Sharing your WW1 research:
Choosing the right location

Our 'Sharing our WW1 research: Choosing the right story' guide discussed the importance of knowing who your audience is. We explored creating our chosen story in a way that catches and keeps their attention, means something to them, and gives them something useful to take away from their time with us.

If we're going to share stories with our audience though, we need to know a little bit about them. Where do they spend their leisure time? Can they travel to see or hear our story, or do we need to go to them? How will their abilities and knowledge influence the way we design our story?

Equally, we need to consider if our story is best told in a particular place, or in a certain format. When we add these aspects together, we can begin to think about possible locations for our stories. This guide will help you to explore some of the options.

Important ideas to remember

No matter what location we choose for our story, there are two important ideas we need to take into account in our design: accessibility and readability.

Accessibility is about making sure that anyone can access a product, service, venue or source of information. An important part of making activities accessible is the way we communicate. People are more likely to relate to our stories when we use conversational language, so thinking about readability helps us reach a wider audience.

For example, if we're telling our story using a heritage walk, can anyone join in? Could a family with a pushchair manage every part of the walk? What about someone in a wheelchair? Is our walk leader speaking clearly and loudly enough for everyone to hear? If we've given people a map to follow, is it clear and easy enough for anyone to read?

The same principles would apply to an exhibition: can people get to the venue and into the room our exhibition is in? Will most people be able to read the words or see the pictures clearly? Is our story told in a clear, straightforward manner?

Accessibility also applies online, and not just for people with disabilities. Web accessibility is a way to ensure every user is able to make the most of the internet, and the opportunities it offers to learn and share ideas.

You can find out more about making events and activities accessible in this guide by the Accentuate cultural development programme: www.accentuateuk.org/?location_id=2188. To find out about web accessibility, the NCVO's KnowHow group are sharing useful tips on writing accessible content: knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/how-to-write-accessible-web-content. The WebAIM group also has a guide to writing clearly for the web, which you can read on their website: webaim.org/techniques/writing/.

The Plain English Campaign publishes a range of free readability guides on their website at www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html. The National Institute for Continuing Adult Education also has a free readability leaflet which is available to download from their website at shop.niace.org.uk/readability.html.

You'll also find extra tips and examples in many of the resources we're highlighting in our sharing WW1 guides.

Publishing

Publishing is one way of telling stories that we're all probably fairly familiar with. Each local history book, journal article, or booklet published adds to the bank of sources each new generation of researchers can explore. When we're ready to share our own stories, publishing can seem the most obvious way to do so.

Advances in information technology over the last 30 years mean that publishing now covers a range of processes. Securing a book deal with a large publishing house, paying a small printing company to help us create 250 local history booklets, and printing out 20 copies of a report on our home computer are all examples of publishing. (We'll come back to publishing online later on).

The market for local history material is very different from most publishing. It's unlikely we'd have WW1 stories to share in a way that would appeal to large publishers, but that still leaves us options to publish with help, or to do it ourselves.

Most publishers of local books are fairly local themselves, and generally stick to books about a particular region. Because they tend to be smaller, specialist local history publishers can build better relationships with local groups and communities, and make the most of local events to sell their books. If you're not confident enough to work with a printer to create a book yourself, and you feel your story is best told in this format, then a conversation with a couple of Gloucestershire's local history publishers might be a good place to start.

You might already have the skills and experience to tell stories in print, and choose to create a publication yourself. If you can already copy-edit and design a publication, make appropriate decisions about pricing and copies, and understand sales, supply chains and

promotion then you're almost there. You might only need to speak to local printers about their short run print services to start turning your plan to self-publish into reality.

Many of our WW1 stories may not fill a whole book, but would make a good article in someone else's journal. If this sounds suitable, you could start by getting in touch with your area's local history society and find out what they publish. Even if they don't have a publication you can write for, they might know someone else locally who does. You can find out more about local history organisations by visiting Gloucestershire Local History Association's website at www.gloshistory.org.uk.

If we can't find a suitable print outlet for our stories, we can always think about creating simpler documents ourselves (either with or without the help of a printing company). Most of us have access to computers, either at home or in local libraries and community centres, and most computers have software to help us create simple documents. For smaller stories, or publications we weren't planning to sell anyway, an occasional newsletter can be a good alternative. It's likely to be quicker and cheaper than working with publishers or printers, but there may be limits on how many copies you can make.

We'll look at publishing again when we explore sharing stories online, but don't forget that we must always be guided by the story we want to tell, and by the audience we want to share it with.

You'll find more about publishing in the 'other resources' section at the end of this guide.

Events and exhibitions

Events can be useful ways of telling stories, particularly when a community or group have been involved in doing the research it's based on. We can use events to raise awareness of local activities, regional good causes, and encourage people to share ideas and experiences. Clearly, research about WW1 topics like war memorials, commemoration and social change can make good community events.

Events offer many opportunities for creative storytelling and participation, and are limited only by our resources and imagination! The Campaign for Drawing, for example, has created resources for running a Big Draw event, using art to tell and share stories. Could your WW1 story be shared with children through a creative activity like this at a larger school event? You can explore all of the Campaign for Drawing's resources on their website (campaignfordrawing.org/resources/index.aspx).

The UK government has produced a guide for planning events that deals with some of the technical issues involved in running a community event. You can find out more on the GOV.UK website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/can-do-guide-for-organisers-of-voluntary-events/the-can-do-guide-to-organising-and-running-voluntary-and-community-events.

Exhibitions might be part of larger events, but can also function as ways of telling stories in their own right. For many local history groups and societies, this is a tried-and-tested

method of sharing stories with visitors to local libraries, community centres and other local venues. If you're new to creating physical exhibitions, you could speak to your area's local history group or society about your ideas. Visit Gloucestershire Local History Association's website for a list of groups in the County: www.gloshistory.org.uk.

Creating a successful exhibition needs to take lots of different things into account, like the need for accessibility that we've already mentioned. If you're not sure how to lay out your work, Gloucestershire Archives has published a guide to designing exhibitions that you can download from its website: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/WW1/recordandshare.

Giving talks and lectures

We're probably all familiar with sharing history through talks and lectures, and this format might fit our chosen WW1 story very well. But we also know that giving a good talk isn't just about the quality of the story we're sharing.

As we've already suggested, knowing your story and knowing your audience are very important in sharing WW1 research. Talks are no exception but we also need to think about the speech itself, as well as the design and use of any visual aids we might choose to include.

A good talk has a clear structure, so everyone knows where they are in the story. It is delivered clearly so that everyone in the audience can keep up. If we've interpreted our story correctly it will be interesting enough to keep our audience's attention, and it won't take longer than the amount of time we've been given.

If we're using visual aids like slides and notes to help us tell our story, we need to make sure we don't distract our audience's attention away from what we're saying. Anything on a presentation screen or in a handout will need to be clear and readable, and help our audience understand our story better. The guidelines for creating accessible and readable stories at the beginning of this document should help.

Some of the features of a good talk are as much about the speaker, as they are about the story the speaker is telling. When we're giving a talk we need to be knowledgeable, enthusiastic and make sure our speech can be heard and understood by everyone in the audience. Practice helps us in lots of ways, but mainly it helps us to feel confident. That confidence will make the talk more enjoyable for the speaker, and is likely to make it more enjoyable for our audience too.

Most skills guidance has advice on giving talks (they generally call them 'presentations' but the principles are the same). You can find books on study skills in Gloucestershire's Libraries: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/libraries.

Sharing stories online

OFCOM's 2014 media report[1] shows that the internet plays a part in most people's lives. Their study shows that over 80% of UK adults spend time online. For adults under 35 years of age the figure is 98%, but even older adults are spending more time on the internet – over 40% of the over-65s are now internet users.

Research like this makes it clear that we need to consider sharing stories online, as well as physically. Use of mobile devices like tablets and smartphones means we can connect to the internet from almost anywhere, so there's likely to be a significant audience for our work if we can find the right groups of people online.

Sharing stories online can also help remove barriers to participation. As our stories aren't being told in a physical location our audience can see, hear or read them no matter where in the world they are. They're not limited by a building's opening times, so they can visit whenever they like. Visitors can also change the way they receive stories through their own devices, increasing the size of text on the screen or the volume of a podcast for example. This can make our stories more accessible.

While it can be valuable, sharing stories online can also be very technically demanding. If you're thinking about creating a website for yourself, the Arts Council have a guide to developing and managing websites that you can download from their 'toolkits' section: www.artscouncil.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/toolkits/. (You'll find lots of other useful interpretation and storytelling advice on this list too!)

The simplest way to share online is probably to do so with someone else's help. There are several online communities that want us to use their websites to share our stories. Some of them ask for our stories to enhance their own research, which they then plan to share online as one joint collection. Other groups and organisations allow us to share our stories directly through a part of their websites. We've listed a few examples of both types below.

Gloucestershire communities:

- The *Gloucestershire Remembers WW1* project has created a special site on Historypin so that anyone with local WW1 pictures and stories to share can do so. You can explore the site at www.historypin.org/en/explore/first-world-war-centenary/gloucestershire-remembers-ww1, and download our guide to adding your stories from www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/WW1/recordandshare.
- The Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum is interested in stories about soldiers in the Gloucestershire Regiments, to add to its database. Visitors can then search the online database for soldiers in the Regiment to find more information. If you'd like to contribute your story, you can contact the Museum through its website at www.soldiersofglos.com.
- Gloucestershire Family History Society is collecting local WW1 stories. They've already got some information on their website, and hope to be able to share more

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[1] OFCOM, *Adults' Media Use and Attitudes Report 2014*, http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/other/research-publications/adults/adults-media-lit-14/ [accessed: 18 December 2014].

online over the next few years. If you'd like to contribute, please visit their website (www.gfhs.org.uk) and click on the WW1 Centenary project link.

- Many of Gloucestershire's local history societies are online and developing ways of sharing WW1 stories on their websites. You can explore who's doing what in your part of the county by visiting www.gloshistory.org.uk.

National communities:

- Historypin also has a digital war memorial project that it wants people to contribute to. Visit its website (www.historypin.org/en/explore/first-world-war-centenary/the-digital-war-memorial) for more details and to join in.
- You could consider joining the Gloucestershire groups who have already added stories to the Imperial War Museum's 'Lives of the First World War' digital archive. You can visit their website at livesofthefirstworldwar.org/home for more information about this.
- If you've been researching any of the men and women from the Commonwealth who were killed in the First World War, you may also wish to contribute to the Royal British Legion's 'Every Man Remembered' project. You can find out more about this on their website at www.britishlegion.org.uk/remembrance/ww1-centenary/every-man-remembered.

Using online space creatively

We can also think about using different types of online spaces to tell our stories. Blogs, for example, can be a good way of publishing online. A blog is often structured like a diary, but entries (or 'posts' as they're usually called) can also include pictures or other media items. You can see examples of posts by *Gloucestershire Remembers WW1* on Gloucestershire Archives' blog: gloucestershirearchives.wordpress.com. Some blogging tools allow us to design a blog with static pages as well, giving us a simple website and a blog, in one site. This is how the *Gloucestershire Remembers WW1* website (glosremembers.co.uk) is built. Some, like Wordpress and Blogger, are free to use or you could pay other people to create and run a blog for you.

If we feel our story should be an exhibition, we could think about sharing it online. Our experiences of planning physical exhibitions are likely to be helpful, even thought the technical challenges might be a little different. You can see examples of online WW1 exhibitions created by The Wilson: Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum on its website: cheltenhammuseum.org.uk/Default.aspx?page=291. If you're looking for guidance about creating online exhibitions, the Museum Association has some helpful presentation slides (www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice/17102011-practical-tips-for-creating-online-exhibitions). The London School of Economics has also been blogging about how it created the Women's Library collection online exhibition. You can find out more on the LSE blog at blogs.lse.ac.uk/library/2014/04/23/case-study-how-lse-library-created-an-online-exhibition-for-the-womens-library-collection.

Sometimes the stories we want to tell are best shared using sound or vision, rather than just the written word. We can think about creating digital stories (a type of video) using our

research material, or even audio podcasts to share a talk with an online audience. You can watch examples of digital stories on the *Gloucestershire Remembers WW1* blog (www.glosremembers.co.uk/ww1-blog/). There's a video to help you create your own digital story too, and a guide you can download to help you. If you're interested in podcasting, the JISC Digital Media team have a guide to creating an audio podcast available on their website: www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/guide/creating-an-audio-podcast. Once you've created your media files you can share them on websites, and in a wide range of other online spaces.

Depending on the story you want to tell, you might want to use online space creatively, using different formats for different parts of your story. For example, if we're sharing a story from Henry James' life, we could write about his life on a webpage. If we've also got a digital story of one of his descendants talking about him, we could share that part of the story somewhere else, and then link the two pieces together. For many heritage groups and organisations, social media offers potential to do exactly that.

Using social media

The Association of Independent Museums defines social media as:

> any internet or web-based platform through which people can share what is now generally called 'content' – text, audio, video and photographs – [and] personal opinions, spread news, swap perspectives and generally communicate with other people. Interaction is the basis of social media. Readers interact with content – commenting, engaging, sharing, enhancing[2]

All social media is about communication. The different social media platforms (like Twitter or Facebook) are the tools we use to interact with people who share our interests.

There are three broad types of social media:

- Social networking platforms like Facebook, Google+ and LinkedIn. These networks connect us to other people, so we can share photos and other things that we're all interested in. OFCOM's report tells us 66% of UK adults have a social networking account[3];

- Micro-blogging platforms like Twitter and Tumblr. These sites let us communicate small updates and ideas very quickly. We can keep track of conversations from people we find interesting and follow what they're sharing. We can also choose to share those ideas with people who follow us; and

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[2] Association of Independent Museums, *Successfully getting started with social media*, < http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/downloads/aaee4b8c-f54d-11e3-8be4-001999b209eb.pdf> [accessed: 18th December 2014], page 2.
[3] OFCOM, 2014.

- Media sharing platforms like YouTube, Pinterest and Historypin. These sites allow us to share certain types of media (video, digital stories, photographs, and so on) with others.

Some platforms allow users to do things that cross between these categories – sharing a short update on Facebook for example, or a photo on Twitter. The strength of social media for many people exploring WW1 is the opportunity to make these platforms work together to tell stories in lots of different ways, at the same time.

Let's return for a moment to our example of Private Henry James who was killed in action on the Western Front in 1917. Imagine that our chosen story is about his wife Susan and their children, and that our chosen audience is anyone interested in the Home Front. We have copies of letters between Susan and her sister Mary that share their thoughts on the war, Mary's job at the munitions factory, the children's lives, and changes in the village. We also have several photographs of Susan, Mary and the children, often taken during walks around the village.

There are lots of ways we could tell this story online, but we know there's an active group of local Home Front researchers on Facebook who will probably be interested in the letters. We've got correspondence for almost every week of 1916, so we've decided to transcribe each letter and post it to Facebook 100 years after it was written. If we share the photographs on Historypin, we can show people where each picture was taken on a map, and we can add a link to each picture into our Facebook timeline. That way our audience can see how the pictures relate to the letters. We can also set up a Twitter account to share regular snippets from the letters, for anyone that isn't on Facebook or part of the Home Front research group, but who might still be interested.

If we're lucky, and we promote our work successfully, we'll get enough people following our story on social media and supporting (Facebook would call it 'liking') our work. We'd also try to interact with visitors, so we'd want people to comment, or even share pictures and stories of their own that tell us something new about the experiences of Susan, Mary and the children.

You may not be sure if social media is the right format to tell your story, and that's okay. We'd recommend looking at examples of how people use social media to share WW1 stories and exploring what they're doing – you might be inspired! It's also a good way to learn what doesn't work, as some social media approaches won't suit some types of stories. You are the best judge of how your story should be told, but do try to keep an open mind.

If you've explored social media's potential and want to learn more, there's plenty of guidance about using social media for local heritage on the internet. We've suggested four examples in the 'other resources' section at the end of this document and hope you'll find them useful.

If you do want to get involved in using social media, we recommend reading the help sections and 'how to' guides of the platforms you're interested in. The best people to teach you how to use Facebook, Twitter and the rest are the people who designed the platforms in the first place. We're making an exception for anyone who wants to join us on

Historypin's WW1 Centenary Hub though, as sharing there is different to pinning other kinds of material. You can download our guide to pinning Gloucestershire's WW1 heritage from www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/WW1/recordandshare.

Evaluating activities

However we choose to share our stories, it's important that we learn something from the experience too.

We might be lucky enough to meet someone at an event who's related to the soldier in our story – in our case Private Henry James. We might be contacted online by researchers overseas who have seen our blog and want to share photographs of Susan and their children, in the years after Henry's death. These opportunities to learn more about our subject are hugely valuable, and help us develop our own understanding.

It's also important to learn about the impact of our events, exhibitions, talks or social media campaigns. The opportunity to evaluate an activity offers us the chance to improve the next story we tell. By reviewing what our audience thought about our story, and what they learned from it, we learn more about interpreting WW1 research for our chosen audience. If our research is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, for example, we'll probably need to evaluate our work to meet their objectives.

There are guides available to help us evaluate our events and activities. These include resources on the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement website (www.publicengagement.ac.uk/plan-it/evaluation/evaluation-resources) and an evaluation guide available from the Research Councils UK website: www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/publications/evaluationguide.pdf. The Heritage Lottery Fund also publishes guidance on evaluating projects: www.hlf.org.uk/running-your-project/evaluating-your-project. You can use many of these ideas to evaluate an event or activity, as well as a whole project.

Other resources

Publishing:

There's an article about local history publishers on the British Association for Local History website: www.balh.co.uk/lhn/article_file_lhn-vol1iss95-16.xml.html

The East Midlands Oral History Association have some useful guidance on publishing oral histories: www.balh.co.uk/lhn/article_file_lhn-vol1iss95-16.xml.html

Richard Fisher reviews local history publishing on the Institute of Historical Research website: www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/publishing_history.html

You may also find guidance at your local Library (www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/libraries).

Using social media:

The Association of Independent Museums' guide to "Successfully getting started with social media" can be found at: www.aim-museums.co.uk/downloads/aaee4b8c-f54d-11e3-8be4-001999b209eb.pdf

The Digital Commonwealth project has published its "Handbook of Digital Storytelling" which is available to download from its website: digitalcommonwealth.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/digital-storytelling-handbook.pdf

The Scottish Civic Trust have published guides to social media for heritage open days. You can explore the full range of social media guides on their website: www.doorsopendays.org.uk/opendays/resources.aspx?category=12

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) have guides to help those applying for HLF funding. This guide helps projects who plan to use digital technology understand how to make the most of these resources in an application: www.hlf.org.uk/digital-technology-heritage-projects.

Further help with social media:

As part of the 'Gloucestershire Remembers WW1' project we've been working with a network of volunteers who can offer advice to communities about their WW1 research.

If you're trying to decide whether social media is a good way to share your WW1 research or promote your WW1 events, then the groups and organisations listed below will be able to help.

They're not experts, but they've all been thinking about how they could make use of social media to share and promote their own work. Whether they've chosen to use social media or not, they'll be happy to talk with you about your ideas.

Group or organisation	Contact
Chipping Campden History Society	Judith Ellis or Mary Fielding enquiries@chippingcampdenhistory.org.uk
Cotteswold Naturalist' Field Club	Jane Rowe via www.painswickhistory.org.uk
Gloucester History Society	Merv Smith merv_is@hotmail.com
Gloucestershire Archives	archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Gloucestershire Family History Society	chairman@gfhs.org.uk
Gotherington Local History Society	Caroline Meller cbmeller@gmail.com
Leckhampton Local History Society	Kate Houston katehouston2000@yahoo.co.uk
Painswick Local History Society	Peter Rowe via www.painswickhistory.org.uk
Tewkesbury History Society	Derek Benson tewkhs@freeuk.com
The Wilson: Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum	Sallie Anderson sallie.anderson@cheltenham.gov.uk