Interactive Archives
Corbridge Middle School

PBL Goes to University

National Curriculum subject content

Year7 and 8 Girls into STEM project: Computer Science/ Local History
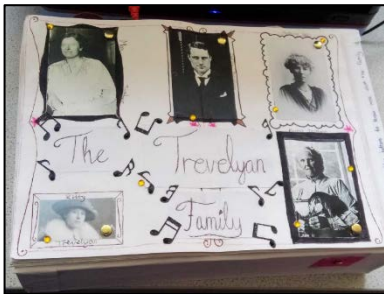
Project Summary

This project took place during the summer term over a four week period. The aim was for the students to create an interactive digital exhibition using a local historical archive as the source information.

The students started with a visit to Newcastle University where they were introduced to the Trevelyan Family Archive by one of the archivists in Special Collections, Robinson Library. They also attended a lecture about the family and visited the School of Engineering where they explored the facilities and met some PhD students. In the afternoon they worked with Megan Wilson (PhD student) who had developed the Interactive Archives project and she began the planning process and introduced some resources.

Back in school, the students had to decide which aspect of the archive was of most interest to them and then conduct research which would provide the content of their interactive exhibit. They worked in groups of 3 or 4 (self-assigned roles) in their computing lessons where they created physical exhibits that would connect to a computer using Makey Makey and Scratch. The computing teacher and the School IT technician supported the students in their work.

The completed exhibits were presented to staff from the university.

Skill development

- Team work
- Working to a project brief
- Working to deadlines
- Producing work for a specific target audience
- Presenting to an external audience

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Cultural capital

Fundamental to the project was the visit to the university to enable the students to experience the facilities and to meet and work with the archivist, academics and university post graduate students. Through attending a lecture and working in the library to conduct their initial research they were able to see what it is like to be a university student on campus. Speaking to the female engineering PhD students also enabled them to understand the variety of research that is undertaken and what sort of study opportunities are available. Finally working with PhD student Megan Wilson and having her and her supervisor assess their work at the end of the project added significantly to the quality of the experience and to their understanding of potential study pathways.
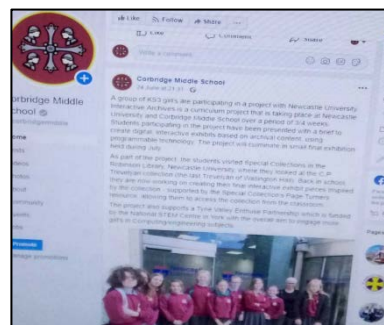
Gatsby Benchmarks

BM4. Linking curriculum learning to careers

BM7: Encounters with further and higher education

Project activity with timeline

| Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Visit to Newcastle University Morning: Robinson Library- special collections. Introduction to the Trevelyan Family Archives by the University Archivist School of History lecture -the historical context of the Trevelyan archive (lecture theatre) School of Engineering- meet PhD students (women in engineering) Afternoon: Start project planning with Megan Wilson, PhD student (seminar room School of Education)	Work on project in computing lessons and lunchtimes Supported by computing teacher and technician	Work on project in computing lessons and lunchtimes Supported by computing teacher and technician Visit by Megan to check progress	Presentation of final exhibits to university staff

Launch event

The project launched with the visit to the university (see above for activities). This was intended to provide an inspiring start through the creation of interesting activities and by enabling the students to meet a variety of members of the university community. It also introduced the subject content and background information that would enable the students to create their products.

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Final product and presentation

The students undertook research to determine the focus of their exhibit and then did the coding finding different ways to introduce the subject content to their audience. All were able to create unique products that reflected their coding ability.

At the end of the four weeks the students presented their work, explaining what they had done and demonstrating the exhibits to Megan and her supervisor.
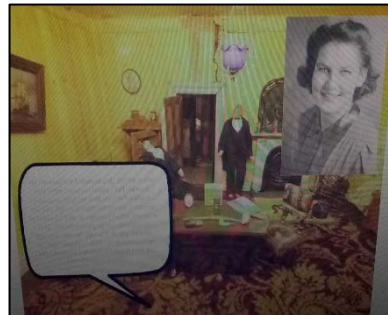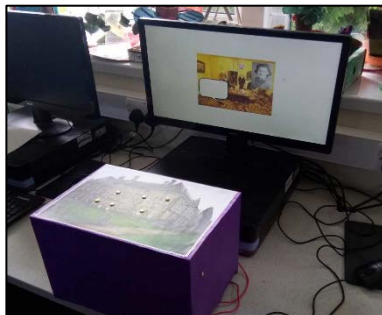
Planning the project: who, how?

The project was planned by the Computing teacher, the PhD student and two researchers with experience of developing PBL. Each brought their expertise to the meetings ensuring the quality and success of the project. The computing teacher was able to provide the information about the skill level of the students, the technical equipment he had available and any issues around timetabling. The PhD student provided the project information, resources and organised some of the activities due to take place at the university. The researchers helped to ensure the principles of a PBL project were included e.g. launch event, meeting people, a visit, creating a high quality product to be presented to an external audience.

Learning for next time

The students required quite a lot of technical support which meant that the school technician had to be present during the lessons and at lunchtimes. Considering the support that will be required needs to be factored in at the planning stage.

The project was affected by its timing in the school academic year i.e. the final few weeks of the summer term. The students were often out doing end of year activities with many changes made at the last minute. The knock-on effect was that an intended final showcase event did not take place. Planning when a project takes place to ensure maximum success needs to be carefully thought-through.

Useful resources

Education Outreach, Special Collections, Robinson Library, Newcastle University:

https://www.ncl.ac.uk/library/in-the-community/education-outreach/

Wallington Hall (former home of the Trevelyan Family)

https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wallington

Newcastle University Travel bursary:
https://www.ncl.ac.uk/schools/resources/support/bursary/

Does your local university offer something similar?

Library Visits

School and college groups are welcome to visit to the Library for tours and taught sessions.

Our Library visits are designed to help school and college students **develop their information literacy skills** and give them the opportunity to **study in an academic library**.

Our How to Research in a University Library workshop is ideal for sixth formers and supports the taught skills element of the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) whilst our award-winning Study Skills for Sixth Form website provides further support.