



digital:works

annual report 2024-25

About digital:works



Participation Through Creative Skills

digital:works is an Arts, Education and Heritage organisation which works with local communities, providing training and creative assistance,

to produce oral history-based digital media projects.

We are committed to a participatory approach. Creative digital arts are an exciting way for people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with and learn more about others from their local community – especially if they are the ones shaping and leading the creative process.

Accessible Projects for All

Our commitment to participation means we place great emphasis on inclusivity.

Our projects actively involve people from all corners of the community – be they young or old, visually or hearing impaired, or someone for whom English is not the first language.

The skills required in taking part in our projects do not depend on advanced media literacy or prior experience with digital equipment.

Community Ownership

Our goal with all projects is to encourage and maintain participants' sense of ownership of both the process and the final product. This, we believe, is the guiding principle of true participation work.

Chair's Report

This year we said goodbye to our much valued and long-term Trustee in David Rogers. David has been with us from the start and acted as Treasurer throughout his tenure. We will miss him and hope the future treats him well.

The Trustees have been joined by Rozanne Gomes, who discovered our work through volunteering on projects and brings much experience of educational work especially with people with special educational needs.

We had three major oral history film projects this year. One of them was directly supported by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and built on our previous look at London's session musicians. This one looked at live music in London's West End from seedy nightclubs to iconic concert halls, while working alongside Camden and Westminster Archives. This was launched at a packed King's Place in Kings Cross to an audience of over 200 enthusiasts. We also worked with Westminster Archives on their Moving Away Your Dust project where we worked with primary school children to interview workers involved in refuse collection and disposal and created two documentary films. Our other film project this year was with Katherine Low Settlement to train volunteers to interview staff and users to tell the story of the settlement since its inception 100 years ago.

Like many charitable organisations we have found applying for funding particularly competitive and challenging this year. After a number of unsuccessful grant applications to regular funders we have sought to diversify our applications to new and wider networks. Our partnership with Royal Hospital for Neuro-Disability, following their successful bid to Heritage Lottery Fund, was dissolved before work commenced because their timetable was shifted and clashed with commitments we had already made.

A successful bid to Cory's Community Fund and a subsequent commission from them will mean we will be working with local schools to investigate Mudlarking on the Thames and the Energy from Waste facility in Belvedere.

A separate proposal to commemorate Swiss Cottage Library's 60th anniversary with an oral history project and film documentary was accepted and funded by Camden's Community Infrastructure Levy.

So, all in all a busy year with plenty of positives to look forward to.

Sally Booth, Chair

Review of the Year

digital:works have completed one National Lottery Heritage Funded project this year and partnered with Local Archives and Katherine Low Settlement on two other projects.

Fixing Day - An Oral History of Live Musician's Work in London's West End.

"Fixing Day" is a project that explores the history of the working lives of musician's working in London's West End. The gigs at the 2i's club in 1950s Soho, the jazz venues, the theatre work, the Palais scene and more. With musicians young and old, we explored the skills, how they got their work, the highs and the lows, as well as the changes in the working lives of musicians from the 1950s to the present.

Archer Street has a central place in the history of live musicians work in London's West End. In 1924 the dance craze around the Charleston arrived in London transforming the dance scene which until then had been dominated by ballroom dancing. With it came opportunities for musicians in London but also for immigrants to meet the new demand. The musicians would get their work by lining Archer Street in London's West End, instruments in hand, waiting for band leaders or contractors, also known as fixers to come looking for musicians. This open air unofficial labour exchange became an integral part of London's music scene and Monday was the day jobs were given. It became known as "Fixing Day". For forty years this was the main way musicians got work. It was not only a means of getting work, it was also a social scene, where musicians would meet and socialise, often in the three pubs on the street, but when they closed for the afternoon, out on the street which would be packed with musicians.

From the mid 60s the widening use of the telephone led to the end of Archer Street with "fixing" taking place over the phone. The way of getting work in the West End's jazz and dance clubs, as well as the theatres changed and Archer Street became just another London street but



musicians have continued to ply their trade in the West End and built on this work to make the West End end scene what it is today.

We trained 12 people in heritage and oral history techniques covering how to develop an oral history project, interview skills and audio recording skills as well as researching and developing themes and questions. They then worked in teams using these skills to conduct and record oral history interviews with 22 people.

The full interviews were deposited with our partners City of Westminster Archives, Camden Local Studies and Archives and Bishopsgate Institute.

We are grateful to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for their financial support.

www.fixingday.org.uk

Moving Away Your Dust

A Multi-Media Heritage Project

How London learnt how to handle its waste moulded the city we live in today. Thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Moving Away Your Dust project follows this story from 1825 to the present day. 1825 marked the opening of the Grosvenor Canal, which handled Westminster's waste until 1995. Using the archive collections of Westminster Archives and Kensington and Chelsea Local Studies, we highlighted how waste blighted the lives of those that lived here in the 19th century, but also led to changes that greatly benefited London and its people.

We worked with Burdett Coutts & Townshend CE Primary to create an oral history of those who work on the dust today and a history of the Grosvenor Canal and the River Thames' importance in moving away our dust.

www.mayd.org.uk



The Heart of Battersea

100 Years of Katherine Low Settlement

With funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund we teamed up with Katherine Low Settlement to document their rich 100 year history as a provider of social and educational services for their local community in The Heart of Battersea.

Working with volunteers who have been trained in oral history, interviewing techniques and sound recording, 22 interviews with Trustees, workers, volunteers and service users have been filmed.

These have been used to create a film to make the project easily accessible to all, while the full interviews and photographic and other material collected have been deposited with the Wandsworth Heritage Service.

Future Projects

Confirmed projects for 2025/26 include working with Cory and two schools to explore the Energy from Waste facility in Belvedere and working with volunteers to research and record an oral history of Swiss Cottage library with funding from the London Borough of Camden.

Financial Report

The independent examination covered the year 6th April 2024 to 5th April 2025.

Our total income for the period was £66,900 [£109,801] made up mainly from Restricted Funds (successful funding applications) consisting of £29,100 [£89,701] accounted for mainly by the Fixing Day project. Designated Income (commissions and partnership projects) amounted to £35,200 [£18,000]. The balance is made up from voluntary and management fees.

Our total expenditure to date is £86,944 [£106,413] which has mostly been spent directly on costs relating to HLF funded projects £43,500 [£89,459], the commissions and partnership projects £41,800 [£10,900] and governance costs of £1,644 [£6,054] which includes insurance costs and accountancy fees.

The difference between income and expenditure over the year can be accounted for by projects being funded in one financial year while expenditure takes place in another.

We have no fixed assets as yet so are not affected by depreciation. We have no current liabilities.

Please contact us by email if you would like a copy of the full accounts.

[Last year's figures in brackets]

Trustees

Sally Booth (Chair)

David Rogers (Treasurer)

Retired 31/3/2025

Eshan Puri

Maya Gottlieb

Chris Conway

Rozanne Gomes

Joined 2/12/2024

Workers

Sav Kyriacou

Matthew Rosenberg



Year 6 Burdett Coutts introducing their film at the BFI.

digital-works 
documenting life-stories through creative participation

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