

The BBC's development of open access multi-media Learning Centres and Buses

Research for the Lifelong Learning Foundation

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RESEARCH CENTRE FOR THE LEARNING SOCIETY

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1 Summary

This report describes research undertaken at a number of BBC Radio Learning Centres (LCs) and Learning Buses (LBs) between August and November 2003. It describes research that follows on from work at the BBC Radio Lancashire Learning Centre (Rogers & Fisher 2003). That research produced a detailed description of the operational, educational and learning issues that characterise the LC and the culture that has developed amongst staff and learners. The model set up at BBC Radio Lancashire in Blackburn has been adopted and adapted by other BBC regional radio stations to suit the local audiences and populations, the partnership opportunities in each region, and the editorial and management choices made by individuals responsible for the learning facilities. These choices and opportunities have been developed into a number of Learning Centres with cyber cafés and Learning Buses.

The earlier research in Blackburn provided some interesting findings about the way that people used and learnt with information technologies and was developed around three related issues:

- **the attractiveness of multi-media resources as an incentive to engage in learning by those from vulnerable groups, with low incomes or with low educational attainment**
- **the use made of such community-based resources by young people and adults alienated by traditional forms of teaching and learning**
- **the pedagogies involved and the extent to which these complement the existing work of teachers and educators.**

This further research still relates to these issues but seeks to better understand the contribution the BBC makes in offering learning content and services. The study has involved three stages. A return visit to the Radio Lancashire Learning Centre to update what has happened in the intervening period since the earlier research. One day visits to LCs at Radio Merseyside and Radio Stoke to look at how they operate from the perspective of the BBC journalists responsible for them. Finally two days spent on each of 3 buses that involved observation of events and interactions between tutors and plus supporting conversations and discussions with the tutors and journalists who participate in the buses operations. Again interviews were conducted with the Senior Journalists responsible for each of the buses. In addition to these visits the BBC also invited me to a BBC Learning Bus meeting in which staff from LBs and LCs across the country came together to share experiences and ideas for development of the buses.

The work has provided a fascinating view of the operation of the BBC's community broadcasting and open learning initiatives. It has also looked at the processes of delivering educational services by the LC and LB staff, and the environments in which this occurs. In this research it was not possible to conduct formal interviews with learners, however where learner enquiries and interests have relevance to the research they have been included as examples.

2 Project Outline

This research has been run by Professor William Richardson (Director), Tom Rogers (Senior Research Fellow) of the Research Centre for the Learning Society, University of Exeter, in association with Jenny Chapman of BBC Factual and Learning. The work was completed with help and support of the BBC staff in the regions located and other staff employed by BBC partners in the LCs and LBs visited.

The funding for the project has been provided from the Lifelong Learning Foundation and is designed to address one of the foundations' main themes:

‘empowering and enabling teachers to explore and adopt new pedagogies in ways and at times that are consistent with the concept of a learner-centred process of learning’.

This theme is intended to explore assumptions that are made about learning, classrooms and schooling, and to understand their relationships with curriculum, assessment and social inclusion.

The Research Centre for the Learning Society undertakes research into all aspects of post-compulsory education, training and lifelong learning. In 2001 it entered into a formal, partnership with the BBC to investigate jointly the impact on British society of learning linked to broadcasting and information & telecommunication technologies (ICTs). This project forms a part of this on-going relationship.

3 Relevant Literature

The literature reviewed for the earlier Blackburn based research has been drawn upon in this subsequent work. As stated in the earlier report, one of the difficulties in researching learning and learning processes that occur in multi-media supported and informal or open learning environments is that most definitions of learning, and the assumptions that underlie them, are generated from research in an institutional or other structured environment. The issues of what it means to learn and the extent to which learner activities can be said to be learning and the best ways in which such learning can be supported are important issues in this project. This view again demands a further refinement in an environment, such as that found on the LBs, where people will only have access for a short period before the bus moves on to a different location. Further contact demands a considerable wait for a re-visit or that learners follow the bus to other locations. It is essential that tutors and advisors have the ability to create rapport and satisfy people’s questions and learning needs within the short contact times they have with learners.

Laurillard’s (1993) work in the field of learning technology has included the development of her ‘conversational model’ which articulates the nature of the teacher-student relationship. The term *teacher* is used flexibly to refer to the person with knowledge and the term *student* to the person who wishes to learn. In this model, Laurillard recognises an on-going process of discussion, negotiation and learning strategy development that occurs during learning. Tutors on the buses provide a variety of services to make the use of computers a comfortable experience, even for the complete novice, and to help people through to find the information they require or resolve the problem they have brought the tutors. This involves the identification of interests, limits of knowledge and goals sought in a very short period of time and then the adjustment of support to enable people to do the things they want to do. This may include things such as a first experience with a computer, finding information on the internet or overcoming an IT problem on their home computer.

Claxton (1998) description of three types of intelligence and learning perhaps offers a simple means to understand one aspect of the tutors work. The use of ones ‘wits’ in trying to master a new skill can be problematic in that overload can quickly occur for a novice. Deliberative mode of thought, which relates to conventional notions of intelligence based on logic and reason need to be supported, and where necessary barriers to understanding reduced so that an individual can build upon existing skills. The way in which this managed upon a bus, where time is limited, may need to be different to a LC where practice can be developed through a number of visits. Finally there is a contemplative mode of thought and learning that is better for dealing with complex and uncharted learning, and that enables people to intuitively develop solutions to problems with high degrees of uncertainty, poor definition and intricacy. Learning in the latter mode involves a higher reliance on insight, pondering, and reflection. In the case of the learning bus achieving such deep approaches to learning is likely to be more difficult. However, it is possible to resolve problems or overcome confusion that inhibits this contemplative mode of learning.

Gorard et al (2000) have challenged the assumption that technological solutions to learning provision are capable of achieving widening participation. They argue that technological solutions are just as likely to replicate existing learning divides as other attempts to increase educational participation and argue that the culture of ICT is male, young, white and middle class and that these characteristics are the mainstay of adult learning that widening participation is seeking to reach beyond. As we discovered in the research at the Radio Lancashire LC the factors that bring people to the learning include the attraction of the BBC name, a personal desire to achieve something or overcome a problem. It was the support of tutors, physical and learning environment qualities and access to technology that encouraged participation in learning. These factors were confirmed during interviews with the BBC personnel and observations on the buses.

4 The research findings

Many of the findings at the BBC Radio Lancashire LC were confirmed in the descriptions of the Journalists spoken to at Stoke and Merseyside. However, it was not intended to replicate the research carried out in the earlier study but to look at the way in which the model had been reinterpreted for different regions. The choice of regions to be involved in the research was decided in collaboration with the BBC to highlight ways in which innovation and different approaches to open learning are developing within the LCs and LBs. The return visit to Radio Lancashire in Blackburn also identified new initiatives and changes in the way that learners are supported.

A greater emphasis has been placed upon understanding BBC perspectives on their contribution to the provision of open learning. As such interviews have been conducted with each of the senior journalists responsible for LCs and LBs in five locations. Visits to the LBs allowed observation, discussion with staff and informal conversations with learners, and to consider how learning services integrate with other BBC services at a local level.

The longer visits to buses presented a different relationship between broadcast activities, learning opportunities and the provision of web content and other information resources for people to use. As with the research presented by Rogers and Fisher (1983) the role of tutors and other staff on the bus is crucial in engaging people with technology. The average age of learners who visited the three buses was higher (with the majority being over 50) than observed at the Lancashire LCs. The reasons for this probably relate to the locations visited and the weekday times (10 a.m. until 3 p.m.) the LBs were open and locations with higher proportions of older people, and a targeted local radio audience of the over 50 age group. Like the LCs, the LBs are also used for special themed events and visit venues when shows, exhibitions or other activities may be complemented by IT access and BBC content and broadcasts. These can provide a means to focus upon specific age groups or learning interests.

4.1 Return Visit to Blackburn

A visit to the Radio Lancashire LC was made in August 2003. The aim of the visit was to identify in what ways, if any, the LC had developed its operation and practices since the 2002/2003 research work. A number of changes had occurred. Some of these changes had been referred to, by LC and BBC personnel, as issues that needed to be addressed during the earlier research and following workshop.

The cyber café is often the first contact point for people who enter the Open Centre. The cyber café at Blackburn is comparatively large with enough machines to warrant a designated support person. The role of the person who looks after the cyber café has been expanded into a 'meeter-greeter'. In addition to fulfilling the technical support needs of people using the machines, the post now also involves welcoming people in, making sure that they are comfortable with the use of computers and to identify if they have any further learning needs which could be better supported by the LC. This approach is more proactive than in the past

and the person recruited is someone with technical skills, interpersonal skills and local knowledge.

A new post has also been created (initially on a fixed contract) to offer people support with their progress on to new learning and experience. The advisor provides help in identifying new learning goals within the LC, getting access to other open learning and educational provision, finding work experience and other resources that will help people achieve more from their learning and that encourages progress away from the LC when they are ready. Tutors described this role as “really productive” as it provides a means of using and reviewing the learning plans that people complete when they first register the LC.

The working relationship with Blackburn College has continued through the delivery of a number of Saturday morning courses for Photoshop training. This involved learners in three weekends of attendance and offered a basic skills initial assessment. It would seem that the interests and focus of learners wanting practical learning and flexible delivery and the need for the college to map the courses against basic skills core curriculum for funding purposes create stresses. These are issues that the LC and college are reviewing and seeking to resolve.

The LC has also adopted the practice of holding courses in closed sessions. These are scheduled on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings. This has received mixed review from staff. For example one tutor pointed out that if the LC is closed to drop-in visitors it may appear that people are being refused entry. If there are regular days of the week on which courses are run then learners might recognise the change in opening hours, but it restricts participation by excluding those who have other priorities on scheduled days.

Work has been done to develop closer links with BBC personnel. Tutors (employed by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council) have spent short periods shadowing journalists to understand more about their work and interests. BBC personnel have spent time in the LC to learn more about its operation and the people who run and use it. There has also been a greater involvement in national and local BBC initiatives with the centre providing venues and learning support for people in campaigns such as running events for the “The Big Read” and “Telling Lives: World War Two”. In addition better publicity through ad hoc mentions on local radio and through the local BBC Action Line has led to more people becoming aware of the Open Centre. Two of the tutors have been learning Adobe Photoshop to enable them to support courses and learner activities for digital story telling.

4.2 Stoke and Merseyside Learning Centres

Like the Radio Lancashire LC, Stoke and Merseyside LCs are both located within the radio stations. The Merseyside LC is a short walk away from the Albert Dock and the city centre. The Radio Stoke LC is located in Hanley, one of the towns that makes up the conurbation. Each Centre offers are:

- 12 multi-media computers in each of the learning centre to introduce IT, Internet skills and other topics of interest to the general public;
- four computers for cyber café internet access.

The Merseyside visit occurred in mid-August 2003. The partners for the Radio Merseyside LC are Liverpool Community College (further education sector) and UK-Online. The LC offers similar services to the Lancashire LC; such as Microsoft Office application practice and training and access to BBC Learning Journeys and courses related to them. The development of the Merseyside LC has drawn upon the experience of the Lancashire LC and developed its strategy upon the earlier success. Two key differences at Merseyside has been the development of partnerships that have enabled a focus upon a younger age group of learners and effort to embed the work of the LC within the wider remit of the BBC as a local broadcaster. Examples of how this has been realised include:

- A course run on the use of audio editing and development of oral and aural skills. This involved a group of young people learning to use audio editing software to create a radio jingle. They developed their own scripts, used sound samples and recorded their voices to produce the promotional materials. Some of which were used on air.
- A project with the Liverpool Comedy trust to teach teenage school children how to deliver stand-up comedy. The people who took part entered a competition, with a final held at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts. One of the finalists produced her own film of the night which can be found on the Merseyside Video Nation web pages.
- Black History month provided a theme through which a digital art project was developed, opportunity for the Merseyside LB¹ to go out and work with people to highlight the achievements of Merseyside's black community. Audio stories captured and events run at a local museum.

The Stoke visit was carried out in September 2003. The partners for the LC are Stoke-on-Trent's College in the Community and UK-Online. Again the model from the Radio Lancashire LC, and other newer centres, has been drawn upon and adapted to suit the needs of the different local communities. Within this partnership scheme, every learner is signed up as a student of the College in the Community. However as with other LCs attendance and learning directions are flexible and free to people over the age of 16. The LC operates both as a drop-in centre and as a venue for courses. Tutors are employed by the partner college, mostly in part-time or specific roles, with all but one having tutoring roles in other places. Both Liverpool and Stoke take what has been described as a 'tough love' approach to progression; whereby learners are guided on to new educational providers once they have completed the courses that can be offered to them at the LCs.

In addition to a range of software application courses (e.g. desktop publishing or word processing) the Stoke LC has tried to find ways to be innovative in its course provision. However local cultural differences need to be understood in building a course programme. An example was given where a course on popular music run in Merseyside did not transfer well to Stoke. It was said that courses that involved more practical 'hands on activities' were more attractive to people who use the Stoke LC and that, unusually, people were willing to travel to attend such events and courses. Examples of the kinds of initiative that were more successful in the Stoke LC include:

- A pilot course on basic Spanish based around the BBC learning journey 'Spanish Steps' (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/spanish/lj/>) offered 12 places over 80 people applied. All participants completed the course. Advice on how to extend their learning was also available from tutors.
- Family learning events where parents can come in with their children and learn how to complete an art or craft project. A tutor is chosen with appropriate knowledge and skills to run the event. Children will be set to work to do the creative work and parents are encouraged to use the Internet to find out how to complete the project.
- The Inside Lives story telling project, where people are able to learn how to script, record and edit their own personal stories. This involves collecting experiences and memories through the use of audio editing software, image editing and the development of story telling skills. This has resulted in a number of stories being produced and broadcast on the Radio.

The point of these examples is not to represent one LC as being exemplary or better than the other, but rather to provide a more rounded picture of the possibilities and opportunities that

¹ BBC Radio Merseyside also has a bus that goes out locations around Merseyside. It was not included in this research because it is comparatively new.

exist in creating and using a LC to its full potential. Many of the characteristics identified as being important to learners at the Lancashire LC have been adopted as foundations for the other BBC LCs. These include flexibility of access and attendance, freedom of choice, tutors with appropriate technical and people skills and content knowledge, good technology, welcoming environment and strong local partnerships.

Learning initiatives such as the Inside Lives initiative at Stoke are part of a wider BBC development programme on story telling and capturing memories. The Telling Lives and digital storytelling at Lancashire are a part of the same initiative. Limitations of space make it impossible to describe all of the activities that each learning centre is a part of. From the interviews with journalists at Merseyside and Stoke a picture began to build which presents an evolving interaction between the activities of the LCs, the remit and output of the radio stations and the content of the BBC regional web pages. This is a picture that was developed further through the later visits to three LBs.

4.3 Cumbria, York and Derby Learning Buses

The three LBs operate in different ways and involve different relationships with their BBC radio stations. The look and internal fittings of the buses are illustrated in figures 1 and 2. BBC Radio York is a junior partner in a relationship with North Yorkshire County Council. The BBC is lead partner and runs the Cumbria and Derby LBs both had the BBC. They look similar although the Derby bus has satellite communications fitted to enable internet access in less populated areas. The York bus has eight computers for use by the public. The Cumbria and Derby LBs have six computers each. All three buses are equipped with scanners, printers, digital cameras and appropriate software for Internet access, business applications and media editing. The buses are well equipped and have pleasant décor and blinds to deal with light problems. The buses are manned by a combination of BBC personnel and tutors from partners. The partners for each of the buses and learning centres are listed in table 1. The two BBC buses have sound decks from which broadcasts can be made, the York journalist uses a radio car or set up in a local venue to do a broadcast.

4.3.1 Cumbria LB

The BBC Radio Cumbria LB was visited for two days in October 2003. It was located at Seascale. The town was originally a small fishing village, it is now known for its association to the nuclear power and fuel reprocessing plants located near by. The bus was located outside the library in Seascale from Monday to Friday. The research visit took place on Tuesday when the bus was open on a drop-in basis and Wednesday when it was closed for course from 12.30 to 3.00pm. The bus was on location from 10.00am to 4.00pm each day.

During the visit, the bus was manned by a BBC IT tutor, bus driver who also offered help and advice to bus visitors and a broadcast journalist. On the second day an additional IT tutor came on board to deliver the course on photo-editing.

During Tuesday the bus was very well attended with a combination of 'passing trade' and people who knew of the visit from promotional posters in the town and regional radio promotions. It was not unusual for people to board the bus and have to wait for attention. An important part of the tutors' job was to acknowledge people as they came through the door to ensure that they were stayed to be helped.

A variety of enquiries and learning interests were observed. Most of the people who came on board were over 50. On the first day, questions and requests for help with digital photography and image editing were a recurrent theme. This included:

- enquiries about photo-editing software
- how to download photographs on to the Internet
- digital video editing

- problems with leads to connect camera to the internet
- what should be considered when buying a digital camera

Other enquiries related to connection to the Internet, and general IT. One elderly lady who owned an Apple iBook laptop computer came on board to ask some advice because she felt isolated from advice and any other Apple computer users. Other visitors included a local councillor who came to be interviewed by the Broadcast Journalist and a 90 year old man who had been a broadcast engineer with the BBC wanted to talk about his past and see what the bus was about.



Figure 1. The BBC Radio Cumbria LB.

The Wednesday brought further enquiries similar to day one. Two people returned for further information about the use of digital cameras. One man wanted to join, the already booked, course being run that day. He was given advice and opportunity to use some photo-editing software before the course got underway. There were also people with enquires about the access to and use of the Internet. An example was a lady who wanted to know more about the effectiveness of a particular herbal remedy and how it could be purchased. The lady with the Apple iBook returned with her machine to resolve a problem and also to show the ZX81 Spectrum computer she use to type programmes into from a magazine for her son in the early 1980s.

The course on digital photo-editing was oversubscribed and all who got places turned up. Of the six participants, four people had a digital camera, one was hoping to receive one for Christmas. The sixth participant had bought a camera with a direct link printer but had sent it back because it was not possible to edit images and planned to buy a computer. The course was well received by five out of the six participants. One person found it difficult to cope because of a total inexperience of using a computer.

The broadcast journalist, attached to the bus, is responsible for doing the preparatory work for each location the bus visits. The job involves working several weeks ahead of the visit to identify potential sites to ensure that the location is safe, has adequate parking, 13A mains power, a telephone line for internet access, and toilets for staff to use. She makes contact with hosts and finds local people with newsworthy stories for the radio audience. During the bus visit she liaises between the community and radio station to produce broadcasts for news or general programming. An example of a story at Seascale was the introduction of parking restrictions and charges and the impact that would have on the small retailers that serve the small town.

The tutor's and driver's role is very broad in terms of the variety of work they undertake and the kinds of enquiry that they must field. They require educational abilities, technical knowledge of multi-media computers and Internet use, and for some skills to set the bus up and drive it are needed. Tutors who run courses need to be able to structure those courses and deal with a wide range of competencies and knowledge levels for the courses they are running.

An interview with the Senior Broadcast Journalist who had overall responsibility for the bus provided a description of the overall vision and strategy for the bus. The bus is intended to be attractive to people of all ages and provide technologies that will offer flexibility in the types of learning support that can be offered. The BBC branding of the bus is thought to be important for attracting people. The tutors and drivers are intended to become a permanent part of the service offered to allow team working to develop. The general strategy is to see the bus as a community service that must also get people through the door and use the technology. As such the choice of where to visit are balanced around choices of communities that are of interest to radio audiences, have a population to bring visitors to the bus and are not usually involved in BBC services. The Cumbria LB does not have a regular broadcast slot, as is the case in some regions, because it is felt that the promotion of short editorially led content that suit individual programmes in the schedule will have greater long-term audience impact and offer items that can be used flexibly to suit programming schedules. It was also felt that more could be done to build up the relationship between bus activities and broadcast activities with the development of the regional BBCi web pages, for example using the bus to tour and find stories for the Video Nation initiative. However there are resource and editorial pressures that mean this cannot be fully realised at present.

Although the Seascale visit was for a full week, other visits are shorter and clustered to allow people to travel short distances if they want to return to the bus, whilst taking the bus to as many people as possible. The bus has also been used in ways that will focus on specific groups of people. For example by locating at places of employment to give employees a chance to experience and learn about different aspects of computing. One of the employers mentioned was a district council in the Lake District. The logistical management of where the bus will be, the learning and broadcast value that it will have and the practical issues of locating a LB are essential aspects of making the facility a useful asset for learners and radio station.

4.3.2 York LB

The visit to the BBC Radio York region happened over two days in October 2003. It is one of three buses run by North Yorkshire County Council as lead partner. They are known as Discovery Buses. The LB is manned by a 'Driver/Mentor' who gets the bus to its location, sets it up and provides advice and support to members of the public who visit the bus. Additional support is offered by adult educators from NYCC and other partners in the project.

The York LB also goes to a wide range of communities and to locations where the bus can provide services to specific groups. The bus travels to a new location every day it is on the road. On the first day of the research visit the bus was located at a centre for adults with learning disabilities. The Driver/Mentor said how much he liked this particular venue because people enjoy themselves when using the computers. Unfortunately, on the day of the research visit, circumstances showed the importance of logistical and forward planning. A

college course and swimming session had been arranged within the same time as the bus was at the centre. This meant that only two visitors boarded the bus in the first half of the day.

The second day the Bus was located at a Council learning centre at Filey on the North Yorkshire coast. The bus used a telephone line to get connected to the Internet. The bus was on location to coincide with a basic skills 'Get On' event. In addition to the Driver/Mentor basic skills advisors were on hand to help people with their IT and other learning needs. During the day the facility was continually used by visitors. A variety of questions were addressed. These included purely technical questions such as "I have been told I need a firewall. What is it and how do I get one?" and "My son is giving me an old computer. What do I do with it?" Another younger couple were in business and had bought a computer with a new operating system which they were having trouble getting to grips with. They were provided with an opportunity to practice with Microsoft Windows 2000. Questions about the basic skills were also addressed and advice given on courses. I was told by one of the adult educators that IT literacy levels and computer ownership were comparatively low in that area of North Yorkshire. This perhaps would explain a higher level of basic questions about IT and the Internet that occurred on the day.



Figure 2. One of the three York buses owned by North Yorkshire County Council as lead partner.

As with the Cumbria bus the journalists work several weeks ahead of the bus arriving at a location for a day. They find a place to broadcast from and complete technical and safety assessments and find potential interviewees to create a local profile. During the Filey visit the Broadcast Journalist had interviewees to talk to interviewees from Filey Museum, the Filey in Bloom committee and the the local lifeboat. On the back of the broadcast the location and activities of the LB are highlighted.

Radio York has three journalists and a broadcast assistant who cover the activities of the buses and daily radio reports from the bus. The locations of the buses are mentioned on the radio during the day. A 10 to 15 minute slot is allotted for broadcast by the journalist from the bus location. Additional items are put out on the breakfast show slot or the evening travel time

show. These are used to promote activities or generate comment. The main difference is that BBC initiatives and suggestions on locations must be requested of the lead partner rather than organised by the journalist. Whilst NYCC leadership and agendas are no less valid in the partnership there is not as close a relationship between broadcast and learning activities.

The bus has also been used in a number of ways to reach out to specific learning groups and attended specialist venues and events. The experience in doing these kinds of visit has illustrated that not all ideas work and that multi-media technology is not always seen to be of interest. The Driver/Minder recounted an event at a steam railway rally where the bus turned up with ideas of giving people access to IT, multi-media and Internet technologies and content. However, very few people boarded the bus because they wanted to be close to the trains and get their rides on the train. A similar experience was recounted by the Senior Journalist at BBC Radio York who told of a flower show event where the bus was prepared to introduce the BBC gardening learning journey called "How to be a Gardener". Again it was only through persistent canvassing by LB staff that brought anyone aboard. In contrast to this the Senior Broadcast Journalist and the Broadcast Journalist told of a Journey into Archaeology event where the LB worked with the National Park Authority to prepare a guided walk. They then pre-recorded the walk and put it in on the Internet with supporting information for people to see before they went on their walk and could then "see the landscape in new ways". The event was accompanied by broadcast items throughout its duration. Another example was given by the broadcast journalist of a visit to a local rare breeds farm linked to the Life of Mammals learning journey, where parents and children could visit the bus during their visit to see the animals.

4.3.3 Derby LB

The Derby LB was visited in early November 2003. The bus visits a different location each day. The style and layout of the bus is similar to that portrayed in Figure 1. It has the additional facility of satellite dish for internet connection where telephone access is not available. The first day of the research visit the bus was located in Alfreton a town a few miles from Derby that once had the coal mining industry as a major employer. The bus was located close to the town library and a shopping precinct. The Derby bus runs as a drop-in centre and does not run courses. The bus was manned by a Driver/Tutor, a Derby Council Adult Educator and the Community Broadcast Journalist. Because a lunch-time radio programme was being broadcast the Community Editor, engineer and presenter were also in Alfreton.

One of the most notable things about this day was the very apparent affection and enthusiasm for BBC Radio Derby by its audience. Throughout the day people came aboard the bus and asked for pictures of presenters and information about schedules.

The lunch-time radio programme was presented by presenter Russell Walker-Brown which in part was connected to The Big Read. A lady was on the bus asking for clues to his daily radio crossword quiz. She was introduced to the web for the first time and found herself being interviewed by Russell and given a new set of clues on air.

During the day approximately 25 people came on the bus and used the computers or asked for advice. Examples include:

- A young man who had learning difficulties and wanted to come on and use the computers to play patience.
- An elderly man who wanted to research Chesterfield football stars from the days of his youth.
- A sixty year old ex-miner who wanted to be introduced to the Internet.
- A woman wanted to see images from a Rocky Horror show that her grandchild had been to.

- A lady who wanted to research Madeira as a potential holiday destination.
- A lady whose first husband had won a medal in the World War II, but still didn't know what the medal was for or why there was an oak leaf bar across it years after his death. She wanted to find out what information there might be on the Internet to help her learn more.

The second day was spent in Monyash a small village of less than three hundred people. An adult educator from the local council manned the LB with the Driver Tutor. Unfortunately only three or four people visited the bus during the day. It was suggested that by the driver tutor that sometimes a location had to be visited more than once to build interest, whilst in other places people will make effort to visit. He said that experience in some of the outlying examining towns was that there was a initiative fatigue because there have been so many since the closure of the mines and that trust and confidence had to be built with some communities. As with the other Regions the broadcast journalist works ahead of the bus to set up interviews and these were completed from one of local dwellings because of radio reception problems in the hills. Items are broadcast in the breakfast and lunchtime shows and at other times during the day to promote the LB and provide items of local interest.

During its travels the bus seeks to capture memories and stories to add to the BBCi web site for the region. People are asked to bring along their memories and photos from the place they live in.

Bus	Lead partner	Other partners	Bus web site
Cumbria LB	BBC Radio Cumbria	Cumbria County Council Learning and Skills Council	http://www.bbc.co.uk/cumbria/bbcbus/index.shtml
Derby LB	BBC Radio Derby	Adult Community Education Service of Derbyshire County Council Derby City Council East Staffordshire Adult and Community Learning Group UK Online. The Derbyshire Learning Partnership helped set up the partnership.	http://www.bbc.co.uk/derby/communities/bus/meet_the_team/bus_intro.shtml
York LBs	North Yorkshire County Council	UK online Centres BBC Radio York ² New Opportunities Fund Federation of Licensed Victuallers Associations ³	http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/localsonline/mobileict/index.asp

Table 1. Partnerships involved in running the LBs

² BBC Radio York are also partners with another local bus, the 'First Byte Bus' run by Mathemagic. They are not included in this report, but more can be discovered on their web site: <http://www.mathemagic.org/bus/>

³ The FLVA are involved in another part of the same initiative to set up ICT learning centres in licensed properties.

5 Conclusions

This research has developed a description of the learning and support activities undertaken at the LCs and LBs. It has sought to answer the issues, presented in Section 1, of whether multi-media resources provide an incentive to engage in learning, the extent to which these community-based resources are used by people alienated by conventional education, the pedagogies involved in delivering the services and how they fit in with the wider provision of education in the area. The findings of the research suggest possibilities for the development of the interrelationships between the broadcast activities of local radio, LB and LC in the creation of Internet content that will be of benefit to the communities that the BBC is seeking to reach.

The possibilities of how such interactions may be brought to fruition have been demonstrated in different ways by the different regions. Take as an example the way that the Liverpool LC has decided to focus upon young people in many of its learning activities. The work completed to produce a radio jingle enabled learners to consider their use of language, develop presentational and media production skills and issues in an innovative way. It also enabled them to reflect upon how their accent and dialect is perceived by others and the way that they can choose to express themselves. They also had the opportunity to develop computer and media literacy skills. The completed work provided the kind of content that helps to meet the goals of the Radio Station and whilst the young people are not typical of the listening audience their parents and other family parents are. The presentation of such a project on the BBCi web page informs people about the type of work that occurs in the LC and helps to develop links into other areas of BBC activity.

The availability of advice and learning resources at LCs and LBs also provides a means to introduce people to the concepts and features of the Internet. The instances on the Derby LB when people were drawn onto the bus because they wanted information about the presenters or schedules created opportunities for them to be introduced to the Internet. Such experiences allow people to develop the basic concepts and literacies that they need to become competent Internet users.

The increasing adoption of digital cameras and the questions and learning needs observed at Seascale were confirmed as being 'hot topics' by the other LBs. Observations suggest that there are some fundamental concepts that are not understood by people who are buying digital cameras and they seem to be seen as direct replacements for film cameras. There are constraints on the use of digital cameras such as not being able to download images unless a computer is at hand and the limitations of picture definition. There are also technical and media literacy skills that can be used in new and innovative ways with digital cameras that relate to the immediacy and communicability of the medium. The LCS and LBs are recognising these issues through advice offered to drop-in visitors, in its development of course to create digital stories and digital video and audio recordings and in using courses to create broadcast and Internet content. The tutors and journalists provide a channel through which this can be achieved. However without promotion through the mainstream conventional media it is unlikely that these opportunities will be considered by many of the people who listen to radio or use LCs and LBs.

An important observation throughout the research carried out at Blackburn and this more recent research has been that multi-media technologies do not have innate properties that universally attract people to learning. The contrasting experience described by people involved with the York LB at different types of event shows that context, disposition and preparation have to be right for people to be drawn towards the use of computers. Effective branding as demonstrated by the attraction of the BBC Radio Derby name is one way that this can be enhanced. Even then there must be perceived advantages in using the technology or media for it to be used further.

At the beginning of this report it was said that it is important to understand what we mean by the term learning. Many people who used the LBs on during the research visit would not automatically consider themselves to be learners. They would explain their reason for visiting in terms of the problem they must overcome or the things they want to do. Learning is a

process that occurs through their actions and their problem solving. It develops incrementally through small steps rather than based on a distant goal or staged plan.

The role of the tutors and advisors in understanding and meeting people's needs is crucial. The tutors met at all locations are well versed in the skills and talents they need to support their diverse learning population. It appears from observation that tutors must have three general modes of working with learners:

- As supportive instructor, to provide help with learning methods and the necessary building blocks for people to develop skills and generate knowledge.
- As problem solver and advisor to help them overcome the practical barriers, technical difficulties, personal concerns and limitations of experience that inhibit progress.
- As conversationalist and someone with a genuine interest in people.

One of the tutors voiced the opinion that the type of work that they are involved in is, in a sense, self selecting. If tutors cannot cope with diversity and uncertainty, or if they do not have a genuine interest in people the role becomes too onerous in the long-term. It is also important to recognise the role that individual and group characteristics have in developing the services offered. There is no one way to deliver learning services and in some respects it is the interest in people and the innovative media skills that can create the kinds of interest to inspire and serve specific groups within the community.

The BBC initiatives that seek to use storytelling as a means to generate involvement in content development and the creation of digital archives provides an excellent vehicle for learning technical, literacy and creative skills. It also provides a means to generate reflective and contemplative learning processes that are important to understanding personal values, perspectives on life and what it means to learn. It can encourage people to develop their own voice, ideas and opinions. The BBC is perhaps uniquely placed to draw upon these opportunities to work with individuals and communities using a wide variety of media, technologies and educational methods. The LCs and LBs are providing experience to build such capabilities. The way in which this unfolds and links learners with broadcasting, internet and other technologies could provide a basis for further fascinating research.

6 References

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