

Lest We Forget

Digital Collection Days – A Guide for Schools

Introduction

This brief guide is written to enable schools to maximise the potential outcomes for their students from a Lest We Forget Digital Collections Day. It may also enable those advocating a Digital Collection Day to governors, colleagues and the wider community to do so with greater confidence. The following guidance assumes consideration by organising professionals of Health and Safety, Child Protection and policies relating to photography, with regard to public access to the school site.

Who is this guide for?

It is aimed to support teaching professionals working with students at **Key Stages 3 and 4** and those organising Digital Collection Days in Universities and heritage organisations.

What are the potential benefits for schools of a Collection Day?

- Meaningful school – family – student interaction and collaboration.
- Significant community liaison and involvement.
- Intergenerational communication and joint working.
- Enhancement of a school's reputation in the local community.
- Partnership working with the University of Oxford and other heritage professionals and organisations.
- Students gaining an understanding of the local impact of the First World War.
- Enhanced participation in, and understanding of, the Act of Remembrance.
- Development of students' participation in, and understanding of, the use of digital libraries and archives for learning.
- Opportunities for student enrichment activities.
- Extra curricula development.
- Provision of demonstrations, presentations and engagement activities by heritage professionals and organisations.
- Local and regional media opportunities.

To maximise the potential outcomes for students of a Digital Collection Day, what might be done in preparation?

- Students are encouraged to carry out their own research about their ancestors associated with the war. If ancestors are unknown, a local soldier recorded on a war memorial or school roll of honour will suffice.
- Letters, texts and e-mails are sent home to students' families promoting the Collection Day, with the possibility of gaining the sense of potential community involvement. The communication includes an appeal for memorabilia and ephemera.
- University representatives and other heritage professionals promote and explain the Collection Day during assemblies.
- Student 'Custodians' are appointed to promote and explain the events in their own tutor groups, assisting communication and enhancing student ownership. Custodians include students with memorabilia to share.
- As part of Curriculum Enrichment activities, students produce promotional materials to support the Collection Day. For example posters, leaflets, flyers, social media output.
- Students are appointed to support the management of the Collection Day.
- A 'Publicity Plan' is created to promote the Collection Day via newspapers, TV, radio and social media.

Which local community audiences, in addition to students' families, would be interested in participating in a Collections Day and might be contacted?

- Local history societies
- The Western Front Association
- Royal British Legion
- University of the Third Age
- Women's Institutes
- Rotarians
- Museums community and partnership groups
- Reminiscence organisations
- Age Concern
- University history and museum studies departments
- Medal collecting societies

What potential roles might students play on a Collections Day?

- Supporting the management of contributors and working, alongside a member of staff, on key stations in the Collection Day
e.g. the Welcome Desk
Helping contributors with form filling and by answering questions

- Helping with Interviews
- Running a digitisation station (camera, scanner, etc)
- Creating a film of the day and/or interviewing individual contributors talking about their objects.
- Assisting with contributors' object and story research.

Activity ideas directly related to a Digital Collection Day

- Bring in a Living History organisation to show objects from the period, give talks, assist with the Digital Collection Day:

Lest We Forget is working with Frontline Living History (<http://www.frontlinelivinghistory.com>) to support Collection Days. They are attending to give talks to students, offer object handling exercises, but also support the Collection Day as a subject expert helping identify items. N.B. This will require a payment based on a daily rate and expenses.

- Students research the local war memorial and/or a First World War soldier in their own families, following these steps:

Step 1: Visit the local memorial, each student carrying out research about one soldier.

Step 2: Students access the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website to discover more about their soldier. (cwgc.org)

Step 3: Search 'The Long, Long Trail' website to discover more about their soldier's unit. (1914-1918.net)

Step 4: Use local newspaper archives to deepen knowledge about a soldier through obituaries, letters home and the local perspective. (Local records Office)

Step 5: Download a War Diary to uncover more about a soldier's unit, its movements and reference to a soldier's death on occasions. (nationalarchives.gov.uk)

- Use a war memorial. How has the First World War been remembered? (nationalarchives.gov.uk)
(learnaboutwarmemorials.org)

Aim to encourage students to understand how and why the war was the subject of so many memorials and to consider how appropriate those memorials are. This work addresses the issue of getting students to really care about aspects of history, rather than simply seeing the subject as a detached study. Memorials are extremely

moving in their own right. When linked to other forms of memorial that may have a direct relevance to the personal experience of students (such as memorials for family members or memorials relating to specific events), they can have an added poignancy if handled sensitively.

Create a 'book', 'virtual exhibition', or database, with each soldier recorded on the memorial included. Students look to add extra value to what is known on national catalogues.

- Digitisation and Object Workshop

Either working with objects brought in to the Digital Collection Day, or items from local museums, students could learn how to handle historical documents, capture them in digital format and make sense of their historical meaning and value. The workshop could give students an understanding of the purposes of digitization. When looking at documents associated with the First World War, the following questions will focus the analysis:

Identification

What type of document is it?

Who produced it? Do you know anything about the author/creator?

When was it written/produced?

Why was it written/produced?

Understanding

Consider the key words and their meaning within the source

What points or arguments are made in the source?

What values or attitudes does the content of the source reflect?

How does the content of the source relate to a given historical situation?

Are there any clues about the intended audience for the source?

How reliable is the source and does it have any limitations?

How does it relate to other sources from this period? Does it share the same ideas, attitudes and arguments? How would you explain any differences between these sources?

- Transcribathon

Using *Europeana*'s transcription tool, transcribe historical documents. This can be done as a workshop and be combined with awareness raising or training (<https://transcribathon.com/en/>).

Creating digital images of historical documents is a valuable and important way to preserve our heritage. By transcribing text found in digital images, we make it easier to find and explore relevant documents which open up exciting possibilities for linking different sources to each other or to a particular time, place, person or event.

- Using First World War Medals brought into a Collections Day. (mylearning.org)

What name do you think should be given to recipients of the campaign medals of the First World War? 'Heroes' is probably not correct. What word should be used? Which people do you think deserve to be called heroes and why?

Were any of the roles for which people received campaign medals more important than the others - for instance, was the role of a nurse or stretcher bearer less important than that of a soldier?

What do you think people felt when they received medals in the War either for themselves or for their relatives? Were there cases when people might not have been pleased to receive one?

Read news story about veterans rejecting their medals in 2015. Why do you think they decided to return the medals? What do you think it means to 'reject war'? (A number of online articles available, for example: veteransforpeace.org)

Find out what medals are still awarded to servicemen and women today, then choose three of them and research some of the people who have received these medals. Make a list showing who they were awarded to, and for what reason.

- Create a film of the Digital Collection Day

Film the contributors, participatory events and workflow. Interview willing contributors, including students, talking about their memorabilia and its related stories.

- Use the 'Europeana 1914-18' archive to stimulate enquiry and activity. (europeana.eu/portal/en/collections/world-war-i)

'Poetry By Heart'. Use one of the Europeana archive's publicly contributed poems in a school recitation competition. (See <http://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/first-world-war-poetry-showcase/>)

Create a rap, dance, or piece of theatre/drama in response to the archive. Film the results.

Following the Digital Collection Day, use letters, diaries, and artefacts brought in as the starting point for dramatisation, the creation of a piece of artwork or the creation of short musical piece. For example, read a letter and write a reply. Alternatively, write a letter from the front based on something featuring in a diary or newspaper feature.

Some additional cross-curricular activity ideas

These activities for students might play a part in supporting preparatory and/or follow up enrichment activities in association with a Collections Day.

Humanities

- Presentation of an object handling session led by the local military museum. e.g. The Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum (sofo.gov.uk)
- Analysis of the collection of 13 interviews filmed in the 1960s for the landmark BBC series *The Great War* (1964). In these poignant B&W interviews, veterans and civilians, by then already into their late 60's, share memories of what it was really like to experience at first hand the grim reality of this most brutal of conflicts. Interviewees recollect life in the trenches, the horrors of artillery bombardment and fleeting outbreaks of peace on the battlefield, aerial warfare, as well as life on the home front. There is a wealth of material available that helps shape students understanding of the First World War. In tandem with those resources these interviews will help make it accessible; none can convey its horror and tragedy like the men and women who suffered it at first hand on the battlefields and at home. As the interviews contain graphic recollections of killing and death, it is the responsibility of teachers to ensure they are appropriate for the age range of their students. These authentic voices offer students the opportunity to analyse such testimony, assess its strengths and weaknesses as an historical source and understand the events referred to. (bbc.co.uk/iplayer)
- Through online research, students list the multitude of roles played by women during the First World War. These roles are categorised under general

headings: for example: 'In support of the front line'; 'fundraising and supply of practical articles for the troops', 'home front related work'.

- Research the role of the British Indian Army during the First World War. Discover the makeup of the army, from which areas of the sub-continent it was recruited and its religious and cultural make-up. Find out about local links to British Indian Army – for example 1st Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry were based in India from the early 19th Century. Local soldiers fought alongside Indians as part of the 6th (Poona) Division, 17th (Ahmednagar) Brigade in Mesopotamia throughout the whole of 1914-18.

English

- First World War Poetry Workshop involves students studying and discussing digitised versions of original poem manuscripts. What do they tell us about the poets and their writing methods? (<http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/>)
- Letter-writing during the First World War gives practice identifying and using present simple and present continuous tenses through the medium of letters. The letters help to bring the period alive and also provide a backdrop for a discussion about censorship.
(teachingenglish.org.uk/article/letters-home)
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Languages

- Soldiers' guide to France and Belgium. Practical language tips for soldiers, based on original manuals issued in 1914-18. An opportunity for students to analyse the guides and produce their own simple manual for soldiers. Perhaps a simple one might be produced for German, Turkish or Sikh soldiers for example, by students with other languages.
- 'Trench talk' – by researching online, students study language used widely today which was initiated during the First World War or which was brought into common usage. Some of those words originated in India before the war with the British Army e.g. khaki, kushi, putti, blighty, bloke.

Science

- Chemical warfare and battlefield medicine workshop. Living historians and museum representatives are able to lead this if required.(sofo.gov.uk)
(frontlinelivinghistory.com)

Physical Education

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- Army style fitness assessment with an indoor and outdoor obstacle course. Local army reservists are often willing to support such events, as well as able to talk about their life as a soldier, perhaps in a particular theatre of war.

Music

- Learn about, practice and perform songs and music from the period.

Design Technology

- Metalwork - compare and contrast the campaign medals of the First World War with those issued in recent campaigns. Design and make an alternative replica medal of the Great War. Consider what other symbols and language would have been relevant to the period at the end of the war and its aftermath.

Food Technology

- Learn about the introduction of food rationing in January of 1918 and the development of allotments, soup kitchens and food queues. Create a simple menu for a soup kitchen. (bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1)

Mathematics

- Students plan to scale trench systems as set out in contemporary guidance. A very good way for students to understand the features, deepen their knowledge of the impact on soldiers and relate more closely to written testimony.
- Create a set of 1914 'Top Trump' cards which highlight numerically the main strengths and weaknesses of the protagonists during 1914-18. Details might include army size, size of empire, GDP for example.

Geography

- Students map the locations where the artefacts brought into a Collections Day are associated within the UK (and perhaps beyond). Is the location important in understanding its story?

- Produce a world map indicating the alliances formed, those countries making up those alliances and the numbers of soldiers committed to the armed struggle during the First World War.
- Students create a map illustrating the flow of refugees across Europe during the First World War. This can be related to the local perspective – for example, Oxford gave refuge to over 1500 Belgians and Serbs during the war.
- Design a map which illustrates the different theatres of war in which local regiments took part in. For example, the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry fought in France and Flanders, Mesopotamia, Russia, India, Salonika and Italy. This activity emphasises the extent of the 'Global War' from a local perspective.

Art

- Having analysed a variety of propaganda posters issued by all sides and countries during the war, list the key features and themes that they have in common. Students create posters based upon these features and then compare and contrast the outcomes with propaganda posters used today.

Useful Websites

An Open Educational Resource supporting new directions in teaching the First World War, produced by the University of Oxford. ww1centenary.oucs.ox.ac.uk

The First World War Poetry Digital Archive is an online repository of over 7000 items of text, images, audio, and video for teaching, learning, and research. Produced by the University of Oxford. oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/

Untold Stories of the First World War. Photos, letters and other memorabilia from the Europeana portal. europeana.eu

Explore the untold stories and official histories of World War I in 514,865 items from across Europe. europeana.eu/portal/en/collections/world-war-i

Commemorating the Fallen. Is there someone or somewhere you are trying to find? The search engine of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. cwgc.org/

The Imperial War Museum. iwm.org.uk/

Imperial War Museums register of over 68,000 UK War Memorials that is continuously improved and updated. iwm.org.uk/memorials/search

A brief guide to researching British government and military records of the First World War. The records are wide-ranging and are kept in a variety of archives. This guide will help you gain a general overview of the main sources of the information

that exists, and where to find what you're looking for.

nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/first-world-war/

War Memorials Trust's Learning Programme provides ideas and materials for young people in schools and youth groups, and the adults who work with them. They work to educate future generations of war memorial custodians so that they can continue the work to protect and conserve war memorials into the future.

learnaboutwarmemorials.org/secondary/

The significant source of information about the military aspects of the First World War. 1914-1918.net

The Digital War Memorial. Explore unique creative responses to World War One made by local communities collaborating with artists.

historypin.org/en/first-world-war-centenary/the-digital-war-memorial/

Local military museums. In Oxfordshire – The Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum

sofo.org.uk