

# Birmingham City Council



## Stage 2 Full Evaluation Report

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May 2007



Supported by the  
**Heritage Lottery Fund**

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## Executive Summary

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Birmingham City Council commissioned Stuart Davies Associates (SDA) to write a two-stage evaluation report for Connecting Histories. This Stage Two evaluation is presented in two parts: part one details and evaluates how the original aims have been achieved and part two describes the additional outcomes that have arisen over the thirty-month project.

In this context, this Stage Two Full Evaluation Report:

- Identifies how the project's actions and activities have achieved the original aims and objectives;
- Identifies successful additional areas of activity, outcomes and measures of success that were not identified or foreseen in the original application and project plan;
- Assesses how the partnership has functioned, the project's impact on the different partners, and identifies success factors to inform the continuation of the partnership;
- Assesses whether the project has supported cultural change within the participating institutions;
- Identifies how other cultural and heritage organisations have interacted with the project and who else has benefited from the project;
- Supports the management board in identifying mechanisms for sustaining the project outcomes as a means to build on the project's successes;
- Articulates how the project can inform or stimulate developments in the wider archives and heritage sectors in areas such as work force development, partnership working and community interaction;
- Produces a narrative of what the project has done and how this was achieved and identifies the key elements of good practice to be included in the models of practice;
- Contributes to a dissemination strategy for the project outcomes.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were used for this evaluation. The following actions were taken:

- Desk research;
- Face-to-face interviews with team members;
- Stakeholder interviews;
- Interviews (focus groups) with user groups and individuals;
- Participation in outreach sessions - As an external evaluator it was important to fully understand the work of Connecting Histories and reading through previous evaluation reports, publications and minutes was not adequate. To take part in an outreach activity provided the researcher with insight into what Connecting Histories is doing and is capable of achieving in the future.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) is currently piloting the development of Generic Social Outcomes (GSOs) which measure the impact of museums, libraries and archives on communities, concentrating on the areas of; health and well being, stronger and safer communities and strengthening public life. As Connecting Histories developed and after the completion of the stage one evaluation, it became clear that the project has the potential to have a wider influence than was originally anticipated. The themes within the GSOs have been used wherever possible in this evaluation in order to gather data on the wider impact of the project (please refer to case studies in appendices).

Due to the nature of the community groups involved and the relationships nurtured by the Connecting Histories' team, in some cases, it would have been inappropriate to undertake structured and formal evaluation. To overcome this, advice from the Community Access Officer was sought regarding the correct evaluative approach.

Furthermore, some areas, such as the impact of the e-learning packages, have been impossible to measure at this stage because some of the outputs are only being finalised within the last few weeks of the project end.

## Introduction

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*'Britain today is commonly portrayed as a multicultural nation. However, the diverse historical experiences which constitute the story of this 'new' Britain are less well known. The history of the West Midlands in the twentieth century is central to this story. It is a history of the emergence of multicultural, multilingual and multifaith communities, of Black, Muslim, Sikh, Jewish, Irish, refugee and travelling peoples. The stories that make up this history remain largely hidden in archival and library collections; stories of common experiences, shared struggles and aspirations.*

*Connecting Histories aims to make these collections accessible and realise their potential so that connections can be made between the past and the present, and thereby encourage local and national debate about our shared identities, our common sense of belonging and our multiple heritages. It also aims to provide users with the skills to engage with these multiple histories'<sup>1</sup>.*

This introduction describes the initial purpose and vision of Connecting Histories; it also shows how the remit of the project has developed and widened since its conception, working in the areas of diversity, workforce development, social justice and community cohesion and engagement. During consultation, one consultee stated how, by just moving the boundaries of Connecting Histories, there are so many creative possibilities.

Connecting Histories, a partnership project led by Birmingham City Archives, the Universities of Birmingham and Warwick and Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures Group (BPBF) was initiated on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2005 and continued over 30 months.

For the previous seven to eight years, there has been a three-way partnership between Siân Roberts - Head of Archives at Birmingham City Library, Ian Grosvenor - Head of the School of Education at the University of Birmingham and key to the evolution and philosophy behind the project and Rita McLean – Head of Museums and Heritage Projects at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. These three integral figures have been involved in many important initiatives that have led to the creation of Connecting Histories, some of which are described in the following paragraphs.

Connecting Histories builds on consultation carried out by BPBF and Birmingham Library Services.

The ethos behind the BPBF Group is fundamental to Connecting Histories. The group of librarians, curators, archivists, academics, teachers and community activists was established in 2000 to develop a strategy and framework for

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<sup>1</sup> Introductory text for the original HLF application

building permanent historical and cultural records of Black people's lives and experiences in Birmingham. The group acts in an advisory capacity to the project, particularly in areas of access, consultation and interpretation.

BPBF aims:

- *To ensure that the histories, cultures and contribution of Black people are permanently represented in archive, library and museum collections in the city and the region;*
- *To ensure that these collections play a central role in learning and education, informally (lifelong learning) and formal (school curriculum).*

Connecting Histories has been important in delivering this strategy. The Project also builds upon the work of the Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures: Using History to Build Community project which was funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. The BPBF project supported teachers who already work with local communities to develop multicultural history materials, bringing the experiences of minority ethnic communities into schools and the national curriculum. The support for this project was continued through the creation of web-based learning packages. Connecting Histories was designed to offer *'an alternative, cost effective, mechanism to deliver support for archival and heritage based initiatives for all those who wish to use archive collections for learning and teaching'*.

A series of community seminars (2000-01) identified the need to develop a strategy to make culturally diverse heritage more accessible. Making Connections (2002-03) and Connecting Identities (2003-04) aimed to widen participation and promote culturally diverse heritage. Complementary to these initiatives was Warwick University's *A Different Reality: minority struggle in British Cities* (2003).

The Making Connections project arose out of the BPBF group. The aim of the project was *'to highlight the international heritage dimension of Birmingham's social and cultural history and thereby provide tangible representation and celebration of Black communities in Birmingham<sup>2</sup>'*. This aim was supported through a series of events, exhibitions and a publication. The publication entitled *'Making Connections: Birmingham Black International History'* (2002), edited by Ian Grosvenor, Rita McLean and Siân Roberts, underlined the need for a project like Connecting Histories to increase awareness and widen access to this significant archive:

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<sup>2</sup> Angie Faust Salus Associates (2003) Making Connections, Interim Evaluation Report

*'Birmingham is increasingly recognised as one of the UK's international cities. However, the international heritage dimension to Birmingham's social and cultural history is generally under appreciated'*<sup>3</sup>.

Prior to February 2005, there had been a series of interconnected steps, finally pulling together the separate cataloguing, learning, outreach and partnership schemes to create one holistic initiative: Connecting Histories.

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<sup>3</sup> Grosvenor, I., McLean, R. & Roberts, S. (Eds) (2002) Making Histories, Birmingham, Black Pasts Birmingham Futures Group

## Project Management

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The project outcomes have been delivered by a team of thirteen:

- Project Manager . . . . . Siân Roberts
- Community Access Officer. . . . . Izzy Mohammed
- Outreach Support Officer. . . . . Adisa Folarin
- Archivists . . . . . Helen Fisher, Jim Ranahan and Anna Riggs
- Trainee Archivists. . . . . Aishling Fox and Arike Oke
- Research & Learning Officers . . . . Sarah Dar and Andy Green
- Digitisation Officer. . . . . Brigitte Winsor
- Academic Advisors. . . . . Dr Robert Carter, University of Warwick and Professor Ian Grosvenor, University of Birmingham

The project was supervised by a Management Board within Birmingham Libraries which consisted of six members:

- Brian Gambles (Head of Libraries and Archives),
- Paul Hemmings (Central Library Manager Archives and Heritage),
- Graham Arrand (Senior Accountant, Birmingham City Council),
- Professor Ian Grosvenor (University of Birmingham),
- Dr Robert Carter (University of Warwick),
- and the Project Manager.

The aim of the Management Group has been the formal mechanism to ensure that the project objectives are delivered, the project is running on track and that any necessary remedial action does not fall exclusively on the responsibility of the Project Manager.

The project has been monitored by David Riggs on behalf of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) with The National Archives as secondary monitors for the archival cataloguing and digitisation work.

In addition to this, the project had an Advisory Group to provide support and advice and which includes individuals from a range of backgrounds and specialisms. The members are:

- Michael Cooke (Chair) MLA West Midlands
- Sam Collenette, Acting Head of Birmingham City Archives
- Zualfqar Hussain, Small Heath Community Forum
- Dr Anthony Joseph, Chairman Birmingham Branch Jewish Historical Society, President Jewish Genealogical Society GB
- Judith Joseph, Birmingham Hebrew Congregation



- Shirley Joshi, Activist and Indian Workers Association
- Rita McLean, Acting Director Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery
- Gillian Reynolds, Journalist, Chairman Charles Parker Archive Trust, Trustee of National Museums Liverpool.
- Charles Small, Director, The Drum Arts Centre
- Carol Tulloch, Senior Research Fellow in Black Visual Culture, Victoria & Albert Museum.

Monthly Management Board meetings and quarterly Advisory Group meetings helped manage and steer the project.

The Connecting Histories team is very organised, efficient and accessible. Much of the success of the project has been due to its flat management structure that has allowed collaborative decision-making.

## Part One - Achieving the Original Outputs

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The aims of the project were to:

- Increase access to culturally diverse archive collections;
- Preserve at-risk sound and photographic archives;
- Expand the heritage knowledge and skills of local communities through user participation, particularly non-traditional users;
- Increase the number and diversity of users of archive collections;
- Provide e-learning environments aimed at a broad range of users;
- Embed and sustain regional partnerships;
- Give users and volunteers the opportunity to influence archive policies and practices;
- Increase the diversity of the workforce in the archive and specialist heritage library sectors;
- Develop a model of working transferable to other contexts.

A number of actions have been put in place in order to realise these aims, they are as follows:

- Catalogue and provide onsite and electronic access to significant and culturally diverse archive collections including:
  1. the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation Archive;
  2. the Vanley Burke Archive;
  3. the Archive of Derek Bishton and the Ten:8 photographic collective;
  4. the George Hallett Archive;
  5. the Indian Workers Association Archive;
  6. the Banner Theatre Archive;
  7. the Charles Parker Archive;
  8. the Archive of the Trade Union Resource Centre and Paul Mackney.
- Digitise sound and photographic archives to ensure preservation and access.
- Train two positive action trainees who will qualify as archivists at the end of the project.
- Develop five e-learning packages, targeting adult learners, on a series of linked themes including; research skills, Black British History, campaigning for social justice, migration and settlement, and the histories of resistance to racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. The related website will feature a discussion board and information and advice for community groups on a range of issues including caring for archives, obtaining funding and planning community history projects using archives, photography, oral and video history.

- Support a network of community archive user and volunteer groups who will participate in the cataloguing, presentation, and interpretation of the collections and advise on archive policies and practices.
- Develop a model of working for the archives and heritage sectors that can be disseminated both regionally and nationally.

How the aims have been achieved:

**Aim: To increase access to culturally diverse archive collections**

**ACTION: Catalogue archival collections at Birmingham City Archives**

Prior to Connecting Histories, collections development policies within the City Archives had focused on increasing the relevance of the collections to better reflect the cultural diversity of Birmingham's population. Connecting Histories has furthered this work by cataloguing and making accessible eight culturally diverse archive collections:

- The Birmingham Hebrew Congregation Archive,
- The Vanley Burke Archive,
- The Archive of Derek Bishton and the Ten:8 photographic collective,
- The George Hallett Archive,
- The Indian Workers Association Archive,
- The Banner Theatre Archive,
- The Charles Parker Archive,
- The Archive of the Trade Union Resource Centre and Paul Mackney

The Vanley Burke Archive Preservation and Cataloguing Project involved 19 volunteers who worked with the trainee archivists and depositor Vanley Burke in cataloguing his collections. This programme is detailed on page 24.

The cataloguing of these collections was seen by one depositor to benefit the wider community not just the community involved; now there is recorded evidence showing how the respective communities have helped Birmingham to grow and given the communities recognition.

**ACTION: Produce five online learning packages using digitised materials from the collections with supporting historical information**

At the end of the Connecting Histories project there will be five e-learning packages available online and within the Birmingham City Archives. These five packages are entitled:

- How to Research Black History;
- Performing Resistance;
- Campaigning for Social Justice;

- Migration and Settlement;
- Archives as Social Knowledge.

These have been created through research into the eight catalogued collections and offer another way to access the culturally diverse collections.

***Other ways access to the culturally diverse archives has been increased***

A major achievement of the project is its website [www.connectinghistories.org.uk](http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk). The website presents resources that have been created from the catalogued archives and interaction with community groups and individuals, offering a variety of ways in which to access and understand the archival material. This facility opens up access to the culturally diverse archive collections to an international platform.

There are six main parts to the website outlined below:

- Collections;
- Learning;
- Exhibitions;
- Notice board;
- Guidance;
- Discussion.

The *Collections* web page is at the core of the website and all other pages present the additional work that has resulted from cataloguing the collections. It introduces the eight archive collections catalogued by Connecting Histories along with a downloadable pdf version of the collections catalogue. This section also presents eight other collections of similar content that are held by Birmingham City Archives and Local Studies of Birmingham Central Library. The Slavery/Antislavery Resources include three downloadable guides to the texts and resources available on the subject.

The *Learning* section offers five e-learning packages. At the time of writing this evaluation, 'How to Research Black History', 'Campaigning for Social Justice' 'Archives as Social Knowledge' and 'Migration and Settlement' were available online, the other package 'Performing Resistance' is to be launched towards the end of the project. The learning element of Connecting Histories is detailed later in this report. 'How to Create a Learning Package' guide will be available at the end of the project.

The *Exhibitions* page includes links to City Stories, City Trails, Community Exhibitions and Photographic Exhibitions. The City Stories have been created as a result of research into the collections; consultation with the archivists revealed that there are many more stories that could be included on the webpage, but time constraints have prevented the site reaching its full potential.

The *Notice Board* section provides a 'What's On' page for events and other website listings and also details ways to get involved with the Connecting Histories project and other community projects. There is also a '*Discussion*' page due to be launched towards the end of the project.

The *Guidance* page offers the following support, although some information is still to be placed online before the project end:

- How to work in heritage;
- How to create an archive;
- How to do research;
- How to do a project.

*Your album* allows the user to add photos from the website and notes of particular interest.

The following table presents the numbers of website hits and individual visitors per month since the website went 'live':

Month	Website Hits	Individual Visitors
October 2006	53,399	1,960
November 2006	186,024	2,674
December 2006	38,182	3,253
January 2007	58,399	4,370
February 2007	65,226	4,905
March 2007	139,377	6,694
<b>Total</b>	<b>664,336</b>	<b>26,336</b>

It is clear that numbers have been increasing. The website has attracted a total of 664,336 hits since it has been live and 26,388 individual visitors. It is interesting to note that many visitors to the website spend at least 5 to 20 minutes browsing, which is considered to be a lot of time for a website and shows that the material is being used.

The following table illustrates the most popular pages within the website:

Webpage	Webpage Hits	Individual Visitors
Collections	2,990	1,796
Other collections	3,750	1,581
Learning	2,965	1,492
Exhibitions	2,512	1,336

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that the original aim ‘*To increase access to culturally diverse archive collections*’ has been achieved. This was realised primarily through the cataloguing of eight culturally diverse archive collections, establishing accessible and useable archival material and secondly, through the resources that have been developed, such as; the website and e-learning packages using the catalogued collections and interaction with community groups and individuals as inspiration.

**Aim: To preserve at-risk sound and photographic archives**

**ACTION: Digitise the sound recording of the Charles Parker Archive  
Digitise photographs from the collections at Birmingham City Archives**

All eight collections were previously deposited in the City Archives but were not catalogued (except for part of the Charles Parker Archive). They comprise of some photographic material (Derek Bishton and Ten:8, Vanley Burke and George Hallett archives in particular) and the Charles Parker Archives consisting of mainly sound archives.

The archives and their collections level descriptions are detailed below to portray the amount of material that has been catalogued over the thirty month project. The Charles Parker Archive is proving a challenge for the Connecting Histories archivists because of the sheer size of the collection and the tight time-scale of the project.

Archive	Description	Quantity
1. <i>The Birmingham Hebrew Congregation Archive</i> 1807-2006.	The papers mainly relate to Singers Hill Synagogue and the Hebrew School/King David School including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Records from clubs and societies,</li> <li>- Minutes created by the Council and sub committees,</li> <li>- School records including log books, admission registers, correspondence</li> <li>- Marriage and death registration records</li> <li>- Ledgers, cashbooks of synagogue finances</li> <li>- Photographs</li> </ul>	6 cubic metres = 120 boxes

<i>Birmingham Jewish Literary and Art Society 1924 – 1960</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Published material including orders of service, annual reports</li> <li>- Minutes of meetings including programmes, reviews</li> </ul>	
2. <i>The Vanley Burke Archive</i>	<p>The depositor, Vanley Burke, worked with the archivists to ensure the cataloguing reflected his 'collecting ethos and motivations'. It is divided into three sub-collections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vanley Burke Exhibitions, Commissions and Projects</li> <li>- Vanley Burke non commissioned photographic and original works</li> <li>- Material collected by Vanley Burke</li> </ul>	3.31 cubic metres
3. <i>The archive of Derek Bishton and the Ten:8 photographic collective 1973 - 1999</i>	<p>About half of the collection is photographic material; the other half is paper archives including related documentary material, publications, press cuttings and posters.</p>	1.51 cubic metres = 30 boxes
4. <i>The George Hallett Archive 2002</i>	<p>Collection includes: Exhibition prints, work prints and material supporting the photographs and the 'Bearing Witness' exhibition in Coventry</p>	52 exhibition prints and 50 work prints from the 'Handsworth Though Southern Eyes' exhibition shown at the Soho House Birmingham
5. <i>The Indian Workers Association Archive</i>	<p>Papers of the Indian Workers Association 1959-1998 both national and local branches of the organisation (primarily the Birmingham branch) consisting of minutes; agendas; reports; constitutions; circulars; press statements; financial papers; correspondence; campaign and casework material; publications; membership records; press cuttings; printed ephemera; and photographs, predominantly digital copies of originals retained by the depositor. The collection also includes papers of the Shaheed Udham Singh Welfare Centre. Other material consists of organisational and campaign papers of other groups</p>	0.65 cubic metres = 13 boxes



<p><i>Papers of Avtar Jouhl and the Indian Workers Association 1956-2005</i></p>	<p>connected with the Association, either through individual members, or through joint campaign work.</p> <p>Papers kept by Avtar Jouhl documenting his involvement in political campaigning organisations, primarily the Indian Workers Association (GB) and in the Trade Union movement.</p>	<p>29 boxes</p>
<p><i>6. The Banner Theatre Archive</i></p>	<p>In 1973, Charles Parker helped inspire the opening of the amateur theatre company based on socialist principles; the company is still active today. The archive includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oral history recordings</li> <li>- Scripts</li> <li>- Notes and research material</li> <li>- Visual images</li> <li>- Songs</li> <li>- News cuttings</li> <li>- Publicity materials and publications</li> </ul>	<p>200 boxes</p>
<p><i>7. The Charles Parker Archive</i></p>	<p>Over the years of operation, the trust explored various ways of preserving and cataloguing the archive. Technology evolved and eventually they received a HLF grant which was enough to catalogue one third of the Charles Parker archive.</p> <p>The aim of cataloguing the archive was to increase access, so this archive was seen as a pilot, 'technically speaking' for Connecting Histories. Connecting Histories has started where the previous HLF funded project left off, applying the lessons learnt previously</p>	<p>The archive includes: 3,000 reel to reel tapes, 9,000 CDs.</p>
<p><i>8. The Archive of the Trade Union Resource Centre (TURC) 1983 – 1996 and Paul Mackney 1981 – 1992</i></p>	<p>The records were arranged to reflect the evolution of the TURC from a single research and information service into a formal groups and associated companies. The archive includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minutes</li> </ul>	<p>70 boxes</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial records</li> <li>- Correspondence</li> <li>- Publications</li> </ul>	
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**ACTION: Undertake conservation audits for collections included in the project  
Undertake repackaging of collections in conservation standard material**

Conservation surveys were carried out and any material that needed repacking was identified during the process. There was no set strategy for this as each collection had different requirements. Some catalogues were repackaged as they were catalogued and others were repackaged once cataloguing was complete, depending on what was deemed most efficient for the team or for conservation needs.

Publicity leaflets were produced shortly after the catalogues were completed. These supported the dissemination of the project.

Many archives had to be separated as often collections contained material of different provenance. The added challenge of the collections was their content; personal papers, ephemeral material and non traditional material e.g. leaflets. Each collection was therefore dealt with in a different way.

Depositors that were interviewed for this evaluation commented on their reassurance that the library ensured best practice and complete communication on all matters. Refer to page 57 for a good practice guide for a depositor/archivist relationship.

**Aim: To expand the heritage knowledge and skills of local communities through user participation, particularly non-traditional users.**

*'...Part of the ethos of the project is to focus on shared experiences, connections and histories as a means of developing cross-community contacts and activities'.<sup>4</sup>*

This aim has been achieved through:

- Outreach - including volunteer programmes;
- Positive Action Traineeship;
- The website;

<sup>4</sup> Roberts, S. (2005) [http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/autumn05\\_p2.pdf](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/autumn05_p2.pdf)

- E-learning packages.

**ACTION:            Establish and sustain user and volunteer groups  
                         Undertake outreach activities in diverse communities**

The Community Access Officer, Izzy Mohammed and Outreach Support Officer, Adisa Folarin, have been working with a range of communities and individuals, from settled communities to new arrivals in the city. A full list is included later on page 21.

The outreach element to Connecting Histories has been very successful and has so far received overwhelming demand from community groups and members of the public. Interestingly, some stakeholders saw Connecting Histories as primarily an outreach project. It is thought its success has been due to three factors; firstly - the quality and content of the collections, secondly - the enthusiasm and passion of the outreach team and thirdly - the flexible management methods in place.

As a consequence of the great demand for outreach, an additional post to support the Community Access Officer was created - the Outreach Support Officer has enabled better management of the project workload. The additional post has also meant that the outreach team were more capable of developing meaningful and interesting projects with communities. The success of the Handsworth event in September 2006, that launched the website, was seen as one success resulting from the extra staff resource.

Connecting Histories did not aim to collect materials for the City Archives, but to encourage and support groups and individuals to develop their own archives and heritage projects. The Community Access Officer underlined the fact that each group or individual has particular needs and skills, so engagement has taken on different forms with each user group, including; meetings, events, workshops and community projects and programmes, consultation, conferences, seminars and lectures, volunteer programmes directly supporting the project, training etc. The work of Connecting Histories has been disseminated at events such as Adult Learners Fair, Celebrating Sanctuary and also through the project's own events at community venues. Email and postal mailings have been used and also appearances on community radio stations. The most effective way to engage users has been through personal, face-to-face contact. Existing community groups involved with the heritage and community sectors were also used as a stepping stone to other contacts. These efforts helped establish a contact database of 400 names of individuals and groups. Two years on, the list is into its thousands.

One important matter to note here is the 'planting of seeds', and 'organic' element involved in establishing and sustaining contacts with BME communities and individuals. Some groups initially made contact with Connecting Histories but it has taken some time over the course of a year for that contact to be reignited and a project developed. Each outreach project has been different, it does not seem to matter how organised a group or individual is, or how much the outreach team engages with the contact, developing a trusting relationship takes time.

The table below shows the variety and number of groups and individuals that have received support from Connecting Histories. Some were one-off meetings to others more sustained support over a longer period of time; however, Connecting Histories has helped to increase the skills and confidence of all these contacts and enable them to move their own heritage projects forward and achieve their goals.

The one-off meetings have been useful to the groups and individuals who have taken away the advice or skills learnt and incorporated them into their own work. This shows the value of the free consultancy and orientation service of Connecting Histories. Support beyond the initial meeting shows the importance of the presence of the Connecting Histories service; groups have been able to use the project as and when they want, building the capacity of communities and empowering them to develop their own initiatives. The groups that have received sustained support from Connecting Histories have built strong trusting relationships and become 'friends of the project' rather than 'working partners.'<sup>5</sup> Often the team's work has gone further than the original project outcomes and outputs in order to sustain support with some groups and individuals.

A good example of relationship development is Connecting Histories' work with the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender (LBGT) community which took a year to initiate. There was an initial history exhibition and reminiscence at the Central Library where 150 people attended. The group have since worked towards a HLF bid; now they have received the funding to collect material to be deposited in Birmingham Library. Connecting Histories provided advice, support and training, aided in the installation of exhibitions and leaflet design. They have also been able to pass on a cataloguing database previously developed for another community group.

The development of the GP Heritage project has taken most of the 30 month duration of Connecting Histories. The project considers the role of GPs within BME communities and discusses the shift in emphasis in community health that has seen older traditional models of GP work slowly disappear. The project is to submit a funding application to the HLF for an exhibition, website and publication of oral histories. Connecting Histories has taken on an in-depth advisory and consultancy role, introducing the researcher, a member of the public, Paul

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<sup>5</sup> Izzy Mohammed, Community Access Officer

Waddington, to HLF and preparation of the application form. The Community Access Officer has also offered expertise and knowledge of the field, but the partnership has been a two-way learning relationship, each gaining skills from one another.

When trust is achieved successful and dynamic projects have been established, for example; Connecting Histories won a Youth 4 Change award in the education category for a project delivered in conjunction with the youth service (16 to 18 year olds) in Hockley and New Town. The project focused on identity and heritage and the important thing to note here is that the project was nominated by the children involved.

The case studies included within this evaluation present examples of the diverse groups the project has worked with so far and the varying amounts of support the outreach team gave in order to sustain the relationships (refer to appendices).

### Levels of Engagement with Groups/Individuals

<b>One Session</b>	<b>More than One Session</b>	<b>Significant or Sustained Support</b>
Somali Women's Hope	Jewish Historical Society	Singers Hill Synagogue
Ethiopian Insight	Hindu Council	Somali Cultural Heritage Archive Project
Ethiopian World Federation	Harriet Tubman Bookshop	Sikh Community and Youth Service
Somer Cultural Focus	Asian Arts and Cultural Society	New-Style Radio
Dawoodi Bohras	Erin Go Bragh'	Annie Wood Resource Centre
Birmingham Council of Faiths	Jain Community	Bangladeshi Multi-purpose Centre
Bierton Youth centre	Adeoti Arts	Somaliland Consortium
Balsall Heath Local History Society	MG Rover Sub-group	Iranian Community
Mashriq Welfare Centre	South Asian Alliance	Vanley Burke Volunteer Programme
African Caribbean Heritage Company	Workers Education Association	Charles Parker Volunteer Programme
Irish humanitarian exhibition project	Bosnian Community	BUGS Birmingham University Guild of Students
Muslim Writers Group	Chinese Community	Living Rhythms theatre company
Bangladeshi Writers Association	Vietnamese Community Zambezi Housing Association	Small Heath Community Forum
St Michaels Trust	LEGACY	Jewish Community
Minorities of Europe (Voluntary Sector)	'Deritend Project' – Anne Parouti	'Community and Play'

Organisation )		
Luton Voices Project	Indo-Caribbean community (Michael Jagessar)	Birmingham Irish Heritage Group
	Inheritance Project	Irish Community Forum
	Angolan Community	Cannon Street Baptist Church
	DASH Arts	Bangladeshi Youth Forum
	'Cultivation' Organisation set up by a member of the South Asian Community - Savita	SBYF
	Elwood Day Centre	Shaheed Udham Singh Centre
	Billy Dosanjh	GP Heritage project
	St Michaels School	Pervaiz Khan i.e. Mahmood Hashmi collection
	Deansfield School	Community and Play
	Holte School	Connections Project
	Unison	LGBT
	BYC	Springhill Library
	Faisal Ali (member of the public – project aspirations) Somali Young Roots Project	'Patwa Project' C-deVision
	Living Rhythms	Gospel Now and Then
	Northamptonshire Black History Project	Smethwick Bangladeshi Youth Forum - SBYF
	Techno Elders	South Asian Alliance
	Patricia Hayward ( member of the public – project aspirations )	St Patrick's Day Festival
	Birmingham Sikh Council	Centre for the History of Medicine – University of Birmingham
		Birchfield Library Consultation Group
		Paul Waddington (member of the public – project aspirations)
		Bangladeshi Women's Association
		Kurdish Community
		Eritrean Community
		Serbian Community
		Dawinder Bansal (member of the public – project aspirations)
		Bish Mehay (member of the public – project aspirations)

There is no pattern to the amount of support the Connecting Histories' team needed to input in order for a project to be successful. As already discussed, each outreach project is different and the team have had to manage their time and understand their limits; especially as the high level of interest created by the

project was unexpected and the structure of the team, as it is now, has often struggled to balance work demands.

Here are examples of the different levels of support offered by Connecting Histories to sustain user groups:

User	Number of meetings*	Dates	Notes
Ahmed, member of Somaliland community	42 (possibly more)	Summer 2005 to 4/4/07	Successful partnership sustained. User gained confidence to continue work with communities (see appendices)
Annie Woods Resource Centre	30 (possibly more)	Sept 2005 until 13/3/07	Ended with the success of the Birchfield library consultation programme (see appendices)
GP Heritage project	20 (possibly more)	Autumn 2005 to Spring 2007	Has resulted in HLF application
Somaliland Cultural Heritage Archive Project (SCHAP)	10	April 2005 to July 2005	Contact started before CH. The relationship could not continue as there were political and trust issues within the group.
Canon Street Oral History Project	10	November 2005 to January 2007	Mapping the shifts and changes within the church congregation over last 30 years. A representative spoke at a CH event for the Birchfield Library consultation programme (example of cross community activity). CH advised them on the delivery of the oral history project.

\* At the start of the project the Community Access Officer logged all contact with groups and individuals. However, because of the increased demand from interested communities and individuals, the Officer's priority was to cope with the high demand and could no longer sustain his logging method as easily.

Since the beginning of Connecting Histories, the project has built strong relationships with its users and it has now become much easier to gather support. With two years experience, the outreach team now know the logistics and levels of support needed to make projects work (see good practice guide to outreach page 56).

### ***Volunteer Programmes***

Two outreach activities took the form of volunteer programmes, actively engaging people in the cataloguing and preservation of an archive; these initiatives are described in detail below.

#### *The Vanley Burke Archive Preservation and Cataloguing Project October 2005*

This early programme was set up by the trainee archivists and Community Access Officer. It became very successful, involving approximately 19 volunteers over different periods of time.

Volunteers helped towards the organisation of Connecting Histories' Black History Month Event with Vanley Burke that took place at the African Caribbean Millennium Centre in October 2005. Volunteers were encouraged to make contributions to the content of the Connecting Histories' website, with their various experiences and views. They were also trained in archival conservation and given the opportunity to participate in the cataloguing of the Vanley Burke archive.

The volunteers were motivated by interest in the photographic content of the archive and enjoyed the heritage aspect of the work. Since the programme, two volunteers have searched for careers within the archives sector.

#### *Charles Parker Archive Volunteer Programme April 2007*

10 volunteers initially signed up to become involved with the Charles Parker Archive Volunteer Programme. The volunteer programme was designed to provide a hands-on opportunity to encourage the public to get involved with the archives sector, to develop knowledge about oral history, and to learn more about different communities.

The volunteers participated in the following activities during the day:

- Listened to interviews recorded during Parker's work on his Radio Ballad, *The Travelling People*;
- Repacked CD copies of his original tapes into acid-free boxes;
- Repacked Parker's original reel-to-reel tapes into acid-free boxes;
- Talked about Parker: his life, his work, his ideas, and what they mean for us today.

#### *Other Volunteer Opportunities*

University students have had their input into the Connecting Histories project; for example one student created the Constance Davies archive webpage. Enabling this close contact between the students and project team promotes the



interchange of skills and knowledge and also removes the isolation of the researcher.

**ACTION: Produce e-learning training and learning packages to be relevant and attractive to diverse users**

**Advise community groups on the development of their own websites and learning packages in the context of the Connecting Histories model**

Five e-learning packages will be available online at the end of the Connecting Histories project. A sixth entitled 'How to Create a Learning Package' is currently underdevelopment and, once complete, will offer a guide for community groups and others planning to create their own resources from archives.

The packages were written and designed to be accessible to diverse users; the variety of users is detailed on page 35 but it is important to note here that the layout and language used within the packages has enabled different people to engage with the material and adapt the packages to their own needs.

No formal e-learning training has occurred but much has happened informally at events and through contact with external groups. This is detailed further on page 34.

**ACTION: Provide information on website about preservation and care of collections held in communities**

Links to the advice from the National Archives and the Institute of Paper Conservation, concerning the care of prints, paper and photographs can be found on the webpage '*How to Create your Own Archive*'.

**ACTION: Provide role models for employment and recruitment of members of BME communities in the archives and heritage sectors**

The diversity and multi-disciplinary make-up of the Connecting Histories team is a role model in itself. Each member of the team, be they; archivist, project manager, researcher, academic or outreach officer, all interrelate to one another and this cross-discipline is mirrored in the resources and activities produced by the project. The Positive Action Trainee (PAT) scheme (detailed further on page 50) has been very successful and the two trainees aim to graduate as archivists at the end of the project. Organisations such as the HLF, National Archives and

the Society of Archivists see the success of the traineeship as 'pioneering'<sup>6</sup> and as a model of practice.

**ACTION: Establish and maintain a network of 'critical friends' to provide information and support to community groups via project website discussion board**

As previously mentioned the website includes a *discussion board* that is due to be launched towards to end of the project and will provide a forum for debate. A network of 'critical friends' was already in place as a result of the work carried out by the BPBF Group. Connecting Histories has taken this network and further extended it through its outreach programmes. Consultation with users has shown how they value the project as a source of advice and support and links have been created between community groups and organisations undertaking similar heritage projects.

### **Conclusion**

User participation has been recorded at all levels; the volunteer projects are just one example of how users can become involved in the core cataloguing work of the project, opening up access to the collections and also expanding the knowledge and skills of the volunteers. Volunteers and users that have had contact with the multi-disciplinary team were given the opportunity to learn and be introduced to many new skills and expertise. The programmes also provided the public with an insight into the time and research needed for an archive/heritage project.

Currently, within the archives sector the cataloguing and strategic work is often completed behind closed doors; Connecting Histories has been a unique exercise in opening those doors, making archives more accessible by listening to and supporting the public's views on the collections and the cataloguing process.

**Aim: To increase the number and diversity of users of heritage collections**

The three original actions outlined for this aim are the same, or similar, to some of those already discussed:

- Catalogue the archival collections at Birmingham City Archives;
- Make the catalogues available locally and remotely over the project website;

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<sup>6</sup> Consultation with Sheena Vick, regional director, HLF South of England, March 2007

- Produce five online learning packages using digitised materials from the collections with supporting historical information.

These actions have been completed successfully, as described in previous sections. However, increasing the number and diversity of users of heritage collections has involved an enormous amount of outreach work and dissemination at events, conferences, also the production of quarterly newsletters (issue 8 was launched in April 2007).

The newsletter has been incredibly successful and has been disseminated across the country:

*“An excellent illustrative newsletter which I can show to the Black Reading Group at the meeting tomorrow!”*

Sonia, African and Caribbean Services Manager, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

*“This looks great. Please pass on my congratulations to Izzy, Ian and the rest of the team. . . we are planning to use your newsletter in our development work to show museums, libraries and archives what they can do to involve communities in their work”*

Sheena Vick, Regional Manager South East England, Heritage Lottery Fund

*“Now if we had every local history library/archive doing this level of work, we'd get somewhere about re-writing the history of the UK. Congratulations!”*

Marika, Black and Asian Studies Association

*“What a wonderful newsletter, I am fascinated with all the projects you are doing and would really love to hear more about the learning packages”*

Rachel Heilbron, Education Officer, Jewish Council for Racial Equality

### **Total number of people involved in Connecting Histories within its two year period**

<b>Total numbers of users and activities</b>	
Number of volunteers	70
Number of primary* users	Tens of thousands...
Number of users of website	26,388 individual visitors since November 2005 (launched September 2006)
Number of events	5
Number of people attending events	520 (e)
Number of outreach activities (includes workshops, events, lectures, meetings...)	3 to 4 a day (e). This has increased over the 30 months

Number of outreach enquiries received	2 to 3 a day (e)
Number of contacts on database	Started at 150. Now over 1,000.

(e) = estimation

\*It was concluded that everyone who engages with Connecting Histories is considered a primary user - be it by the website, events, volunteering or outreach activities and the newsletter. The number of primary users of the project is estimated to be in the tens of thousands. The secondary impact, in terms of how those individuals have used the engagement and support offered by Connecting Histories, is, at this stage, considered to be an impossible figure to calculate. However, it can be concluded that the project has reached well over its original expectations.

### ***Events Organised by Connecting Histories***

Each event was evaluated through questionnaires and direct feedback from attendees. Below is a summary of the main points made:

<b>Event</b>	<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Number attended</b>
<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> October 2005</b>  <b>'Making History'</b>  <i>(In partnership with Black Pasts and Vanley Burke at the African Caribbean Millennium Resource Centre.)</i></p>	<p>The attendees wanted to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibits of stories and histories in the communities, seen by local people.</li> <li>• Monthly meetings to share experiences</li> <li>• More events</li> <li>• Black history taught in schools</li> </ul>	40
<p><b>19<sup>th</sup> March 2006</b>  <b>'One city-many stories'</b></p>	<p><b>Likes</b>  'Witnessing the experiences of peoples and communities in Birmingham'</p> <p><b>Dislikes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too formal</li> <li>• Not enough local groups attended</li> <li>• Need variety of projects from different ethnic backgrounds so not to exclude anyone</li> <li>• Very academic</li> </ul> <p><b>Type of advice needed from communities working on heritage projects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to put together project from initial idea</li> <li>• More feedback</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Shared resources with other groups</li> </ul> <p>When asked if they thought the heritage sector in Birmingham was valued, most respondents answered 'no'. There is a lack of awareness of the heritage sector in the local area.</p>	130 plus 10 volunteers

	<p><b>How heritage can be supported in the local area</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-sector partnerships with health, education, tourism etc.</li> <li>• More projects like Connecting Histories</li> <li>• More heritage focused events</li> <li>• More support for those not in the sector</li> <li>• Develop projects in non-traditional places</li> <li>• Links between new and existing projects</li> <li>• A forum to take action</li> </ul> <p><b>Frequently used words/phrases</b>  ‘Good networking opportunity’  ‘Informative’  ‘Connecting Histories is increasing the value put on heritage’</p>	
<p><b>18<sup>th</sup> May 2006</b>  <b>Somaliland Independence Day Conference,</b>  organised by Ahmed Mirreh, CH volunteer</p>	<p>Attended by international key figures</p>	<p>80 plus 4 volunteers</p>
<p><b>23<sup>rd</sup> September 2006</b>  <b>Vanley Burke catalogue/’How to Research Black History’</b></p>	<p><b>Public interest</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Popularity of family history and educational discussions proved demand for this type of event in the Black community.</li> <li>• Can information presented at events be incorporated into the national curriculum?</li> <li>• Educational value of presentations was appreciated</li> <li>• Take events into communities and schools</li> <li>• More frequent events</li> <li>• Sessions on funding research</li> <li>• More links with schools and after school clubs</li> <li>• Needs support from businesses, government</li> <li>• Good range of topics</li> <li>• Will similar events be repeated across the City and country?</li> </ul> <p><b>E-Learning package workshop</b>  The few attended were aware of the packages.</p> <p>The package was available to view on a number of computers at the venue. People who used the resource said it was ‘good research’ and ‘easy to use’.</p> <p><i>‘Its good to know that there is such a facility like this for the community to use’ (Evaluation report, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2006)</i></p> <p><b>Frequently used words/phrases</b>  ‘Very interesting and informative’  ‘Relaxing atmosphere’  ‘Positive feeling of seeing a wide spectrum of age in attendance’.  <i>‘Heritage needs to be supported by the people – events</i></p>	<p>200</p>

	<p><i>like this inspires us to do so on a greater level'</i>  <i>'I have been in Birmingham for 18 months and this afternoon has been one of the best, informative, and enjoyable I have had. Thank you'</i>          'Inspiring'          'Informal'          'Good community feel'          'Flexibility of the day'          'Personal pride encourages national pride'</p> <p><b>Improvements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More and better advertising to local community</li> <li>• More young people</li> <li>• More grass roots involvement</li> </ul> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>Andy Green incorporated feedback and areas of public interest highlighted at the event into his learning package.          Families attended – young and old were able to engage</p>	
<p><b>4<sup>th</sup> November 2006</b>  <b>Connecting Diasporas</b>  <i>Involved speakers from Irish, Somaliland, South Asian, Kurdish and African Caribbean communities.</i>  <i>Funded with grant from Community Champions Fund to Ahmed Mirreh from Somaliland Community</i></p>	<p>Aim of event was to foster positive understanding within the wider community of the newer communities in the city and to provide a platform for dialogue between newly-emerging and long-established ethnic minority groups.</p> <p><i>'Anybody attending the Connecting Diasporas day would have surely come away with a heightened awareness of the pivotal role that the arts and heritage play in society'</i> Sociology student, University of Birmingham researching dissertation into the role of the arts and heritage in multicultural society.</p> <p><b>Other remarks from sociology student</b>  <i>'the diverse nature of histories and experiences articulated'</i>  <i>'it was interesting to see a variety of community groups represented on the day'</i>  <i>'heritage projects are not just valuable because they educate us about the different experiences that the communities have faced, but also highlight the similarities between groups.'</i>  <i>'arts and heritage seem like an affective way of encouraging cross-community communication in order to undermine the misconceptions that can all too easily lead to suspicion and mistrust'.</i>  <i>'promote empathy between communities'</i></p> <p><b>Improvements</b></p> <p>How to expand audience profile at events? It appeared to be a case of 'preaching to the converted'.</p> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student was reassured that the subject of their</li> </ul>	<p>70 plus 10 volunteers</p>

	<p>research was highly relevant to society today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interesting parallels between communities</li> <li>• Learning more about newer minorities</li> </ul>	
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Reading through the evaluation of these five events, it is clear that the feedback becomes more positive as the Connecting Histories team learn from previous challenges and negative comments, and are able to hold accessible, popular and interesting events.

### ***Dissemination***

Together with the eight newsletters and collections leaflets produced, dissemination has also been achieved through the numerous invitations for members of the team to speak or assist at conferences. This external interest has come as an additional outcome of the project and the following points are only the most recent examples of how Connecting Histories has been involved in other projects and organisations:

<b>Month</b>	<b>Dissemination Activity</b>
September 2006	<p>Presentation about the project and positive action workforce development to the Society of Archivists Conference</p> <p>Presentation to seminar on heritage and cultural diversity at Birmingham University</p> <p>Attended meeting to advise Black Cultural Archives and Middlesex University on their HLF application for a project documenting London's African presence</p> <p>Visit from MLA London</p>
October 2006	<p>Seminar on 'Connecting Histories, Cultural Diversity and On-line Learning' at Birmingham University</p> <p>Presentation to Institute of Historical Research seminar on Heritage and Identity in London</p> <p>Institute for Public Policy Research, University of Newcastle - talk on cultural diversity</p> <p>Visit from five members of Stockholm Cultural Administration</p> <p>Spoke to Institute of Historical Research seminar on Heritage and Identity in London</p>
November 2006	Presentation to Birmingham History Day
January 2007	<p>Siân Roberts, Project Manager, attended reception at 10 Downing Street</p> <p>Siân Roberts gave workshop and Professor Ian Grosvenor gave keynote address at Diversity training day organised by MLAWM and Tide Development Education Centre</p>
February 2007	Museum Association conference on workforce development at National Gallery

	Dr Andy Green speaking to 'Radical Region' day school on Joseph Sturge and Antislavery. Dr Paul Long UCE speaking on Parker and Philip Donnellan.  Siân Roberts and Izzy Mohammed spoke at <i>Accentuate the Positive</i> workforce development conference at the National Gallery
March 2007	Charles Parker day in Birmingham 30 March 2007 organised by Paul Long and an opportunity to publicise aspects of the project.  Andy Green speaking at an event in the Quaker Meeting House, Bull Street  Participate in a HLF organised day 'Disability Heritage Matters'
April 2007	To speak at training day on access and audience development for the North West region

Further external interest has been shown through numerous invitations to write articles, visits from external organisations and governmental agencies and features as case studies:

- The project has been visited by Archive Policy Officers from MLA, Chief Exec and Head of Inspection at TNA, 2 government ministers from DCMS, and the Education Officer of the Jewish Council for Racial Equality.
- Siân Roberts has written a piece for Tide-DEC publication to promote the website as a resource for teachers.
- Sarah Wajid is currently writing a piece for Local Government Chronicle which will look at the project as one of five case studies on widening participation in arts and culture among BME communities.
- Asked to write a short article for English Heritage's Conservation Bulletin on community engagement with heritage.
- Used as case study for MLA Comprehensive Spending Review briefing sheet for archives

**Aim: To provide e-learning environments aimed at a broad range of users**

**ACTION: Produce five online learning packages using digitised materials from the collections with supporting historical information**

The e-learning packages are designed to:

- Raise awareness of the collections catalogued;
- Introduce users to the collections, their content and the possibilities they offer for engaging critically with cultural heritage;
- Prepare users to effectively work with archive materials;



- Develop the heritage research skills of users, either individually or working on a group project.

The packages will also develop a number of transferable, cognitive and key skills:

- Judging and evaluating evidence;
- Gathering, retrieving and summarising information;
- Interpreting evidence;
- Archive and Library skills;
- IT/web skills;
- Group/team working skills.

The packages cover the following themes:

- Research Skills;
- Black British History;
- Campaigning for Social Justice;
- Migration and Settlement;
- The Histories of Resistance to Racism;
- Anti-Semitism;
- Islamophobia.

#### *1 'How to Research Black History' Author Professor Ian Grosvenor*

This package is aimed at a broad range of non-specialist users including secondary age school children, teachers and lifelong learners. It introduces them to the heritage research skills required to use primary sources for learning and teaching, archive use and materials in the collections. Researching Black History and Heritage also acts as an introduction to the other learning units. This e-learning package was launched as part of Vanley Burke catalogue/'How to Research Black History' event on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2006.

#### *2 'Archives as Social Knowledge' Author Dr Robert Carter*

This unit is an archival teaching pack for third year undergraduates, first year Masters and postgraduate study focusing on the theoretical and methodological issues in designing social research. The teaching pack allows students 'hands-on' access to original archive material investigating a variety of issues connected with the post war history of Birmingham and the West Midlands conurbation. This package went online at the end of March 2007.

#### *3, 4 and 5 "Migration and Settlement", "Performing Resistance" and "Campaigning for Social Justice"*

"Campaigning for Social Justice" and "Migration and Settlement" packages are now complete and available online. "Performing Resistance" will be available

before the end of the project. These units take a thematic approach and build on the skills learnt in units 1 and 2. The units are based on material from the collections and are compiled by the two Research and Learning Officers under the supervision of Dr. Robert Carter and Professor Ian Grosvenor. They target a wide range of users to enable an understanding of the histories of the region and the nation in these subject areas.

An additional outcome has been the sixth package "*How to Create a Learning Package*" to be launched towards the end of the project and will guide users towards working with their own archives and developing their own learning resources from them. The guide has been compiled as a result of the experience gained by the two Research and Learning Officers.

### ***Use of the Packages***

The Research and Learning Officers involved in the production of the packages believed that the original objectives of the project were achievable. As there was no initial set structure to the learning packages, the Researchers were given freedom to arrange the content of the packages as they deemed appropriate. Targeting the general researcher, the packages were not produced as definitive guides but as an introduction to the resources available and as a starting point to encourage people to use archive facilities in their own research. However, because the packages are available online, users can also take what they want from them; a notepad facility accompanies the text and offers the reader a chance to note down their interpretation and thoughts.

Evaluating the use of the packages has been difficult due to the short time they have been available online. Nevertheless, evidence of use can be illustrated, to some extent, through; additional outcomes, the high number of enquiries, diverse potential use that is emerging and the interest generated by the research and how it has filtered into public space. Much of the history within the packages was previously segregated within a traditional academic structure but now through the Connecting Histories e-learning packages, the history is online and accessible to the general public again.

One criticism was the level of language used in the packages. Their online availability ensures that they can be accessed by all; however a couple of consultees mentioned that the further simplification of the language could provide wider understanding. The Research and Learning Officers agree that the language is to a high-level but argue that the packages were placed on the website for users to explore and use to whatever depth they desire. The high-level language shows the richness of the material and is clearly laid out in user-friendly sections and headings. It is believed that the more 'in-depth' language used has been a contributing factor to the great number of enquiries generated. The packages were initially aimed at those aged 16+ but, as a resource, they can be used in many different ways and adapted to meet different needs (the range

of use is detailed below). The language level also shows the team's enthusiasm for the research and the value and amount of material available.

It is difficult to define how the impact of the packages can be measured due to their versatility. Informal evaluation has occurred throughout the project and was initially built into the process of developing the resources; direct and natural evaluation has been carried out during events, listening to feedback from the audience. As a result, the packages have been amended to suit public need – so the public has had direct influence on the content. For example, the Handsworth event on the 23rd September 2006 presented a talk, supported by a number of workshops, introducing the online materials. The packages were discussed with attendees during an e-learning package workshop. People who used the resource said it was 'good research' and 'easy to use'.

*'It's good to know that there is such a facility like this for the community to use'*  
(Evaluation report, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2006)

*'Inclusive... clearly written and engaging'*  
(Alison Gove-Humphries, History Advisor for the School Effectiveness Division, Birmingham Local Education Authority)

Formal dissemination of the packages has yet to take place, it will occur on a larger scale at the end of the project when all the packages are online. After the completion of the project, it will be interesting to examine how the material is used by the public and to see what other groups/projects/organisations produce as a result of working with the material.

### **Mediation Role**

The mediation role of the Research and Learning Officers was unexpected, especially for projects such as; Equiano and 3 Continents (HLF funded History of Slavery project for the African-Caribbean Millennium Centre). For these and other projects, the Research and Learning Officers have been the point of contact for groups. They have provided a starting point for their research, showed them the material and given them a sense of the content.

### **The Future Potential of the Packages**

<b>Higher Education</b>	The 'archives as social knowledge' package is to be formally used as an e-learning module at the University of Warwick. The use of archives as a tool for research methodologies has influenced teaching methods and has the potential to be used in other higher education institutions.
<b>Schools</b>	Evidence of the use of the resources within schools has been through the work of the Creative Learning Officers (CLO) within the City Archives. The resources provided by Connecting Histories and the expertise and skills of the team have been successfully supporting the development of outreach workshops within schools. The CLO

	<p>commented on the ease of using the project's resources and adapting the material for school age children.</p> <p>The History Advisor for the School Effectiveness Division within Birmingham Local Education Authority<sup>7</sup> approached Connecting Histories for ideas and resources. Material from the collections has supported the 'Breaking the Chains: Making the Links<sup>8</sup>' projects. The learning packages are invaluable for schools and teachers can adapt the resources for their own projects.</p>
<b>Community Use</b>	<p>Groups, such as the Quakers, were interested in the trail and website and asked the Research and Learning Officer to do a one hour speech on the subject. This is just one example of the interest that has come from the communities within Birmingham, regional and national organisations. Dr Andy Green's research into the involvement of Birmingham in the development and abolition of the salve trade has supported many initiatives created for its bicentenary. He has presented at many conferences, suggested useful and relevant material to enquirers and researchers and produced a Birmingham History Trail for the antislavery campaigner, Joseph Sturge.</p>
<b>Individuals</b>	<p>The packages have been used to direct a number of individuals approaching the team with enquiries about slavery. Dr Andy Green has helped with people's individual research projects and also aided student's dissertation study.</p>
<b>Media</b>	<p>The media attention has been an unexpected outcome; the publicised visit from Meg Munn, the MP for Women and Equality focused on anti-slavery and Birmingham's connections. Radio West Midlands did a live broadcast and the Birmingham Post took photographs and an interview<sup>9</sup>.</p> <p>A local journalist has spoken of the ease of finding information and research in Birmingham compared to other cities; this was said with reference to the Connecting Histories resources.</p>

### **Aim: To embed and sustain regional partnerships**

This evaluation assesses how partnerships have functioned, the project's impact on the different partners, and identifies success factors to inform the continuation of partnerships. Partnerships have been essential in extending the project's capacity and will also support the furtherance of the work after the project has finished in July 2007.

Interviews with those organisations involved with Connecting Histories were carried out face-to-face, or alternatively, by phone. The aim of the consultation was to discuss the development of the Connecting Histories project with partners

<sup>7</sup> Consultation with Alison Gove-Humphries The History Advisor for the School Effectiveness Division within Birmingham Local Education Authority, May 2007

<sup>8</sup> <http://breakingthechains.co.uk/index.jsp>

<sup>9</sup> The Birmingham Post (2007) *How City's Women Opposed Slave Trade*, 20<sup>th</sup> march

in order to inform the continuation of the relationship and establish how the project has influenced other social structures.

Fourteen of these organisations were approached for consultation and their thoughts and feedback are discussed below.

## **1. The Birmingham Central Library**

### *Impact within the Service*

There have been two levels of impact, one stronger impact within the higher institutional echelons of the Central Library, and the second within the general libraries and archives organisations (operational level).

A general level of awareness was established within the library and the wider library service about the project and what it was doing; this was achieved through regular communication via newsletters and presentations given by the project manager to middle management groups. The project has been a good learning experience for a lot of people within the library as Connecting Histories has brought many aspects from past projects all together.

On an operational level, day-to-day basis, the library ensured that the material Connecting Histories was working with was managed by the mainstream libraries and archives service.

There are three dimensions to the services within the library; Connecting Histories has had an impact on each service:

- Collections Management – Connecting Histories has supported this in its cataloguing and conservation work.
- Public Enquiry Service - Connecting Histories helps provide.
- Outreach and Community Development Work – Connecting Histories has highlighted the role archival heritage has to play in the broader community cohesion agenda. The Connecting Histories project has been perceived as the main outreach service of the library today.

The current difficulty of mainstreaming Connecting Histories is exacerbated by the limited funding available and also by the need to balance the three library services; Connecting Histories provides huge outreach activity which would place pressure on collections management and the public enquiry service

The lessons learnt from Connecting Histories are being injected into the mainstream structure of the library, supporting a refocus and restructure of the archive and local studies service. There have also been many more posts created within the collection management service, not solely down to Connecting Histories, but the project has helped.

Connecting Histories Positive Action Traineeship scheme has influenced recruitment practice at the Library. The success of the scheme and the number of high quality applicants shows that there is potential to develop the workforce. It was also mentioned that the success of the PAT had increased confidence across the institution.

### *Success of Connecting Histories*

Before the project, the archives department had a good reputation for outreach and working with communities but Connecting Histories has 'pushed that boat almost out of sight'. In addition, material is more readily available than it was before, a direct consequence of the project.

The ability of Connecting Histories to engage with BME communities and younger people within those communities is seen by the Head of Library and Archive Services as a very powerful offer to policy makers. As a result the project has attracted other archives and the representation of the city within the archive has benefited.

## **2. Warwick University**

The partnership between Warwick University and the Connecting Histories project has been primarily initiated through Dr Robert Carter, a lecturer in the Department for Sociology. He has researched and authored the e-learning package 'Archives as Social Knowledge' and built his research and material from the archives catalogued for Connecting Histories into two lectures that focus on using archives as sources for social knowledge. He reported that students have responded warmly to the archives and it has raised some methodological issues of analysis. It has made a big difference to student's study practice having real documents to use as part of their research methods lectures. The whole learning package will be directly integrated into teaching at Warwick University from September 2007.

The Centre for Academic Practice at Warwick University is very keen on e-learning and innovating teaching methods. Their initial aim for working with Connecting Histories was to develop an e-learning module at the University within the Research Methods teaching programme. Research Methods teaching has not been very successful in the past but the package offers an alternative, more autonomous, method of teaching and empowers the students more as the module is not lecture-led.

The research achieved for the Connecting Histories learning package could be extended further, exploring pedagogy and research methodologies, and how archives can be added to quantitative and qualitative research. Areas of quantitative data have been introduced by the package; census and burial

registers have basic forms of classification and the author said that it had been interesting to research what information can be developed from them.

Warwick University Library have recently acquired the Institute of Race Relations' archive and there has since been talk of a possible e-learning package on the material, using the Connecting Histories template as a model.

Dr Robert Carter has been enthused by the importance and relevance of archives to social science research; archives are very little used as sources for research. The University has been fully aware of the Connecting Histories project and has been very supportive. There is scope to develop the partnership further.

### **3. Birmingham University**

There was previously a strong relationship between the City Archives and the University, thanks to Professor Ian Grosvenor, Head of the Education Department. Connecting Histories has engaged with the undergraduate programmes and Izzy Mohammed and Siân Roberts have been involved in seminars.

University students also engaged by volunteering in the project; a final year undergraduate student's dissertation has emerged as a consequence of volunteering on the project.

The University is fully aware of the Connecting Histories project. The next move for Professor Grosvenor is to set up a Research Institute on Heritage and Diversity at the University, where Connecting Histories will be used as a case study. Other urban universities such as Liverpool, (Centre for the Study of International Slavery), Manchester (Research Institute for Cosmopolitan Cultures) and Hull (Wilberforce Learning Centre), have already set up research institutes that strategically link heritage and diversity.

### **4. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery**

Rita McLean, Head of Museum and Heritage Projects, has been involved with the Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures (BPPF) group, which aims to ensure that the histories, cultures and contribution of Black people are permanently represented in archive, library and museum collections in the city and the region. The BPPF group brought people together, encouraged dialogue and created a sound foundation for Connecting Histories. It ensured that the project was not operating in isolation. This foundation has made it easier for Connecting Histories to progress more quickly.

The relationship between the museum service and Connecting Histories has operated through Rita McLean, and the project has provided research and

advisory support to the Equiano Project, and too a lesser extent the Ask the Audience Project. Other people in the museums service are aware of the project and the rich material it has that can be used within the libraries in any future interpretation of displays. Rita McLean's role has been to make sure Birmingham museums remember the material is available and that they are using it. An objective of BPBF group was to make sure material is embedded within organisations; the legacy of Connecting Histories will be the museum's use of the findings and materials.

### **Additional Partnerships**

In addition to the original partnership between the City Library, Universities of Warwick and Birmingham and the Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures Group, Connecting Histories has established partnerships with other cultural and heritage organisations; the report will now describe how these additional organisations have benefited from interaction with the project.

## **5. Community Libraries**

Connecting Histories was approached by Community Libraries for their help with consultation regarding the construction of a new Birchfield library, the 'Birchfield Library Community Consultation project'. Connecting Histories was the link between Community Libraries and the older generation resident groups in the area, empowering them by listening to their views and ideas over four activity sessions (see case study 1 in appendices). The arranged activities helped people think about their heritage and identity, giving them a sense of place and belonging and discussing what role a library should perform within these issues.

The four week programme has inspired more work and there is currently a HLF application in place to develop an archive and to extend public involvement in order to create a substantial community resource, housed in the new library.

This partnership has proved that the philosophy, idea and strategies of Connecting Histories can be applied to a number of different platforms. It provided Community Libraries with an adaptable model, offering practical ways to engage people, giving them a sense of belonging, increasing skills and confidence by focusing on heritage. Community Libraries hope to continue this relationship with communities, on a smaller scale, as they have been fortunate to have the skills resources of the Connecting Histories team for the Birchfield consultation.

The Head of Community Libraries is planning a workshop day to explain their methodology for the Birchfield consultation, inviting other local authority library services; Connecting Histories will be mentioned as a model of practice. The



project is also being quoted in a bid from Community Libraries to create more library spaces across the city.

The work and philosophy behind Connecting Histories has yet to reach all Community Libraries, but the principals are fundamental to the aims of libraries as non-threatening, inclusive spaces. The project has made a difference to the Head of Community Libraries as it has shown a way forward and helped with the delivery of the service. It is also an advantage for policy and strategy development.

A Community Library that has been supported by Connecting Histories is the Spring Hill Library (please refer to case study 3 in appendices). The Community Librarian asked Connecting Histories to support the implementation of a family history project with a local essential skills group in partnership with the Workers Education Association (WEA). The Connecting Histories team inspired the group of elderly Afro-Caribbean ladies to start talking about their past, believing in the importance of this discussion and discovering the similarities between their own personal experiences. The fact that the Connecting Histories outreach team could talk about their own family histories and memories, relate this to the group adapting the activities to the group's needs resulted in a very successful programme. The essential skills group have requested a repeat of their sessions, especially the visit to the Central Library.

The Community Librarian benefited from the specialised skills within the Connecting Histories team and the professional and confident sessions that were delivered has supported service delivery for the Spring Hill Library.

## 6. City Archives

City Archives service staff were asked whether there had been a change in the number of type of enquiries received from people who are obviously first time users and whether they had noticed a 'different type' of new user. This line of questioning was to ascertain the use and demand of 'non-traditional collections':

*'...we definitely see more people wanting to look at what you might consider to be the sort of non-traditional collections, the photographic collections, and I think that stems from the publicity around say Black History Month, the newsletters and contact that people are having with members of the Connecting Histories team, and so they're definitely I feel a new type of user'<sup>10</sup>.*

The staff also noted that the Vanley Burke and the Indian Workers Association collections have become popular through having an online presence.

The Creative Learning with Archives project started in 2004. The Creative Learning Officer (CLO), a post that was previously funded by Creative

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<sup>10</sup> Dialogue with archivists at City Archives 2006

Partnerships and the City Council, has now become a permanent position within the City Archives and the first CLO to be employed by an archives department in the country. It is a future possibility that a further CLO post will be required, in order to sustain the work with archives and schools.

The current CLO has been supporting the use of archives with schools and young people to explore local history, citizenship, issues of identity and cultural diversity. Connecting Histories has been involved in the following ways:

- The Research and Learning Officer Dr Andy Green has helped with research for the 'Chocolate and Slavery' event held in primary schools;
- The Bridges project used collections catalogued for Connecting Histories (Derek Bishton, and the Ten:8 photographic collective Brian Homer and John Reardon);
- 'A Shared History, A Shared Future' project - This project, initiated as part of the commemorations marking the abolition of the slave trade, raises awareness through the use of archives of indentured labour and the city's role in sustaining and abolishing the slave trade. Connecting Histories provided the relevant source material to support this topic.
- "Who are we?" project - A partnership project run by Birmingham City Archives, and the Quinton Education Action Zone funded by Creative Partnerships. It involved children at Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 from three local schools. Children worked with a storyteller, a photographer, a model maker and a film maker to explore the history of their local area and community using original archival material, photographs, maps and oral history interviews. Again, Connecting Histories provided archive material and advice.
- Turves Green Intergenerational project with Northfields Library "Same Old Place" – The project introduced participants to the archives and library services. Children explored their local environment over three weeks working with residents of the area; using archive material and library resources, as well as additional material brought by participants, they produced a slide show with commentary. Again, Connecting Histories provided archive material and advice.

Other ways in which Connecting Histories has supported the work of the Creative Learning Officers are through:

- Mutual support and networking;
- Advice for developing projects;
- Providing a primary source of material to support the development of workshops.

The Connecting Histories Project Manager and the CLO are discussing ways to make the Connecting Histories resources and archives more accessible to younger people and teachers.

The Bridges project was inspired by the 1979 Handsworth self-portrait project.<sup>11</sup> Children took their self-portrait using web cams and digital cameras and presented them to other schools '*creating a bridge between schools and young people in our city*'<sup>12</sup>. Archives and photography from the City Archives collections were always used as a starting point. The aim was to help children explore their identity and self-representation, have a photography exhibition in the Central Library and eventually deposit the work in the City Archives as part of the 'schools' box'.

The children's reactions to the archives were very positive and they appeared to be excited by the material they saw. The schools had children from mixed backgrounds and so many were able to connect with the material used from the Connecting Histories archive collections. An archivist from the Connecting Histories team, Helen Fisher, took part in some school sessions, presenting the archive material to the children

Connecting Histories has had a strong impact on the CLO's work and it has provided a ready-made resource for use in schools. The in-depth and well documented resources, with relevant support material, produced by the project have been useful for the delivery of the CLO's projects.

The partnership between the Connecting Histories project and the CLO has shown how work from the project is relevant to younger children. The partnership has been aided by the overlap with the Creative Learning outreach work and the similarity of both initiatives aims and objectives. The resources on the website and archive material available has been used for many of the Creative Learning programmes and will continue to be used once the project comes to an end in July. Having the Connecting Histories team has supported the CLO's capacity to run creative projects; the CLO noted that contact with the team's expertise and skills will be missed.

#### *New Outreach Post in Archives*

The success of Connecting Histories has had an impact on the current restructure of the library service as there will be a new position created within the City Archives for outreach and community engagement. The library service has now realised that there is a need for a new type of service within its remit, not instead of what it currently does but in addition to its service.

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<sup>11</sup> Handsworth-based photographers Derek Bishton, Brian Homer and John Reardon organised the self-portrait project in autumn 1979. They built a stall on Grove Lane with a simple studio set-up, inviting passers-by to take their own portrait. More than 500 people took part during the project's five sessions, all of them later receiving a copy of their own portrait to take away.

<sup>12</sup> Bridges promo for schools, Nikki Thorpe, Creative Learning officer, City Archives

## 7. Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)

The funding was awarded to Connecting Histories for its unique interests as an outward-looking archive service within a sector that has been slow in this area of work. In addition, the Birmingham City Archive Service had very relevant collections which were underused.

Consultation was carried out with the Regional Manager of HLF South East. At the time Connecting Histories submitted their application she was Regional Manger for HLF West Midlands. As regional manager for the West Midlands, she was often approached by smaller groups in Birmingham interested in receiving funding for community heritage projects and she automatically directed them to the City Archives. Even today, as regional manager in the South East, she refers groups to Connecting Histories – so the project has had impact on other projects in the UK.

The PAT scheme has been successful and ‘pioneering’ according to the HLF representative. This element of the project was not funded by HLF, but the City Council. However, the project prompted HLF to explore funding this area and now they do fund PAT schemes.

## 8. The National Archives

Connecting Histories impacted upon the National Archives in two ways:

- The consultee previously worked as Social Inclusion Project Manager for the National Archives before moving to Head of Social Inclusion and Diversity at English Heritage. At the National Archives she was responsible for moving forward an online project called ‘Moving Here’ and putting together a stage 2 funding bid. Connecting Histories was considered to be an example of good practice, creating a partnership between museums and local communities. She felt able to point towards Connecting Histories work as a role model.
- For the first Positive Action Traineeship undertaken by the National Archives, Connecting Histories were approached to see how the PAT was working. National Archives felt they could use the experience of Connecting Histories on how to advertise the PAT placements. They received over 60 eligible applicants and they had a very successful placement as a result. Connecting Histories is seen as a model for how to diversify the profession, a profession which is overwhelmingly White. National Archives saw the discussion with the Connecting Histories team and getting the PATs feedback as very influential. Connecting Histories also provided a ready-made peer group for the National Archive PATs, like a support system.

A significant barrier, identified as a deterrent for BME communities who wish to pursue a career in the sector, is the risk of training and not having a guaranteed

job at the end. The consultee saw the work of Connecting Histories as going some way towards taking this barrier away by presenting the archives sector as an accessible career path.

The consultee saw Vanley Burke being interviewed on TV recently and is sure that Connecting Histories has helped mainstream important cultural activists.

## **9. Society of Archivists**

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) has been interested in the outreach potential of archives for some time. The Chief Executive of PRONI visited the Connecting Histories office in September 2006 and was 'enormously impressed'. He was struck by the enthusiasm and passion of the group, its non-academic focus and the fact that the team wanted the project to succeed.

He was interested in understanding the starting point and background of the project. It became clear how Connecting Histories had a good starting point already in place and the project was just pulling together the different strands.

PRONI would like to build a partnership with the Western Education and Library Board of Ireland and they will take into account the work of Connecting Histories and be deeply influenced by the website model. PRONI has already been enthusiastic about community archives but Connecting Histories is a 'flagship' for the archives sector.

The project has been the catalyst for the Society of Archivists to say 'we must do something about this (diversification of the workforce)<sup>13</sup>'. It has increased awareness of the issue and the PAT as a way forward. Before Connecting Histories diversification was not on the archive sector's agenda.

## **10. Victoria and Albert Museum**

The V&A have been trying to set up an advisory group around their African Diaspora collections. The first arrangement was too large and centred on academics. The consultee, Carol Tulloch, Senior Research Fellow in Black Visual Culture, Victoria & Albert Museum, directed those V&A staff involved to the Connecting Histories advisory group as a model of good practice; looking at the format and range of people within the group.

The consultee has referred to Connecting Histories on many an occasion. She attended the Interactive Networking Event in Livingston, Zambia, organised by the British Council which focused on how Africans can address the development of their cultural heritage. Connecting Histories was a good example of how to work with diverse groups and attract Black communities into museums. She also

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<sup>13</sup> Consultation with Vocational & Professional Development Officer, Society of Archivists April 2007

mentioned Connecting Histories at her own talk during South African fashion week in Johannesburg. People's reactions were positive and interested and they thought it was a 'fantastic example of what is possible.'

Carol Tulloch has been asked to be an external examiner for other art colleges and universities – she will suggest using the e-learning packages to help with students' research.

### **11. 'Community and Play' Birmingham City Council**

Time and resources are the only issues preventing Community and Play from further developing their work with young people (16 to 21 year olds) and archives. Connecting Histories provided the scheme with an opportunity to work with the library and enable them to gain more recognition. It also gave the young people involved an opportunity to display work in the Central Library and gain access to archives. The majority of the young people involved were not aware of what archives were, but after a visit to the Central Library and seeing the archives first hand, they now know the resource is available.

The only downfall to the scheme was the small number of young people it engaged (5). However, Connecting Histories has shown that there is both; potential and need to engage with those aged between 16 and 21 years to generate interest in heritage projects. To encourage this interaction a stall was set up at the 'Increase the Peace Day' 2006, which promoted the work with Connecting Histories. There were many younger people interested and some asked why they were not informed before.

It was through this programme that Connecting Histories was nominated and won a Youth 4 Change award for education.

### **12. West Midlands Refugee Council**

The first contact between the Refugee Council and Connecting Histories was in April 2005 during Refugee Week. Since then, they have swapped contacts and given Connecting Histories support and ideas. The current relationship between the Refugee Council and Connecting Histories is based on networking; the Volunteer Coordinator at the Refugee Council will pass on newsletters and promote Connecting Histories events through their channels of contacts.

The Refugee Council deals with 'front-line' work with new communities and individuals. Many have to endure enforced destitution and have critical needs that the Refugee Council has to help meet. The consultee saw the work of Connecting Histories better suited to settled communities – who would have more to gain from the activities.

### 13. Smethwick Bangladeshi Youth Forum (SBYF)

The SBYF has received funding from the HLF for a Bangladeshi Heritage Project. The project will focus on the patterns of migration since the 1940's and the impact this has had on people's lives. It will involve first, second and third generation Bangladeshis and discuss how they identify with Bangladeshi culture and how it relates to their lives in the UK today. The outputs of the project are:

- A book which will have an educational aspect to be used in schools, amongst young children;
- DVD of oral histories;
- Piece of theatre;
- Photographic exhibition (to be used at the launch);
- Bangladeshi artefacts;
- Website;
- Celebratory mosaic.

Connecting Histories has been involved in the development stage of the heritage project enabling the SBYF to clarify their strategies, think about target outputs and timescales. Connecting Histories has also offered professional support through contacts and access to examples of similar projects within the city.

The Youth Development Worker at the SBYF has felt able to contact the Connecting Histories team and ask questions and advice, acting as a 'buffer' between his organisation and the HLF. The consultee felt that contact with Connecting Histories has given him confidence to move the SBYF project forward, facilitating its development and bringing access to services and resources closer. Connecting Histories also gave advice on the use of terminology to reach a wider audience.

The Community Outreach Officer has also helped the Youth Development Officer run training sessions for young volunteers (14 to 22 year olds). It was said that the Connecting Histories training sessions were to a higher standard than the Oral History Society version. The Youth Development Worker at SBYF perceives Connecting Histories as having a pivotal role in their next training session 'Archive Treasure Hunt'. Young volunteers will have the opportunity to research semi-guided, acting as pioneers to find the information required. A future strategy would be to link with other projects through Connecting Histories.

The partnership has been a two-way learning relationship; Izzy Mohammed from Connecting Histories gaining skills in working with young people and the Youth Development Officer at SBYF learning about the potential of heritage projects.

#### **14. Canon Street Memorial Baptist Church Oral History Project**

Connecting Histories' work with the Canon Street Memorial Baptist Church was in a similar capacity to the partnership with the SBYF. The Baptist Church is 250 years old and its previously White congregation changed over the years to now predominantly Afro-Caribbean; the Church received £50,000 from the HLF in order to research into its history, produce oral histories and an exhibition. The project started in November 2005 and ended in January 2007.

Izzy Mohammed, Community Access Officer, was asked to be on the committee at a very early stage, even before the project manager was engaged. The partnership between Connecting Histories and the project manager was a two-way relationship, giving mutual support and presenting at respective events. The initial phase involved a lot of networking, advertising the project and engaging volunteers. There was initial mistrust from within the congregation but with both Connecting Histories and the project managers networking skills, this barrier was mitigated and informal chats were undertaken with most of the 300 strong congregation and around 100 oral histories were recorded.

The project involved both the young and old; it resulted in an interactive exhibition with guest speakers and appearances from past pastors.

Connecting Histories gave advice on how to start the project, showing alternative examples of projects that have initiated similar work. The project manager has now become more aware of the depth of help and resources available and now uses the library and archive service for her work and research.

#### ***Conclusion***

Cultural and heritage organisations that have interacted with the Connecting Histories project perceive the project as a highly positive initiative, providing groups and individuals with the confidence to progress their ideas and use the project as a model of practice, influencing their own aims and objectives.

The partnerships have functioned as a two-way learning and communication process; Connecting Histories have benefited and grown from this external interaction and at the same time, provided resources, training or advice to others. The project's impact on the different partners has been positive, influencing recruitment strategies, teaching methods, consultation programmes, to use as a case study or providing source material for other projects.

The success factors that will inform the continuation of the partnerships are as follows:

- Two-way communication;
- Openness and approachability of the team;



- Flexibility of project allowing room for change and additional activities;
- Multi-disciplinary aspect of team has ensured ease of working with different partners;
- The project's link to the Central Library and Universities;
- The Positive Action Traineeship;
- A sound base to start from i.e. the previous initiatives of the City Archives and Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures group.

**Aim: To give users and volunteers the opportunity to influence heritage policies and practices**

**ACTION: Establish and maintain user groups**

**Establish and maintain information and discussion boards on project website**

**Undertake workshops during the life of the project**

**Disseminate outcomes at the end of the project through launch, conference, website etc.**

According to the Community Access Officer, the opportunity to influence heritage policies and practices is found on two levels;

- A covert level - the team and users have learned and experienced what works and consequently, shaped a more appropriate way of working together. A good example of this is with the Annie Woods Resource Centre. Initially the group was hostile towards working with Connecting Histories, but because of the efforts and enthusiasm of the Community Access Officer, a trusting relationship was nurtured and from that, productive outreach sessions were undertaken which resulted in an exhibition in the Central Library. Interaction with this group is detailed on page 77.
- A more explicit level - user groups and individuals have had opportunities to play a role in shaping a service (e.g. Birchfield Library consultation, see case study number 1). The users have also impacted on Connecting Histories team and their way of working, even if they did not realise they were doing so.

The Connecting Histories Birchfield Library Community Engagement Programme implemented a new approach to consultation; over four sessions the two community groups involved were introduced to the plans for a new Birchfield

Library and given the opportunity through creative activities to show what they expect from a community library (The consultation programme is detailed on page 77)

Important concerns have been expressed by both groups and individuals as part of the workshops and activities. The Connecting Histories team has acted upon these comments and suggestions, which has in turn, influenced the content of the learning resources. Feedback from one community group highlighted that the Black History collections at the Central Library are not very accessible due to their location of the fifth floor. They are pleased to hear that local history will have a central position at the new Birchfield library.

As a result of their two years experience, working with a variety of community groups and individuals, the Connecting Histories outreach team have learnt more about people's interests and dislikes. Over time, they have realised what people want and need from a project like Connecting Histories. The project's methods of engagement have been flexible and non-prescriptive, empowering the participants and giving them control. The fact that the project allowed people to engage with all phases of its work has played an important part in enabling users to influence directly the workings and policies of the project.

**Aim: To increase the diversity of the workforce in the archive and specialist heritage library sectors**

**ACTION: Support two positive action trainees to professional qualification as archivists**

*"Seeing them (the PATs) develop from the first presentation during an advisory group meeting to today is 'inspiring'."*<sup>14</sup>

A major challenge facing the archives sector today is how to diversify its workforce to become more representative of local and national demographic profiles. To this end, two positive action trainee (PAT) placements for graduates from a Black and Minority Ethnic background were included within the Connecting Histories project. The two graduates are to qualify as archivists at the end of the project through distance learning with the University of Wales Aberystwyth and gaining experience by working directly with the project team.

The adverts for the placements received around 50 applicants, all of a very high quality. The main reasons for applying were:

- previous interest in a career in archives;

<sup>14</sup> Consultation with Carol Tulloch, Senior Research Fellow in Black Visual Culture, Victoria & Albert Museum, March 2007

- interest in the content of the project, its aims and ethos.

The project attracted a very different ‘type’ of individual from those who would ‘normally’ apply for jobs within archives services.

As a result of their experience with the Connecting Histories project and the archivist training, the two trainee archivists now hope to move into a career in the heritage sector. The traineeship has been excellent for making valuable contacts for their future careers and the possibilities and opportunities introduced have been significant in widening their available options.

From its conception, the trainees have been involved with the project as equal members of the team; they created a volunteer programme for the Vanley Burke archive and took part in the 2006 Society of Archivists conference in Lancashire. There, they were presented as good examples of how diversifying the heritage sector can be successful and easily achieved.

The traineeship was praised for its ability to give people time and space to think about what it is they want to do in the future. The trainees thought introducing the PAT into 3<sup>rd</sup> year university study would be a good idea.

### ***The Trainee Process***

Both trainee archivists were motivated to apply for the course because of their desire to work with heritage and the community interest involved. They were introduced to the Positive Action Traineeship (PAT) and Connecting Histories through an advert on the internet and through word-of-mouth. Once they were accepted, there was an initial meeting with the team, then a visit to the National Archives.

### ***Assessment***

The qualification is completed through a distance learning course and three residential study weeks at Aberystwyth University. The traineeship is assessed by coursework; eight modules and essays to qualify for the diploma and the further completion of a dissertation will attain the Masters degree. The pass or fail boundary is 40%. The two trainees are on track to pass their diploma by the end of the project. This is a sign of success for Connecting Histories as one of the original outputs was to complete the course.

### ***Unexpected Issues***

It has been difficult for the trainees to balance working full time for Connecting Histories and completing work for their course. The trainees have felt completely integrated into the Connecting Histories team as equals; however, this has meant

that they have been expected to make equal contribution to the project. Even the Project Manager commented on the tight study schedule currently employed.

The issue now is securing a post for the two PATs after their training. The library service needs to provide them with a carrier path in order for the aim of the traineeship to be achieved.

### ***Has the Project Supported Cultural Change?***

Within the Central Library, the Head of Service sees potential on an even greater scale. So far, the project has helped raise awareness of the archives sector, as there are few trained BME archivists in the country. Connecting Histories has also made a significant contribution to the positive action agenda through its contribution to training.

For cultural change within the Library, it has been a good learning experience; important lessons have been learnt and will be put into practice in future working methods. However, it was said that the affects have been felt within the more high strategic management structures within the library and less so amongst the 'low-level' staff who might have felt themselves quite divorced from the project. This was seen as a result of focusing too much on delivering objectives leaving less time to engage the project with the library staff. This highlights the need for a more holistic approach to staff involvement in future.

The PATs acknowledge that their role in the project has contributed to the beginnings of change towards diversity in the workforce. Their success on the course, their presentations to the Society of Archivists and the many contacts made throughout the two year's training are ways in which awareness of the programme has been highlighted. The trainees' participation in events and talks has catalysed discussion, placing diversity in the minds of important stakeholders in the archive sector and setting the trend towards change. Connecting Histories has been a significant part of that process.

Connecting Histories has been 'thoroughly positive' for workforce development in the archives sector according to the Vocational & Professional Development Officer at the Society of Archivists. Diversification is identified as a major problem in the sector, not only in terms of gender but also for race, and Connecting Histories is considered a 'beacon of light' in this area. The project has been important in mainstreaming the issue within a major archives service. It has also shown that there is significant potential for cultural change. This potential has been discussed in forums, regarding diversification of the workforce, as 'an exemplar'. Connecting Histories has been the first step to discovering how cultural change can work within the sector. The Society of Archivists feel the project has created a stimulus to what can be achieved regarding workforce development. There is now a working group that are discussing the issues of diversification within the wider archives sector.

**ACTION: Provide role models for employment and recruitment of members of BME communities in the archives and heritage sectors**

Through its work Connecting Histories has provided a thoroughly useful and 'transferable result'<sup>15</sup>. The Birmingham Central Library will now be aware of how to recruit the next generation of archivists and what their expectations need to be. They now know, understand and acknowledge the potential within the sector and recognise the PAT scheme as a legitimate way forward.

National Archives used the Connecting Histories PAT scheme as a model of practice whilst planning their own positive action programme. Consultation with a former member of staff at the National Archives said that it was very influential in the design of their own scheme and talking to the Connecting Histories team, getting the PAT's feedback and using the Connecting Histories as a template proved extremely useful. Connecting Histories also provided a 'ready-made peer group' for the National Archive PAT's, almost like a support system.

The success of the Connecting Histories PAT scheme was aided by the contact with the multidisciplinary team, giving the PATs opportunities to come into contact with a range of skills and disciplines from across the museums, archives, library, voluntary and academic sectors. Further to this, the multidisciplinary team, as mentioned before in this report, can be seen as a role model in itself for other organisations planning similar initiatives. The success of the project is due in part to this team of diverse skills, and has since influenced recruitment strategies within the Central Library.

**ACTION: Information on possible careers placed on project website**

Information and careers advice will be placed on the project website at the end of July 2007.

**ACTION: Engage volunteers to work on archive and library collections**

This report has already commented on the successful volunteer programmes organised by Connecting Histories. Please refer to page 24.

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<sup>15</sup> Consultation with Head of Library and Archives Service March 2007

**Aim: To develop a model of working that is transferable to other contexts**

- ACTION:**            **Deliver project outcomes**
- Develop dissemination strategy as part of exit strategy for project**
- Engage regional and national partners**
- Advise community groups, sectoral groups and others on adaptation of Connecting Histories model and template for potential projects**
- Disseminate and publicise the cataloguing outcomes as a base for new projects relevant to community engagement**

The project has been influential as a model of practice in the following areas:

- Partnership working;
- Community interaction;
- Workforce development.

As previously mentioned, it has been acknowledged and implemented as a model to be used by other heritage organisations and has already been introduced to the New Museum of Liverpool by an advisory group member. Each of the three areas above will now be discussed in more detail.

### ***Partnership Working***

The relationship between the outreach team and the community groups has, so far, been an equitable and real partnership. Connecting Histories has worked in ways useful to the community groups and with respect and equality – empowering these groups and not just imposing a project upon them. The Regional Manager for HLF South East England commented that often community groups will be engaged at the start of a project primarily to secure funding but the contact is not sustained. However, Connecting Histories has empowered and given the groups control throughout.

‘Moving Here’, the National Archives project, approached Connecting Histories as a model of practice for creating a partnership between museums and local communities. Connecting Histories shows how the sector can work in a ‘joined

up way<sup>16</sup>, as it is clear that the project has cross-cutting relevance, joining up archives, museums, libraries and community groups.

The academic partnership with universities has also given the project 'additional strength'<sup>17</sup> and ensured rigorous research. Partnerships with local heritage projects have often been a two-way learning relationship (e.g. Smethwick Bangladeshi Youth Forum, Canon Street Memorial Baptist Church Oral History Project).

### ***Community Interaction***

Community interaction is often seen as a difficult task for museums, libraries and archives organisations yet Connecting Histories has demonstrated the potential for community interaction with archives and heritage. This is not to say that this form of engagement and relationship development was 'easy' for the Community Access Officer at Connecting Histories but his drive, enthusiasm and knowledge of the communities helped to develop a database of around 1,000 contacts. Sustaining these relationships has been supported by the relatively 'full immersion' of the participants in all levels of the development and delivery of the project.

Involving people internally through volunteer programmes has increased public awareness of the demanding workload required to develop and launch a project such as Connecting Histories. Often, museums that are trying to attract BME groups do not realise that it will be the first time some have visited a museum, so the method employed by Connecting Histories, introducing the internal workings to all, should be used more widely as a future model for interaction and engagement.

### ***Workforce Development***

As mentioned in previous paragraphs, Connecting Histories has already been used as a model of practice in workforce development. There have been perceived barriers preventing BME communities to pursue careers in the sector (risks of training and not having a guaranteed job once training is complete) and one consultee strongly believed that Connecting Histories had helped reduce the impact of such a barrier.

In response to the successes and challenges experienced by the Connecting Histories project, the team were able to provide 'good practice' guides, offering advice on outreach, learning resources and cataloguing. These recommendations are listed below:

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<sup>16</sup> Consultation with Head of Social Inclusion and Diversity English Heritage

<sup>17</sup> Consultation with Regional Manager HLF South East, March 2007

***Outreach – A Guide to Good Practice***

- Select appropriate site for activity or meetings, near to community as possible;
- Create network of interested people/activists. The Volunteer Coordinator at the Refugee Council commented on the difficulty of engaging people – the client must be approached and spoken to. Figure heads in communities are important to engage and gain support from, as they can be important community activists. Gaining the support of key individuals can also facilitate cutting across communities;
- The fragmentation within communities must be recognised<sup>18</sup>;
- Resources and items should be contextualised so that their significance can be appropriately understood;
- Allow (undirected) discussion – do not just ‘talk at’ the group;
- Prior organisation and effort to ensure sessions are well resourced;
- During creative sessions, show examples to provide support and increase confidence for people undertaking activities for first time;
- Presence of food to retain interest;
- Reimbursement of travel expenses;
- Use broader range of community and social contacts and networks to achieve more diverse participation to contribute to community cohesion;
- Time management is essential;
- Have no expectations of capacities and capabilities.
- Include measures to value success of a project and a structure in place for long term results;
- Re-engage with database;
- Strong people skills are required. Outreach officers often need to encourage and ‘win over’ participants;
- An awareness of community issues is needed and an ability to relate to them;
- Thick-skin for when things are not quite working out;
- Be prepared to put in effort that may seem disproportionate to the outcome;
- As an outreach officer develops an understanding of outreach work, an awareness of communities and establishes contacts, community groups can then be targeted strategically;
- Something is better than nothing – where there has been no prior activity within a certain context or with a particular group, making some sort of intervention is better than nothing;
- When working with a diverse group, it is important that each community or individual receives recognition; think about who might be present then design activities that might be of interest to them so at the same time everyone gets to be validated;
- A balancing act - work to establish new contacts and opportunities, whilst at the same time maintain and reinforce your established relationships;

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<sup>18</sup> Consultation with the Volunteer Coordinator West Midlands Refugee Council April 2007



- The nature of what an outreach officer does will be largely determined by the nature of the task and the agenda – but ultimately, the outreach worker determines the course, shape and form of activities i.e. the community engagement dimension of an organisation’s activities will owe greatly to the strengths, interests and even weaknesses of the outreach officer in question.

### ***Cataloguing - A Good Practice Guide for Archivist-Depositor Relationships***

- Connecting Histories has been unusual in that the archivists have worked in tandem with the depositor of the archive. This has developed some useful pointers for any future working between an archivist and depositor. An example has been Vanley Burke, whose archive was catalogued as part of the project. The arrangement of his archive reflects his collecting ethos and motivations, matters that were discussed with him before any cataloguing began. As the collection is on-going, the way the archive has been structured should make it easy to incorporate new material;
- Archivists on the team had the chance to work closely with the depositor of the archive which is very unusual. This close working relationship allowed the depositor to have a say in the way their material was catalogued. It was essential to meet people on their own ground and see the setting in which they live and work;
- There is a sense of an ‘open door’ at Connecting Histories; cataloguing and discussions are not closed, allowing external participation. This is unusual as often the strategic and policy work is completed behind closed doors and the public face is the search room. With Connecting Histories, the public can have an influence and this is important to maintain in future services and projects;
- The first action of the archivist must be to explain the reasoning and vision behind the project to the depositor. The archivist needs commitment, a willingness to explain and must keep the depositor fully informed at all times;
- ‘Closure periods’ – When dealing with sensitive material, data protection is of utmost importance as often some documents will be closed to the public view. A list of the entire archive with ‘open’ and ‘closed’ recommendations must be sent to the depositor for their approval. This document is then signed by the depositor themselves and a second signature from another member of their community/group. Any closed archives wanting to be viewed by the public will need permission from these two signatories;
- There are often political elements involved in the presentation of the archive back to a community so the archivist must appreciate the depositor’s position. The depositor has to understand why the material is sensitive. In depth research must be a pre-requisite to working with any depositor and their community. This enables the archivist to have more empathy and understanding. Time and patience is needed to build a trusting relationship between depositor and archivist.

- The depositor must give the archivist guidance, explaining their background and on the other hand, the archivist must have the confidence to ask questions of the depositor;
- Remembering religious festivals e.g. Sabbeth on Saturdays;
- The relationship between an archivist and a *potential* depositor is seen as just as important, the potential depositor will need reassurance that their archive will be looked after. One potential depositor said it had been easier to communicate with an archivist on the Connecting Histories' team who was of similar background and heritage as they understood the issues surrounding the deposit more clearly;
- More open debate is needed within the sector. Archive services can learn from each other's experiences.

### ***Learning - Advice for Community Groups Developing their Own Websites and Learning Packages***

For a community group starting from scratch and with limited resources, the Research and Learning Officers identified the following key recommendations:

- Be practical and clear about what you need to achieve;
- Give time to follow leads but stick to original goal;
- Additional relationships – make sure they are not taking away time to reach goals;
- Double the time you think is needed;
- Use knowledge already available;
- Manage time for other events;
- Meet with other people;
- Two-way discussion is important;
- Have knowledge of the material;
- Have knowledge of the technology;
- Knowledge of documentation and image manipulation (scanning etc.);
- Awareness of the level of language needed;
- Trial material with potential users;
- Have your readership in mind at all times – how manageable is the material? How interesting is it to read?

A more in-depth list of how to create a similar resource will be posted on the Connecting Histories website before the end of the project.

### ***General Advice for Future Projects***

- Recruit a 'web editor' who has full responsibility for the design and function of the website;

- Be aware of the importance and success of a multidisciplinary team. The availability of these diverse skills was seen as a way to increase outcomes and the power of the project;
- Start to embed the project within the library service at an early stage.

## Success Factors

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The following tables list the successes and challenges faced by the Connecting Histories project that will help inform the continuation of the partnership.

<b>It is a project</b>	The team was able to focus all their concentration and time on achieving the vision and aims of the project.
<b>The project's title</b>	Connecting Histories as a brand is easily remembered. Underneath this title, the project has allowed a 'semi-independence' as community groups do not want to lose their control <sup>19</sup> .
<b>The project looks 'outside the traditional archive box'<sup>20</sup></b>	Connecting Histories has been a pioneering project in terms of its work towards increasing access to culturally diverse collections and its success with engaging BME communities with archive and heritage projects. The project has also prioritised workforce diversification to a position of prominence in the sector which has been a ground-breaking step forward for archives.
<b>Its 'in-depth' approach</b>	The project has helped to broaden the public's knowledge of the diverse communities through 'in-depth' research and consultation, using the archive material as a starting point. The richness of the collections has facilitated the production of resources and the organisation of outreach activities.
<b>The project team</b>	<p>The multidisciplinary composition of the team (archivists, outreach, researchers, and academics) worked well in support of projects, with all members bringing their own strengths to the work. The skills set of the people involved has been interesting in that it has shown the library service that it is not necessary to simply employ archivists and librarians.</p> <p>The individual convictions, enthusiasm and hard work of the team are major success factors.</p> <p>One consultee said the expertise of the team must be capped and worked with in the future.</p>
<b>Project management</b>	<p>The 'excellent project champion'.<sup>21</sup> The flat management system has encouraged discussion within the team and a flexible working approach.</p> <p>The Head of Social Inclusion and Diversity at English Heritage had 'enormous respect' for the management of the project; it has produced some 'high level intellectual outputs and also delivered practical outputs'. The archives sector needs both of these.</p>
<b>Flexibility</b>	<p>Working with communities and individuals and supporting their archive heritage projects has been an organic process, each project growing in its own way and at its own rate. Short term projects often become constrained by their objectives but this hasn't happened with Connecting Histories, partly due to the flexibility of the Project Manager's work ethos.</p> <p>The Community Access Officer has endeavoured to keep detailed and</p>

<sup>19</sup> Consultation Dr Gerry Slater, Chief Executive Public Record Office Northern Ireland, March 2007

<sup>20</sup> Consultation with Volunteer Coordinator West Midlands Refugee Council April 2007

<sup>21</sup> Consultation with Regional Director, HLF South of England March 2007

	up-to-date notes on all his meetings and conversations with user groups as he initially did not know how the outreach activities would develop. This data provides a rich source of quantitative and qualitative data that has helped with the evaluation. The Community Access Officer has used his documentation as a backup which has helped realise the success of the outreach activities and presented previous experience, illustrating the changes and developments, from challenges over the two years.
<b>User participation has been at all levels</b>	User groups and individuals have been able to engage with the project at all levels, from the cataloguing processes, to the actual delivery of events and activities. This has empowered those involved, giving them confidence to move forward with their own plans.
<b>Richness of the learning packages and original data on Birmingham</b>	<p>The success of the learning packages has been due, in part, to the archive material within the culturally diverse collections catalogued for the project. The researchers responsible for the production of resources recognised the potential for development if there was more time, so many more stories and activities could be developed from the archives.</p> <p>The resources are unique in that they uncover and raise awareness of many histories of the city and people of Birmingham that have been hidden until now. The packages present original source material that can be used by all.</p>
<b>The City of Birmingham</b>	It was said that the project was introduced at the right time, when the cities' population has been growing and changing. Individuals, groups and communities are looking for ways to express their own identity and heritage and Connecting Histories has given them the opportunity.
<b>The previous work of Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures (BPBF)</b>	The project was heavily influenced and guided by previous work carried out by BPBF. Connecting Histories evolved within an established partnership between Birmingham City Archives, the School of Education at the University of Birmingham, Birmingham Museums and Art Galley and Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures group. Together, these groups began to promote awareness of culturally diverse histories within the city over the past seven years.
<b>The importance of cataloguing</b>	Connecting Histories has shown what cataloguing can achieve and has highlighted it as a core activity that needs to be sustained. An organisation needs to take on responsibility for this, cataloguing needs to be built in to projects and services as a priority.
<b>Connecting Histories has shown that there is no established view of what an archive is.</b>	Often the language used within the archives sector is a barrier and it is still seen as a 'profession' and therefore inaccessible to the public. Connecting Histories has achieved a way of breaking down those barriers <sup>22</sup> . Within the website there are sections on 'what is an archive' which emphasises that there is no one alike.
<b>Non-threatening means of communication</b>	Connecting Histories has a 'non-threatening means' <sup>23</sup> of communicating which is part of its success. People do not like to be lectured and so the project has encouraged discussion and empowerment of communities and individuals.

<sup>22</sup> Consultation Dr Gerry Slater, Chief Executive Public Record Office Northern Ireland, March 2007

<sup>23</sup> Consultation Dr Gerry Slater, Chief Executive Public Record Office Northern Ireland, March 2007

## Challenges

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<b>Engaging voluntary support</b>	The difficulty has been getting people to participate; after presenting the aims and support that Connecting Histories can give, the reaction has often been 'well, what else is there?' As it requires voluntary support, people have had difficulty in understanding the benefits of working with Connecting Histories. However, with time and resources it has been possible to establish strong and trusting relationships with community groups and individuals which, in time, have created successful outreach projects.
<b>It is a project</b>	The fact that Connecting Histories, as a project, was seen as both a weakness and strength; a weakness because there is an inevitable end to the work and bringing the project to an abrupt end is dangerous as the contacts made need to be nurtured.
<b>Flexibility</b>	Occasionally, when working with external organisations, the flexibility of the project was restricted when met with the structured and strict deliverables of another organisation.
<b>The continuation of relationships after Connecting Histories</b>	New relationships that have developed as a result of the project have involved a greater amount of trust and communication. Will the project end mean the rupture of these relationships? How will these contacts be maintained and nurtured?
<b>Too outward-looking</b>	The project was not strategic enough internally, it has tended to be too outward-looking to the detriment of internal and political support and increasing the chances of readily engaging in the City. There were numerous visits from high profile individuals and groups from outside Birmingham but little from within the City.
<b>Time and staff resources</b>	<p>There is so much more that can be done with the learning, cataloguing and outreach aspects of the project but time and resources are limited.</p> <p>The demand for outreach resulted in an additional member of staff.</p> <p>There needed to be a Web Editor position within the team, who took on the responsibility for the design and use of the website; the Digitisation Officer did more than was required on the website and also students were recruited over the summer holidays to help.</p> <p>The timescale for the completion of the PAT has been very tight. More time should have been given for the trainees, 2 to 3 years rather than 2 years.</p>
<b>'Preaching to the converted'</b>	It was said on a few occasions that Connecting Histories now needs to move out of a 'comfort zone' as it appears that only very interested parties attend events. The project needs to engage wider support from outside the sector.
<b>'Connecting to Histories' a more appropriate title?</b>	One stakeholder commented on the difficulty of connecting the histories of new communities with communities that have been established in the City for decades: <i>"While the quality of the various research projects has been energising, I've not been clear how the different units of research actually connect"</i> (consultation with stakeholder).

## Part Two - Additional Outcomes

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Over the 30 months, Connecting Histories has achieved far more than the original aims stated and far more than was expected. The project comes to an end when eight culturally diverse archive collections are accessible, the learning resources completed and available online and relationships with community groups and individuals within the city are strong. Consultation with stakeholders, user groups and individuals revealed a desire for the work of Connecting Histories to continue.

This report will now detail the additional outcomes from the outreach, cataloguing and learning resources. However, on a general level for the team, the project has been a learning experience and has enabled them to develop both professionally and personally. A further additional outcome has been the external interest in the project that has been overwhelming and supported the dissemination of Connecting Histories to a wider audience.

- ***Outreach – Additional Outcomes***

### *Action Research*

Connecting Histories has been about 'action research', learning about communities and their circumstances and, as a consequence, the outreach team are now almost able to map communities and activities across Birmingham which was seen as an important achievement by stakeholders<sup>24</sup>. The Community Access Officer now feels that the archive sector has more currency and the groups he is involved with have more awareness of the service and the opportunities it creates.

### *The Impact of Outreach*

To uncover the impact that Connecting Histories has been having, especially where outreach has been concerned, its community initiatives and cohesion, Ahmed Mirreh's work is a good example (case study 2 in appendices for more detail). Ahmed has been in Birmingham since 2003, he first came with the aim of raising awareness of his home land, Somaliland, but he is now talking to different communities and focusing on cross-community work through heritage and culture.

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<sup>24</sup> Consultation with Pauline Roche, Senior Policy Officer, 'Third Sector Team' Birmingham City Council and Chair of St Patrick's Festival board March 2007

### *The Demand*

As explained earlier in this report, the success of the outreach activity has been overwhelming; the Community Access Officer reached his capacity and an additional post was made, creating an outreach 'team'. The creation of an Outreach Support Officer post has meant that engagement with communities has become easier as a wider network is created. However, the high level of demand for outreach has often meant that the project exceeded its original remit to ensure the success of some projects.

It was noted through discussion with the Community Access Officer that many outreach posts within museums and archive organisations are part-time positions; outreach work is very labour intensive and often the amount of effort engaged will not necessarily equate to fruitful amounts of outcomes. Connecting Histories has had two full-time posts to cope with the demand for outreach from the culturally diverse communities of Birmingham; part-time posts in museums and archive services will often be the only outreach activity within the organisation's framework and so it appears that many heritage organisations are not fulfilling their potential community engagement activity.

- ***Cataloguing – Additional Outcomes***

#### *Production of Other Resources*

The Jewish Heritage Trail; the archivist Anna Riggs created the trail based on the archives catalogued through Connecting Histories. This resource was inspired by a two day training course in conjunction with Channel 4 called 'Originationinsite' and Professor Ian Grosvenor's heritage trail. The infrastructure was already in place to enable this new resource to be placed on the project's website.

Constance Davies' archive contained a lot of personal and ephemeral material and was an excellent example of how someone, quite 'ordinary', had documented and collected material linked to their life. This material was judged as a good resource to put online as inspiration to others. Of course, the depositor gave consent and is now very happy with the results.

#### *Possibilities for Future Work*

Connecting Histories has been the catalyst for new deposits in the City Archives; and the Central Synagogue in Birmingham has deposited their archive as a result of the Singers Hill deposit. This archive has many outreach and research possibilities and could be catalogued with further funding.

Another example is Brian Homer, a friend of Derek Bishton, who has since deposited his collection of photographs. From this recent deposit has come new



work and activity with schools in collaboration with the Creative Learning Officer at the City Archives.

The Irish community, the largest ethnic minority in Birmingham, had been in contact with the City Archives before the Connecting Histories project. Connecting Histories has maintained the contact and the community are thinking of depositing their collection in the Library.

### *Potential Depositors*

A concern raised about potential deposits is the short-term contracts archivists often work to and, therefore, the lack of continuity across their work. The decision to deposit a collection comes down to individual rapport and trust, what happens to the archivist/depositor relationships after Connecting Histories, is down to the successor's attitude. The archivists on the Connecting Histories team feel it is their responsibility to introduce the depositor to a member of permanent staff within the City Archives in order to continue the relationship. The problem then is the time pressures that archive departments have as they handle larger volumes of material and have little time to nurture relations like the Connecting Histories project has been able to do. The need for a change in resource priorities within archive departments has come to the fore as it was noted that there needs to be more emphasis on social engagement and adapting the traditional theory of appraisal. There is to be a new outreach position within the City Archives, which goes towards furthering the relationships with potential depositors.

One potential depositor said that it has been helpful to speak with a team archivist who has been acting as a 'broker' between their community and the library. It was seen as encouraging speaking to an archivist who is also of the same background as the depositor as it was felt that he could better understand the community's perspective.

### *Potential Sensitivities*

It has come to light that trainee archivists are not taught how to deal with the potential sensitivities of a collection. Working with Connecting Histories, the archivists have become more aware of the practicalities and the creative process involved.

### *Change in the Traditional Archive*

Connecting Histories has brought together traditional archives with more ephemeral, local studies material. The guidelines set for the traditional appraisal model may need revising.

### *High Quality Design*

The archivists aimed to create publicity leaflets for each collection as it was important to them, and the credibility of the project, that the leaflets were designed to a high standard and quality. Archives generally have not concerned themselves with design but high quality shows that 'style is as good as the content'<sup>25</sup>.

- ***Learning – Additional Outcomes***

#### *External Interest*

The content within the packages has generated much additional interest. It was almost expected that the 2007 bicentenary slavery events would have sparked interest in the Connecting Histories research into Birmingham antislavery under the 'Campaigning for Social Justice' e-learning package but this was not the only area of added interest. The Research and Learning Officer wrote the Jewish History of Birmingham as part of the 'Migration and Settlement' package. It is hoped the Jewish History will create more opportunities for discussion and dialogue with communities.

The Research and Learning team have had to deal with at least one research enquiry a week since the start of the project. Sometimes the enquiries have led to them giving a tour around the archive department, guiding and orientating the public. There has been no pattern in the enquiries received but the team have had to set aside time and balance other work in order to help with the enquiries. The enquiries were usually polite and informal and there have been no expectations on the Connecting Histories team.

The Research and Learning Officer highlighted two types of enquiry:

- Afro-Caribbean individuals needing help with research
- Groups and institutions, University departments e.g. Quakers, Queens College Birmingham

#### *Extra Activities*

The major areas of additional work have involved:

- Giving Lectures
- Taking Heritage Trails
- Giving additional research support (including outreach groups/heritage groups/ individuals)
- Broadcast and Media Work (BBC)

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<sup>25</sup> Consultation with project archivists March 2007

Here are a few examples of recent talks and events attended by Dr Andy Green:

*Additional Sessions: 2006*

8<sup>th</sup> September: Conducted 'The Connecting Histories Sturge trail' for English Heritage open days in Birmingham.

11<sup>th</sup> September: Research session with curator Clair Parsons Re: supporting the Equiano project (via research)

9<sup>th</sup> October: Research session with Suzanne Carter re: English Heritage outreach projects.

27<sup>th</sup> October: Lecture at Equiano Day Conference, Birmingham University (to present paper and disseminate C.H. Website)

2<sup>nd</sup> November: Lecture at Birmingham University: 'Birmingham and the Transatlantic' (Dissemination of C.H. website)

4<sup>th</sup> December: Filming in Archives department for BBC Midlands 'Inside Out' programme.

October/December: research support given to Afro Caribbean community, Oral Thomas, PhD student. Subject: 'Missionary cultures'

*Additional Sessions: 2007*

February 6<sup>th</sup>: research meeting with Clive Harris, leader of '3 Continents, One history' (in support of his project)

February 7<sup>th</sup>: Participation in BMAG 'Equiano' exhibition project advisory board.

February 24<sup>th</sup>: Lecture at Birmingham University Day Schools, department of Education. Subject- 'Joseph Sturge and Birmingham Antislavery'

7<sup>th</sup> March: meeting with Emma North, Senior BBC reporter, filming for 'Midlands Today'. Subject: social justice, antislavery

8<sup>th</sup> March: Research support given to Soweto Kinch, Birmingham Jazz musician, towards major Town Hall concert in 2007.

15<sup>th</sup> March: 'Museums Federation' meeting. Presentation of Connecting Histories website

19<sup>th</sup> March: Meeting with Minister Meg Munn at Connecting Histories office. Also: interview for the Birmingham Post on C.H.

27<sup>th</sup> March: Conducted 'The Connecting Histories Sturge trail' for Queen's College, Birmingham University.

29<sup>th</sup> March: Lecture at Quaker Meeting House, Birmingham Bull Street. Subject: Antislavery and Connecting Histories.

30<sup>th</sup> March: Attendance and short presentation at Charles Parker day, U.C.E.

*Further Additional Activities:*

The extra amount of research that has opened up with the Connecting Histories project has led towards other publication outcomes. Dr Andy Green has been asked to contribute the following pieces of work:

'Birmingham, Slavery and Abolition' is an essay he will be contributing for the catalogue of the forthcoming major 'Equiano' exhibition.

'Birmingham (U.K.) to Guantanamo: From Artefacts of Oppression to Cultures of Resistance', Journal of 'Slavery and Abolition' (2007)

## The Wider Impact of Connecting Histories

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*The recognition of the communities' contribution has to have some impact on social change<sup>26</sup>.*

*It does a 'social good', enabling 'disparate groups to express themselves... It is a 'powerful social tool' – not just an archive project<sup>27</sup>.*

*The project has 'kicked things off'<sup>28</sup>.*

*'Without a shadow of a doubt'. Connecting Histories is a 'huge instrument' of social change, because it makes people aware of who they are and why they belong<sup>29</sup>.*

These are just some of the comments made by people involved with the project. All consultees believed that the work of Connecting Histories has shown the potential to support community cohesion and engagement and there is evidence that this has already happened through the sharing of experiences and histories as a means of developing cross-community contacts and activities (e.g. Connecting Diasporas event, Birchfield Library consultation programme). The project has very clearly demonstrated the role heritage and identity agenda have in animating the interest of community groups within the BME communities. Evidence of this is seen through the outreach work of Connecting Histories. The project has far exceeded targets for the number of 'hard to reach' community groups engaged.

The feedback from events and activities indicates the need and demand for people to express their heritage. People appear grateful for the opportunity to link with other communities in terms of similarities and differences between their own heritages. Therefore, it was seen that this aspect of the project can be taken forward - Connecting Histories has 'laid the ground work'<sup>30</sup> for change. The relationships created between communities and archives are models of good practice and demonstrate the opportunities to inspire communities to engage with their heritage.

A Youth Development Officer from the Smethwick Bangladeshi Youth Forum said it was projects like Connecting Histories that allow discussion and the development of questions regarding identity and culture that form a better

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<sup>26</sup> Consultation with Head of Social Inclusion and Diversity English Heritage, March 2007

<sup>27</sup> Consultation with Dr Gerry Slater, Chief Executive Public Record Office Northern Ireland, April 2007

<sup>28</sup> Consultation with Carol Tulloch, Senior Research Fellow in Black Visual Culture, Victoria & Albert Museum, March 2007

<sup>29</sup> Consultation with Gillian Reynolds Journalist, Chairman Charles Parker Archive Trust, Trustee of National Museums Liverpool March 2007

<sup>30</sup> Volunteer Coordinator West Midlands Refugee Council, April 2007

understanding of 'who we are'. Once people have identified that they are 'complex individuals' and not just 'black or white' then this can develop into mutual understanding. It was also seen that the Community Access Officer's drive and enthusiasm for community empowerment and cohesion has an influence on the groups and individuals he works with.

The significance of Connecting Histories has been the accessibility of the archives and resources for everyone and it is now easier for anyone to find out about their own community and those of others. However, it was concluded that it was too early to understand the wider impact of Connecting Histories on social change but the project has, undisputedly, put in place the elements to facilitate social change, to be felt in the longer term.

Prior to Connecting Histories, the Central Library only scratched the surface of the issue but the project has demonstrated the potential for archives to play a key role within the service for social change and can fit within city council and national agendas for community cohesion. People see the problems but do not know how to tackle them efficiently and Connecting Histories was seen by the Head of Library and Archive Service as a potential solution.

If Connecting Histories was a service within a library, archive or museum organisation, then there will be the capacity to evaluate impact. There needs to be a longer term legacy to see its achievements and the wider impact.

The potential of the Connecting Histories project to have an impact on important social agendas such as; cultural diversity, community cohesion and social inclusion has been seen through the additional outcomes of the work. The four case studies within the appendices clearly show how the support provided by Connecting Histories has impacted upon the communities and individuals involved. Using the Generic Social Outcomes (GSOs) as a guide, consultation undertaken with these groups has uncovered how their work with archives and heritage projects has contributed towards the development of 'stronger and safer communities' and 'strengthening public life'.

## The Future

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*“The Connecting Histories work is outstanding and inspirational, and we will be looking closely at how we can develop this further in the context of the next spending round, and priority setting at MLA.”*

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

Within the lifetime of the project, far more has been achieved than was originally expected. However, there is significant potential for a lot more content and activity across the cataloguing, website, outreach and learning packages than the project has time and resources for.

### *Online Resources*

Many thought it would be beneficial to have another stage of the project to see the potential of the online resources as the project is coming to an end just as the material is made accessible. There should be an assessment of the use of the packages and research into how they might be used in the future. There is a great deal of rich and accessible material now – how can it be used more effectively once Connecting Histories ends?

The Project Manager is awaiting funding results from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to continue the outreach element of Connecting Histories, in the form of a two year ‘Birmingham Stories’ project. This ‘daughter’<sup>31</sup> project of Connecting Histories will have a home on the Connecting Histories website and will focus on knowledge transfer in community libraries. It will further the work of Connecting Histories in developing academic research into accessible forms for the community, engaging them with the research. Activities such as workshops will support workforce development within the libraries and archives service, giving staff advice and experience with outreach, connecting their collection with the community and an opportunity to place their work on the website.

### *Continuing Connecting Histories as part of the Library Service*

The Head of Library and Archive services thought that ideally Connecting Histories should become part of the library service - Connecting Histories is the outreach service of the library today. The project has many facets but the outreach came so much to the fore that people view it more as an outreach service/project. Although cataloguing does play an important role it was seen as harder to make this activity ‘sexy’<sup>32</sup> (to policy makers).

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<sup>31</sup> Conversation with Professor Ian Grosvenor 4/4/07

<sup>32</sup> Consultation with Head of Library and Archives Services March 2007

Community cohesion is the important agenda for today as the Head of Library and Archive Service believes this is where the opportunities are now and where the future is for Connecting Histories work. Integrating the full project into the service will be too resource intensive because the library has other objectives to focus on. There is no revenue funding to support any parts of the project at the moment within the library but other avenues are being explored.

If it were to continue as part of the Library service it would not be called Connecting Histories but it would build on the expertise that has gone in to and out of the project.

There are three futures routes:

- Embedding within the library structure – this is limited
- Seek new funding for certain elements of Connecting Histories. A bid has gone in to AHRC for the research capacity; another could go to HLF for the workforce development side of the project.
- The City Council could be approached for funding for community cohesion aspect to ask them to acknowledge the value of the work.

#### *Connecting Histories in Other UK Towns and Cities*

Many consultees believed Connecting Histories could be part of something much bigger and used as a model of practice for other library services wanting to develop similar initiatives. One consultee introduced the idea of a 'mobile team', almost as a franchise that could be established to show others how the work is set up<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Consultation with Gillian Reynolds Journalist, Chairman Charles Parker Archive Trust, Trustee of National Museums Liverpool March 2007



## Conclusions

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Over the 30 months, the Connecting Histories project has:

- Catalogued 8 culturally diverse archive collections
- Produced 5 on-line learning packages
- Supported over 100 BME groups and individuals
- Organised 5 events
- Launched 1 website
- Trained 2 BME archivists
- Disseminated 8 newsletters

The secondary impact, in terms of how individuals have used the engagement and support offered by Connecting Histories is, at this stage, considered to be an impossible figure to calculate. However, it can be concluded that the project has reached well over its original expectations.

The project has exceeded its original targets for outreach, learning and cataloguing. It has highlighted the importance of cataloguing archives as a core activity and the potential resources and activities that can stem from archive collections.

For the diverse users who have been supported by Connecting Histories, it has been the presence of the project that has been important, be it an organisation requiring advice for managing a heritage project or a community group in need of guidance towards funding streams. Connecting Histories has offered a free consultancy that has been used in a variety of ways.

The huge demand within the City of Birmingham for this service shows that there has been a gap in skills and knowledge that the Connecting Histories project has managed to bridge. The presence of Connecting Histories has enabled links to be created and sustained between communities and the heritage sector, highlighting the role archival heritage has to play in the broader community cohesion and social inclusion agenda. It was concluded that the project is ending just when the wider impacts upon the involved communities and individuals is being felt. However, the project has been the catalyst for change and proves that creating partnerships between the library and archives sector and BME communities can produce some inspiring results.

Connecting Histories is drawing to a conclusion when it has achieved an impact on major funding organisations in the sector such as the HLF and the MLA.<sup>34</sup> The project's impact on the different partners has been positive, influencing

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<sup>34</sup> Connecting Histories was used as a case study for the Comprehensive Spending Review briefing sheet on Archives  
[http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//C/csr\\_briefing\\_archives\\_11134.pdf](http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//C/csr_briefing_archives_11134.pdf)

recruitment strategies, teaching methods, consultation programmes, to use as a case study or providing source material for other projects. Within the Birmingham City Library and Archive service, it has shown the need for a new type of provision which has already influenced internal structures.

## Appendices

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Essential Skills Group, Spring Hill
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'What Makes A Brummie?' Intergenerational project, Shenley Green Centre, in partnership with Birmingham Youth Service

## Appendix One List of Consultees

1. Brian Gambles, Head of Libraries and Archives
2. Paul Hemmings, Central Library Manager Archives and Heritage
3. Geoff Mills, Head of Community libraries
4. Rita McLean, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Chief Curator
5. Professor Ian Grosvenor, Head of School of Education, University of Birmingham
6. Dr Robert Carter, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick
7. Gillian Reynolds, Journalist, Chairman of Charles Parker Archive Trust, Trustee National Museums Liverpool.
8. Carol Tulloch, Senior Research Fellow in Black Visual Culture, Victoria & Albert Museum
9. Judith Joseph, Birmingham Hebrew Congregation
10. Dr Gerry Slater, Chief Executive Public Record Office Northern Ireland
11. Rob Newitt Vocational & Professional Development Officer, Society of Archivists
12. Kemi Folarin Head of Curriculum at 'Community and Play', Birmingham City Council
13. Tof Islam, Smethwick Bangladeshi Youth Forum
14. Pauline Roche, Senior Policy Officer, 'Third Sector Team' Birmingham City Council and Chair of St Patrick's Festival board
15. Eleanor Harrison, Volunteer Coordinator, West Midlands Refugee Council
16. Rachael Hasted, Head of Social Inclusion and Diversity, English Heritage
17. Sheena Vick, Regional Manager, HLF South East
18. Marcus Belben, 'A Shared History, A Shared Future' project, Birmingham Central Library
19. Nikki Thorpe, Creative Learning Officer, Birmingham Central Library
20. Alison Gove-Humphries, History Adviser for the School Effectiveness Division, Birmingham Local Education Authority
21. Deep Hunjan, Community Librarian, Spring Hill Library
22. Ahmed Mirreh, member of the Somaliland Community
23. Paul Waddington, GP Heritage Project
24. Essential Skills Group, WEA, Spring Hill
25. Annie Woods Resources Centre, Lozells
26. 5 participants of the 'What Makes a Brummie?' project, Shenley Green Centre

## Appendix Two

### Case Study 1

#### Annie Woods Resource Centre (AWRC) for Afro-Caribbean elder women and carers, Lozells, Birmingham

Two sessions were attended, the first to gain their confidence and to help the group finish collages they had been creating as part of the consultation process for the new Birchfield Library. Questions were asked of their experience with Connecting Histories during the second session.

##### ***Activities***

- Online photographic exhibition
- Photographic exhibition to be displayed in libraries and community centres
- Connecting Histories Birchfield Library Community Engagement Programme (in partnership with Birmingham Community Libraries)

##### ***Engagement with Connecting Histories***

The community group have been working for 18 months with Connecting Histories. The Community Access Officer, Izzy, had contact with the group through a previous job at a Birmingham museum. The relationship today is strong and the group has had an exhibition of their collages in the Central Library. Around 4,500 people visit the library a day, so the exhibition will have raised awareness of their community centre.

At the beginning, it took a while for some members to trust Connecting Histories and believe they would work with them over several meetings and not just a one-off session. Their experience of other external support in the past has been disappointing and they have often been let down.

##### ***Nature of activity***

The outreach team at Connecting Histories introduced diverse activities and discussion where many of the group willingly and enthusiastically took part.

The Community Engagement Programme included four sessions;

Consultation sessions organised by Connecting Histories:

- Session 1

Introduction to the programme and development of the new Birchfield library. Exploration of the relevance of a library service to history and identity. This session aimed “...to enable them (the participants) to offer a personalised perspective by being empowered by the programme with knowledge and enthusiasm<sup>35</sup>”

- Session 2

A trip to the Central Library, introducing the group to Archives and Local Studies services and exploring ideas for replicating these services within a local context. It was noted that the direct contact with the items at the archives service had ‘enormous impact’. It was also an opportunity to raise awareness of the career opportunities within the library and archive service.

- Session 3

Start of creative exercise, using magazine cuttings and text from the previous sessions to create montages that conveyed their wishes as to what they would expect to see in the new library.

*“In doing this project we can leave behind a heritage for the children of the area to learn some part of recent history” (S.M.Smith)*

*“Now that we have been on the Connecting Histories New Birchfield Library Programme, we feel more confident about using libraries” (local resident participant)*

Three ladies from the group have been very involved but another eleven have had input. The Community Access Officer said that it is often the way that not everyone will be interested, but great input and enthusiasm has come from the three main ladies involved.

All materials were provided and the aim was to create a board of images and text that best describes what and how a community library should be. The text was taken from previous discussions where it was asked ‘what should a library offer its community?’ Words such as ‘adult learning’, ‘ICT’, ‘diverse collections’, ‘community history’ were introduced and have become part of the collages along side images of library users, books, buildings across Birmingham and local history themes. Many images were taken from the archives at Birmingham Central Library and used as inspiration for their creations.

The creators were asked about their work and what it represents; this information informed the text panels for the final exhibition of the work exhibited at the Central Library.

It was clear that the ladies were happy to see the Connecting Histories team member and welcomed him into their group. They were working intensely with

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<sup>35</sup> Izzy Mohammed writing for the Birchfield Library Community Consultation project report 2007

their collages for around two and a half hours and happily accepted the Community Access Officer's guidance.

When the session came to an end, the group asked what would be happening with their work and when hearing their creations will be exhibited, they enquired if people would be asking for autographs!

The group also asked how they will continue their involvement with Connecting Histories and wanted reassurance that the Connecting Histories representative will be returning.

### ***Session no. 2 – evaluation questions***

*How did you hear about the CH project?*

The Community Outreach Officer had worked with the AWRC group before Connecting Histories; he had remained in contact and the relationship developed and strengthened over the past 18 months.

*Were you aware of archive collections before?*

Yes, through another centres, they have visited London and also Oxford.

*Were you aware of the archive resource in the Central Library before your contact with CH?*

Yes

*Were you involved in community archive projects before?*

They are a pro-active group and have had jewellery exhibited in the Jewellery quarter, the Drum theatre and the Mail Box. They are involved in the Equiano project, putting together a collage representing a slave's journey, taking images from the internet.

*Do you collect and organise your own archive?*

Yes, they collect and save photos and memorabilia, often to send to families abroad to let them know how they are doing. They mentioned how difficult it is to organise and that older people did not take many photos.

Connecting Histories can scan all their photos and keep them on disc, so they are preserved. This continued into a discussion about how times have changed from watching film on projectors to today.

*How many have been involved?*

14

*Who was involved?*

Elder females and males from the Afro-Caribbean community and this has not changed throughout the project

*Initial reasons for volunteering with CH?*

To learn more and to get to see places. They hoped they would be taken out to exotic places! Izzy, the Community Access Officer informed them of a scheme that takes ethnic minority groups out to visit gardens and historic landscapes around Birmingham free of charge.

*How has your work with Connecting Histories helped you personally and professionally?*

The time with Connecting Histories has increased their confidence. The library visit was a significant experience for them that they enjoyed, the Central Library was always seen as inaccessible to them. They were unsure at the start but when actually tried they have enjoyed their work with Connecting Histories. They have never worked on collages before, so they got great enjoyment from doing this new activity introduced to them by Izzy.

There will be a trip in the next few weeks to see their exhibited work at the library.

Taking photos for the website exhibition, they were obliged to stop in places they would never have done before and so realised how many beautiful buildings there were in Birmingham.

*What sort of impact has contact with the project had on you?*

The library visit was mentioned again – there was an exhibition up about Birmingham history; they could only gather bits and pieces of information during their visit but it made an impression on them and inspired them to learn more. The library exhibition showed them how Birmingham has changed over the years and made them realise that it has been a 'long journey'.

The behind the scenes tour was very interesting – it was a surprise to them how accessible the building and service actually is. 'Everything is there in case you need anything'.

*What aspects of the project have you found challenging?*



Trying to get things finished as they initially only had sessions over four Saturdays. Because of the enthusiasm and success of the project, Izzy had to work with them during their Tuesday morning meetings.

*How did it feel to discuss memories?*

It feels good to look back at the past. Listening to others and realising the similarities of people's backgrounds no matter what colour or creed. Some sessions have revolved around cups of tea and discussion about memories and heritage.

*Have you gained a better understanding of your background and heritage?*

They have never lost it but working with other people has achieved a better understanding.

*Has the CH project influenced your thoughts and perceptions of your heritage and others in any way?*

Throughout their life, they have often mixed with the Asian community and have Asian friends today. One consultee described how at the end of the day, we are just human beings and there should be no significant differences if we acted naturally and with respect.

*Have you increased the number of contacts you have amongst your community and wider?*

Yes, they visited the Spring Hill Library with Izzy where they met different people and were invited back whenever they wished. It was their first visit to this library.

They were introduced to photographer Vanley Burke who helped them with their photography.

*Reactions to the CH project amongst your community?*

Their work with Connecting Histories so far has been within their community group. They have let their work speak from itself.

Some of the photos are placed on the website but others are exhibited in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. There is now global recognition for them as people, such as family back in Jamaica have recognised them from the photos on the website.

*How did you find communication with the CH team?*

They have been very happy with the Community Access Officer Izzy, who has now gained their trust and friendship. They look forward to future work with him.

### *Extra information*

It was highlighted how the Black history collections at the Central Library are stored on the fifth floor right in a far corner. They are pleased to hear that local history will have a central position at the new Birchfield library.

The conversation continued for another 20 minutes, when memories of the back-to-back houses, outside toilets, 'doorstep' bread, laundrettes and the low levels of hygiene back in the 60's, 70's was discussed.

### **Conclusions**

It was clear that the Annie Woods group appreciated the regular contact with the Community Access Officer and hoped to continue work with him in the future.

The Community Access Officer, Izzy, explained that the group may not understand the basis behind Connecting Histories and it was felt inappropriate to explain the project in detail; the community group was just grateful for the support and enjoyed being introduced to new activities and services.

The three main impacts of the project on this group are:

1. Being able to learn more - the photography exercise enabled them to discover parts of Birmingham they had never been to. The visit to the Central Library presented them with an exhibition of Birmingham's history, where they realised how times had changed and the 'long journey' the City has undertaken.
2. Meeting new people and being introduced to new services such as the City Archives and the Birchfield and Spring Hill libraries – realising that these services are accessible to them.
3. Increased confidence from working within a group and being able to take on new activities.

### **Generic Social Outcomes**

It is clear that the work Connecting Histories has done with the Annie Woods Resource Centre includes the following GSO's:

<b>Strengthening Public Life</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building the capacity of community and voluntary groups</li> </ul>	<p>The Annie Woods group has created three exhibits, a website photography exhibition, a photography exhibition to be displayed in libraries and other community centres and collages on display in the Central Library for the</p>

	Birchfield library consultation programme. They have been successful at activities they have never been involved in before such as collage-making and visits to Birmingham Libraries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving the responsiveness of services to the needs of the local community, including other stakeholders</li> </ul>	The Connecting Histories Birchfield Library Community Engagement Programme has enabled the Annie Woods group to have their say in the development of the new Birchfield library.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging and supporting awareness and participation in local decision making and wider civic and political engagement</li> </ul>	The Connecting Histories Birchfield Library Community Engagement Programme has enabled the Annie Woods group to have their say in the development of the new Birchfield library.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling community empowerment through the awareness of rights, benefits and external services</li> </ul>	Before Connecting Histories, they believed that services such as Birmingham Libraries were inaccessible to them; as a result of a behind the scenes visit to the City Archives, they are now aware of the huge resource available to them.
<b><i>Health and Well-Being</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging healthy lifestyles contributing to mental and physical well-being</li> </ul>	Discussing memories has been a positive process. Also the sessions have been social and learning events for the group.
<b><i>Stronger and Safer Communities</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting cultural diversity and identity</li> </ul>	Sessions with Connecting Histories has often revolved around long discussion about memories and their heritage. Displaying their work online and in the Central Library will increase awareness of their community centre and activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving group and inter-group dialogue and understanding</li> </ul>	It was said that working as a group has helped understanding and confidence.

## Appendix Three

### Case study 2

#### Ahmed Mirreh, member of the Somaliland Community

Ahmed Mirreh has been in Birmingham since 2003; for almost two years he has been working with the Somaliland community and Connecting Histories. The activities and projects that the partnership has achieved over this time is evidence of the value of Connecting Histories' support.

Ahmed comes from a very active family; members live across the world from the United States to Abu Dhabi, many of them working voluntarily within their communities. His initial reasons for developing heritage projects with Connecting Histories were to raise awareness of his community, increase the opportunities open to the community and become a mediator between the young and elder generations.

*"I want to help the Somaliland community to break out of the cycle of life they are in and to build towards a new future."*

Ahmed Mirreh, 2006

Further to this, he hopes to find solutions for the education problems encountered by the Somali youth, who are often unable to seek support for their studies at home, as many elders are illiterate.<sup>36</sup> Ahmed and his siblings hold weekend classes for school children within his community and he hopes to develop this into after school and half term classes.

Ahmed was volunteering with a Somali community group when he was introduced to the work of Connecting Histories. Since then, much has been accomplished and he is now introducing others to the work of Connecting Histories. He was nominated for a regional Community Champions award and received a grant from the Community Champions Fund. This resource enabled him to organise two events: one workshop in May 2006 celebrating the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Somaliland Independence and another called Connecting Diasporas in November 2006, which brought together members of the Somaliland, Irish, South Asian, African Caribbean and Kurdish communities.

In addition to these successful events, Ahmed's journey is presented through an online exhibition of images and text on the Connecting Histories website. The collection of photographs was gathered together by Ahmed with the help from his

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<sup>36</sup> In 1974 a written Somali language was introduced for the first time. Those who could, moved abroad to continue their studies or career, many of those who remained in Somaliland gave up their studies and as a result are now illiterate and unable to support their children's studies.

family. He said that he has received many calls from family abroad who wanted to say how pleased they were with the exhibition of their family history. Ahmed's younger brother has since been inspired to collect material for his own archive.

During the two years, Ahmed has been to many conferences including one in Belgium for Somaliland Society Europe (SSE) and another in London. He has been invited to speak at other events and talks such as one for the Derby Somali Community, the Pakistan community and is now a committee member for the Refugee Advice Group. Ahmed believes creating partnerships across communities is essential in mainstreaming a community and raising awareness of the positive initiatives within these communities. He also sees his work as an opportunity to become a role model for others.

So how has Connecting Histories helped? Ahmed stated that if it was not for Connecting Histories support and advice, he would not have been able to achieve the amount he has to date. Through the training, access to resources and guidance, he has developed confidence to reach his goal and progress his work with communities. When he first moved to England he did not have the confidence and self-esteem to accomplish what he has today. He has found increased self-belief and inspiration since working with the project and his writing, communication and public speaking skills have been improved.

He now has confidence to be more open about his culture and will continue to work with communities into the future. An idea for the future is to develop a New Communities Heritage Forum/network (title to be confirmed) that will apply for funding to work with 16 to 25 year olds within new communities through workshops and museum or countryside visits.

### ***Conclusions***

Connecting Histories has been the support and catalyst that has enabled Ahmed to believe in himself and achieve his goals.

### ***Generic Social Outcomes***

It is clear that the work Connecting Histories has done with Ahmed includes the following GSO's:

<b><i>Stronger and Safer Communities</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving group and inter-group dialogue and understanding</li> </ul>	<p>The Connecting Diaspora's event, organised by Ahmed and Connecting Histories brought together diverse communities in Birmingham. Since this event, Ahmed has created partnerships with other communities, such as the Pakistan community who hope to develop summer projects for younger generations within the Somali and Pakistani communities.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting cultural diversity and identity</li> </ul>	<p>Sessions, the online exhibition and events with Connecting Histories have given the opportunity for discussion about Somali heritage and identity. Ahmed's aim was to raise awareness of his community and increase the opportunities available to them.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging familial ties and relationships</li> </ul>	<p>Ahmed's online exhibition has encouraged family discussion and support; many family members from other countries sending photos to add to the collection. Ahmed's brother has been inspired to develop his own archive.</p>
<b>Health and Well-Being</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helping children and young people to enjoy life and make a positive contribution</li> </ul>	<p>Ahmed's aim for working with Connecting Histories and heritage projects is to develop an educational support system for Somali youth. He also hopes his work for the community presents him as a role model for others.</p>
<b>Strengthening Public Life</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging and supporting awareness and participation in local decision making and wider civic and political engagement</li> </ul>	<p>Events organised by Ahmed and Connecting Histories were attended by important politicians and activists from Somaliland which shows the significance of his work.</p> <p>As a result of Ahmed's increased confidence skills and networking, his attendance at conferences and talks has enabled him to participate in important discussions regarding his community and Somaliland.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building the capacity of community and voluntary groups</li> </ul>	<p>The partnership has resulted in two successful events, an online exhibition, networking and presenting at conferences and a Community Champions award. These initiatives have raised awareness of the Birmingham Somaliland Community and empowered Ahmed to achieve things he, only a few years ago thought were impossible.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling community empowerment through the awareness of rights, benefits and external services</li> </ul>	<p>Ahmed has been introduced to the library service and its vast resources as a result of working with Connecting Histories. Work within the service has increased the number contacts he has made and empowered him to progress his community work.</p> <p>As a consequence of his achievements throughout the two years he has been asked to be a committee member for the Refugee Advice Group</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving the responsiveness of services to the needs of the local community, including other stakeholders</li> </ul>	<p>The sustained support given by Connecting Histories to Ahmed has been a learning curve for both parties.</p>

## Appendix Four

### Case study 3

#### Essential Skills Group, Spring Hill

There has been a four-way partnership with this project:

1. The Spring Hill Library
2. New Testament Church of God
3. Workers Education Authority, Essential Skills Group
4. Connecting Histories

Connecting Histories were approached by the Spring Hill Library to help them complete a 'Who do you think you are?' family history project (based on the BBC programme), with a group of elderly Afro-Caribbean ladies. The sessions were held at the New Testament Church during their WEA Essential Skills class.

The 'Who do you think you are?' packages were used as a starting point to create a family tree and write down their life memories. The group brought family photos and objects in to discuss with each other. Connecting Histories introduced sessions that involved activities around 'what is your first memory?' and 'talk about a relationship you have with a particular member of your family'.

In the early stages, it was clear that the packages given by the Spring Hill Library had limitations in that the group did not have the resources to properly research into their family history, as of course much of the documentation is overseas. Connecting Histories was able to adapt the package to become more relevant to the group but the flexibility of the Connecting Histories way of working was met with restrictions because of the WEA and library's structured programme and set deliverables; it was hard for Connecting Histories to introduce new activities within the structured framework of each session.

Two sessions were attended by the researcher; an initial presence in order to make contact with the group and become a familiar face. The researcher did not take part in the session but observed how the Community Access Officer interacted with the group. The members had brought in family photos and objects that were scanned to become part of a large montage. The Community Access Officer was able to relate his own family stories to those of the group members, which inspired the group to have more in-depth discussions.

The second session brought the work between the group and Connecting Histories to a close. Eleven members came to the Central Library with staff from the Spring Hill Library. Half an hour of a film was shown (voice montage by Charles Parker). The film was shot in 1964 and showed scenes of Birmingham

and interviews with immigrants from the West Indies. The personalities in the film spoke of their expectations of England and the realities upon arrival.

Many of the group started singing along to songs they recognised. The discussions that followed, initiated by Connecting Histories, revolved around how times have changed and generally improved for younger generations; when members of the group first arrived in England, '*if a man wants good, his nose has to run*' (you had to work hard in order to achieve your goals).

The researcher had time with the group to ask questions about their time with Connecting Histories and what they had gained:

*Were you aware of archives before?*

They were only aware through the recent 'Who do you think you are?' series.

*Were you aware of the archive resource in the Central Library before Connecting Histories came along?*

Not all.

*What have you learnt/gained from your work with Connecting Histories?*

There are so many stories to discuss from a photograph. The importance of passing on and sharing stories and memories to younger generations.

Informative, enjoyable, good debate, showing different ideas. Bringing back memories. 'Opened our eyes'.

The group was formerly reluctant to write about their history – Connecting Histories has increased confidence to now do so.

*How did it feel to discuss memories?*

Often shocked at some memories, such as their housing situation, sanitation and employment when they first arrived in England. They were surprised by many customs such as 'doorstep bread'.

*Any difficulties, challenges?*

For many, it was hard to remember names of their great-grandparent's generation. A complete family tree was impossible because much of the information is abroad.

*What was it like to have Connecting Histories participate in your sessions?*



They were very 'pleased' and 'learnt a lot'. They congratulated Izzy Mohammed, the Community Access Officer for his work "*hats off to Izzy!*" they cried.

*Have you had contact with new people?*

No, but have involved the community in discussions during Church meetings.

*Have people been inspired to start their own archive collections?*

The family history work will continue; the group will now write about their own family history and show photos to the group. They will involve other family members in their discussions.

### **Conclusions**

This project has proved again how so much discussion and activity can be developed from archives, especially photographic material.

Connecting Histories helped deliver the community library, Spring Hill and the WEA's objectives.

The sessions were a social event for the ladies involved. Consultation with the Community Librarian that engaged Connecting Histories said there had been requests for another visit to the Central Library.

The hardships they had endured as settlers in England were compared to the situation of younger generations today. The passing on of memories highlights the changes between generations. When the same film was shown to 17 and 18 year olds, they were not familiar with the issues portrayed in the footage.

The impacts on the group:

1. Increased awareness of the archive service
2. Discussion around the photos and family history brought back memories
3. Increased confidence to record their family history
4. Encouraged discussion with family

### **Generic Social Outcomes**

It is clear that the work Connecting Histories has done with the Essential Skills Group includes the following GSO's:

<b>Stronger and Safer Communities</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving group and inter-group dialogue and understanding</li> </ul>	The family history theme encouraged inter-group dialogue and also discussion of memories with family members

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting cultural diversity and identity</li> </ul>	Sessions with Connecting Histories has revolved around long discussion about memories and their heritage, reinforcing their identity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging familial ties and relationships</li> </ul>	The family history theme has encouraged discussion of memories with family members
<b><i>Health and Well-Being</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging healthy lifestyles contributing to mental and physical well-being</li> </ul>	Discussing memories has been a positive process. Also the sessions have been social and learning events for the group.
<b><i>Strengthening Public Life</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building the capacity of community and voluntary groups</li> </ul>	The group has completed their 'who do you think you are' programme with the Spring Hill Library, WEA and Connecting Histories. They have produced family trees and a photographic montage. The family history work will continue.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling community empowerment through the awareness of rights, benefits and external services</li> </ul>	The group were not aware of the archive resource before their contact with Connecting Histories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving the responsiveness of services to the needs of the local community, including other stakeholders</li> </ul>	As a result of the group's feedback on the difficulty of completing the original 'who do you think you are' programme, it was altered and adapted for the group, and informs any future family history work with BME communities

## Appendix Five

### Case study 4

#### *'What Makes a Brummie?'* intergenerational project, Shenley Green Centre, in partnership with Birmingham Youth Service

Adisa Folarin, the Outreach Support Officer at Connecting Histories led a 12 week project that brought together elderly and teenage members of the Shenley Green community. Support was given also by Juliet Faulkner, Special Projects Officer for Birmingham Youth Service and Janice Boyett, Community Development Worker for Northfield and Edgbaston Constituencies. Each Monday afternoon, the group met at the Shenley Green Centre where they discussed family and community history, brought in personal family mememtoes and items of local interest in order to inspire conversation amongst the different ages. One week involved a visit to the archives department at the Central Library and another visit to the Northfield's Community Library where they were introduced to researching family history on the internet.

The researcher was able to organise a meeting with the elderly members of the project but unfortunately not with the youth members. It was mentioned that it had been difficult to sustain the interest of the younger participants as the project was lengthened in order to finish a montage; it was initially a 6 week project which had to be completed in 12.

#### *1. What was involved in the 'What Makes a Brummie' Project?*

'We talked about history, things we did, what Birmingham was like and how people were', through different exercises and talking about the importance of mememtoes (most of the elder participants have lived in the community for over 50 years). Photographs were brought and a collage made 'which finished it (the project) off nicely'. As the younger members of the project slowly dropped out towards the end of the project they have yet to make their collage.

#### *2. Initial reasons for getting involved in the project?*

The organisers wanted to bring together members of different communities but it proved difficult to recruit participants as people do not like to travel far during dark hours. The Shenley Green Centre had an active senior group so it was easier to recruit from this community.

The elder members see themselves as 'true Brummies' and wanted to talk about being a Brummie and get feedback from the children. The matter of street safety today and fear of going out alone was discussed. The younger members

realised that the elderly were 'not as we appear'; they had a laugh with each other talking about the things they used to get up to at school. The younger girls were interested to hear about 'courting', 'romance' and the dance evenings held years ago.

*3. Were you involved in community archive/heritage projects before?*

It was the first heritage/family history project they had been involved in; although some had been to poetry clubs before.

*4. Were you aware of the archive resources at Central Library before?*

No. They had a very interesting and 'quite surprising' visit to the archives department. They could look at the various archives and pick out material for their collage.

However being elderly they found it difficult to use the escalators within the Central Library as the lifts were out of order.

*5. Who was involved?*

Around five 65-70 year olds and initially seven younger members (around 16 years of age). It was not intended to be an all female group, however, more women showed interest in the project at the beginning.

*6. What have you managed to learn/gain from the project?*

They didn't realise some current and historical facts about the City. Adisa Folarin gave them exercises and 'tests' to complete on the subjects of immigration and culture; most of the information was new for them.

They did not use the computers at the Northfield Library ('we were all lost weren't we?') but the younger participants were showing them how to do so.

*7. How did it feel to discuss memories?*

It brought things back for the elderly participants. It appeared that the youths were more interested to hear about what the elders had done at their age, however, the discussion and interest worked both ways.

*8. How did it feel to work with other generations? What are the benefits of this?*

They enjoyed working with the younger people; they had tended to have a bad impression of younger generations and 'pigeon hole them' but they thought the younger participants were 'smashing kids'.

9. *Have you gained a better understanding of your background and heritage/local community?*

They have gained a better understanding of their heritage and community – especially through the informal discussion with the youth. They also learnt a lot about one another.

10. *Have you increased the number of contacts you have amongst your community and wider?*

Yes – with the younger generations

11. *Have you had contact with people in your own and other communities that you otherwise would never have worked with?*

Yes – with the younger generations

12. *Any further activities created as a result of the project?*

There are plans to develop a family history project in the summer. The younger participants expressed interest in organising a dance, where roles would change; the elderly would learn to dance as the youth do and vice-verser.

13. *If you wanted to research your own family history/local community are you now aware of how to find the resources and information?*

Yes, they are now aware of the free resources at the library. It has inspired some to research their family history.

### **Conclusions**

The elder generations enjoyed their time on the ‘What Makes a Brummie?’ project; realising that the youth participants were interested in what they had to say about their memories of the community and Birmingham empowered them and made them feel important. The project also informed them of the resources available to them at local and the central libraries.

Sustaining the interest of the youth members appeared a challenge; they lost motivation when the project was lengthened.

### **Generic Social Outcomes**

It is clear that the work Connecting Histories has done with the participants of the ‘What Makes a Brummie?’ project includes the following GSO’s:

<b>Stronger and Safer Communities</b>	
• Improving group and inter-group dialogue	Talking about memories and local history

and understanding	amongst the group has made the participants learn things about each other. The contact with the youth members enabled the seniors to realise that their former bad impression of the local youth was a preconceived view.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting cultural diversity and identity</li> </ul>	Sessions revolved around long discussion about memories and their heritage, reinforcing their identity. Facts about immigration and culture were introduced.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging familial ties and relationships</li> </ul>	The family history theme has encouraged discussion of memories with family members. The participants have been inspired to start tracing their family history.
<b><i>Health and Well-Being</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging healthy lifestyles contributing to mental and physical well-being</li> </ul>	Discussing memories has been a positive process. Also the sessions have been social and learning events for the group. There is talk of organising a dance session between the elder and youth participants.
<b><i>Strengthening Public Life</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building the capacity of community and voluntary groups</li> </ul>	The group have created a montage that is to be displayed in the Central library. It is hoped the family history work will continue.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling community empowerment through the awareness of rights, benefits and external services</li> </ul>	The group were not aware of the archive resource before their contact with Connecting Histories. They are now aware of the free resources available to them at local and central libraries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving the responsiveness of services to the needs of the local community, including other stakeholders</li> </ul>	The difficulty to sustain the interest of the youth has been a challenge and a learning curve for any future intergenerational projects.