



Sharing your WW1 research: Promoting events and activities

Finding creative and appropriate ways of sharing WW1 stories is good, but we also need to let our chosen audience know the stories are being shared.

Many of the documents and sites we've been highlighting throughout this series of WW1 guides also mention promotion, so we're not going to try and replicate their advice. This guide simply reviews some of the questions we could ask ourselves when we're ready to promote the WW1 events and activities we've created.

Finding your audiences

We've decided who we want to share stories with, but how do we let them know our work is ready for them to see, hear or read? We considered this a little, when we were thinking about where our chosen audience spends their leisure time. This will help us decide whether promoting our stories online or in local venues, for example, is more likely to get their attention.

Although it's not our priority, it can't hurt to think about reaching new and different audiences – those we didn't create our stories for but who might enjoy them anyway. Are there places we could promote our work that will encourage new people to get involved? Could we try new ways of communicating to see if we can attract a wider range of people to our event or activity?

Reviewing resources

Promotion can be expensive and time-consuming, so it's important to be clear what resources we have.

Do we have the funds to design, print and deliver leaflets to every house in our community, or is it cheaper and more efficient to place one advert in the local paper? If we need a cost-free option, can we arrange to put a notice in a shop window or use free social media accounts to share our news? If we're organised far in enough in advance, can we secure local sponsorship for our event that might help to cover some of the costs?

If time is short, does the immediacy of social media present an opportunity to share information about our event or exhibition quickly? If we have more time, can we arrange to tell people well in advance and then regularly, so that anyone who's interested in our story is reminded closer to the date?

We can also draw on our social resources – the people we know and the networks we belong to. Can we ask other people to help us spread the word, either online or by word-of-mouth? Do we have supporters we can call on for help promoting our work? Do we have a print mailing list or an email group that we can send information to? Have we kept names and contact details of people who've attended our events in the past?

What do we say?

All promotional activity needs to make a clear statement. This will make our leaflet or tweet stand out on a busy table, or in an active Twitter feed. We should draw on our interpretation skills to design promotional material that captures and keeps people's attention, making a connection between our work and their lives.

We can join in with promotional activities that are led by other people, or those that are already getting lots of attention. Linking our stories to the Armistice in November, or promoting our stories around the time of key battles, can help to promote our work. A good example is the use of hashtags on Twitter, where anyone wanting to share what they've been doing can join in with well-established conversations. Hashtags such as #refugees #remembrance or #onthisday, for example, bring our message to the attention of lots of people we couldn't reach otherwise.

Another example could be speaking on local radio, or being interviewed for the newspaper, around the time of a notable anniversary. Many news organisations look for local material about important anniversaries and events, so it can be worthwhile making contact with them about our work and the stories we've created.

Promotion specialists recommend using the five W's to help us design our promotional material: who, what, where, when and why. They also suggest beginning with the most important points about an event or activity, and leaving detail until later. For example, when we're designing a leaflet we need to say what the event is, when it's on and where to find it. Telling people where they might park and whether there will be refreshments might be useful too, if we have enough space. We could also include an email address, or link to a webpage that includes more detail.

Finally, it's important to think about the language we use. Our promotional materials need to be as accessible as our WW1 events and activities, but they also need to be interesting. Being enthusiastic about our research and stories helps, and we must share that enthusiasm in our promotion too. Think about it this way: if we don't make our story interesting when we tell people about it, no-one will be inspired to find out more!

Evaluating your promotion plan

It's important that we learn about the impact our promotion has had on the numbers of visitors we've had, how long they stayed, and so on. Without this information we won't be able to decide whether to use these approaches again in the future.

The tools we use for evaluating events and activities can also be helpful when we're deciding whether our promotional activity was successful. We highlighted these guides for evaluating events and activities, and they should be useful here too:

- The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement
www.publicengagement.ac.uk/plan-it/evaluation/evaluation-resources
- An evaluation guide from Research Councils UK
www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/publications/evaluationguide.pdf
- Guidance on evaluating projects from the Heritage Lottery Fund
www.hlf.org.uk/running-your-project/evaluating-your-project.