I’m afraid, it is led by pygmies in grey suits, wearing blind-folds.” This damning indictment was delivered with perfect timing by Alan to hit the end of the broadcast to the second. It summed up succinctly his disgruntled view of BBC management, and I suspect that this is what resonated with the users of the Pebble Mill Facebook page. Staff of BBC Birmingham have seen programme making in the Midlands decimated since the closure of Pebble Mill, and many of the users of the page were made redundant because of changes in BBC policy. This post received a reach far beyond the Pebble Mill online community, because of the way it was shared by users, and it is the power of sharing that is important here. It was shared by over 100 users, meaning that all their ‘friends’ had the opportunity to see it, and engage with it. 20 new users ‘Liked’ the Pebble Mill Facebook page during this particular week, in contrast to the usual one or two people joining, this demonstrates the positive effect of that increased reach, in bringing new people to the page. The post itself had over 170 ‘Likes’, and around 35 comments, including some from his family, which were very supportive of his actions. The number of comments was low given the large reach of the post, although significantly higher than the Vicki Butler-Henderson photograph. We can deduce from this that users wanted to see the clip, and perhaps to ‘Like’ it, but were not motivated to comment on it; as with Vicki’s

photograph, this implies a superficial level of engagement, which helps bring the project to wider notice, but without adding to the content. The clip is short, at just over a minute long, which complies with the norm for Facebook videos, and its content is audacious, and surprising to hear from a highly respected local presenter. The fact that it is subversive, and displays a level of dissent from an apparently establishment figure makes the clip attractive to watch.

Posts like this, which prove so popular enable us to draw some important conclusions about why people join the Facebook page, and interact with it. The stated purpose of the page is to document and celebrate the programme making that went on at BBC Pebble Mill, but paradoxically this does not seem to be why users join it and engage with it. The motivation for the majority seems to be centred around social engagement, and active remembering of working with certain colleagues and accessing collective memories, as a shared experience. The users participate in the page because the collective act of remembering is a social experience, which helps make them feel connected to each other, and their shared past. It is a satisfying experience for participants, which is discernible not only from the tone of the Facebook interactions, but from comments I receive from users, where it is clear that they appreciate the page; for instance, I received a message from one user which thanked me “for helping keep the memories alive”. It is interesting that the motivation to contribute is different from my stated intention to document and preserve the programme making from BBC Pebble Mill. However, although the motivation is not the same, the end point of preserving memories of Pebble Mill is. There are obviously users who do want to be reminded of particular programmes, or particular production

practices, but the primary engagement seems to be directly related to social interaction. I am therefore, rekindling the social capital which existed within the Pebble Mill workforce, transferring it online, and building it through the addition of new members. The utilisation of the Facebook Page is very different to the Pebble Mill website. Users will visit the website if they are looking for particular information about Pebble Mill itself, and are likely to be taken there by an Internet search; in contrast, users will visit the Facebook page to interact socially with former colleagues, or to post their own photographs, or make comments on other posts, and users are obviously using Facebook for other social interaction anyway, and may well be on the site when a post from the Pebble Mill page pops up on their news feed. The two online aspects of the project: the website and Facebook page, have different and complementary functions, and symbiotically they both feed in to each other. The website posts are placed on Facebook, where users will comment on them; these comments are then fed back to the website, and conversely new content is posted on Facebook by users, which then becomes a fresh website blog.

5.6 Who Contributes and Why?

In order to determine the dynamics of the Pebble Mill Facebook community an analysis of who was adding comments to posts, and who was posting up their own content was warranted. I wanted to investigate to what extent the site was dominated by a small number of active users, and whether the serial commenters were also those sharing photographs and other artefacts. This would help to establish to what extent we can term the Pebble Mill Facebook

page an active community, and assess whether the site is dominated by a few active voices or has a wider reach. Using the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo (QSR International, accessed May 2016), a spreadsheet was produced which shows the activity of named users on the Facebook page between June 2013 and April 26th 2016 (see Appendix iii). The spreadsheet shows that there were just over 500 users who had either commented or added their own post to the site. This does not include those who had simply 'Liked' a post. This demonstrates that out of a population of 1400 (at the time the data was analysed), around 36% had actively engaged and added new information to the page. This appears to be a healthy proportion of the population, however, it is not possible to see who the 'Likers' of the Pebble Mill page are, and therefore we cannot correlate the names of the active contributors against the 'membership'. It is, for instance, likely that some of the commenters are not in fact 'Likers' of the Pebble Mill page, but have seen a post which has been shared on a friend's profile, and 'Liked' that specific post. This will skew the figures somewhat. Below is a screen shot of the most active commenters, alongside the most active posters of information. It is clear that the Pebble Mill Facebook page is very much a managed site, with me, as 'Pebble Mill', being by far the most active commenter and poster. Below this there are a small number of very active commenters, with only 40 users adding 12 or more comments. In terms of people posting their own artefacts or information, there are only eight users making more than one post. There is some correlation between active commenters also being active posters, but this is not universal, with only four out of the most prolific ten commenters also being the most active posters. The information is somewhat misleading though, as a number of the active commenters have emailed or sent me material

to post on the website and Facebook page, and therefore are in fact active posters, although they do not appear so on the spreadsheet.

Top Commenters June 2013-April 2016

Top Posters June 2013-April 2016

Rank	Name	Comments	Posts
1	Pebble Mill	197	81
2	Jane Mclean	76	0
3	Lorraine Q. Anore	73	1
4	Pete Sifkin	68	12
5	Peter Poole	59	10
6	Kailh Brook	38	1
7	Steve N Weddle	35	0
8	Ann Gumbley M.ams		0
9	Andy Watters	21	0
10	Tenv Powell	28	0
11	Stuan Gandy	27	1
12	Ruth Barretto	26	0
13	Susan Asfle	25	0
14	Jean Palmer	23	0
15	Otwmesh Ra,OUI	22	0
16	Wv Sanchez	21	0
17	Jane Wad	19	0
18	David Shute Bbc	18	2
19	Jarice Rider	18	1
20	Isdth Markal	17	0
21	Carotvn Dalties	17	0
22	Ra. Joncnd Lee	16	0
23	Conal O'DoMEll	16	0
24	Richard Stevenson	15	1
25	Edn	15	0
26	LeSe\Weav«	15	0
27	Malcoln Hickman	15	0
28	Rosalnd Gower	15	0
29	Andy Bende'Y	1	0
30	Pat de Whallev	1	0
31	Belinda Essex	1	0
32	Ruth Kiesses	13	1
33	Jane Clement	13	0
34	Aihlil	13	0
35	Adam Trotman	13	0
36	Eurwyn Jones	12	5
37	Garv Jordan	12	1
38	Jane Green	12	1
39	Dave Bushell	12	0
40	Russel Parker	12	0
41	Sarah Dunring	12	0

Rank	Name	Comments	Posts
1	Pebble Mill	197	81
2	Shirlev O'Mara	2	5
3	Peter Poole	59	10
4	Pete Sifkin	68	12
5	Roy Thofl¥Son	8	8
6	Eurwyn Jones	12	5
7	Stuan Gandy	27	1
8	Richard Tavor		3
9	David Sb.tle Bbc	18	2
10	vrn o.6nore	73	1
11	Kailh Brook	38	1
12	Jarice Rider	18	1
13	Richard Stevenson	15	1
14	ftu'h Kiesses	13	1
15	Garv 1<Irdan	12	1
16	Jane Green	12	1
17	Gail Eleretl		1
18	N.arie Ph llos		1
19	Ka !I Shuttleworth	6	1
20	HeAena Taylor	5	1
21	Paul Surlon	5	1
22	Bey Land	5	1
23	H.atv Pope		1
24	Jane Woll		1
25	Maurice Bisson		1
26	Catherine Pinchbeck		1
27	SteYerson	3	1
28	Jan Poston	3	1
29		2	1
30	Helen O'Rahill	2	1
31	Michael Fisher	2	1
32	Daniel Taylor	1	1
33	David Gtegrory-Kumar	1	1
34	Janette Griffiths	1	1
35	Andrew Lane	1	1
36	Neil Roberts	1	1
37	Sharon Pemberton	1	1
38	Weaver	1	1
39	George Anthony	0	1
40	Helen Mails	0	1
41	Helen Ph lls	0	1

Figure 17 Top commenters and posters on Pebble Mill Facebook page (June 2013-April 2016)

It is clear from the data that there are a few very active members, and a much larger number who comment or post only once, for instance around half of the 500 commenters only make one contribution, and 33 out of the 41 posters, only post once. This is indicative of a wide reach, but with little depth. It would be consistent with users seeing something of interest on the page in passing, without contributing becoming a regular occurrence for them. This is obviously not the case for the smaller number of active voices who participate frequently, and seem to consider themselves at the heart of an online community.

Research carried out by Lee et al., suggests that social networking sites embody a collective source of value for users, encompassing 'knowledge pools for information sharing' (2014, p. 350). This conclusion is reinforced by the data relating to the popularity and engagement with posts on the Pebble Mill Facebook page, suggesting that social networking sites foster the establishment and building of social capital, as well as sharing information and developing a sense of belonging. Lee et al. conclude that this resulting social capital can be divided into three strands: social interaction ties, shared vision and trust (ibid, p. 356). Each of these elements is important; 'social interaction' is structural, and without it the other two elements cannot operate; the 'shared vision' provides the motivation for the interaction, and as discussed earlier in this chapter, it is at the heart of being a 'community'; and unless there is 'trust', the interaction is likely to be superficial. Citing Roloff (1981), Lee et al., note that trust is central to social exchange theory, and refers to notions of integrity: an individual's expectation that fellow users will follow a generally accepted set of values,

norms, and principles (ibid, p. 353). It is therefore linked to the Ridings' observations, mentioned earlier in this chapter, about members of the group passing sanction against users who fail to observe the accepted values and norms that have evolved within the community.

Facebook's 'insights' provides us with some useful data about the demographics of who 'likes' the Pebble Mill Facebook page, and who actively engages with it. Below is the data showing the engagement during two separate months, taken over a year apart, split by age and gender.

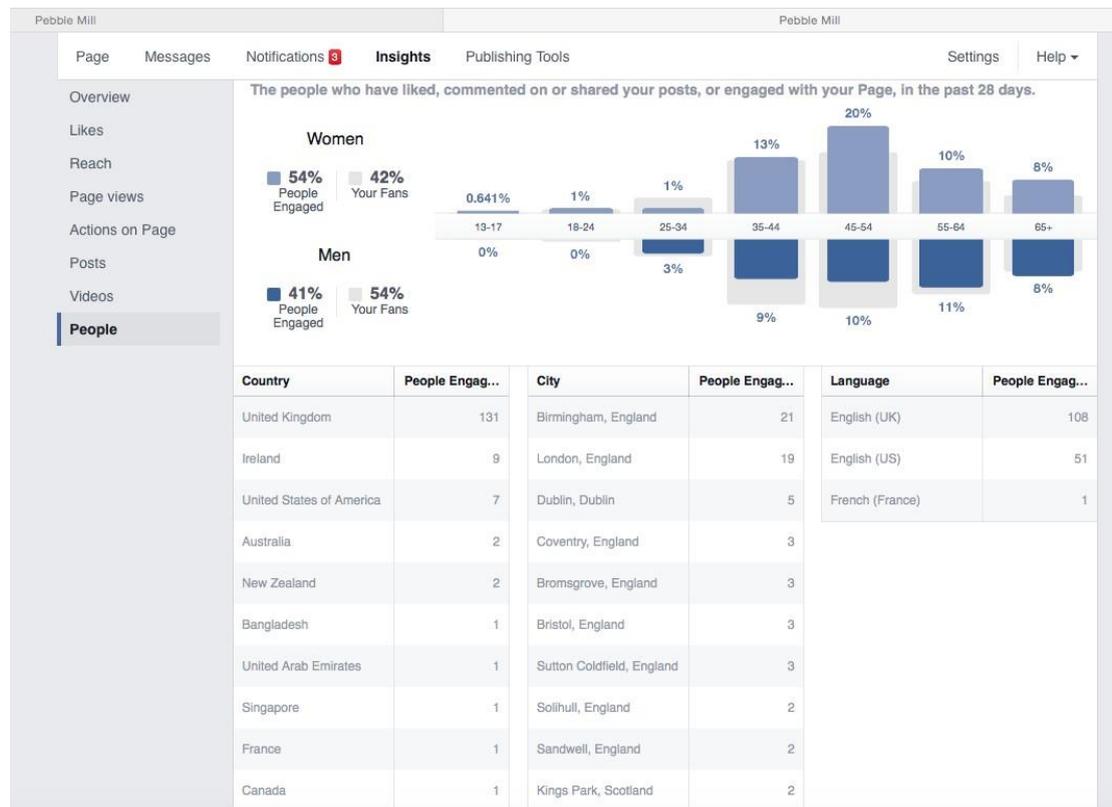


Figure 18 Demographics of 'likes' and 'engagement' on Pebble Mill Facebook page (February-March 2016)

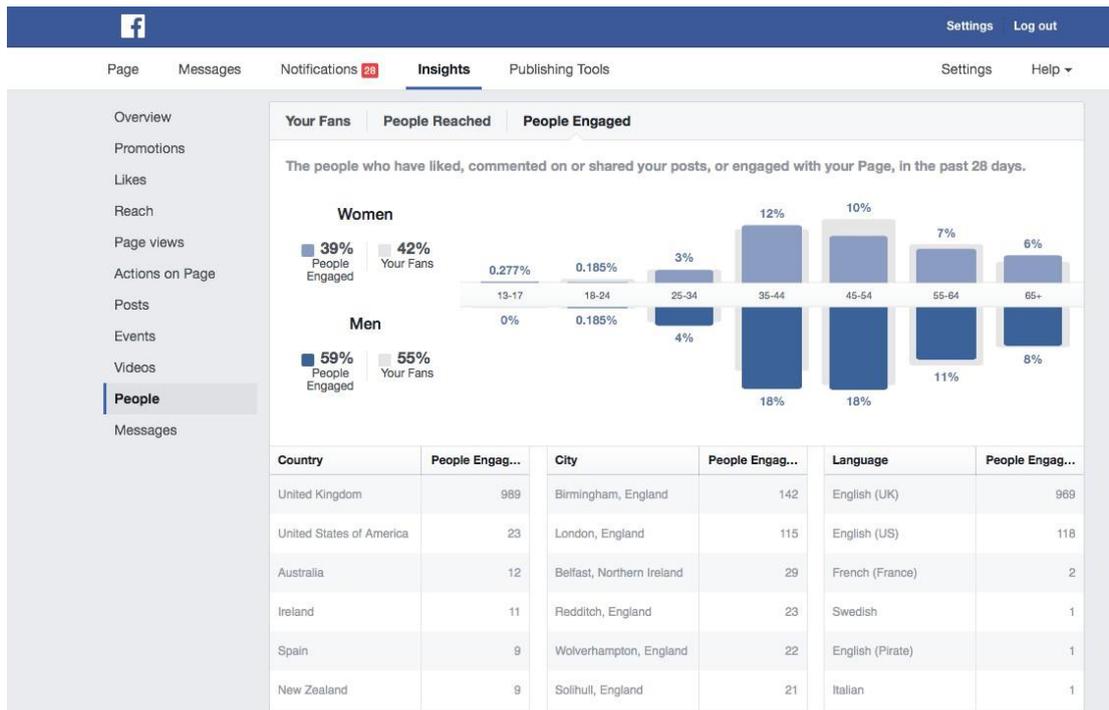


Figure 19 Demographics of 'likes' and 'engagement' on Pebble Mill Facebook page (April-May 2017)

What is immediately apparent is the difference in the volume of engagement during the two months, with 131 people in the United Kingdom interacting with the page in the first month's data, in contrast to 989 in the second. This large increase points to the growing popularity of the page, but the information is skewed by the fact that the most popular post, Alan Towers's final news bulletin, mentioned earlier in this chapter, appeared during this month, and therefore we cannot assume this level of engagement is now the norm.

The demographic breakdown of the two charts is worth exploring. We can see that the percentage of male to female 'fans' is almost static across the two months, with 54-5% men to 42% women, with presumably the remaining users not specifying their gender. This gender breakdown of the users is noteworthy, and differs from the UK's overall Facebook demographic of 51.34% female to

48.66% male users (Fanalyzer, 2013). The reason for this disparity is not immediately apparent. However, more men than women probably worked at BBC Pebble Mill, particularly in craft and production roles, and perhaps more men are interested in broadcast history than women, and therefore join the page. The percentage of men and women engaging with posts and with the page is very different between the two months analysed; more women than men actively engaged with the site during the first month, despite being fewer in membership numbers, with 54% of interaction from women and 41% from men, in contrast to the second month, where 39% was from women and 59% from men. From this result, we can deduce that engagement is related to the specific appeal of particular posts, and that some posts appeal to one gender rather than the other, and some age demographics rather than others. This implies that engagement is not a given, that can be assumed, but something which needs to be nurtured and encouraged. It also emphasises the need to consider the likely appeal of particular posts during a period of time in order to serve the preferences of the entire community, to ensure that sub-sections are not neglected and feel that the page is no longer of interest to them. This highlights the benefit of posting a variety of material likely to engage different sectors of the online community. The age demographic is perhaps less surprising, although it is in contrast to Facebook's general UK age split (see Fig. 19), which is skewed much younger than the Pebble Mill page's profile.

Demographics data - Facebook UK

Last updated: 2013-01-28 19:53:44

38.000.000 users in the UK	61.28% FB users / population	76.6% FB users / internet users	0.47 EUR AVG CPM
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The demographics data below is gathered in real-time, picturing the users who access Facebook from the UK.

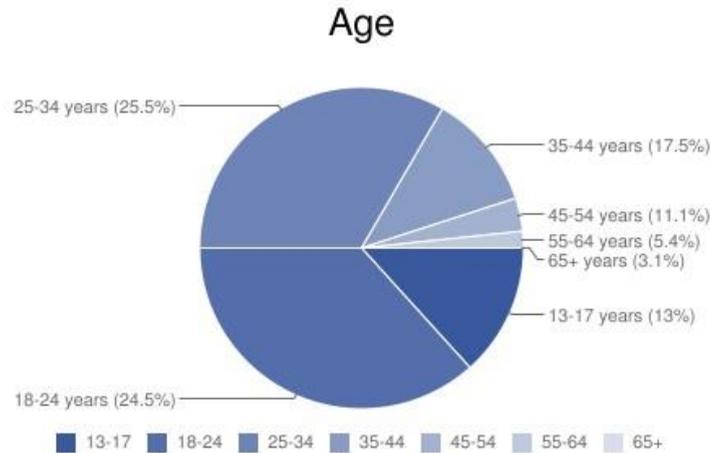


Figure 20 Facebook UK age demographic 2013, Fanalyzer

We would expect the Pebble Mill group to be older than Facebook's norm, since the building was demolished in 2005 and BBC Birmingham has been in decline as a production centre for a number of years. The people who worked there in its heyday from 1970-2000 will now be middle-aged or elderly. This is reflected in the statistics which show a bulge of around a third of users in the 45-54 age range with fewer in the 55-64, and over 65 categories. There is very little engagement with users under the age of 35, which is to be expected given the period when Pebble Mill was active. We can conclude from these figures that the ages from 35 and 54 were the most actively involved in the Pebble Mill online community during the periods analysed, as well as being the most numerous. I fall within this demographic, and my own profile may skew the community

demographic, as many members of the community are BBC friends or former colleagues of mine. It is also clear that the older Facebook users, from 55-65+ make up between 30-40% of engagement, and are a valuable part of the online community. However, although the numbers in these categories exceed Facebook's averages, given the age of former workers at Pebble Mill these categories are under-represented, due presumably to Facebook's lack of membership in older age groups.

By choosing Facebook as the platform for the project, some former Pebble Mill workers will be excluded. This will tend to be the older workers, who, as can be seen in Figure 19, are less likely to use Facebook (with over 65s making up only three percent of Facebook users). Face-to-face events, and email groups, are a better way of engaging with many older members of the community. A former colleague of mine runs a very active monthly coffee morning and emails out a regular newsletter; she will often ask my permission to pass on posts and news from the Pebble Mill website and Facebook page, and I will often pick up news from her, which can be posted on the project. It is helpful to co-operate in this way, and share information from both the online and face-to-face worlds, in order to reach as many members of the community as possible.

5.7 Challenges of Working in an Online Environment

There are many positives around online projects, like the Pebble Mill one, especially around the ability to engage a group of interested and knowledgeable individuals, and expand the archive collection of ephemera concerning the

broadcast centre. However, there are also challenges, particularly over the infrastructure of the platforms curators must work with. One issue with Facebook is over lack of control. The Facebook element of the Pebble Mill project was set up originally as a 'group', and I was able to add 'Friends' to the project, when they requested to join, or I could send a request to individuals, suggesting they might like to join the group. This worked smoothly until the 1200th 'Friend' was recruited in November 2013. The morning after the 1200th 'Friend' was recruited, I was emailed by a member of the group, saying that he had tried to access the Facebook group, but a message came up saying that the site had been 'deactivated'. When I tried to log in I received a message that told me that it appeared that I had infringed Facebook's rules, as I had too many 'Friends' to be an individual, and seemed to be operating as a community or organisation. The only option I was given was to change the 'group' to a 'page', which I did. The 'Friends' were carried over to the new 'page', but are now called 'Likes', the recent photographs which had been posted on the 'group' were also carried across, but unfortunately none of the comments were. Luckily, I had already developed the practice of copying most of the comments back on to the original website blog, something I was very glad I had done. It is not possible to interact with Facebook and enter into a dialogue with them. One member of the 'group' tried to object to the status being changed, but simply received an automated response, which said that Facebook would not reply to individual users. It is ironic that Facebook, an organisation which facilitates so much meaningful interaction between users, chooses not to communicate with them. I can moderate the Pebble Mill Facebook page, and interact with the users of it, but I am unable to interact with the host itself.

There are certain advantages in being a 'page' rather than a 'group', for instance it is possible to see how many people have viewed a particular Facebook post, which was not possible before, and if desired, I could now 'boost' posts by paying for them to be promoted, something which I am not interested in doing. The look of the 'page' is now arguably more professional. There are disadvantages as well, it is now not possible to 'tag' people in photographs, and I think it is harder to find the 'page' because it comes under an individual's 'Likes', rather than being able to connect through 'Friends'. It is also noticeable that a lower percentage of traffic to the website comes via Facebook now, than before the change from being a 'group'.

This episode highlights some of the challenges facing online communities using social media platforms, which are outside their control. There are other aspects concerning the operation of social media organisations which are less visible than this incident, but none the less impactful. The behind the scenes mechanics of Facebook are opaque, for instance, certain posts appear in certain timelines and not in others, which means that there is a filtering of content, in ways we are not aware of. Facebook hold the vast majority of power over their pages, having the ability to take down posts and comments, and indeed to disband or delete pages, groups or profiles, with very little right to redress from the people affected.

Changes to platforms, like Facebook, in the future, may make the site less attractive to community groups and illustrate the precarious nature of some fascinating online content which has been built up over a number of years by members.

Another important observation to make about this incident, is how it illustrates the strength of the online community that has grown up around the project. A number of people messaged me, saying how angry they were about Facebook deactivating their group. They felt a sense of ownership, because of their participation, and were particularly upset about the loss of two and half year's worth of comments and discussions on the site (see Figure 20). This sense of ownership demonstrates that the users of the project act as an online community, rather than unrelated individuals; they add value to the group through their comments, and enjoy the interaction with their peers. This demonstrates the value and success of the project: that it has brought together a significant number of individuals and encouraged them to care about the collective endeavour they have contributed to.



Anthony Hughes Since when has a Group not been a community? strange.. But yes I can see it and already recorded my 'liked' status Thanks

Unlike Reply 3 1 hour ago



Lynn Cullimore thanks Vanessa... all your hard work is much appreciated.

Like Reply 3 10 hours ago



Keith Conlon You do an excellent job Vanessa

Like - Reply 2 1 hour ago



Richard Smith like it Vanessa, thanks

Like - Reply 2 1 hour ago



Tracy Crump well done Vanessa you work hard on this and face book is so unfair ,how can a place that is no longer there be counted as community. soo wrong !!!

Like Reply 1 1 hour ago



cathy Houghton I can't see it on my FB

Like - Reply 1 1 hour ago



Peter Poole The most annoying thing is Facebook deleting all the comments. Plenty of gems gone forever!

Like Reply 1 1 hour ago



Lynn Cullimore odd but oh well...

Like - Reply 1 1 hour ago



Alan Mercer Works!

Like - Reply 1 1 hour ago



Giles Herbert It works I tell you

Like - Reply 1 1 hour ago



Pete Simpkin Thanks Vanessa, yes..I 'like it' too!

Like - Reply 7 hours ago



Dave Watkins Facebook going political then, or just pedantic?

Like Reply 1 - 8 hours ago via mobile

Pete Simpkin The sad thing about facebook is that they do things without notice beforehand and also they have no human beings to talk to on the phone. still we press on...what we have here on this site/ community/ group/ family is PRICELESS!

Figure 21 Conversation on Facebook after the 'Group' had been disbanded, and the 'Page' created

This incident demonstrates the consequences of lack of control over sites like Facebook, as well as the resilience of users, and the value they place on the apparatus that enables user interaction. Through their seemingly arbitrary action in deactivating the group, Facebook disempowered me, and disenfranchised the members of the group. This is the price of convenience, of using platforms that the people you wish to reach use, but which are beyond an individual's control.

5.8 Conclusion

The Pebble Mill online community is not a true 'virtual community', but rather a hybrid community, where users interact with each other both on and offline. Members of the community regard interaction on the Pebble Mill Facebook page as a natural extension of their offline activity, and in many cases continue to operate within the professional norms that were part of the production culture whilst working at BBC Pebble Mill. The users also see participation in the page as part of their habitual social media engagement. The majority of users share a common history: that of working at Pebble Mill, or at least a common interest in the history of BBC Pebble Mill, if they did not personally work there. There is a sense that they feel part of a collective identity, valuing the interaction they have on the Facebook page, and being part of this 'community'. The interaction requires not only the framework of the page in order to take place, but also the stimulus of each post to initiate the online conversation. Without these two catalysts there would be no virtual community. The online community only

exists through the process of interaction. Without this the users would lose the 'glue' of their common interest, and the community would dissolve.

Through analysing how and when users engage with the Facebook page we can observe a pyramid of engagement, determining which posts are likely to elicit most interaction, as well as drawing conclusions about differing levels of activity. It is clear from the data that the posts with the highest level of participation are those concerning popular members of staff, or particularly important social areas of the building, for example the canteen or the bar; niche programmes, or obscure pieces of broadcasting equipment, tend to receive a far lower level of activity. There is a discernible hierarchy of engagement, with the number of 'Likes' being the most numerous, with a smaller number of 'Comments', and fewer 'Shares' than comments.

From an analysis of who is participating in the page, there is a relatively small number of serial commenters, and an even smaller number of serial posters. These highly active members make up the core of the group, and without them the page would cease to flourish. Other participants may comment only once or twice, and may never post themselves. The data suggests that this is not a self-sustaining online community, but one which needs the regular postings to maintain momentum. This has been confirmed by the low activity levels which occur when I am away on holiday and not posting daily.

The subsequent chapter will examine why photographs in particular appear to be such an important catalyst in engaging interaction.

Chapter 6

Photographs as a Stimulus for Online Community Engagement, Memory and Oral History Work

This chapter examines the different types of photographs which are displayed on the Pebble Mill website, considering who contributes these, their industry context, and perhaps most importantly, exploring their meaning for users, analysing why they appear to be so effective in terms of community engagement. The previous chapter 'Engaging with the Online Community' considered how users engage with the Pebble Mill Facebook page in general, whilst this section concentrates on the specifics of photographic posts specifically, and explores what it is about these images that seems to encourage interaction.

The chapter considers the 'textual memory product' that the *Pebble Mill project* has become, providing evidence to support the paradigm shift I identified in the literature review: that we are currently experiencing the era of 'collaborative, online, oral history'. Visual images, and the way users share and add information to them, are key to this new method of creating oral histories. The opportunities that online interactivity presents for oral history work are explored in this chapter. These findings are likely to be generalisable to other projects working with online communities.

6.1 Online Platforms and Memory Work

Digital media technologies have become increasingly important in providing accessible platforms for displaying a whole host of historical materials. Keightley and Pickering describe these technologies 'as vehicles of remembering, which help constitute a sense of the past – both in terms of our private lives and of history at large' (2012, p. 102). They enable us to situate our personal memories within a wider collective memory of a particular era. The collective memory is often illustrated through personally owned items, such as photographs, artefacts and ephemera. These objects, digitally displayed online through websites and social media invoke memories of the past, and of relationships between individuals and groups (ibid). With the growth in social media, there are now many more sources of digital images to support memory work, including photos of an individual taken and shared by others (Van House, 2011, p. 130). On the Pebble Mill site, the images which provide the catalyst for online discussion will ordinarily have been taken and posted by someone other than the subject. The fact that they are someone else's photographs, does not mean that they do not invoke one's own memories, either directly or indirectly. In fact, where the images depict an institution, workplace or group, there is a connectedness even if the photograph does not represent the actual experience of a particular individual, and this connection seems to spark the interaction.

The data I have collected from the *Pebble Mill project* indicates that posts with visuals, rather than purely written blogs, provide the most effective stimulus for

online interaction on social media platforms, and it should be noted from the previous chapter 'Engaging with the Online Community', that posts without visuals elicited lower levels of engagement from users. There may be a number of reasons for this, around the aesthetics of a post, for instance, but also around the speed with which a user can 'read' a photograph, in contrast to the time it takes to read a written blog, or click and watch a video. The most popular posts usually combine a photograph, often of a person, with a short contextual description.

The most commented-on photograph-based post on the Facebook Page, with over 6,800 views, was in the middle of February 2014. It was a photograph, accompanied by a brief written blog about the death of a popular member of staff, Beverley Dartnall, a former series producer of the daily continuing drama

series, Doctors (BBC, 2000, ongoing).

<http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/beverley-dartnall/>

Hi , I have some sad news- I've just heard that Bev Dartnall died yesterday. Bev was a producer on Dangerfield, and series producer on Doctors, before leaving the BBC several years ago and moving to Majorca. Bev's funeral is going to be held in Majorca, but it is thought that there will be a memorial service in Birmingham at some point. Bev had a lot of friends at Pebble Mill and will be much missed! This photo by Peter Podle captures her perfectly. Vanessa



Itgvrz zse ny DotlnoN pose on locetJ00.'< 1811'1 lebtwrfZOI4

llr"1 John Greening Bev was the first person I met at Pebble Mill on my first day in
Lt:,,,; Til, on the 3rd March 1984 and we worked together at Pebble Mill for nearly 30
years in all sorts of rolls- finally she was a series producer and me a
grateful director. I'll miss you Bev, and thanks for many happy memories -it
was a privilege to work with you in the golden days of English Regions
Drama. [Unlike](#) - [Reply](#) - [Message](#) · **09** - 18 February 2014 at 23:17

I["J]l
lfil Dominic Keavey Was honoured to be a snib. A kinder, more supportive boss
we'll never find. God bless Bev.
[Unlike](#) - [Reply](#) - [Message](#) · **09** - 18 February 2014 at 23:06

m Herbie Donnelly You meet many friends and you meet many colleagues but
bev was rare she became both.
[Unlike](#) - [Reply](#) - [Message](#) · **08** - 19 February 2014 at 10:20

iiN Ian Barber I shall never forget the warmth of her embrace,
[Unlike](#) - [Reply](#) - [Message](#) · **08** - 18 February 2014 at
22:51

Peter Eryll Lloyd She was only a 'poor girl from Nechells' and she lit up my life
[Unlike](#) - [Reply](#) - [Message](#) · **07** - 18 February 2014 at 22:09

Maggie Cronin Just shocked and saddened. What awful news. God bless you
Bev. You were a kind, warm and wonderful woman to know xxx
[Unlike](#) - [Reply](#) - [Message](#) · **05** - 18 February 2014 at 23:31

iJ
nie Ann Toy A sadder world without her. I am honoured to call Beverley a friend.
[Unlike](#) - [Reply](#) - [Message](#) · **05** - 18 February 2014 at 22:54

iiii;] Andy Tea Such sad shocking news. Bev will truly be missed, such a
" "" "] supportive and kind person who managed to make everyone feel like
truly valued member of her team. More like a lovely aunt than a boss. xx
[Unlike](#) - [Reply](#) - [Message](#) · **05** - 18 February 2014 at 22:35

Gralne O'Boyle She was a truly inspirational woman. My benchmark. I will
always remember her faith in me and affectionately calling us her little
snibs
Rest in peace lovely xxx
[Unlike](#) - [Reply](#) - [Message](#) · **05** - 18 February 2014 at 22:19

lf Janice Rider Beverley lit up any set she worked on. She had the ability to
keep every member of her crew happy whilst being firm and in control -
qualities not many producers manage to achieve. She was a wonderful
colleague and friend and Vote for Them was made all the more special for her
being in Egypt with us. Khaled and I will never forget her lovely generous soul
-
[Unlike](#) - [Reply](#) - [Message](#) · **05** - 18 February 2014 at 21:19

llgvFe23 A se«uon of che«omments fc!!! usponse cocheBe!! IkNVIO»pose

Over 90 comments were left on the Facebook page in response to the photograph and text, with people adding their own memories of working with Beverley. This level of participation reinforces what Bruns notes about 'produsage' communities providing examples of active citizenry, with contributors acting out of motives of altruism in order to share and build understanding. It is also significant in this case that the people who commented had worked with Beverley and knew her in the real world rather than the virtual space of Facebook, but had been brought together as an online community after the physical entity of their workplace had long since disappeared. This photograph did not have the highest post reach for the Pebble Mill Facebook page, but it did have the greatest number of comments. This implies a depth and quality of interaction which was lacking in the higher reaching posts.

Photographs have particular properties, and these may influence why they appear so successful in eliciting engagement. They are indexical, in that they represent an object within the context in which it occurred. Photography imprints the image of the object through mechanical, chemical or electronic means, producing a two dimensional image which accurately represents the object. This indexicality means that photographs bear witness to, and document events, if only partially, making them a useful historical source, and stimulus for remembrance. John Berger describes photography as the process of making observation self-conscious, in that the photographic record of an event, uses the event to explain its recording, making a judgement that it is worth recording (1967). If an event was worth recording in the past, and the image worth preserving in the interim, then it should have a value in being looked at in the

future. Photographs are encoded messages, encoded both electronically in the capturing and display of the image, and encoded by the photographer in the production of meaning. Despite being simply encoded mechanical/electronic recordings of their subject matter, photographs frequently include the wider context of the event, and particularly the people involved in it, in a way which is rarely captured in other media. This makes them particularly valuable both as historical artefacts, and as stimuli for memory work.

This section examines what user generated photographic material adds in terms of telling an alternative history, rather than an institutional one, and why it seems to be so effective in engaging with individuals, and explores what we can learn about photographs as a medium for stimulating memory, which is relevant to other historiographical projects. It will begin with an analysis of the different categories of photographs donated to the project and where these come from, before moving to an examination of their reception once published.

6.2 Categories of Photographs and Who Contributes Them

Photographs give the impression of being clear in what they represent, because of their indexicality. Barthes explains that because an image is 'captured mechanically', [or now electronically], it has the illusion of being an objective record (Barthes 1964, p.44), but as Banks notes, photographs are no more 'transparent' than video or written documentation, and are similarly only representations of an event, rather than a 'direct encoding of it'. Photographs mediate their subject, as do written or video material, albeit in a different way.

The nature of representations is such that they are subject to their 'social, cultural and historical contexts of production and consumption', (Banks, 1995, p. 2), a notion which is shared by Pink, who urges us to take note of the enmeshed nature of 'cultural discourses' and 'social relationships' of individual photographers, in addition to the wider political, economic and historical contexts (2001, p.55). This view echoes the conclusions of Peirce and Saussure, that the sign (in this case the photograph) provides coded access to an object (Cobley and Jansz, 1997, p. 29). Photographs are distinct from other signs, such as writing, in that they are 'iconic', and resemble the objects they represent, albeit in a static and two dimensional form (Cobley and Jansz, 1997; Chandler, 2002). How the photographer chooses to represent a scene is governed by the purpose of the photograph, its intended audience, the relationship with the subject, the background and experiences of the photographer, as well as their equipment and expertise. The analogue photographs on the Pebble Mill website and Facebook page are certainly a product of the diverse contexts of their production and envisaged initial consumption. I have taken these analogue images and digitally re-mediated them, for secondary consumption, in a context which could not have been predicted when they were produced.

The photographs on the Pebble Mill website are clearly a product of their social, cultural and professional contexts, as is apparent through their nature and qualities. The images themselves tell the social historian much about the means and cultures of production, and the intentions behind their existence. They were produced in different ways, by different groups of people, for different audiences, despite now being grouped together on display for a modern audience which was

never envisaged. The photographs would have been taken for professional or social reasons, primarily for immediate use, they were not taken as the historical records they have now become. The photographer would have planned for the use of the photograph, depending on its context, but is unlikely to have imagined that it would be of interest to others many years later, as a historical artefact.

We can divide the photographs into several categories: including those which were directly work related, secondly, those taken to document programmes or working environments by participants, and thirdly, social snapshots of friends at work. Included in the work related category are publicity stills taken by professional photographers, particularly of dramas, which were used to promote forthcoming programmes in the press. Also in this category are photographic records of sets and dressed locations taken by designers for their portfolios, as well as Polaroids taken by costume and make-up designers for continuity reasons, to ensure that clothing and make-up could be matched in a particular scene, which might be recorded at a different time or location. There is a wealth of this kind of material on the Pebble Mill website.

There is an obvious distinction in terms of quality between the well framed, documentary, usually monochrome, publicity stills of cast and crew on set, which might capture a performance, or show the elaborate and painstaking business of filming a particular scene, and Polaroids taken as an instant record of costume and make-up. The publicity shots frequently depict an intriguing and creative world for external viewers, and were taken on high end professional cameras. They provide privileged access for the public, through the lens of a professional

photographer, who was witness to the shoot. The photographer was an outsider, not part of the crew, but accepted by them, usually a freelancer, but employed by the BBC for that particular day. This relationship results in a particular quality of image. As an outsider the photographer has a degree of objectivity about what is potentially visually interesting about the day's filming; capturing fleeting moments; framing, but not usually choreographing the shot; using the available or televisual lighting, and always during rehearsal, never an actual take. Chandler (2002, p. 163), citing Barthes (1961, p. 19), notes that in terms of production, the press photograph is a carefully constructed image which conforms to professional or ideological norms and, in terms of consumption, such photographs are read in the context of a tradition of a shared understanding of a system of signs. These photographs provide us, as retrospective viewers, with a rich visual source, perhaps in part because they document the shoot through the eyes of an observer, rather than a participant, and frequently depict the interaction of cast and crew, which is one of the norms in play. Press and publicity photographs frequently show behind the scenes images, including the camera equipment and the crew, in order to provide a sense of privileged access for the viewer, through the eyes of the photographer, as to how the programme was produced. Below are some publicity stills taken by freelance photographer, Willoughby Gullachsen, for BBC Pebble Mill, for different drama productions. The images are included on the Pebble Mill website, by permission of Willoughby Gullachsen.



fjgtJre Z4 Crew shoorng 'f'loogje OtJrlows'f'fiCZ 2987; WJJiotJghby GtJJiodue!! (GtJs)

This photograph is a dramatic, silhouetted shot of a film camera on a crane rehearsing a complex scene during a location shoot on the 1987, BBC2, three-part series, *Boogie Outlaws*, by Leslie Stewart. The drama was about a band, one of whom gets arrested by the army. The other members of the band decide to rescue the drummer, rather than find a new one (Radio Times, 1987). The photograph is taken at night, outside The Princes Cinema; dry ice, creating 'smoke' adds to the atmosphere of the shoot. We can see the grips on the far left, controlling the crane, next to him is the cable basher, with the cable, in his hand, and next to him is probably the sound operator, with the camera operator, above him on the crane. Other members of the cast and crew are not identifiable. The car is central to the shot, with presumably the characters arriving or departing in it. The photograph is taken from quite a way back, so that it has an air of observation, and Gus, the photographer, has cleverly used the lighting and dry ice intended for the shoot, to lend atmosphere to his shot. This makes the image of the cast and crew look mysterious, dramatic and exciting, all desirable qualities in a publicity photograph.



Figure 25 Toby Roth and Mamra Kaa51t In 'Shalom Salaam' BBC4 1989, WIHoughby Gulladt51/n

This photograph of Toby Rolt and Mamta Kaash in the five-part series, *Shalom Salaam* (1989, BBC2), is interesting because it appears to have been directed by Gullachsen. He has ceased to simply observe, and is here choreographing the actors as their gaze is directly into the lens, in order to create a portrait publicity shot which depicts the inter-racial relationship at the heart of the drama. The drama follows the interconnected lives of two Leicester families, one Jewish, one Muslim (Radio Times, 1989). The actors are in character, Kaash's character, Mumtaz, fingers the male character, Adam's jacket, in a show of affection. The couple have their bodies touching, with only their faces turned towards Gus's lens. They look serious and troubled, rather than joyful, and the racial divide is highlighted by Mumtaz's traditional Muslim clothing, in contrast to Adam's relaxed demeanour. The photograph summarises the themes of divided family loyalties and racial divisions, told through a couple's relationship.



Figure 26 Shooting 'Space Station Milton Keynes' BBC2, 1985, tracking shot from the boot of a car, Willoughby Gullachsen

This photograph is from a location shoot of the Screen Two drama, *Space Station Milton Keynes*, by Leslie Stewart (1985, BBC2). The drama tells the story of a young girl, Maria, who is taken to a new foster home in a magical city. The image shows camera operator, Steve Saunderson, in the boot of a saloon car, filming a tracking shot of three members of the cast running across a field. It illustrates a rather different approach, that in addition to recording publicity material to be released to the press, that Gullachsen would also take stills for the production team, documenting the shoot in its more bizarre moments, like this improvised

tracking shot. It was important from his point of view as a freelancer, to be welcomed by the production team, or he might not be booked again. Certainly many members of the team still have publicity shots, which would have been shared amongst the team, as I sometimes come across them in the scrapbooks and the collections of staff, which are shared with me.

The polaroid shots taken by costume and make-up have a very different context of production, and are equally different in style, quality and purpose, but still show us, as historians, a wealth of information about a production and the working cultures behind it. Chandler, citing Peirce, argues that instant, unedited photographs, such as Polaroids, are very useful because they are an exact representation of their subjects, a direct index, unedited, although still subject to framing, focusing and so on (Chandler, 2002, p. 43). The Polaroids tend to be hurriedly posed, grabbed quickly between filming takes. They were taken as a record for continuity of prosthetic injuries, broken-down clothing, hair and make-up, because the subsequent scene including a particular actor in particular clothing, might take place several days, weeks or months hence. Quality, beyond being able to see the visual state of the actor was not important, but taking the shot quickly, having it print out immediately and being able to label it, with the scene number and other details, was vital to carrying out your job successfully. The Polaroids were a by-product of the role, not the end product, as with the publicity photographs, but they are still important signifiers, not only of the actors and the production, but also of the relationship between the costume or make-up artist taking the Polaroid and the actors. Additionally, the written notes

on the photographs tell us the actual details of the actor and the scene recorded at the time, and perhaps more importantly about the working practices of the particular costume or make-up person making the notes.





Sc 30
End Shot



Sc 8
Thurs

Figure 27 Make-up continuity Polaroids, Bernard Hill, playing 'Yosser in, 'Boys from the Blackstuff' 1982, photos by Maggie Thomas

These Polaroids record the make-up 'injuries' during different scenes from *Boys from the Blackstuff* (1982, BBC2). Actor, Bernard Hill, was playing the troubled character 'Yosser Hughes', who suffers mental instability after losing his job, his wife, and the threatened loss of his children (Radio Times, 1982). Hill is serious, even morose, in the photographs and the injuries look realistic and brutal. The Polaroids are simple, snatched head shots; there is no directing of Hill to look to camera. The smudged writing on the prints records vital information: the shoot day, and scene number, so that pick up shots, or subsequent scenes recorded on different days, can have congruent make-up.

Another category of work-related photography is the documenting of creative work for a portfolio. This practice seems to have been carried out particularly by some production designers, and costume designers. I was in contact with three such women, who had assembled scrapbooks during their working lives, of the productions they worked on, as a record, and as a potential 'calling card' for future contracts; they were intended for display, to be leafed through. The scrapbooks sometimes only contained photographs they had taken themselves, but on other occasions included publicity stills, transmission cards and additional material. It was clear from the volume of material, and the timespans covered, that the collecting was systematic, and that they felt that documenting the productions was important, perhaps beyond simply recording their own working lives for themselves. The women were very happy to share their photographs with me, and with the wider *Pebble Mill project*. Two of the women are now accomplished artists as well as designers, which is consistent with the imaginative display of

their design work, and both gave talks to schools and other organisations about their work, using the scrapbooks as reference points. I suspect that there may be a gendered aspect to this practice, as indeed there probably is with my own involvement in the *Pebble Mill project*: that frequently the person who assembles the family photo album or scrapbook, and keeps it safe, is a female member of the household, that she is the custodian of the collective memories. The *Pebble Mill project* itself is akin to an electronic scrapbook of images and memories. The scrapbook photographs have proved a very useful record, particularly of lesser known programmes, which might not have had publicity stills taken.

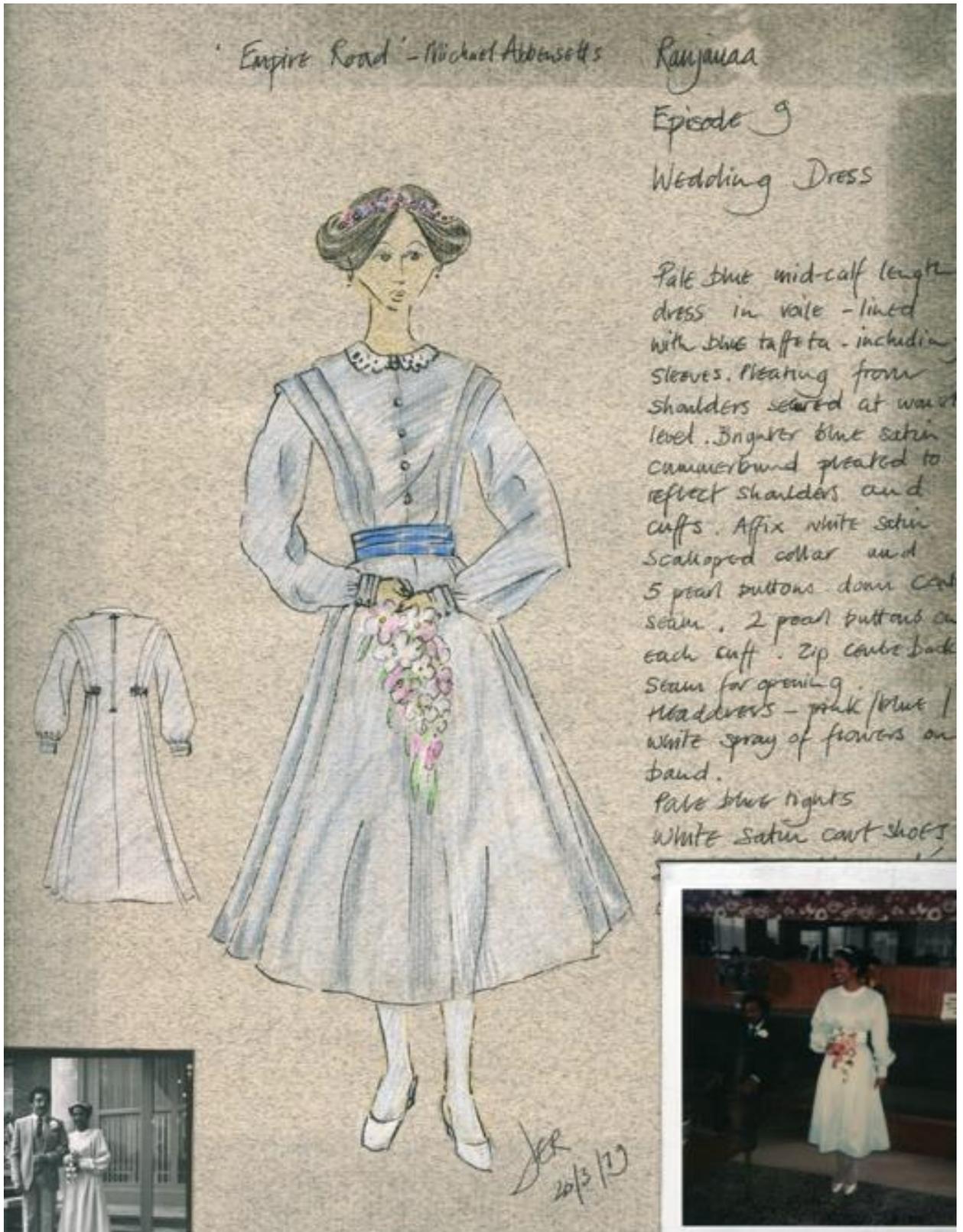


Figure 28 A page from costume designer, Janice Rider's scrapbook, from 'Empire Road', BBC2, 1979

In this scrapbook page, the designer has brought together the original wedding dress design, with her Polaroid from the shoot, and a small publicity photo of the wedding taken by a professional photographer. She has curated the different visuals available to her, to make most sense of the production process. The images are from the drama series, *Empire Road* (1979, BBC2). It was the first 'soap opera' with a Black cast, and was recorded in Studio A in Pebble Mill, as well as on location in Handsworth, one of Birmingham's suburbs with a high Black and minority ethnic population.

CD



Figure 295toJYboardsequence of 'Ho;vords' Woy'ship11"recl.yndo Kettle's scrapbook



Figure 30 Shipwreck tonk shots/rom Oesigne" lyndo Kettle's scrapbook of 'Howards' Woy, BBC1 1985-90

In this scrapbook documenting her work on the drama series, *Howard's Way*, (1985-90, BBC1) production designer, Lynda Kettle, has displayed the storyboard of a shipwreck scene drawn by someone else, with her own photographs of how she designed and oversaw the filming of the scene in a controlled tank. It is an example of the same curation process of visuals to document the production process, as the *Empire Road* example.

A slightly different category of photographs was frequently taken by staff to document programmes they were working on, or machinery they were using. These are distinct from the scrapbook photos, in that they were not intended for display, and were often of staff at work, rather than of the work itself. Post-production staff seem to have taken many more photographs of the equipment they were using and the editing suites they were working in, than other craft specialists like camera operators. It is unclear whether this is due to the particular individuals involved, or is related in some way to the nature of the work, or the culture of the department, or indeed to the access and contacts that I have. In terms of production staff, I rarely receive photographs from producers, much more commonly it is production assistants or other more junior members of teams who have taken photographs. Perhaps the producers, and camera operators, were preoccupied by the shoot itself and had little time for taking photos.



Figure 31 VT editors show off their VPR20, photograph by VT Editor, Ian Collins

This photograph shows the team of entirely male, videotape editors gathered around a new portable 1" video recording machine, a VPR20. It is staged almost like a family group showing off a new member of the family. The gendered aspect is striking. There were no female videotape editors at Pebble Mill at this time. The men look proud of their new piece of equipment, which would enable them to record on location, without a full outside broadcast, prior to portable single cameras being introduced.



Figure 32 Henry Fowler editing on a Steenbeck, photograph by VT editor Ian Collins

This photograph shows film editor, Henry Fowler, editing on a Steenbeck, the standard film editing machine; it is a quickly framed, but well lit, documentary photograph of a man at his work station. Henry is smiling, looking to camera, as if he has just looked up from his work. His hands are still in position to carry out a task, probably the marking of an edit point, judging from the chinagraph pencil held in his right hand. It is a snatched shot, rather than a staged group shot, like the previous one



Figure 33 Photo by VT editor, Mike Bloore, probably of a 'Pebble Mill at One' broadcast

This photograph shows an episode of *Pebble Mill at One* (1971-86, BBC1) being transmitted live, with the VT area recording it, and playing in inserts from 1" machines. The three VT operators are sat still, with arms folded, watching the content on the monitors. The monitor of the middle machine is displaying the countdown clock on the front of an insert, which will shortly be played into the programme. It is not clear why the photograph was taken, but it is a useful record of how the area operated in the early 1980s.



Figure 34 Photograph from Mike Bloore, removing a quad machine

This photograph, also from VT editor, Mike Bloore, although not taken by him, as he is in shot just behind Sue Williams (the girl sat on top of the machine), shows the VT editors removing a 2" editing machine, when it was being replaced by a 1" machine. There is an element of camaraderie, and macho culture, with the young woman, Sue, a production assistant, sitting on top of the machine. It has a performative air, and is reminiscent of an archaic advertisement, where an attractive young woman is draped over a car, as part of the sales ploy. The photograph depicts a work place where men carry out the real work and women look decorative, but also where relationships between co-workers are close, and where you can have fun, as well as work hard! All these photographs depict a stable (we see many of the same faces in the photographs, despite them being taken years apart by different people), largely male workforce in post production,

who take pride in their working environment and the relationship between man and machine, and wish to record their working culture through photographs. In contemporary times, with the advent of digital cameras, and then camera phones, photography has become more pervasive than it was in the 1970s and 1980s, when these photographs were taken. It is easy for us to forget, because of the current proliferation of photographs, that this was not always the case, and that taking and processing images took time and money. It is therefore surprising that so many amateur photographs were taken, and kept by the staff. It suggests strong social and cultural capital: that the staff felt pride in their workplace and wanted to record their place within it, they enjoyed their collegiate culture, and had social bonds with their fellow workers, and in the production processes they practised.

The strength of the staff's social capital is clear from the third category of more casual photographs; these photographs would be classified as 'events', rather than staged 'pictures' by Wigoder, they are fragments of reality, moments in time frozen, with life taking place beyond the frame (2001, p.23). Many of these photographs have been taken by post-production staff, as well as design crew and some production teams. The snapshots of parties, of informal gatherings in the bar or canteen, or of fun on location are less interesting from the point of view of documenting the programme making, but tell us much about the culture of a relatively stable workforce who knew each other well, and developed lasting friendships.



Figure 35 Photograph by Paul Scholes, '6.55 Special' wrap party

This photograph is of the 'wrap' party, when the *6.55 Special* show came off air in August 1983. It depicts a bitter-sweet event, and certainly an occasion that warranted marking. The entertainment show would have come off air, and then the party would have commenced. The majority of those in the photo are male, young and white. The men are mostly from the VT area, and it was taken by a VT engineer, with the girl being a member of the production team, who was leaving to join Central TV. She is clearly enjoying herself and kicking her leg in the air. The photograph gives the impression of a male dominated workforce, but of close working relationships and of being able to enjoy yourself whilst at work.



Figure 36 Photograph by Shirley O'Mara, BBC Club, lunch time

This photograph could have been taken at any lunch time in the summer, over at the BBC Club, where many staff would go for something to eat, often accompanied by an alcoholic drink. Those shown in the picture are mainly film editing staff, and it was taken by the Editing Organiser, probably in the late 1980s, or early 1990s. We see a more diverse range of staff in contrast to the earlier photographs, including women and Black and Asian staff. The mood looks relaxed as the editors get some fresh air, and a chance to chat, away from their work stations.



Figure 37 Photograph by Roger Mulliner, Regional Clubs' Day

This photograph shows the tug-of-war competition at Regional Clubs' Day at Pebble Mill, it was taken on the field by the Club, by one of the Editors. Regional Clubs' Day was an annual event, where members from BBC Clubs from broadcast centres around the country would come to Pebble Mill for a day of events, competitions and socialising. The tug-of-war team is made up from members of production, technical and support staff, with a high proportion of female staff. The photograph shows a work force which worked together and socialised together, in a way that is perhaps less common today.



Figure 38 Frank Carson giving an impromptu performance in the canteen

This photograph shows Frank Carson giving an impromptu performance at the staff Christmas lunch, after an appearance on the lunchtime *Pebble Mill* entertainment show in 1995. Below is the information I posted on the Pebble Mill website, to mark Frank Carson's funeral in March 2012, and the comments from the Facebook page, which have been copied on to the website:

"It was Belfast comic, Frank Carson's funeral today.

Stephen Davies remembers that one December, Frank Carson was a guest on 'Pebble Mill' and afterwards went to the staff canteen. It was the day of the staff Christmas dinner, and Frank decided to join in. He had everyone in hysterics.

The following comments are from the Pebble Mill Facebook page: Barbara

Harrison: 'I remember that Christmas lunch. It was the best ever and he was such a natural.'

Naomi Bishop: 'He came in through the double doors, saw an audience in party hats and went for it. He was fabulous. It was a real treat. Took our mind off sprouts that had been cooking since September.'

Caroline Officer remembers being the researcher looking after Frank Carson on 'Pebble Mill' that day: 'When he arrived, he told me his flight back home to Blackpool wasn't until 6pm, so we had to find something for him to do, the Christmas lunch was a Godsend. Ironically Engelbert Humperdinck was on the show too and we invited him to the lunch too, but he didn't want to come, couldn't stop Frank though.'

I love the earlier comments because since that day I've felt slightly guilty at disrupting everyone's lunch. He was a lovely man, but I remember being glad to get him into the taxi and on his way to the airport – exhausting! Norman Wisdom was the same.' “

When I first posted this story of Frank Carson unexpectedly providing the entertainment at the Christmas party, I did not have a photograph to illustrate it, and it was only when I put the story on Facebook, did one of the engineering staff mention that there was a photograph of the event on a social media group that the engineers had, which I was then able to use. The story was built up through the use of social media, with each comment adding information, and a different point of view. Caroline Officer's comment about how Frank came to be at the Christmas party in the first place, is particularly illuminating, and the power of social media is shown by the fact that the guilt she had felt about the incident is now assuaged!

There are hundreds of these kinds of photograph that have been given to me to post on the Pebble Mill website. They show a workplace where there were places

on site to socialise together outside of work, and where colleagues were also friends. They demonstrate an institutional ethos which was prevalent in many large employers in the 1970s and 1980s. Obviously the photographs only depict a partial and positive image, the negative facets of production life: the rows, stresses of deadlines, resource issues, bullying, sexual harassment and dealing with difficult individuals are all omitted.

The photographs on the site are in the main analogue, rather than digital, and usually have to be scanned before being uploaded to the Pebble Mill website and Facebook page. They are photographs taken at a different time, for a different purpose, and re-mediated and shared as part of the Pebble Mill project. Through digitalisation they lose some of their aesthetic, and haptic appeal, but gain far wider dissemination.

6.3 Contemporary Photographs Taken Specially for the Project

In addition to the re-purposed analogue photos displayed on the Pebble Mill project are digital photographs taken specifically for the site. These are frequently of ephemera, or of staff reunions at various contemporary events.

The ephemera include images of programme merchandise, tickets for events, BBC policies and procedures, and objects from the Pebble Mill building, or from programmes, which have been kept by site users. As BBC Pebble Mill is no longer an entity, this is not 'new' content, rather it is a digital representation of existing content, for the purposes of sharing and preserving it. This practice is equivalent to the scanning of an analogue photograph, and is motivated by the same aims,

although it's quite a lot of thought in terms of finding a suitable background, all'anging the items and fl'aming the shot.

<http://www.pebblemill.org/.../50th-anniversary-of-the-bbc-st.../>

Hi, here, thanks to Sue Sweet are the commemorative stamps which were given to BBC members of staff to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the BBC, in 1972.

Has anyone got any other BBC stamps? Thanks, Vanessa



917 people reached

0 Boost Unavailable

Like Comment +Share

0 Jacky Williams, Sarah Morrison and 13 others

Top comments

Write a comment...



L Peter Greenhalgh My favourite camera is first class, but only worth 7 1/2 p...
ISil Unlike - Reply - Message **01** 8 March at 13:53

F;gvre 39 Commef 110 rotive C stomps, photograph by Sve Sweet

This photograph of BBC commemorative stamps, was taken in March 2017, and did not invoke a very large response, although one of the cameramen has commented concerning the EMI 2001 camera on the 7½D stamp. The EMI 2001 was the preferred camera of many cameramen during the 1970s and early 1980s, and it is interesting that the stamps invoke a response not about themselves as artefacts, but about what they pictorially represent, and that the response is in the form of a joke or ironic comment.

The taking of new photographs of people, at present day social events, such as reunions or funerals, is a slightly different practice. These images are of interest to the project because of what these people have done in the past, at the time they were working at Pebble Mill, rather than what they are doing now. They are interesting particularly if the user already knows the person, and are significant in demonstrating the social capital of the online community. Many of these images will be a better technical quality than some of the re-mediated analogue photographs, but they are lacking in other respects. These photographs do not have the historical richness of images of BBC Pebble Mill social events from the 1970s and 1980s, and they lack meaningful connectedness to historic programme making. They are important, particularly from a social perspective for contributors, in terms of finding out what people are doing now, and seeing

who you can remember and recognise. This social aspect is one of the central purposes of the *Pebble Mill project*.

On the next page is a blog about the funeral in November 2016 of a dresser, and then member of the post room staff, Amin Hassan, who had worked at BBC Birmingham for most of his working life. The written content was contributed by one member of the online community, with the photographs of former colleagues attending the event, by another. Despite the solemnity of the event, the people meeting up seemed to enjoy seeing each other again, and those who could not attend could at least get a sense of the occasion from the images.

<http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/amin-hassans-funeral/>

Hi, it was Amin Hassan's funeral today. Below is a post from Jo Mainwaring about the service:

"Well it may have been Black Friday in more ways than one, but the sun was shining and there was a very good turnout. Nice to see so many familiar old faces from all areas where Amin had worked and made friends. The service was short and sweet, with two hymns, 'Morning Has Broken' and 'Jerusalem'. Amin's niece was too emotional to give her eulogy but Rev Brian Atkins stepped in to read. Quite a few people went on to the Pavilion afterwards, but some had to return to work, eg. those taking time out from the Drama village. There are some lovely pictures of Amin in the order of service which I'd like to post, if I wasn't technologically challenged! Perhaps one of his other friends can do that. Rest in peace dear Amin, we shall miss you."

Josephine Mainwaring

(The photos are from Kevin Lakin. Please add in names. Thanks, Vanessa)



Figure 40 Digital photographs taken at a staff member's funeral in November 2016

6.4 Photographs and Their Mediated Reception

We have so far explored the types of images which appear on the Pebble Mill website and Facebook page, the motivation behind their production, and their origin. The next part of this chapter will explore how the photographs are 'read' when posted on the site, and how, and why, they are a catalyst for online engagement.

Barthes classifies the different subject positions regarding a photograph: the 'operator' (the photographer); the 'spectrum' (the subject of the photograph); and the 'spectator' (the reader). It requires these three aspects coming together to create meaning. Additionally, he identifies the mechanism by which photographs convey meaning, through elements he describes as the 'studium' and the 'punctum'. The 'studium' encompasses the photographer's skill and technique, whilst the 'punctum' is more difficult to define, but is 'the ecstasy of the image', the factor which gives the photograph an emotive quality, and connects the reader to the image (Pink p.14, citing Barthes, 1980). The 'punctum' is less tangible than the 'studium', but potentially more powerful. The classification of these different elements is valuable in helping us to analyse how photographs are read, and enable us to understand why they seem to be such a provocative medium for online engagement.

From a semiological perspective a photograph is 'read' in a similar manner to other texts. There is a rhetoric involved, with signifiers including the gestures,

expressions and composition, and associations connected to the subject and the setting. Due to the code of connotation, the reading is always historical, and is dependent on the reader's 'knowledge' of the signs (Chandler, 2002 p.163, citing Barthes, 1961). The historical aspect is significant: a photograph is taken at a particular instance, which is always in the past, it represents a moment in time, which occurred and is now gone. This encourages readings of photographs to be reflective. The 'spectator' examines the image, and quickly considers a whole range of information: what the 'spectrum' is, what techniques the 'operator' has employed, the wider context, what meaning it has, and whether there is a connection to the reader. The 'spectator' also brings a historical perspective, a knowledge of the future, and how it has affected the subject of the image. Depending on the reader's background and knowledge, some signifiers will be easily distinguishable, and others may be missed altogether. Barthes mentions a typology of knowledge required to fully read an image: 'practical, national, cultural, aesthetic', and argues that an image can be read in different ways by the same individual (1964, p.4). Sarah Pink's opinion echoes Barthes, arguing that the same image can elicit multiple, sometimes conflicting responses, because of temporal, historical, spatial or cultural contexts, due to the subjective gaze of the viewer (2001, p. 51). This 'subjective gaze' goes some way to explain why different users comment on different aspects of a particular photograph. It is a phenomenon that can be observed in the 'reading' of some photographs on the Pebble Mill sites; one user will comment on a particular aspect of the photograph, whilst others concentrate on a different one. For example, in August 2016, I changed the profile picture for the Pebble Mill Facebook page, to this photograph:

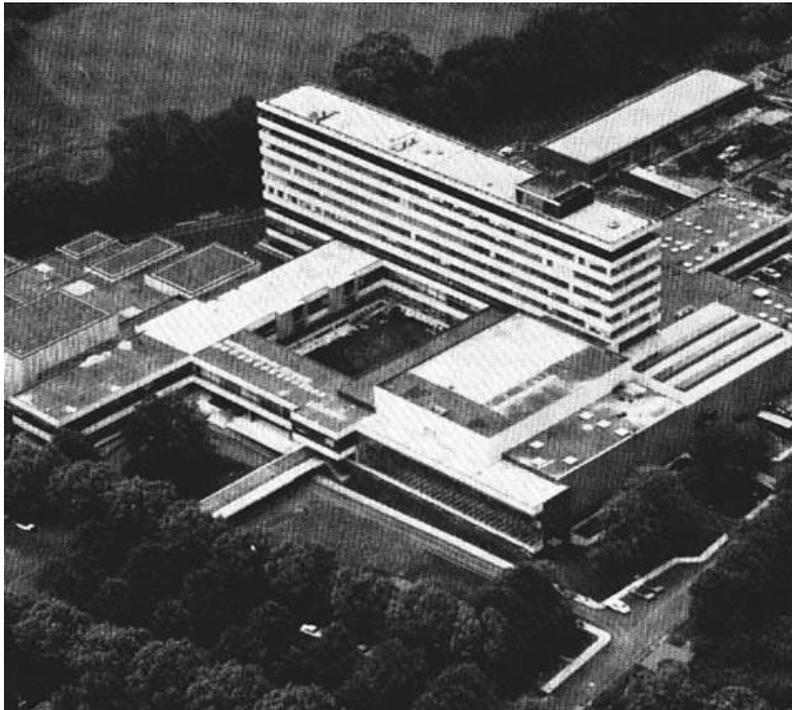


Figure 41 Aerial view of Pebble Mill, copyright unknown

The image did not have any text accompanying it, to lead users in a particular direction, and did not invite comments, but several users did post comments, a selection of which are added here:

Pam Aldridge: "Didn't know it was so large and imposing."

Lorraine Randell: "Happy days, unless I spent hours looking for my car in the car park, only to find I had had to park in the street. I loved my time working at Pebble Mill."

Karen Singleton Davies: "...& did I mention I was given the exacting job of lift girl, taking Princess Anne to 4th floor dignitaries on the official opening day?"

Pam's 'reading' focuses on the nature of the building represented in the image. It seems that she did not know the building herself, and therefore it has fewer connotations for her. For Lorraine, and Karen, the building has positive

associations as their workplace; Lorraine reflects on her overarching memory of working at Pebble Mill, peppered by the recollection of a trivial and amusing frustration, whilst Karen concentrates on one specific memory, which situates her place in a significant moment of Pebble Mill's history. Van House, citing Langford (2001), notes that memories of photographs are used in a performative oral tradition (2011, p.130), whilst Paula Uimonen observes that on Facebook, relationships are increasingly demonstrated through photographic images, and that there is an element of performance in the interactivity between people (2013, p. 122). This seems to be true of the interaction of both posters and commenters on the Pebble Mill Facebook page, as they share stories and further images, extending beyond users' profile images. In the past this oral tradition would have been a discussion around a photograph album, but that is now transposed to the more public arena of social media. There is a distinct performative nature to the responses especially of Lorraine and Karen, where small stories are retold to an imagined audience. Karen's response is particularly performative, as the comment is exactly as it is written here, self-consciously starting with the three dots and the ampersand, implying that she has retold this particular story many times, and has a reputation for retelling it. In contrast Pam 'reads' the image in a literal manner: she does not seem to have access to the socio-cultural references and the rich connotations that it holds for Lorraine and Karen. Pam's reading concentrates on the 'studium', whilst Lorraine and Karen's reflects the 'punctum' as well.

We cannot, however, see an image purely in isolation. It is never simply the photograph itself, even if it does not have any text associated with it. In the

publishing of an image it is impossible to separate the image from the context. A user of the Pebble Mill Facebook page, or website, has navigated to the site, and unless they have happened on it by chance, which is unlikely; they come armed with some socio-cultural knowledge of BBC Pebble Mill. This knowledge colours any readings of materials on the site. Chandler identifies a shared 'textual code', operating between producers and readers: a set of ways of reading the images (2002, p.194).

I would argue that because of social media, the textual code, that Chandler identifies, operates not only between the producer of the image and the reader, but also between the 'publisher' of the image and the reader. I am not the primary producer of the vast majority of the material that I post up, but I am reversioning it for secondary consumption. I am curating the material, articulating the context in which the image was produced, and publishing it for a new audience. I am therefore adding value, and visibility to the image, and the textual code would seem to apply, as I am building upon and re-mediating the original image, whilst imagining how the new audience may read it. The textual code appears to be subconscious in many respects. When I post an image, I am not considering the textual code, and yet it is clearly present: an unwritten contract between the producer/publisher and user, in the exhibiting of a photograph, and the subsequent reading of that image. That reading may be articulated and shared, in the form of comments, or it may be an internalised reading that remains private to the viewer.

6.5 Photographs as a Memory Tool

Viewing photographs, especially those with an institutional or workplace context, which relate to our earlier lives, encourages us to reflect on our place in that particular history, enabling us to situate our individual stories within the collective experience. Keightley and Pickering explain this concept in *The Mnemonic Imagination*:

Our past experience is imaginatively reworked into textual memory products using interpretative schemata and social frames particularly associated with the different groups to which we belong during the life-course. (2012, p. 103).

As mentioned in the literature review, the ‘mnemonic imagination’ is the process by which our past experiences, and our perceptions of them are encoded into cultural texts; it allows us to remember, reflect, and bring our intervening experiences to bear: synthesizing these elements into a new creative and constructed whole (ibid p. 106). Posts on the Pebble Mill website and Facebook page are examples of these synthesised memory texts, and indeed the whole website and Facebook page can be described as a ‘textual memory product’. Photographs of a particular event are combined with first hand testimony and more general context, to create the ‘memory product’. These texts may represent the past experiences of others, but through reading them, we can relate to those experiences, and position ourselves in relation to them, thus adding to the collective memory. It is the creation of these relationships, and the connections we make in this discursive space, which are so valuable, rather than the textual

end products themselves, although these are obviously the only tangible and lasting results.

Barthes, cited by Wigoder, asserts that photographs can block memory, and become in fact a 'counter-memory'. They are incapable of retrieving the past, and only prove that a moment in the past existed. (2001, p. 16). What I understand is meant here, is that we quickly remember the image, and it becomes almost impossible for us to distinguish between the memory of the actual event and the memory of seeing the photographic representation of it. This position is potentially conflated by discussions around the photograph which may have taken place at different viewings of it over the years, where someone may have mentioned a detail, which is then added into the accumulated 'memories', which become attached by an individual to a particular photograph. These memories and 'counter-memories' become enmeshed over a period of time, and cannot be separated. There is a tension between this interpretation and Van House's articulation of contemporary thought, which emphasises the constructed nature of personal archived images to tell a particular version of the past, and one in which images are viewed as durable evidence to correct the fallibility of human memory (2011, p. 130). This perspective seems to lay more weight on a photograph's *denotation*, what Barthes in his 1977 essay, *The Photographic Message*, describes as the facts of what we can see, rather than its *connotation*, which relates to its implied coded message. A photograph's denotation is easily read by individuals not connected to the taking of the image, whilst its connotations are less tangible, as we saw reflected in the comments relating to the aerial photograph of Pebble Mill. There is a literal reading of a photograph,

which is the reading of the encoded form of the mechanical recording of the instant it was taken, alongside a symbolic reading, which is far more complex and fluid, and is dependent on the reader's cultural and historical knowledge.

Whilst photographs cannot retrieve the past, they do situate the past in the present, they can stimulate our memories of the past, even if those memories have become muddied by our subsequent experiences, and by details added by others. John Berger describes the 'thrill' of seeing a photograph that brings an 'onrush of memory', helping us to remember what we forget (1992, p.192). The use of the word 'thrill' is significant, implying a powerful, and largely positive emotion, whilst 'onrush' suggests that the individual is almost overwhelmed by the sensation of memory. However imperfect photographs might be in their representation of the past, they do seem to be a very valuable medium for memory evocation. In Van House's research she notes that the importance of a photograph was in the memories evoked, and not in its representation, and that the quality of the image was irrelevant to its importance (2011, p. 130). This is a phenomenon that I have observed on the Pebble Mill Facebook page, the quality of the image itself seems unimportant. Even poor quality or dull images have the power to unlock the memories associated with the subject represented. This is particularly so, in the collective context of social media, with other people with similar experiences commenting on the image.

I posted the photograph below, in October 2016, to illustrate a blog, which a retired BBC engineer had written for the *Pebble Mill project*:



Figure 42 BBC Birmingham Canteen 2004, photograph by Philip Morgan

The photograph is not poor quality technically, but it is a seemingly dull image, of an empty institutional workplace restaurant. However, the post had a reach of almost 2,000 people, which is well above average for the page, with 62 'likes' and over 20 comments. Only one comment responded to the blog post itself, with the others all relating to the photograph of the canteen. Several of the comments refer directly to the memories evoked by seeing the image:

Liz Munro: "Quite emotional looking at that photo. I loved the canteen and the staff who worked there. They made the best bacon and egg butties! And crumble and custard."

Gregory M. Hallsworth: "Ah, a place where many a programme idea would first come to light. Good memories!"

Jane Green: "So sad to see the space now. In this canteen, I remember David Hasselhoff coming in for breakfast...and Jeremy Clarkson.... Amongst many

other weird memories...I do remember the ladies making the most amazing steak pie for lunch with brilliant pastry."

As with the aerial photo of Pebble Mill discussed earlier in this chapter, the commenters concentrate on the 'punctum', rather than the 'studium' of the image. It is the emotional connection the image has with them which is significant, rather than the photographic affordances. The restaurant is fondly remembered because of its social connotations, as well as its food. It was an important place for taking a quick break for a cup of tea and a chat with friends and colleagues, or having a meal during or at the end of a shift, and with the excitement that you never quite knew who you might meet, with the comings and goings of actors and celebrities! This is an important example of the work of the *Pebble Mill project*, and the value it has in its reunion of photographs and people. This story could not be told in the same way in an institutional archive, and yet it is an important part of Pebble Mill's history. Ironically, the fact that the photograph is so seemingly uninspiring, may actually be an asset. John Berger makes a paradoxical comment that the, 'sharper and more isolated the stimulus memory receives, the more it remembers; the more comprehensive the stimulus, the less it remembers' (1992, p.193). Thus a black and white image, or a bland image, as here, might provoke more comprehensive memories, than a colourful and lively photograph. This argument is counterintuitive, but it is true of the image above, where the deserted space, allows viewers to project their own memories of the institution of the canteen, without the distraction of a particular event to focus their memories elsewhere. What is clear, is that the photograph acts as a prompt for users of the Facebook page to reflect on their memories, and share those thoughts with others, and that the quality of the prompting image is

a lower order priority. The sharing of memories on the page becomes a social interaction: the personal memory situated in the collective memory of a particular time and place, tinged with a sense of nostalgia. This process of remembering and sharing those memories publicly has become part of many people's everyday lives, through the proliferation of social media. Photographs seem to be integral to this process, perhaps because of the everyday quality of photography, which we now use habitually to document our daily lives.

6.6 Shared Photographs as a Stimulus for Engagement

Photo elicitation is the process of introducing a photograph during a research interview, with the intention of stimulating memories and discussion around a particular event or era. Photographs provide us with a focus for remembering, by capturing the representation of the seemingly impossible, perhaps someone now dead, or a past event. It can be argued that what happens on the Pebble Mill website and Facebook page is an online form of photo elicitation and a postmodern research method for harvesting oral histories. It is an approach which combines different methods and sees histories as contextual and constructed. Some academics stress the sensory and haptic value of physical photographs, especially when they show evidence of their use, through wear and tear (see Pink 2006, Van House 2011), and obviously this facet is lost through the more clinical, non-tactile, display of digitised images, but online display brings other benefits, predominantly around collaboration and community discussion. We are now habituated to documenting, sharing and commenting on our own photographs,

and those of others, through social media. Images seem to be the dominant means of communication on platforms like Facebook; in fact Facebook advise using visuals, in their tips about creative effective posts: '[s]hort, visual posts created for the right audience are more successful' (Facebook, accessed 2016). Photographs enable us to express ourselves, to represent ourselves through our choice of profile and other pictures, to demonstrate our personal and community relationships, and importantly for sites like the Pebble Mill Facebook page, to remember both personally and collectively through our own photographs and those of others.

Harper suggests that photo elicitation is a useful tool for empirical research because it produces a different kind of information, due to the photograph's particular form of representation, which 'evoke[s] information, feelings and memories'. He argues that images work on a deeper level of the human consciousness, which results not simply in more information, but in a different sort of information, where we can connect our sense of self to 'society, culture and history' (2002, p. 13). Seeing the image itself seems to work at a more visceral level, than simply talking about an incident, awakening the memory of the emotions we felt at that moment. Collier emphasizes the power of photographs, in being charged with emotional triggers, which are not visible to the interviewer, but stimulate intense feelings in interviewees (1967, p. 66). A social media site obviously has a very different context from a one-to-one interview. In the interview, you are prepared, you know why you are there, and even if you do not know that you might be shown particular images, you are likely to know the area for discussion, and to be in a safe and private environment. Having agreed to the

interview, it is difficult to not participate. With online platforms, participation is entirely self-directed; there is no forewarning of what might be posted up by one of your friends or acquaintances, or within a group, page, or website that you are connected with, and no compulsion for you to interact with it. That users do respond and actively participate in a relatively public arena demonstrates the motivating power of the remembered emotions prompted by the shared images. The nature of the triggered emotions will differ hugely depending on the event represented, some will be nostalgic, as evident in responses to the photo of the canteen, discussed earlier in this chapter, whilst others may be less positive, for example in the post in Figure 41, from the production *Witchcraft* (1992, BBC2). The photograph is a wide shot in a church, and shows several members of the cast and crew, including the camera crew and sound operator. No one in the photograph looks happy, and whilst it is possible that this might colour the responses evoked by the photograph, the unreservedly negative comments posted suggest a deeper issue with this particular production. Below is a selection of comments from some of those involved, sharing their experiences in response to the photograph:

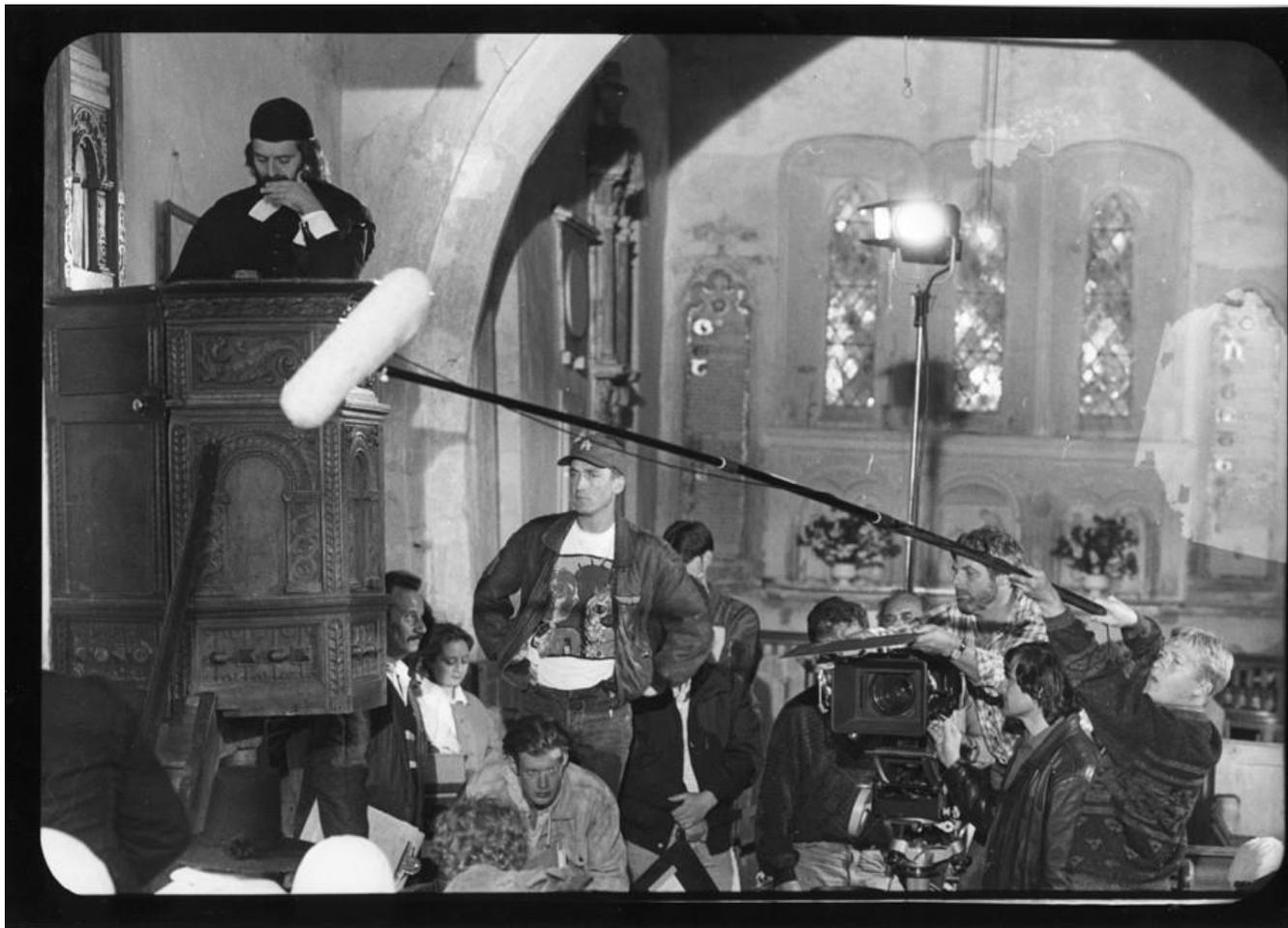


Figure 43 'Witchcraft', 1992, BBC2, photograph by Willoughby Gullachsen

John Greening: "This show was a nightmare. As 1st AD I ended up being the go-between between a 'difficult' director and the crew – many of whom used to be in tears because of something the aforesaid director had said/implied. I went prematurely grey and Nigel Jones (designer) left show-business as a result! I hope my own directing career hasn't scarred any of my crews to such an extent."

Mark Smithers: "One of the biggest drama budgets ever for Pebble Mill, completely wasted on a very 'hammy' production. I was one of the electricians and crossed swords with the very difficult director on a number of occasions."

Victoria Trow: "I was assistant editor, working with John Rosser. A bonkers production. Sasyd was hideously good at divide and rule..."

It is clear that the photograph was all that was needed for members of the production team and crew to recall the emotions they had felt at the time, and despite the candid nature of the comments there does not seem to have been a

reluctance to share them online. Whilst the comments are critical of Sasdy, I judged them as fair comment in expressing the crew's opinions, and was therefore happy to approve them, despite Sasdy still being alive.

It is not possible to know for certain whether a written post, without the photograph would have prompted the same response, but it seems unlikely.

There appears to be an inherent quality within a photograph posted online that invites engagement, especially if posted in a community context.

Few photographs prompt the kind of emotional response seen with *Witchcraft*, in contrast the interaction to most posts is more measured. Despite this, there is a motivation to participate and comment. One reason for this could be that there is a sense of gratification in being able to fulfil a request for information. Smith (1981) notes that when individuals help each other, voluntarily, without asking for any reward, that this results in a sense of inner enjoyment. There is, therefore, a value to the individual in contributing, but there is also a value to the whole online community, through the interaction of individuals. Quinn et al. (1998), point out that when knowledge is shared between two parties, the result is a linear increase in information and experience for both individuals, but that if this is shared with others, then the reach of the information is extended, and potentially modified or added to by third parties. With postings on a social networking page the reach of social interactions between individuals is automatically extended to everyone viewing that page. With the Pebble Mill Facebook page, the online community adds value collectively, by pooling their experience and expertise. This interaction happens in a non-linear fashion, with

users making comments over days or even weeks, and being able to respond to comments occurring earlier in the post's timeline. In terms of say the identification of individuals in a photograph, one person might remember the first name of someone, whilst the first name might trigger the remembering of the surname in a different individual, and a third is able to expand on the context of the taking of the photograph itself, and a fourth uploads a photograph of their own which was taken during the same production. The information garnered in these exchanges is unpredictable, but no less gratifying for that; discussion between users can lead in entirely new directions, and give different perspectives to what was envisaged by the originator of the post.

Adding value to an original post is something that online communities can accomplish with ease. The following exchange posted on the Facebook group in response to a photograph of the crew of the 1980's drama, *Morte D'Arthur* (1984, BBC2), pictured with a studio camera, an EMI 2001, illustrates how the process can work:



*Figure 44 Publicity shot from 'Morte D'Arthur', 1984, BBC2, Nike Camera Crane, with crew and director.
Photograph from cameraman Dave Short*

Dave Bushell [Lighting director]: "Looks like a 2001 - nasty things!"

Steve Dellow [Engineer]: "Nasty things? From what I heard, once they were lined up they stayed lined up, not like the Links that needed realigning twice a day!"

Dave Bushell: "Just stirring it! I never liked the tinted-monochrome feel of the EMIs but I was a voice crying in the wilderness when I arrived at Pebble Mill in 1984. Criticising the EMI 2001 was not a move guaranteed to endear me as the new boy."

Dave Short [Cameraman]: "Ask any cameraman who worked during the 70's or 80's what was the best camera to operate, and the EMI 2001 would come out tops."

We hear three different perspectives, from skilled craftsmen, each with a valid reason for their view. It would be difficult to capture this kind of conversation using another method, for example via interview, and yet this is the type of

encounter which happens organically in a social media context. The comments tell us much about the production culture, they hint at the rivalry between different specialisms within the crew, as well as displaying their professionalism, and the importance of fitting in and being accepted. Such spontaneous conversations cannot be predicted, but capturing them does add to our understanding of screen histories in ways that would be difficult without social media. I had anticipated that the comments reacting to this photograph would be about the unusual crane, or the actual production, and not the ubiquitous EMI 2001 studio camera. This demonstrates how multiple readings of the same photograph are possible, and how online conversations can lead in new and unexpected directions, prompted by details within the frame.

Occasionally, I post a photograph on the website for which I have very little information, the Facebook community are invited to identify what a particular piece of equipment was and discuss the working practices surrounding it: in effect crowd-sourcing information. Usually, within a remarkably short space of time, interesting and informative comments are posted. A case in point is the following response to a photograph of an editing block used on two-inch videotape in the 1960s and 1970s:



Figure 45 2" editing block, photograph by Ian Collins

Ian Collins [Videotape editor]: "It is indeed a 2" Quad editing block. The magnetic recording was revealed by applying iron filings onto the tape and then viewed through a microscope to find the correct place to cut and splice the tape to make a synchronous join."

Alan Miller [Sound recordist]: "If I remember correctly the sound edit was at a different point from the video, making the edit not a straight cut. Also in Scotland the editors cut football matches on a single quad machine using this technique. On play out the tape ran continuously even when we cut

back to the studio for links, which made studio presenting a hazardous activity. The link simply had to fit the gap in the tape."

Dave Bushell [Lighting director]: "It's thanks to the policy of avoiding editing a 2" tape that so many early programmes have been lost – they were recorded over!"

Pete Simpkin [Radio producer/presenter]: "Exactly! I think if they cut the tape it had to be costed in the programme budgets."

Ian Collins: "It was a very crude, by today's standards, but fast way of editing a football or cricket match down to time, which was why it was widely used by sport. The audio was indeed recorded in a different place relative to the pictures on the tape but because in sport, the audio was mainly effects, it was not too noticeable if the two cut at different times."

We learn from this online conversation not only about the time consuming and intricate disciplines of working with this piece of equipment, but about its implications in terms of both the production process and viewing experience. The participants draw on their experiences in other production centres beyond BBC Pebble Mill, widening the frame of reference, and giving the project a relevance outside of the geographical locality. The production process of recording and editing today appears so simple and straightforward in comparison to this era, and as someone who is used to operating semi-professional camcorders today, an understanding of the technological history of programme making has provided me with a new found respect for these craftsmen.

Many of the programmes produced at Pebble Mill were high volume, low budget productions, often for BBC1 Daytime: programmes with perceived low cultural value, which tend to be omitted from the major online television databases, such as the British Film Institute (BFI) database, and International Movie Database

(IMDb). Entries in the BBC Genome project (BBC, 2014) also tend to be short on detail for such programmes due to daytime listings in the *Radio Times* being limited. Therefore, having an online community to refer to can prove very informative. The food quiz *Eat Your Words* (1996, BBC1), is a case in point. I had a photograph of the set, from the production designer, but knew no other details about the show.



Figure 46 'Eat Your Words' set, BBC1 1996, photograph by Lynda Kettle

Through posting the photograph on the website and linking it to the Facebook community, additional information was offered. The researcher who had developed the idea and devised the title added a comment, as did the show's

celebrity booker, advising that Loyd Grossman was the presenter, as well as who the two team captains were, and providing the names of many of the celebrity guests. This information certainly enriches the archive of series, which could otherwise be forgotten entirely, and demonstrates the potential of online interactive archives in supplementing traditional institutional archives.

Collier observes the value of photo-elicitation in his own research interviews, explaining that the prompt of the photograph lends authority to the interviewee, meaning that they are able to identify content and educate the interviewer: providing a stream of information about people, places, processes and artefacts (1967, p.48). This phenomenon appears to operate in the same way with photographs posted on social media, as we can observe in the previous examples. With interview based photo-elicitation, the photographs are pre-selected by the interviewer after sourcing and researching, in much the same way that I choose a photograph to post online; it is in the subsequent stages that the methods differ. With traditional photo-elicitation the photograph acts as a conversation piece between interviewer and interviewee in a time-limited exchange, whereas in my method the photograph is posted as a provocation which invites comment from whomever it resonates with, in an open-ended, non-time-limited interaction. The advantage here is the number of people who potentially see and respond to it, instigating an online conversation, which provides information about people, practices and equipment. I would argue though that through social media photo-elicitation has even more impact, because it can result in a meaningful conversation, that would be almost impossible to orchestrate on a different platform. Harper concludes that photo

elicitation is an ideal model for research, because of the collaborative practice it engenders: enabling two or more people to explore the meaning of an image together (2002, p. 23). This is the same practice, albeit in a very different context and on a different platform, which is facilitated through photo elicitation on social media, and particularly Facebook. It is a practice at the heart of an online community project, like the Pebble Mill one. This application of photo-elicitation to collaboratively write community history via social media is new. It would transfer well to numerous projects and hopefully other researchers will adopt it.

The volume of engagement with a post is important in gauging the reach and popularity of a project, and without a certain level of engagement a project could not be deemed a success. However, a high volume of interaction does not necessarily reflect a greater value of contribution above a less popular post. As Zhang et al. have noted, some studies of social engagement have resulted in purely quantitative data, about the number of posts, views and active users, rather than assessing the quality of social engagement and the consequences relating to 'individual or collective wellbeing' (2011, p. 570). Even a post with a relatively low level of engagement may elicit valuable comments, which either add entirely new information, or correct an inaccuracy, or are particularly gratifying for an individual user, or sub-group. Quantity of engagement is not necessarily the only signifier of success, and researchers need to be careful to evaluate data qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

Paula Uimonen draws cultural similarities in terms of visual identity between traditional, hard-copy photograph albums and social media profile pictures (2013, p. 134), I would argue that this analogy extends beyond profile pictures to the operation of whole Facebook Community pages, like the Pebble Mill one, which act like an online collective photograph album. In her work on 19th Century, and early 20th Century photograph albums, Anna Dahlgreen asserts that the older Victorian photograph albums acted as conversation pieces and worked better without text, in contrast to the Edwardian and later ones, which tend to be annotated and are akin to a personal diary (2010). Social media profiles, particularly on sites like Facebook, are the contemporary equivalent of those later annotated albums, and it is significant that Facebook even uses the same language of 'photo albums', and encourages annotation with the message to 'say something about this photo'. Dahlgreen's argument seems to correlate with John Berger's observation mentioned earlier, that black and white photographs evoke memories better than more stimulating colour ones, with a 'less is more' mentality. This is a perspective which does not seem to always hold true with social media interactions, where the text frequently provides the necessary context in order for users to 'read' the photograph meaningfully.

We have seen in the previous examples how valuable photographs are in prompting memory, but it is important not to consider images in isolation, since they are not published in isolation, and therefore it is virtually impossible to disentangle the impact of the image, from the impact of the written text. The two examples below illustrate the importance of the text accompanying the image, in terms of users' engagement:



Pebble Mill

17 January at 21:08 · 🌐

<http://www.pebblemill.org/blog/norman-paintings-piano/>

Hi, here's a photo by Martin Fenton of the piano in Radio Studio 3. It was this piano which was played by Norman Painting, who played the role of Phil Archer, in *The Archers*. Norman Painting died in 2009, aged 85. He had played the part of Phil Archer since the start of the Radio 4 soap in 1950. Additionally, Norman wrote over 1,000 scripts for *The Archers* between the mid 1960s and early 1980s. He also wrote two books about the series: *Forever Ambridge* in 1975, and his autobiography, *Reluctant Archer* in 1982.



Figure 47 Piano in Radio Studio 3, 2004, photograph by Martin Fenton

This post reached 2,437 people, had 29 'likes', and four comments. This was a high reach, although a relatively small number of comments proportionately. The photograph itself does not seem particularly interesting: a relatively modern upright piano, in a non-descript setting. The value of the post is only apparent if you read the text, and find out that it is the piano that Norman Painting, who

played Phil Archer in the radio soap-opera, *The Archers* (BBC, 1950-ongoing) used to play. Although there were relatively few comments, those there were added useful information, like the memory below:

Jane Ward [radio producer]: "Norman loved playing piano duets and duos for two pianos. I once went to his house for the day and we spent the entire time having a ball playing through loads of duet repertoire he had...it was such an enjoyable day! I played the Studio 3 piano for the programme a few times when they needed a pianist and Norman happened not to be in..."

The post shows the importance of the text as a foil to the photograph: the one lacks meaning without the other. Without the prompt of the written text, Jane is unlikely to have shared her story. The same dual importance of image and text is true for the post on the following page:



Pebble Mill

13 January at 21:01 · 🌐

<http://www.pebblemill.org/b.../andy-payne-filming-on-the-roof/>

Hi, here is a photo of Andy Payne, filming the arrival of the harrier jump-jet at BBC Pebble Mill, from the roof of the building, for Pebble Mill at One. Andy's great friend, Andy Stowe, was allowed up onto the roof by Security to take photos. They were accompanied by two sappers in case of any security issues!

I didn't recognise Andy with a moustache!

Thanks to Andy Stowe for sharing the photo.



Figure 48 Cameraman Andy Payne, recording the landing of a Harrier, from the roof of Pebble Mill, 1982, photograph by Andy Stowe

This post reached 3,211 people on Facebook, it had 82 'likes', and 11 comments, this was a high level of engagement for the site. The cameraman pictured, Andy Payne, sadly died in 2016 in his mid-fifties; he was a very popular figure, as well as an exceptional camera operator. The photo and accompanying text stimulated much user engagement. With such a popular person as the subject of the

photograph, I expected most of the comments to relate to him, but this was not the case. One thread of comments was about Andy directly, but the others concerned memories of the Harrier: the noise it made, the fact that local radio had not been warned and where people watched it from. The Harrier is not visible in the photograph, but is mentioned in the text, making it clear that it is not simply the photograph which is prompting memory and eliciting comment, but rather the marriage of image and text, which together stimulates a reaction. The text can succinctly explain the context, whilst the image makes the post enticing, and draws the reader in. Photographs are undoubtedly important as a catalyst for engagement, but the value of accompanying text should not be ignored. In a social media context, the '*annotated* photograph album' analogy is the most effective for stimulating user engagement.

Websites and social media sites have developed as very effective platforms for enmeshing written and visual texts, disseminating them widely and encouraging user conversations. Interestingly, Van House remarks that participants in her study, who regularly posted images online 'felt that images were more 'real' than text', as well as being quicker and easier to post and also to read (2011, p. 131). The feeling of 'realness' probably relates to the fact that we can see the image of the actual event, although arguably it is no more 'real' than a written description of it. I deduce, from the experience of operating the Pebble Mill Facebook page, that photographs prove particularly rich in terms of interaction because they are quick and easy to view on a social media platform, in a way in which written blogs and videos are not, as they frequently need more click-throughs, or require more devoted attention, rather than a quick glance. Additionally, I would argue

that annotated online photographs have an intrinsic quality that invites comment: the electronic version of flicking through a friend's photograph album and reminiscing on times gone by, with people who were also present. They capture the representation of a particular moment, which will have different resonances for different users, coloured by what has happened in the intervening period. We are habituated to documenting our lives through photographs, and sharing these with our friends and associates, particularly since the proliferation of social media. The quality of the photographs rarely seems to be an issue as far as engagement is concerned, it is the subject matter, and the memories evoked that are important, rather than the technical or aesthetic affordances, and the ability to share those memories in a communal setting. It is a way of reconnecting with friends and acquaintances whilst collectively reminiscing.

6.7 The Era of Collective, Online, Oral History

The earlier sections of this chapter have illustrated how the Pebble Mill virtual community builds the online archive which documents the history of the broadcast centre. Shared visuals and text evoke memories in others, who are prompted to contribute their own individual responses, which then builds the history further, with each person adding their piece of the collective jigsaw puzzle. Scholars referenced in the literature review, (see Van House, Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, Reading, Keightley and Pickering) emphasise the new digital media ecology created by interactive platforms for memory work: the *Pebble Mill project* uses these vehicles for remembering, and harvests the articulated

memories from the online community. However, these academics stress the memory process, rather than the creation of the memory product: in this case an oral history.

The most significant finding relating to the *Pebble Mill project* is the identification of a new paradigm shift in the writing of oral histories, what I describe as the era of collective, online, oral history. The inter-relationship of process and product is crucial here, and both have interactive online platforms at their core. As noted in the literature review, Flinn et al draw attention to the role of archives in stimulating memory (2009, p.76), and this is what we see in practice with *the Pebble Mill project*, the posting of a media artefact online, evokes memories, which are captured and then fed back to enhance the archive itself, in a virtuous circular process. All the examples seen earlier in this chapter, about how artefacts are sourced, posted and commented upon, are testament to this new departure in oral history writing. The examples illustrate how, why and what individuals contribute to the project, and demonstrate how this creates an idiosyncratic archive, telling a history in a manner that would be impossible through other methods. This process demonstrates social media's ability to transform non-fictional narrative, by effectively crowd-sourcing it in a non-linear fashion, a concept which questions Cobley's statement, mentioned in the literature review, that, 'social media have not wrought a transformation of narrative any more than email or telephone did' (2014, p. 186). Social media does have the ability to transform non-fictional narrative, and to collectively build a multi-authored, non-linear, multi-media oral history. The artefacts and stories to be included in the Pebble Mill history are predominantly chosen and

donated by members of the online community, they are then remediated by me on the website and Facebook page, with some additional information, followed by the online community building on the original post with their comments, anecdotes and further photographs or additional artefacts. It is a circular, creative process, where the community collectively produces their own history. Through this process a multiplicity of views is gathered, which provide a context far more nuanced than would be possible in an institutional archive, with personal first-hand testimony being key, rather than an institutional perspective. How individuals react to a particular multi-media blog post is not necessarily predictable, with some seemingly innocuous posts eliciting high response levels, and online conversations frequently taking an unexpected direction, but this adds to the democratic empowerment of the community, leading and authoring the collection down particular paths.

What is not yet clear is the extent to which other community projects will exploit the possibilities of collective, online, oral history making. I provided examples in the opening chapter of this thesis of similar online projects, but noted that few of these ventures were using the full potential of interactive platforms to enhance their collections. In time the opportunities afforded by interactive technologies are likely to become more visible to oral history projects, and the historians involved will hopefully capitalise on them.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the types of photographs shared within the Pebble Mill project, their industry context and who contributes them. Additionally, it has considered why photography appears to be such a key medium for encouraging memory work online, and looked at how online photo elicitation works in practice on the Pebble Mill sites. The chapter concludes that although photographs are a powerful memory stimulus in their own right, it is the ability to create multi-media texts online, which combine images with written text, that prove so successful in prompting user engagement. The capacity to build creative multi-media cultural memory texts online constitutes a paradigm shift: the era of collective, online, oral history. This presents new research opportunities and arguably new intersections of overlapping fields. Whilst Horst and Hjorth emphasise the opportunities that new media technologies enable regarding the production and circulation of visual culture, 'requiring us to re-examine the increasing intersections between practices of art, visual culture, ethnography and knowledge production (2014, p. 125), I would argue that the same thinking can be applied to other subject intersections, for instance: oral histories, idiosyncratic archives, and community histories, which map more closely to the *Pebble Mill project*.

Chapter 7

Video as a Medium for Oral History Recording and Display

This chapter reflects on my practice of recording video oral histories with programme makers and crafts people from BBC Pebble Mill. It examines the advantages and challenges of using video, rather than traditional audio only recordings, for such interviews.

It was observed in the literature review that influential oral historians, like Paul Thompson and Alessandro Portelli, were advocates of audio, rather than video collection methods, with Thompson even proposing that video could be counterproductive, with the visuals potentially distracting and conveying their own meaning (1978, p. 206). Even modern researchers, like Charles Hardy III, align articulations of memory with audio, rather than visual processes (Hardy in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 399). This position neglects to consider what video can add to the articulation of memory, both at the recording and dissemination stages, especially as Dean states that visual sources are the strongest and most memorable (1994, p. 26). This chapter attempts to present the case for video as an oral history medium, whilst also noting its limitations.

With advances in digital technology the cost of video recording equipment, editing software, and the ability to publish videos online, has become affordable for the majority of researchers. However, although the practice of using video is becoming more widespread there is surprisingly little scholarly work, beyond Dan Sipe's, on the advantages and disadvantages of it as a method: a gap which

was noted in the literature review. There is a body of literature giving production advice on where to place cameras and microphones, choosing locations, and setting interviewees at their ease; additionally, there is literature addressing ethnographic video, but little about how video can enhance the historical record, over and above an audio recording, or how the interactivity enabled by Web 2.0 can influence oral history making.

Examined from a semiological perspective, video combines several intersecting systems of signs: the verbal, visual, auditory and locomotive, making it a complex medium. Chandler notes that no medium is neutral, with each having its own affordances, due to the systems of signs operating (2002, p. 55), this means that each specific medium has advantages and disadvantages, which make it more or less suitable for a particular application. It is the individual properties of each particular medium which makes its choice more or less appropriate. Video is a complex and multi-sensory medium, and one which seems to have a lot of potential in an oral history context. The work of Dan Sipe was referred in the literature review; he argues that video provides a richer oral history source than audio alone, although many historians have yet to realise its power, both for recording and disseminating historical narrative (Sipe in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p. 143). This assertion would appear to be evidenced by my own work, and I aim to explore here, in what ways video is potentially a 'richer' medium, particularly in certain scenarios. Additionally, I will examine some of the challenges of using video for oral history work.

7.1 Video Production – My Practice

The use of video in oral history work is a collaborative venture; frequently there will be a crew of several people, who work together, but the most significant collaboration is between the oral historian and the contributor. Approaching an individual and requesting them to take part requires time, research, and negotiation. The relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, the research that has been carried out and discussions before the interview all influence the final recording, meaning that as Sarah Pink suggests, that the resulting video recording is not an objective text, but a subjective one, which engages with human experience and individual concerns (2001, p. 54). The video is a construct, with decisions being made about its production, presentation, its location, the questions asked, its scope, as well as its potential editing and display. The finished recording will be a co-creation, with trust being instrumental on both sides. The participant trusts that the oral history videographer will record the interview competently, editing, and potentially publishing it, appropriately, whilst the oral historian trusts the interviewee to take part, and be open and truthful in their testimony.

As discussed in the literature review, the content which I publish on the Pebble Mill website and Facebook page aligns with the broader definition of oral history provided by researchers such as Stephen Humphries (1984) and Paul Arthur (2009), who interpret it as the history around communities of living people, and recorded via a variety of media. The videos I produce also fall within this wider scope. My video practice includes different approaches, which are separable into,

firstly, oral history type interviews, which document a participant's recollections of sections of their life history, and may also include location footage and additional visuals, such as photographs, and secondly, reconstructions with television and radio crafts-people (technical, as opposed to production staff, workers with a creative as well as technical input, for instance, camera operators, and editors) demonstrating now defunct production equipment, and how they were used in programme making. The methods of shooting and editing these types of videos is very different. The oral history interviews tend to be recorded in controllable domestic settings, with a static camera and cabled microphone, whilst the reconstructions are dynamic, often hand-held, with the frequent reframing, to record cutaways and overlay shots, so that a viewer can understand the process being demonstrated, through seeing close ups, when the material is edited. I have produced these videos both by myself, and in conjunction with Royal Holloway's *ADAPT project*. *ADAPT* is funded by the European Research Council and led by Professor John Ellis. It aims to reunite historic television production equipment and the people who operated it, recording these reconstructions for posterity.

7.2 The Benefits of Video Over Audio in a Traditional Oral History Interview

It seems self-evident that video as an oral history medium can provide a more comprehensive, multi-sensory source material than audio alone, although many traditional oral historians choose not to use it. Video includes, as a matter of course, additional information over audio, including the mise-en-scene of the

recording, as well as, crucially, the physical actions, body language and gestures of the participants. How significant these visual factors are, is at the crux of deciding how valuable video recording is as an oral history medium. If the recording involves the demonstration of a physical action, then *seeing* that action performed is instrumental in documenting that operation, and indeed in a viewer understanding it. Where the case is less clear cut is when the recording appears to be a straightforward interview, with no props or significant visual action.

In order to explore the supplementary evidence afforded by video, I have analysed an interview I recorded in 2013 of television executive, Stephanie Silk. The interview took place in her sitting room in Birmingham, which was a suitably quiet, and comfortable location. A viewer of the interview would quickly make some assumptions about Stephanie: about her appearance, age, clothing, lifestyle and standard of living from seeing her, and her surroundings, which would not be possible from a purely audio recording. I recorded the interview with a single video camera (a Sony Z5), and a personal lapel mic. The duration of the interview was around two hours, and covered on three 45-minute digital video (DV) tapes. Only Stephanie and I were present. The interview dynamic is more complicated than usual in that I used to work for Stephanie, and in fact she gave me my first job as a researcher at BBC Birmingham in 1989; this alters the power dynamic, although Stephanie has no authority over me now. The purpose of the interview was to document Stephanie's career at the BBC, particularly focussing on the changing role of women in production; it was essentially an oral history of her working life, but did not explore her personal life and family

background, which is a starting point that oral history purists would always insist upon. Stephanie joined the BBC in 1965, and retired in the early 2000s, meaning that she had first-hand knowledge of the entire length of BBC Pebble Mill's operational period, and could contribute a valuable insight into the culture of production there.

There are methodological discussions about how best to analyse video, and much of the interest in video as a data capture medium comes from anthropology, and particularly ethnography, rather than the field of oral history. The approach with anthropological and ethnographical videos tends to concentrate on observing and recording actual events, in as naturalistic a manner as possible. This is a very different prospect from a constructed interview or reconstruction of a particular technical practice, which are the modes I tend to practice, however, the general principles regarding analysis and interpretation would seem to be applicable.

Even within sociological research Knoblauch et al. (2006, p. 9-10) observe a disregard for video, in favour of text-

based methodologies, and raise questions around what data can be distinguished in video, and how to study and interpret it. Amongst the issues they raise are the complexity and abundance of video data, meaning that just a short clip will yield a large amount of visual, kinaesthetic and audio data, which can then be transcribed. The data is multi-sensory, including speech, visual conduct, gestures, expressions of participants, as well as possibly the presentation of artefacts, observations relating to the environment, and the additional layer of the videography practice itself, in terms of camera angles, shot sizes and focus (ibid, p. 15). The challenges of how to analyse and interpret video data, may be a

factor in its relative underuse and disregard in academic circles. The process of how to transcribe the data is not clear cut: the audio transcription is straight forward in textual terms, although time consuming, but how to notate expressions, gestures and body language is less fixed. Some researchers create their own individual coding system, as there does not seem to be a universally accepted method. With the complexity of video data, the question of how much of it to analyse is a potentially problematic one. It is difficult to quantify what constitutes a unit for analysis. It is possible to take a macro approach and analyse a whole interview, giving an overview of the data, or conversely, to micro-analyse a small section of it. For the purposes of the analysis of Stephanie's interview, I watched all three of the tapes, transcribing sections of the audio, as well as describing Stephanie's expressions, and gestures, concentrating on sections where they were particularly animated: in effect an amalgamation of macro and granular analysis, but falling short of a full video transcription (see Appendix iv for the transcription notes).

From watching the rushes and analysing the video data, several things are immediately apparent: the professional context of the interview, certain mannerisms and patterns of speech, hand gestures, facial expressions, a level of performance, and that the process of being filmed can be unsettling. The recording set up is conventional; the camera is on a tripod, on a locked-off shot, which is a mid-shot (MS), with the lens at the interviewee's eye height, which is a neutral position. I am sat at the same height, out of shot, just to the right of the camera, so that the eye-line, between Stephanie and I, is level with the lens. The shot is face on to Stephanie, so that the viewer sees both eyes at all times. The

size of shot conforms to the conventions of professional television interviews: it includes the head and shoulders of the interviewee, cutting off at the waist. It is close enough to see facial expressions and emotions, but wide enough to see hand gestures. As Chandler notes, in visual representation the apparent proximity of the camera to the subject, in terms of shot-size, encourages feelings of emotional involvement, with close-ups signifying intimacy, and medium shots being a social mode (2002, p. 193), therefore an MS is suitable for this kind of interview. If it was tighter, the shot might seem intrusive, especially when it was not an emotive interview, and if it were looser, then the ability to see facial expressions would be diminished. The shot is framed with sufficient 'headroom' (the distance between the top of the interviewee's head and the top of the frame), so that no portion of the head is cut off, and therefore the shot appears aesthetically comfortable to the viewer. The composition also allows for 'looking room'; the interviewee is not positioned centrally, but towards the edge of frame on the side they tend not to look towards; this is more aesthetically pleasing. In this case, during the majority of the interview the shot is framed with Stephanie on camera right, with her looking off camera left, when she is thinking. The recording follows the convention of interviewees looking at the interviewer, rather than at the camera lens itself, which in factual television production tends to be reserved for the presenter, whose relationship is directly with the viewer, seemingly via the barrel of the lens. Stephanie, as a retired television executive, is aware of this convention, although interestingly at around timecode 06:40 on tape one, she does ask if she should be looking at me or the lens, and I reply that she should be looking at me. This might suggest that in reality the act of being

interviewed causes disquiet, even when one is very experienced in being behind the camera.

Whilst the interview does have the air of a conversation, and there were no scripted questions, it is a constructed and self-aware exchange, and Stephanie was aware that I wished to cut out my questions in the edit; this meant that it was helpful if she began an answer with a statement, rather than a 'yes' or 'no' response. A traditional oral history interview may differ in that it might present as a more organic conversation, with fewer stops and starts, and a less obvious performance. For instance, in the first seven minutes there are four breaks in the interview; twice Stephanie stops the interview whilst mentally searching for the right word, and once to ask about where she should be looking, additionally, I stop the interview at around timecode 06:00, to reposition Stephanie and the camera, as the sun has come out and I am worried about the background of the shot being over exposed. At this point we re-stage the interview from the start. A purely audio oral history would not have to contend with the technicalities of light, and would probably leave the recorder running even when the interviewee requires a pause for thought. Wanting to achieve a technically competent video is bound up with wishing to exhibit the edited material, rather than the intrinsic value of oral history. The element of performance is also linked not to the medium, but to the purpose. Stephanie was aware that I was going to edit the interview and publish sections on the Pebble Mill website, as well as playing excerpts at academic conferences. She confided to me that she was more nervous of former colleagues seeing the interview online, than she was about academics viewing it. She was concerned about getting the facts right, as demonstrated at

around timecode 12:30, she asks me to rephrase a question about why BBC Birmingham was chosen to house the 'Immigrants' Programme Unit', because she, "wouldn't like to be wrong". Her professional reputation is obviously important to her.

Stephanie switches backwards and forwards from her natural mode to her performance mode, which is very clear from her tone of voice. Sometimes she is talking to herself, or to me, and not for the tape, for instance, she says around timecode 17:18, "I'm trying to think where I'm going with this ...if I can just tell you...", and then she asks me to ask the question again, and says "I'll see if I can do better". She is very conscious of providing sound bites that I can use in the edit, and even refers to where I might cut. For instance, on tape three, around 18:00, she asks to start an answer again, and says, "I think you'll be able to get in in-between", meaning that there is enough of a pause at the end of her previous statement to be able to edit it cleanly. This demonstrates an understanding of how I may cut the footage, and of her wanting to provide me with suitable material, it also proves a reminder, to me as interviewer, of her professional skills and knowledge. At other times Stephanie forgets that I am still recording, because she is engrossed in our conversation and is not in her performance mode. On tape two at around timecode 13:00 she asks if I want to roll the camera, to which I reply that, "I am rolling", as I had been recording continuously, after apologising, she delivers the performed version of the story we were discussing before her digression:

There were a number of able female researchers at 'Pebble Mill at One' and there was one very able chap [laughs, seemingly to herself]. But all the directors and producers were male. And a number of these women, girls and

*women, had been working at full pitch for some time. They wanted to get on, and there was this critical mass of talented women literally waiting [**hands raised in pushing action**] to push down the dam [**right hand mimics a flowing motion**] and flow over into the brave new world.*

I have notated Stephanie's gestures, and non-verbal audio, in bold type, in square brackets. The metaphor of the dam being breached is a powerful one which illustrates a moment of significant change. However, it is not the words alone that tell the story, but the verbal language combined with the gestures.

Stephanie's hand gestures are an integral part of how she communicates, working in time with the rhythm of her voice, reinforcing the message, and mirroring the words kinaesthetically. The importance of gesticulation is observable across the whole interview. There are repeated movements, some are subconscious, such as adjusting her glasses and playing with her necklace, and others are linked to prompting thought, such as putting her finger to her lip, and on a couple of occasions, holding her hands to her head, giving herself time to think. It is not these gestures though that I consider to be particularly important, rather it is the hand gestures which complement the verbal communication directly. For example, in tape one at around 18:50 she makes an inverted commas gesture, to emphasise that "people didn't **know**" about television", and at 19:20 her hand draws steps going up, to illustrate, "I was learning my trade". There are numerous examples of this type throughout the interview, for instance when making a verbal list of programme types (tape one, 30:20), her hand gestures backwards and forwards to emphasise the list, and on another occasion (tape one, around 36:50) she counts some big crime stories she covered on her fingers. The hand movements work with the same rhythm as her spoken words, for example, on tape two at around 03:40 Stephanie says, "my own predilection

was for current affairs type items **[taps her hands together on the stressed words]**; I consciously developed an interest in cookery because I felt I should soften my image **[puts finger in mouth and laughs]**". The gestures are an integral part of the interview adding meaning to the words, giving energy to the performance and emphasising the points made, especially when seeking to visualise an object. For example, on tape two at around 05:30 Stephanie talks about the switchboard telephones they had in the production office of *Pebble Mill at One*, and draws the shape of the switchboard in the air, gesticulating with her right hand when she describes how the calls from viewers would flash up. The hand movements are a significant part of the communication method in this interview, animating the verbal language, emphasising and illustrating points and energising the conversation. An audio recording would lose this multi-sensory richness, especially for subsequent viewers of the material, and their understanding would be diminished because of it.

Facial expressions are important in adding another layer to the visual dimension of the recording, particularly given the static camera position and relatively close shot, in this instance. Expressions help us read the emotions of an interviewee, and allow us to make sense of elements within a conversation, such as pauses; this is another layer of signs that would be lost in a purely audio, oral history. In Stephanie's interview we can observe a range of facial expressions, with the most frequently recurring one being her looking up and off to camera left, out of the window, which is when she is searching for memories. This behaviour, although, not demonstrating emotion, explains pauses in the conversation, and the reflective quality of it. The expressions which provide more emotional insight

are the animated ones, such as frowns and smiles. For instance, towards the end of tape one, at around, Stephanie is talking about a specific *Pebble Mill at One* editor, Terry Dobson, “it was love and fear **[rolls eyes]** and boy did he keep you on your toes **[smiles]**”. The eye rolling emphasises the conflicting emotions of ‘love and fear’, with the smile implying a challenging, but ultimately positive professional relationship, which is now remembered fondly. On another occasion, on tape one at around 16:10, Stephanie is explaining how the ‘Immigrants’ Programmes Unit’ operated in ensuring fairness between Muslim and Hindu representation, “everything was very carefully balanced and calibrated **[frowning, accompanied by hand movement]**”. The frown illustrates the seriousness and precision that was taken in the even-handedness, and the gesture emphasises the importance of it. The facial expressions are part of the performative aspect of the interview, adding animation and energy. Stephanie describes being a newly promoted woman going into a male preserve, such as a film cutting room, “sometimes you felt that you had to run the gauntlet of some disapproval **[raises eyebrows, sways head, hand raised]** and a ‘let’s see what you can do’, kind of approach” (tape two, 20:28). The facial expressions, together with the gestures, help illustrate the emotions experienced by Stephanie and her peers, and make the conversation more interesting to watch and hear; they are certainly part of the performance.

From the analysis of Stephanie’s interview, it is clear that the visual dimension adds information to the recording. A viewer will learn about the interviewee from the mise-en-scene, and from their visual as well as oral presentation. With Stephanie, we observe an articulate, older woman, in a comfortable domestic

setting. Despite the fact that this is a static interview, with no props, the visual dimension, particularly of gesture and facial expression, contributes much to the recording. We note Stephanie looking camera left when searching for memories, we see her frowns and smiles, adding emotion when explaining particular experiences and we observe her hand movements and gestures working in rhythm with her words, lending weight and animation to what she is saying. The visual forms an important part of Stephanie's performance in the interview, and without it the recording would have less energy. Some contributors will be more or less visually animated, but in each case the visual aspect will add to the information in the recording. Surely historians desire the fullest, most informative version of a history, and since video images with diegetic sound do provide richer oral history evidence, than audio alone, video should certainly be considered as the medium of choice in many circumstances.

7.3 The Use of Additional Visuals in Oral History Interviews

Stephanie's interview included no visual images beyond her seated in her lounge, but oral history as a practice has the possibility of laying far greater importance on the visual dimension.

Since being awarded the George Shiers Trust funding in April 2017, I have been able to record a number of more ambitious video oral histories with programme makers and crafts-people. One of the people interviewed in June 2017, was Roger Casstles, a retired television producer and director, who was responsible for creating *The Clothes Show* (BBC1, 1986-2000). After a discussion with Roger,

I decided to film parts of his interview at the actual locations where he worked for the BBC, as well as a traditional static interview in one of the television studios at Birmingham City University. The first of these locations was in the centre of Birmingham, overlooking the canal, where the original BBC Broad Street studios were located, before the move to Pebble Mill in 1971; the second location was Pebble Mill road, overlooking the dental hospital which now stands where the Pebble Mill buildings were. Recording at these locations was much more challenging than a controlled interior setting. The logistics of setting up the shoot were complex, requiring filming permissions, risk assessments as well as parking and transport details to be considered. During filming there were issues such as background noise, fluctuations in exposure with sun and cloud cover changes, therefore, location shooting is not something to be embarked on without thought and preparation, but there were tangible benefits. Roger had suggested filming on location, he was extremely comfortable in front of the camera, and there was certainly an element of performance, for instance, he would occasionally look straight at camera, in an aside, to address the viewer directly. This demonstrates an innate understanding of video as a medium, and of the meaning of different eyelines. Eyeline refers to where someone in front of camera is looking. If an individual is being interviewed, they will usually be looking at the interviewer, and consequently their eyeline will be *off*-camera. In contrast, a presenter will look down the barrel of the lens, meaning that their eyeline is *to* camera. This is important to establish the presenter's direct relationship with the viewer. (Roger's interview is included in the practice artefacts contained on the accompanying memory stick.)

Putting the interviewee in the place where events happened helps the recall of those events: it literally and emotionally locates the interviewee in the site. The interviewee is likely to feel some emotional response to being in the actual place they are talking about. It also emphasises the passage of time, through the material changes that have occurred since the events related: buildings have been demolished, areas regenerated; the place is at once, the same and different. For the viewer of the interview, there is an obvious benefit: they can relate the events the interviewee is talking about, to the place where they happened, and they can see the interviewee situated in that specific place. This makes the video more interesting and more understandable.

A traditional audio oral history could also be recorded on location of course, and the same benefits for the interviewee would be apparent, but the visual aspect for the end user would be lost.

There are other ways to make oral history interviews more visually appealing, for instance using props or photographs during the interview, and capturing these images for editing in to the final version. Again there will be benefits for both the interviewee and the viewer. The interviewee will be able to focus their recall on a specific occasion, shown in the photograph, or related to the prop.

7.4 Reconstructions

Some of the interviews I have carried out, both by myself, and in collaboration with colleagues, involved the demonstration of how now defunct pieces of production equipment operated, particularly in the days of analogue production. These reconstructions are not traditional oral history interviews, although they do fall into a loose definition of oral history, and such demonstrations would seem to *require* video as a medium. The memory of the operator is stimulated by the physical presence of the machinery, in a way that would be difficult to imagine without it. This chimes with Fickers and Van Den Oever's plea for 'hands on history': a practical approach to historical enquiry, where through physically interacting with historical artefacts, we stimulate our 'sensorial appropriation of the past' (2014, pg. 273). The understanding we gain through this activity is qualitatively different from other kinds of historical endeavour. Additionally, the visual aspect is instrumental to a viewer's understanding of the production process being demonstrated. Without seeing what the piece of equipment looks like, how it moves, how the operator interacts with it, the operations the equipment performs and how it contributes to the production process, then it is difficult for a user to have any real understanding of the subject.

I have carried out a number of video demonstrations with vintage broadcast production equipment, including: a television outside broadcast truck, outside broadcast cameras, 1 inch editing equipment, and radio production equipment from the 1950s and 1960s.

In October 2012 a television outside broadcast (OB) truck CMCR9, built in 1969, was on display at an exhibition being held at the University of Salford (Manchester Science Festival, 2012). Since it is difficult to find 'working' examples of television apparatus from the 1970s and 1980s, I went along and recorded several videos with technical staff who had worked on the vehicle during its broadcast career. Whilst the truck has been extensively restored both internally and externally, there was still much work to do, particularly on the electronics, such as the camera control units (CCUs). This means that the OB truck was not in full working order, and not capable of actually recording a programme.

The interviews differed from the simple interview format of the recording with Stephanie. Instead of a locked-off camera on a tripod, the camera was hand-held, or balanced on my shoulder, depending on the shot. This results in a different dynamic; on the one hand there is more energy, from having a moving shot, able to reframe, and move towards or away from the subject quickly, whilst on the other, the camerawork can look shaky and less professional, with occasional focus issues. I find at least an element of hand-held camerawork to be the best solution for practical demonstrations, and consider that the dynamic quality is appropriate, making the recording more interesting and more understandable for viewers, due to being able to get the camera in for close-ups in real time. Due to operating alone, and in the confined space of the OB truck, I had to use the on-board camera microphone, which is omni-directional, and not of a particularly high quality, which compromises the audio quality somewhat.

Inside the OB truck I recorded an interview with retired sound supervisor, Jerry Clegg, I then recorded two demonstrations of OB cameras with a retired cameraman,. The method I adopted with Jerry's recording was to interview him hand-held, seated in the truck to start with, and then pick-up sections of the interview again, with him demonstrating the equipment at the same time. This enabled me to switch between the interview and the demonstration in the edit. Due to the cramped space of the OB truck, there was no space for a tripod for the interview, and I could not have recorded Jerry talking in shot and showing his hands demonstrating at the same time, necessitating the split between the interview and the demonstration. (The interview with audio supervisor, Jerry Clegg, showing how audio operations worked in outside broadcast trucks in the 1970s, is available via the Pebble Mill Vimeo site (link in the bibliography), and on the memory stick.)

With Malcolm Carr I adopted a slightly different approach, simply following the action with my camera, and moving between the cameras he was demonstrating, and his face. This proved particularly effective because of Malcolm's performance. He was very eloquent in his demonstration and explanation of the cameras. Malcolm's demonstrations are virtually unedited, and he required very little direction. Filming with Malcolm was serendipitous; I had not set up the interview in advance and had never met him before or since. He happened to be there when I was filming, and was very happy to be recorded when I approached him at the exhibition. This demonstrates the benefit of allowing flexibility in your recording schedule, and assessing filming options pragmatically.

(The demonstrations of retired BBC cameraman, Malcolm Carr, using the Pye outside broadcast camera and EMI 2001 cameras are available via the Pebble Mill Vimeo site (link in the bibliography), and on the memory stick.)

These demonstrations of now defunct television production equipment *required* videoing, in order to document the operations meaningfully, making them understandable to anyone wishing to view them. An audio recording of these encounters would be far less satisfactory. Traditional oral histories would tend not to include the demonstration of equipment, but showing the relationship between these men and their machines is an instrumental part of their life stories, and not one that an audio interview could document adequately.

Few would argue that video is not the best method of recording these kinds of reconstruction, however, I would suggest that there is another, subtler but still significant, additional dimension. In each of the re-encounters between the men and their machines which I have recorded, there was some disclosure made by the participants which illustrates the culture of production in a way not frequently documented. This might be a surprising fact about the piece of equipment itself, or how it was used, or how it enabled production to develop.

In the interview I recorded with Jerry Clegg, who had worked on the OB truck, as a sound assistant, the importance of plugging in to the General Post Office (GPO) system of lines, was something I was not aware of. He added some information, that surprised me, about the vulnerability of the television transmission system:

that an audio output which peaked too high, could take out a whole transmitter, knocking the programme off air, and meaning that no one in a particular geographical area could receive a BBC signal until the fault was fixed, giving the example of a particular incident which took out the signal in the North of England. Without being able to see the jack panel and the communication switches it would be difficult for an outsider to understand the process correctly and conversely it would be difficult for the contributor to describe the functionality without having the physical equipment to demonstrate with. I would suggest that without the participant interacting with the machine once more, that these nuggets of additional information might not be articulated. This method of interviewing seems to suit interviewees whose memories are more visual and haptic, than verbal.

In the interview with former cameraman Malcolm Carr, the discovery was about how colour outside broadcast trucks were used as drive-ins, to convert a black and white studio recording into a colour operation. This piece of information is delivered after Malcolm has demonstrated the features of the Pye camera. He handles both this camera and the more compact EMI 2001 with consummate ease, accessing his muscle memory for their operation. Whilst others at the exhibition were reverential and treated the cameras as if they were museum exhibits, the cameramen who attended were enthusiastic about operating the vintage equipment. It is the combination of men and their machines, which provides us with a compelling living history. The contributors have memory stimulated by re-operating the machine, and the machine comes alive to do its

job, under their operation. It is this combination, which reveals some hidden histories of the television professions.

The incidental comment from Malcolm about the use of drive-in scanners tells us much about the pressure on the BBC to create colour content in the late 1960s and early 1970s, despite the Corporation not being able to update its studio infrastructure quickly. From the time the CMCR trucks were built in 1969 they were routinely used as a pragmatic solution for creating colour programming in black and white studios. The OB truck would drive as close to the studio as possible, and cable its colour cameras into the studio, using it as a lit set, rather than as a fully operative studio. This practice happened at the BBC Birmingham studio in Gosta Green, before the purpose built, colour facilities were completed at Pebble Mill in 1971, and according to Malcolm, the same was happening in Manchester in the early 1970s. This kind of video interview is a very effective method of bringing production practices such as these to light. It might be possible to access these memories through other means, such as a seated, semi-structured interview, but without the haptic experience of re-handling the vintage machinery, the memories might not be evoked.

OB trucks, like CMCR9, were fitted with 2-inch videotape (VT) recorders, which were later replaced with 1-inch VT recorders, as the technology improved. I was keen to document the videotape operation, but unfortunately there were no VT machines on the restored CMCR9, therefore, I recorded a subsequent reconstruction about the operation of 1-inch VT recording in an editing suite at BBC Birmingham. This yielded further facts that I was unaware of about

analogue television production: firstly, how slow motion shots were created by physically spooling the tape, and secondly, why so many taped analogue programmes were recorded over and never archived.

In January 2013 BBC Birmingham's post-production department was being closed down, as factual network production programmes, including *Countryfile*, *Gardeners' World* and *Coast* (BBC2, 2005-present), were being relocated to BBC Bristol. A 1-inch VT machine had been kept by post-production in case 1-inch archive material ever needed transferring to modern formats. Before the machine was disposed of, and the editors were made redundant, I took the opportunity of asking one of the VT engineers, John Duckmanton, to demonstrate the 1-inch machine to me. The machine was a little temperamental, and took a while to get working, but the resulting video interview includes some interesting insights into the functionality of the machine, and the improvements it had over the original 2-inch VT machines. (The demonstration by John Duckmanton, of the 1-inch videotape machines is available via the Pebble Mill Vimeo site (link in the bibliography), and on the memory stick.)

One of the most surprising pieces of information resulting from this video is the technique of creating slow motion shots for use in sports coverage. Before I recorded this interview, I had not thought about how slow motion shots were achieved in this era. The fact that the slow motion was achieved by the VT operator manually spooling the tape, and adjusting the speed accordingly, seems incredibly crude and haphazard as a method. It is little wonder that mistakes were made, as it was easy to spool beyond a shot change, and ruin the effect.

The complexity of linear analogue tape editing, compared to modern non-linear systems is clear from this video interview. We also get an insight into the results of economics on production practices, and the impact this had on archiving. The fact that 2-inch videotape was extremely expensive led to tapes being bulk erased and re-used. This practice goes some way to explain the paucity of studio and outside broadcast programme archives from the 1970s.

All these videos are openly accessible on both the Vimeo platform, and on the Pebble Mill website.

7.5 Wider Relevance

In each of these video interview examples we learn about the practices behind television production in the 1960s-80s, and gain some understanding of the complexity of programme making in the analogue age. However, I would argue that we gain something wider as well, something about the culture of production: for instance, about the reliance on the general post office telephone infrastructure for early outside broadcast transmission; about how the BBC created colour programming despite the limitations of its black and white studios; and about why so many taped analogue programmes from the 1970s were never archived and consequently do not survive. These are incidental to the main purpose of the video interviews, but arguably of even more significance to the television historian.

Reuniting skilled technicians with the equipment they habitually operated provides an important opportunity for effective reminiscence and re-creation. The physical act of operating the machinery appears to rekindle memories of using it on particular productions in the past, which add depth and colour to the reminiscences. Despite the logistical difficulties of achieving these encounters, I would suggest that they are worth the effort of engineering, as the results are often illuminating and surprising. Fickers and Van Den Oever note that the benefit of re-enactments is not so much in the impossible quest at an 'authentic' historical reconstruction but in producing new ethnographical and empirical knowledge about past production processes (2014, pg. 276). The method does provide researchers with a very different historical understanding. It would seem that the resulting films, and indeed the wider *Pebble Mill project* provide a model that could be successfully adopted in other historical projects, and which have a significance for television historians outside of the United Kingdom.

Oral history projects usually rely on audio recordings, but given the visual nature of the subject matter with this project, I consider that video recording provides a more satisfactory result, despite the necessity of additional equipment and an interviewer/practitioner with video shooting and editing skills, and ideally a small technical crew. It would seem sensible that other visual oral history projects consider adopting similar models. Not only does the video interview seem to be the most suitable method of recording these histories, but certainly the most engaging way of disseminating them freely online.

If others wish to experiment with video as a method for recording oral history they would need to borrow, or acquire suitable equipment, including a good quality camcorder, tripod, external microphone, and ideally filming lights. Access to editing software, such as Final Cut Pro or Premiere Pro, would be necessary, if oral historians wished to edit their interviews. There are guides available which give detailed advice, such as *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* by Donald A. Ritchie. The equipment is only one element necessary for undertaking a video oral history project, arguably more important is a committed individual or team to drive the project, preferably with filming knowledge and expertise, as well as access to the community whose history is to be recorded.

7.6 ADAPT 'Simulations'

The reconstructions I have discussed here were recorded with single operators demonstrating a particular piece of equipment, with me recording that demonstration on a single camera. This scenario has obvious limitations, both technically in terms of quality (particularly audio), and editorially, in terms of showing and explaining what is happening.

In addition to these videos, I have collaborated on a couple of occasions with colleagues from Royal Holloway's ADAPT project. Their remit is to 'reconstruct' the television production processes of the late twentieth century, using a 'hands on' approach. ADAPT have far greater resources, and are able to organise much more ambitious 'simulations', often involving several contributors, who interact together to recreate the operational processes with now obsolete television

production equipment. These encounters are recorded in an observational manner using an array of locked-off and hand-held cameras. Professor John Ellis is the principal investigator of ADAPT, and has written for a forthcoming edition of the multi-media online journal, *View*, about the work of the project. He emphasises the benefits of *multi-camera* recordings of the reconstructions, because of their ability to fix the 'perishing moments', of the skilled operator reconnecting with the now defunct equipment (Ellis, forthcoming publication date). Having multiple angles available at any one moment ensures that the viewer is able to understand the intricacies of the procedure. The ADAPT team frequently synch up the shots and place them on a screen split four ways, so that the viewer can watch all four angles simultaneously, thereby concentrating on a closer or a wider shot, depending on what will aid their comprehension at a particular moment; however, it does take some time for the viewer to understand the geography of the different shots, especially the top-shots which view the equipment from overhead. The fact that the recording is observational is also important; Ellis likens the ADAPT filming technique to reality television, where the cameras observe, but do not interact with the participants (ibid). The contributors are the equivalent of laboratory subjects, being studied and their actions analysed retrospectively, in an ethnographic manner. This is a very different technique to my own practice, where I am asking the participants questions, and encouraging them to explain and demonstrate the technical operation. I am behaving in the manner of a 'show and tell' type television show, such as one of the gardening or lifestyle programmes I used to produce. In contrast ADAPT are behaving like an observational documentary, following the action using remote cameras, and adding explanation later via interview.

I worked with the ADAPT team in the recording of a 16mm film editing simulation. I arranged for a retired BBC Pebble Mill film editor, and his former assistant, now an Avid editor in her own right, (Avid being the professional digital editing software used in most television programmes and feature films) to edit some 16mm film on an operational Steenbeck (the standard equipment for editing film professionally). The encounter was recorded multi-camera using Royal Holloway students as crew. This was the first ADAPT simulation, and acted as a pilot to finesse the production method. The editors had not worked on the film editing equipment for around 25 years, and had to work hard to remember exactly how to operate the machinery. The working dynamic was fascinating, with the older editor sometimes taking an authoritative stance, and directing operations, whilst doing very little work himself! The reconstruction resulted in three short videos, which are hosted on YouTube, and accessible on the links in the bibliography. They are rough around the edges, and lack clean beginnings and endings, but they explain the process of film editing in an innovative way, testing out a new approach. In the first film Oliver White and Dawn Trotman demonstrate how film images and audio were synched up using a 'PicSync' (a mechanical device for marrying up the 16mm film images, with the magnetic audio tape) (Trotman and White, 2015a). In the second sequence, which is unfortunately displayed out of sync on YouTube, Dawn and Oliver show how film was edited on a Steenbeck, and actually make an edit (Trotman and White, 2015b), and in the final video Dawn Trotman explains the use of edge numbers and rubber numbers in film editing (Trotman, 2015c).

These videos demonstrate the complexity of the film editing process, which begins with the manual synching up of a cutting copy taken from the original film. The editing takes place on the Steenbeck, with the film being marked with a special 'chinagraph' pencil, denoting the area to be cut away, followed by physically joining the cut ends with tape. Equally interesting are the patterns of labour, and the interaction between the two participants, which is something missing from the one-man operations I have recorded myself. The contributors adopt the manner of working together from their shared history, quickly slipping back into their former roles, demonstrating the division of labour. As Ellis notes, this method of engineering encounters between historical equipment and their operators, and recording the interaction, has links with the practices of oral history, but enables the researcher to discover much more than would be possible through an interview alone. It provides 'a glimpse of the past through a new optic' (ibid). The interaction between the contributors, and the hands-on approach of re-discovering the operational processes together, gives the resulting videos an authenticity, and immediacy, which is engaging for the viewer, and aids the understanding of the processes being shown.

7.7 Viewer Engagement – Dissemination

Traditional oral history projects are often more concerned with recording the histories of living people, than in sharing these histories more widely. Collections are frequently housed in libraries where a physical visit may be required, or where access is restricted. With the *Pebble Mill project*, the objective has always

been to publish and share the community histories online, with open access. This corresponds with Dougherty and Schneider's (in Perks & Thomson, 2006) notion of the fourth paradigm shift in oral histories, where audio-visual recordings are accessible online. Engaging users with the online material is crucial to the impact of the project, and this is another aspect where video has benefits over audio-only histories, especially with the growth of video use on social media platforms, and particularly on Facebook. Industry commentators have argued that video is critical to the future of Facebook, with video becoming the most popular way of sharing between users, although photographs still constitute a greater number of posts (Constine, 2015). Video use on social media has expanded enormously in recent years, making it an increasingly significant medium for online dissemination, above text, and potentially even above still images.

The previous chapter examined why the visual engages users so effectively on social media; photographs enjoy the benefit of being quick and easy to read, whilst video demands more time and attention from its viewers, but it does have other advantages, particularly in terms of immediacy. Barthes sees film, [and I would include video in this exposition] as much more than animated photographs. He argues that photographs have the property of 'having-been-there': they are evidence of a moment in time, whilst film has the quality of 'being-there' (Barthes, 1964, p. 11). Moving images have an immersive property, which seems to transport the viewer to the depicted scene, which then unfolds before them, drawing them in. I hope that the Pebble Mill videos possess this quality, allowing viewers to vicariously experience a scene, whether it is

someone demonstrating a piece of equipment, or an interview. The message of the photograph is encapsulated within the image, whereas the meaning of the film or video is derived not only from the images, but from the audio, both diegetic and non-diegetic, and in a temporal context. This is why it is such a rich medium and why it is likely to be instructive, with viewers learning from seeing, as well as hearing the content.

Sarah Pink identifies another layer of complexity in the meaning of film/video, namely the context of the viewing and the subjective relationship of the viewer to the text. She argues that once videos are in the public arena, they are liable to diverse interpretations, and (mis)understandings (2001). This opinion is shared by Marcus Banks, who notes that a single reading of a film cannot be presumed, and that viewers will bring certain expectations of the form to any viewing. Viewers will obviously bring their own knowledge and experience to any viewing, but I do not think that subjective, or diverse readings are necessarily problematic. However, it is obviously important to make any video as self-explanatory as possible, and being clear to establish the context. This can be particularly challenging when a lengthy oral history video is split into shorter sections to facilitate online viewing, as is the case with the *Pebble Mill project*. There are small practical steps which can be employed to explain the context of the interview or reconstruction, for instance, titling and captioning each individual section, in order to ensure it makes sense to a user choosing to view one edited section in isolation.

Encouraging users to view, and more importantly, interact with the video interviews and reconstructions is a crucial element of the *Pebble Mill project*, as it is the interaction with the online community where the project takes on an exciting dynamic. It is this capacity for comment and interaction that constitutes a development beyond Dougherty and Schneider's fourth paradigm, into a fifth: where communities are empowered to respond, shape and build the oral history, beyond what has been presented by the historian.

The oral history videos are recorded to be seen and used by the online community, and therefore it is important to make them as watchable as possible. On social media platforms shorter videos tend to receive more 'views' than long pieces, and so a video of a few minutes duration is preferable to a complete interview. This is backed up by research which shows that medium length videos, between two and a half and seven minutes, receive most views on YouTube, with very short and very long videos (around ten minutes) performing less well (Cheng et al. 2013). Therefore, I edit the footage into shorter topic-based sections, of around five minutes, before uploading the clips to the Vimeo platform, and embedding them on the Pebble Mill website. It is also usually necessary to edit the footage, because of how it has been recorded; for instance, with Stephanie's interview, there are stops and starts, re-positioning and repeats of questions, making posting up an unedited version highly undesirable, and at odds with the element of performance which is evident in the rushes. It is clear from the delivery of Stephanie's interview that she considered parts of it for display, and it would be unprofessional of me to publish the parts where she is thinking aloud, or searching for the right word. This does mean, however, that

the knowledge of the participant that an oral history interview is going to be published, has an effect on the tone and presentation of the recording, which may be detrimental in some circumstances, particularly if the participant becomes very self-conscious, or reluctant to speak candidly about certain experiences. It is therefore important to consider the purpose of the recording before embarking on it, and discussing and agreeing it with the participant. Where territory is explored which the participant might not want making public, this needs to be made clear to the historian at the time, to avoid future issues or misunderstandings.

The majority of the reconstructions also require editing, in order to cut to different camera angles, and to insert cutaways and close-ups, which enable a more complete understanding of the process being shown. Watching the demonstration on a fairly wide shot, with no variation in shot-size or angle, would be unsatisfying and lacking in meaning for the viewer. There are occasions where the editing of reconstructions can be minimal, because of the use of a developing hand-held shot, meaning that the viewer can see sufficient detail to understand the process. This was the case with Malcolm Carr's demonstrations of outside broadcast cameras, because he required very few prompts, and there was sufficient room for me to follow his demonstration with the camera.

Editing the oral history videos, cutting them into shorter clips, and adding in additional visuals, such as photographic stills, has the advantage of making the finished product look more professional and more watchable. However, it can

have the disadvantage of removing the recorded material further from its raw state, and therefore potentially making it seem less authentic. Editing also has the effect of distorting the voice of the narrator, as observed by Portelli (in Perks & Thomson, 2006, p.39). There is therefore, a balance to be struck between representing the participant accurately, fairly and professionally, whilst making the material as engaging as possible to the online users.

Graphical and audio stings can be added in post production, such as the Birmingham City University sting I have used on some clips; these bookend the video, signalling to the viewer that the clip is about to start, or finish, and they add an air of professionalism. Captions are also useful in adding additional information, such as someone's name, or role, or a programme title, or crediting copyright for overlay footage or photographs.

7.8 Disadvantages of Video

The benefits of video recordings are perhaps more obvious than the disadvantages, but there are drawbacks, many of which are technical or logistical in nature. Video recording requires much more equipment than audio only, meaning that it takes longer to set it up for filming, and de-rig afterwards, as well as needing a larger crew to operate it to a high level, which can also lead to possible transportation issues. If your technical quality requirements are high, then skilled operators are necessary, which can present some difficulties, in terms of budgets and finding suitable people to act as crew. However, if good

technical quality is not needed, or is impossible due to budget constraints, then it is perfectly possible to film on a mobile phone, and upload it to an online platform like YouTube. This democratises the process of production, meaning that almost anyone can create their own oral histories.

It is clear from the rather ad hoc video recordings that I individually undertook on the outside broadcast truck, that the technical quality has suffered through operating alone, with a single hand-held camera. The major drawback is the poor quality of the audio, and the lack of control I had over the background noise, although the audio is still audible, and certainly better than nothing. These videos have their flaws, but I would argue that they were still worth recording, editing and posting online, as the opportunities to film men reunited with their vintage production machines are relatively difficult to engineer.

Ideally, unless it is a quiet environment and a controllable interview, then a number of people on location are required, depending on the number of cameras and the complexity of the shoot. However, a larger crew can also present challenges. Contributors may be less likely to open up about delicate subjects with more people around, and the atmosphere is less private and less conducive to an intimate conversation. Additionally, the presence of a camera at all, and particularly a larger semi-professional camera, may be off-putting to some contributors. The minimum size of crew required should be used, meaning that a simple interview, such as the one with Stephanie, should be possible with one videographer, whilst more complex shoots should use a larger crew.

Another disadvantage of video, over audio, oral history recording is the cost and availability of equipment. Although semi-professional digital camera equipment, and editing hardware and software, are much more affordable and available than ever before, these costs can still be significant. Fortunately, many educational establishments have access to equipment suitable for video recording and editing, although for community groups this may be more of a challenge.

Alongside the cost issue, is the complexity of video production and the skill level needed. Although there are a similar number of production stages to audio, each one is likely to be more time consuming and complicated with video. Once the rushes are recorded, they must be ingested, and backed up on a computer, before being imported into an editing programme. The video and audio will then be edited; the video may require effects such as colour correction, as well as transitions including wipes and mixes. Graphics, overlay footage, and music may also be added, before the edited piece is saved, exported, perhaps compressed, and then uploaded to a platform like YouTube or Vimeo. This is a complicated and time-intensive business, whilst audio only is frequently a quicker production process. There may be additional considerations to contend with, such as large file sizes, requiring the use of external hard-drives. The rapidly developing technological world also presents challenges, such as changing camera and file formats, as well as changing editing platforms, which can lead to format obsolescence. All of these factors make video more difficult to produce than audio only, but whilst they may be challenging to tackle, they do not negate the fundamental benefits of video over audio only, as a medium.

Another more philosophical disadvantage of video is the lost opportunity for users to bring their own imaginations into play in conjuring up pictures around purely audio content. It is sometimes said that radio has better pictures than television, because of the listener's licence to use their imagination to create the picture in their mind, and the same argument can be made here. In seeing the historic equipment and how it was used, the viewer gets an impression of the production process, but often it is a pale imitation of how the operation would have been in an actual live analogue studio, editing suite or outside broadcast truck, and there is an argument to suggest that video demonstrations only give us a very partial understanding, and indeed one where it might be difficult for the viewer to use their imagination to supplement the picture. However, I would conclude that in such demonstrations, video provides us with more additional understanding, through the use of visuals, than the medium limits us by.

The effect of the camera on the contributor, is another important factor to consider. Potential interviewees may be reticent to be filmed, regarding it as more intrusive than an audio only interview. People are sometimes concerned about how they appear on camera, and can become overly self-conscious or nervous, which is counter-productive. I have experienced several contributors who have been reluctant to be filmed, but who are content to have an audio interview recorded. In these cases, it is sensible to be pragmatic and record the interview using whatever medium is agreeable to the contributor.

One contributor was willing to be videoed for an oral history interview, but on reflection was dissatisfied with his own performance, feeling that his memory

had let him down at times, and left him struggling to recall names and dates. He emailed me after the interview, here is an excerpt: "I was disappointed that I could not come up with the subtle wording and the delicacy of comment that I spend time finding at the key board. Nor could I put into words, off the cuff, my thoughts on the less routine and pragmatic aspects of my time at Pebble Mill." For this interviewee, video per se was not the issue, but rather not having the time to think through and finesse his responses; an audio interview would probably have been as frustrating for him as video. He had started writing his memoirs before my visit, and it is clear from his email that he preferred the reflective process of writing to the immediacy of a verbal interview. In fact, he had suggested reading out his written memoirs for the video, but I felt this would be unsatisfactory, as it would lack spontaneity, and there would be no eye contact. The contributor had been a script editor, and therefore it is not surprising that writing is his preferred medium. Despite his disenchantment, he was not withdrawing his consent to have his video interview displayed, rather he was emphasising his disappointment with his perception of his performance. In fact, the interview was not as poor as he thought, and with some judicious editing to remove pauses, it will be very watchable. This experience demonstrates that there are drawbacks in using video, or indeed audio, as a medium on some occasions, as it does not suit all contributors. Therefore, the choice of medium is best discussed with contributors before arranging an interview, and other methods, such as written accounts should be considered, if the contributor is more comfortable with this as a method.

7.9 Conclusion

Where the oral history being captured involves the demonstration of a particular physical process, then video is certainly the best suited medium, as the visuals are essential for viewers to witness the encounter in an understandable context. The reuniting of practitioners with the historic machinery of their craft is a haptic experience which seems to stimulate memory and frequently results in unexpected disclosures of lesser known production practices. This phenomenon is not caused by the use of video as a method of capture, but it is enabled by it, since practical reconstructions are unlikely to be staged for audio only recordings. This is, therefore, a serendipitous result of video capture of oral history content, rather than being integral to the medium itself.

Depending on the type of oral history interview, and particularly if historical production equipment is operated, or the interview is recorded at a significant location, or props or photographs are involved, then I argue that video should be the medium of choice. I suggest that it has distinct advantages as a medium, even in static oral history interviews, particularly for the dissemination of material. However, this does not mean that it is the best medium in all cases, and oral historians should be sensitive to the preferences and vulnerabilities of their subjects.

Video oral histories are likely to engage end users more successfully than other forms, because of being able to see, as well as hear, the contributor, thus understanding the physical context in which they were recorded, whether it was

at their home, in a public place, outside or inside, and draw subtle conclusions from the mise-en-scene. As a viewer you can read the contributor's body language, observe pauses: seeing where the contributor needs time to search their memory for a response, or where they might be uncomfortable in answering a question. There is fundamentally more information available to the end user in a video, rather than an oral interview. That additional information aids our understanding of the history being explored, and makes video a powerful medium for both recording and disseminating oral histories.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: What New Historiographical Opportunities are Enabled by Multimedia Online Archival Practice?

This chapter draws together the themes which have emerged through this thesis, extracting what is generalisable from this project, for others wanting to create similar community histories. I have spent the last few years developing the project and have therefore learnt, through experimentation and observation, how we can use online platforms for historiographical work, adding to our knowledge of this field. Social media, and in this case, specifically Facebook, is a powerful tool for enabling collaborative interaction, with the ability to share stories and artefacts, to build an online, collective memory text. The potential of social media for this kind of work is yet to be fully realised, but the *Pebble Mill project* is an example of one method of harnessing this functionality, to create a resource impossible to construct through other means.

8.1 The Practice of History

This thesis is concerned with the practice of history, and demonstrates that online platforms present us with opportunities to write history in new ways. It supports Andreas Fickers's assertion that 'academic historiography has definitely lost its hegemonic power in the public sphere' (2012, p. 6). Fickers notes that the internet offers abundant opportunities to share previously inaccessible sources with potentially unlimited users, but asks, what kind of history this might produce (ibid). The *Pebble Mill project* is one possible answer:

a history based not on a critical examination of documentary sources, within a culture of objectivity, with the aim of producing a synthesis of authenticated events in a scholarly, narrative form, instead a history of living people, written by the community whose past experience it is, and facilitated by me, as archivist, chronicler and interpreter. Documentary sources, and particularly artefacts, are critically examined, albeit not in a scholarly manner, and particular events are retold in a narrative form, but there is no pretence at objectivity, because the writing concerns the community's lived experience. How the actors in these particular events felt and the position they took, are germane to the narrative, and at the heart of *their* history. This is a qualitatively different kind of resource, and different from everything else that is currently available. It is an informal history, often written in the form of an online conversation, rather than academic prose. It is partial, subjective, and in places lacking in accuracy, but it is the history that the community chooses to write, and to share, about itself. This imbues the resulting historical text with a different kind of authenticity, and a different kind of value. Such collections have a place in the archival world, providing complementary collections to the institutional repositories, and to 'official' histories, though they may lack the academic rigour of a traditional history. The same practice that I have developed with the *Pebble Mill project* is applicable to anyone wanting to write the history of any other community or unity.

8.1.1 *The Era of Collaborative, Online, Oral History*

The most valuable aspect of the Pebble Mill project is the interaction of the online community, and without this the project would lose its spontaneity. The interactivity enabled by social media in the last decade marks a paradigm shift in online archival possibility, and must not be underestimated. The online community has the power to add value to digital artefacts through comments, adding contextual information and personal experiences. They also have the power to shape the direction of the community archive through posting up their own material, and adding it to the archive. The collective sourcing of artefacts and information, enlarges both the archive in terms of the number of artefacts, and also potentially enlarges the scope of the archive, making what might seem a niche project, wider and more widely applicable. For instance, whilst a particular story posted on the Pebble Mill Facebook page might seem only pertinent to BBC Birmingham, the production processes and practices were undoubtedly the same across the BBC and Independent television throughout the country, so the specifics are about the particular Pebble Mill experience, but the relevance is national, and even international.

Institutional archives still hold an important place in preserving documents for future use, and continue to set laudable standards of archival practice, but idiosyncratic archives are complementary in nature and fill in some of the institutional gaps. The two should not be in direct competition, and both can learn from the other. Traditional institutional archives should learn from the open access granted to users of community archives and the value of the

interactivity enabled by social media. Online community archives can learn much from the organisation and categorisation of the traditional archive, and the value of rigour, robust documentation and preservation. Traditional archives find it difficult to relax some of their access regimes, and for good reasons around privacy and the need to redact sensitive information, for copyright, other rights reasons or for legal issues. However, there may also be a reluctance to reveal too many archival treasures to too many people. This is where they could learn from community archival practice, where open sharing is encouraged. This would not be possible for all collections, but it is possible for some artefacts in each archival collection. Traditional archivists may not see their primary function as providing access, and be more focussed on preservation and documentation, but opening up the archives can have unforeseen benefits, particularly in terms of promoting the value of the archive to the public. Community online archives need to embrace the systematic categorisation of traditional archives, which keeps the materials easy to find, and relatable to other similar artefacts. Explaining the context of the item and maintaining its relationship with other artefacts in a particular collection, thus proving its provenance, is key here. This would transform community collections into more valuable, coherent and searchable archives, with suitable databases. The formal and the informal, the physical and the virtual, the traditional and the modern archives can exist side by side, influencing and improving each other.

For online community archives to succeed they need to harness the power of the community. At the outset of the *Pebble Mill project* there was no online community relating to the historic broadcast centre. There were pockets of face-

to-face activity, of retirees' coffee mornings and annual reunions, but there was no online community. Small social media groups had been set up by specific departments, for example the BBC Pebble Mill engineers, but there was nothing that brought a wide cross section of former broadcast centre workers together to tell their own collective story. When the project began I did not appreciate the importance of developing an online community, but that aspect has been the one that has ensured the success of the project, and which will lead to its longevity. I brought the online community together on Facebook through the project, and whilst this happened in a relatively organic fashion, it is a considerable achievement to create a community of around 1600 individuals, all with a common interest. The community feeds the project with new information, stories and artefacts, and without it the sources for new blog posts would largely disappear. It is a symbiotic relationship: the community is enabled by the online archival project, and the project is enabled by the community.

The significance of an engaged online community is realised in what it enables the historiographer to pull together about a history. The community possesses a pool of knowledge, experience and memories which relate directly to the history being documented. It is up to the citizen curator to dip into that pool to access the living history to be recorded. The skill of the citizen curator is in working out how best to engage with the community. With the *Pebble Mill project* that engagement has been through my creation of regular multi-media blog posts, shared on the website and Facebook page, with the aim of stimulating discussion and facilitating further sharing.

8.1.2 *Who are such Histories for?*

We, the Pebble Mill community, are engaged in a process of collective history writing, and as curator I am compiling the resulting material. However, we acknowledge that we are undertaking this task primarily for ourselves. As curator, I have to have an awareness of the wider usership, and therefore add content that I have produced myself, such as the oral history videos, but again this is aimed primarily at the contemporary user, especially as there is currently a high level of interest in the history of television and of media in general. Whether this account on the Pebble Mill website will be of use to future generations is not my principle concern.

The *Pebble Mill project* is primarily for the members of the specific online community themselves, and similar projects should be focussed on what works for a particular group, although such sites do have a wider significance. For instance, frequently the children of BBC workers want to find out about the careers of their parents, and the site has also been used as a resource by academics, media organisations, as well as national institutions like the British Film Institute, and indeed the BBC itself. The process of remembering working lives in a collective forum has a multifaceted value for the individuals involved, including:

- Social value
- Affirmation of identity
- Validation of contribution

- Memorialising individuals
- Pleasure in collectively creating a historical text

These aspects are addressed below.

There is an important social value in reminiscing on times gone by with people who have shared a particular experience. This reinforces social networks, which helps a person's sense of wellbeing. As individuals age, they are likely to become less mobile, and may see friends and former colleagues less frequently in face-to-face settings, making online encounters more important. Loneliness is a condition often encountered in older age, and being able to get back in touch with previous colleagues is likely to help combat it. Collective, online reminiscence may also aid sufferers of conditions of old age, such as dementia, as frequently the memories which are retained in sharpest relief are those of young adulthood, and therefore discussions stimulating these memories can be beneficial. The social value extends beyond the virtual world, as such sites also facilitate face-to-face events, which can be organised and advertised through social networking platforms.

Interacting with the *Pebble Mill project*, particularly for former BBC workers, is an affirmation of identity. Through watching, reading, and contributing users are in effect joining a 'club', they are aligning themselves to the project, attesting its relevance to their lives, and to their sense of self. Individuals who worked for an institutional employer, like the BBC, for a significant portion, or all of their working lives, feel connected to that institution even after they have left it, often feeling part of an institutional 'family'. The association with the institution

becomes part of their identity. Therefore, being involved in projects around the history of their working lives with former colleagues, is entwined with notions of identity.

The value to the individual user goes beyond cementing their sense of identity, to validating their professional contribution. When people retire, or leave a respected employer, like the BBC, there can be a loss of status and self-esteem. Participating in a project which venerates the work they did, reinforces the significance of their work, to themselves, their former colleagues as well as to their family and friends. This can have a positive effect in building self-esteem.

One of the valuable aspects of the project is its ability to memorialise individuals when they die. In fact, many of the most popular postings are those centred on memories of working with a particular person who is no longer with us, frequently with a photograph, and biographical details provided as an initial focus. It is the social media equivalent of an interactive, collective obituary, or a virtual funereal guest-book full of happier memories. Although poignant, these are usually celebrations of life, rather than outpourings of grief, and are often a source of comfort for families of the deceased. There have been examples during the project of individuals who were terminally ill, wanting to collect the memories of people who had worked with them, during their lifetime, rather than leaving it to others after they had died. This self-memorialising is potentially something which will become more common with the growth of social media, as we desire to create a memory cache of our lives.

There is also a value to the individual, as well as to the project, when people contribute information and artefacts. Participants are very positive when they are able to add to the archive in some way. They are pleased that the artefacts they have kept in their lofts and garages for years, can be re-mediated, shared, and are valued by the project. Similarly, there is a sense of gratification in being able to contribute a fact, or memory, which others may be oblivious to. They are able to write and remember about themselves, and about what they have achieved in their working lives; this is an empowering process. Being the provider of knowledge, a respected voice, again builds self-esteem and status within the group, affirming one's identity.

The contribution of the *Pebble Mill project* has yet to be fully mobilised, and there is undoubtedly a wealth of possibilities, as yet unexplored. I would argue that it has a value in interpreting major cultural artefacts, for instance through screenings, and through the video oral histories being recorded. The project began with a number of public screenings of television dramas, and these drew attention to the cultural legacy of BBC Pebble Mill. This legacy is further contextualised and interpreted through the oral history interviews that I am currently recording.

8.1.3 *History and the Future*

The writing of history is a process of selection: choices are made about what is to be written about and remembered, and what is to be omitted and potentially forgotten. History is the account of the past that the future finds necessary or

useful. The history that will be created of our times will make use of, as its raw material, what survives from our time. Judgements will be made about the raw material according to the standards of the times, and absences, both voluntary and involuntary, at the heart of what is being said and shown will be investigated. Whether or not the Pebble Mill project will be useful to future historians is a matter of speculation. The contextualisation it provides for other sources, such as the archive of television programming, may prove valuable in explaining the cultures of production, and the experiences of the programme makers. Equally, it may be useful in indicating the nature of workplace cultures in the late 20th century, in the era before mass computerisation and the casualisation of the television production industry. Additionally, it may not be the content of the archive which is of interest to future historians, but the process of its democratic, community-based production and dissemination.

In academic histories it is the historian who makes the choices, based on an examination of documentary sources, and what physically remains from the period being studied. With the *Pebble Mill project*, the process is rather different, as the historical, multi-media text, is what the online community has chosen should be remembered about BBC Pebble Mill, and about themselves, for the future. The sources are sometimes official documents, but more often they are career-history blogs from individuals, reflecting on their working lives, or the first-hand testimony of people's reminiscences of particular events, and the remains from the era, are the photographs, the pages of script, the programme merchandise, that have been kept safe in the intervening period. The community

through its contributions has assigned a value to particular events, and by having a contribution to make, has deemed these worthy of being remembered.

What we do not know is whether the history that the community has chosen to write, and the events it deems worthy of remembering, are what the people of the future will value, and indeed this is not our primary concern, as the history is being written for the community itself and for contemporary users.

8.2 The Myth of Permanence

Through undertaking this project for a number of years I have become aware of the vulnerability of the 'idiosyncratic archive'. There is a perception that the online space has a permanence which masks the precarious nature of many websites and social media groups, especially when they are beyond the care of institutional resources. A high profile example of this precarity is the 1986, *BBC Domesday Project*: a nationwide digital initiative to mark the 900th anniversary of William the Conqueror's original Domesday book, to which over a million people contributed. The project used special laser discs read by a BBC master computer, but the technology was expensive and had few adopters, meaning that the technology became obsolete. Through initiatives to salvage the project and make it widely available, parts of the data have been retrieved and were published online (BBC, 2011). In this case, because of the size and scale of the project, and the fact that it involved the BBC, there were the resources to resurrect parts of it, but this is not necessarily possible with smaller initiatives, and in fact, it is pertinent to note that the pages explaining the retrieved

Domesday Project are themselves archived, and no longer being updated or capable of being interacted with. However, the value in the Domesday project was in galvanising communities to come together to map their surroundings, as well as in creating lasting (or short-lived) documentary evidence of their endeavours. The *Pebble Mill project* is the same; the value the project has is in the here and now, for the community which has created it, through the process of creation.

We have a perception that archives and collections are permanent, but this is frequently not the case, especially outside the care of national institutions. Whilst attempting to preserve and 'futureproof', the collections we are responsible for, we need to recognise that this will not always be possible, and that many archives and collections are impermanent, and not only 'idiosyncratic ones'.

The Pebble Mill website is a WordPress site, which seems a relatively stable platform and it is supported by Birmingham City University, in terms of server hosting. It is probably unusual as an online community archive to enjoy this resource, and obviously this may not always be the case. If WordPress was to go out of business, or the University decided not to support the site technically and financially, then its future would be in doubt. As with any 'idiosyncratic archive' which is operated by an individual, if I choose not to continue developing the project, it would relatively quickly risk becoming defunct itself, and a newly accessible history, would become inaccessible once again. Ideally we should

archive such sites, so that the content is retrievable in event of catastrophic failure.

Due to the dynamic nature of websites like the Pebble Mill one, they are relatively difficult to archive themselves, especially when material is hosted on diverse external platforms and then gathered together on the website. The videos on the Pebble Mill site are hosted on Vimeo, for instance, with audio items being embedded from SoundCloud. This makes the task of archiving the archive a challenging and imperfect one. There are measures which can be taken, for instance, I have downloaded versions of the website using the software *HTTrack*, but the resulting files are not particularly user-friendly, and whilst they do provide a version of the site which would enable it to be re-built if necessary, they do not give a usable static version of the site which resembles the original. Personally, I feel an obligation to preserve the digital artefacts which have been donated largely by the community of participants in the *Pebble Mill project*, especially if bottom-up living histories are to have a currency beyond their specific founding communities. An element of future-proofing is required if these projects are to remain accessible for future historians.

As discussed in the chapter, 'Engaging with the Online Community', social media platforms are particularly vulnerable, as technology develops, companies are bought and sold, and priorities change. The groups and pages established on Facebook are controlled on a micro level by the administrators of them, and whilst that is undoubtedly important as far as the day to day operation is concerned, there is a macro level of decision making from Facebook itself, which

dictates everything from the functionality to the appearance of the site. Changes are regularly made concerning its appearance, and procedures, in order to respond to commercial priorities. Facebook is not a democratic organisation, and users have very little control over the corporate decisions imposed. This makes the question of how to preserve the 'work' of the online community, which grows up around projects like the Pebble Mill one, a pressing one. Whilst comments can be copied across from one precarious platform to another potentially more controllable one, which has been my practice in transferring Facebook comments to add to the corresponding post information on the Pebble Mill website, this does not replicate the interaction that takes place on the social media platform, and raises its own ethical concerns.

In order to keep a record on the workings of the online community, I have downloaded the posts and comments from the Facebook page. This will obviously need to be repeated as the site continues to develop. This practice will build in some resilience to the project, and provides a back-up if the page was disbanded by Facebook, as the preceding group was. Whilst producing back-up copies of the online sites is a sensible measure, they lack the functionality of the online ones.

We should accept that permanence is not something which we can guarantee, and is indeed not achievable for many important collections both nationally and internationally; whilst building in resilience is desirable, we should become more relaxed about how long projects such as this, remain accessible for. We are writing this history to explain how we spent our working lives, but we should

acknowledge that we are doing this for ourselves and our immediate friends and families, in addition to a potentially nebulous future.

8.3 Citizen Curation

This thesis has explored the lived experience of citizen curatorship in a way that has not been attempted previously. The citizen curator role is a new one, and little scholarly research has been done, especially from the perspective of the individual curator themselves, which is one of the unique aspects of my research.

Citizen curatorship is crucial if projects like the *Pebble Mill* one, involving online community archives, are to succeed. Such projects do not happen spontaneously, they require an individual, or small group of enthusiasts to shape, develop and deliver them, in order to facilitate the growth and engagement of the online community. They need someone with commitment to the project, because fostering online engagement demands sustained effort, it is not something that can be stopped and started on a whim. If a burgeoning online community suspects that their interaction is not being seen or valued, they are likely to cease participating. Therefore, individuals wishing to develop similar projects must be realistic regarding their contribution. When I began the project, I did not appreciate the level of commitment it would demand, but having worked on it for a number of years, I do understand the inter-dependence between the input of the curator and the input of the community. Consequently, I do not foresee, and would not want, the conclusion of this thesis to mark the conclusion of the

project, instead the project will continue to have an evolving life beyond the scope of this research.

I consider myself a citizen curator, and projects such as this, require this role: someone to gather the remains of the past, to search out sources, and to actively interpret them, in order for the community to interact and enrich the project through searching out and adding their own sources and artefacts. Such people are at the heart of building 'idiosyncratic archives'; they are a new breed of historiographers, with a range of complementary skills. They gather content from different sources, perhaps commissioning it, re-purposing it, embellishing it, making sure it conforms with the house style, is fit for purpose, scheduling it and ultimately publishing it online. Roles such as this develop organically as platforms develop and the need arises. It is easy to underestimate the complexity of the role, which combines technical operations, creativity and project management with editorial decision making, researching and communicating with producers and users. The citizen curator often provides the driving force to the project, bringing together and shaping the disparate elements, and deciding on the direction of the community's focus.

I am, both, part of the Pebble Mill community, and am therefore a trusted 'insider', as well as now an academic, who can appreciate the value of the historiography. I liken my own practice to strands which together form the web, which is the project itself. The strands of the web include disparate activities: researching, writing, requesting, filming, editing, scheduling, cataloguing,

publishing, moderating and evaluating, all of which come together in the umbrella role of citizen curator.

8.4 The Future of the Pebble Mill Project

There are very many positives in running the *Pebble Mill project* and even after several years I still experience a thrill in seeing the response to a blog post, of hearing contributors' stories, and receiving new artefacts to share. I will continue developing the project over the coming years, although potentially at a slower rate, if the artefacts donated reduce in number. The focus of the project may also shift to include more video oral histories, as this is an area I am keen to build on, especially with being awarded the funding from the George Shiers Trust, for this purpose.

In the longer term there is the issue of archiving the project's archive. I have had a conversation with Dr Clare Watson, the director of MACE, the Media Archive for Central England: the regional moving image archive for the East and West Midlands, and she has agreed to house the database of the Pebble Mill website, including the digital media artefacts. Whilst this does not mean that the website would continue to exist in its current form, it would ensure that the artefacts collected by the project would be preserved, and searchable by researchers. This agreement provides a degree of longevity and sustainability for the project.

The video oral histories produced as part of the project will also be preserved and curated outside the project. Through collaborating with the BECTU History Project, the video oral histories will become part of that collection, and will be looked after along with their other oral histories, and made accessible via the BFI as well as the History Project itself. Written transcripts may be taken, and whilst formats become obsolete with time, I would expect that the History Project has the resources to copy formats across to newer technology in due course.

Whilst there is no particular expectation of longevity with the project, the online community is actively engaged in the project currently, and so, for the foreseeable future I will continue to facilitate the page, making regular posts and encouraging interaction. I am honoured to have been pioneering the role of the citizen curator, and will continue to do so.

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