

Key Questions

The workshop participants broke into 4 groups each to make up a StoryCube with ideas around the following questions:

- who is it for?
- what could it be?
- what shouldn't it be?
- what opportunities should it offer?

The resulting discussion created a much larger pool of questions which were the basis for the questions posed to the delegates at b.TWEEN08

Group A

- what are your networks?
- how do you communicate without technology?
- what are reasonable and achievable expectations?
- who are the key people to engage (community gatekeepers etc)?

Group B

- what layers of interactions should it include?
- what levels of 'investment' should users have to choose?
- what levers could actively engage involvement?
- how can different groups find a common understanding of technology?

Manchester Beacon Workshop, June 2008

Giles Lane & Karen Martin

DIFFUSION GENERATOR

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Introduction

Proboscis and Just b. Productions facilitated a one day workshop in Manchester which was designed to set the scene for the Beacon project and Just.b Productions to commission "an online service that maps connections between people, place and knowledge, and creative activity within Manchester". Twenty participants were invited to outline issues, opportunities and challenges for the commission. Their questions were presented to delegates and the public at b.TWEEN08, who were invited to share their collective intelligence and build a collaborative 'landscape of ideas' using StoryCubes.

About the Beacons

Beacons for Public Engagement are university-based collaborative centres to help support, recognise, reward and build capacity for public engagement work across the UK. Together with their partners, the UK funding councils and the Wellcome Trust, they are investing 9.2 million pounds into this initiative in order to support a step-change in recognition for public engagement across the higher education sector. There are six Beacons around the UK, and one National Co-ordinating Centre.

Analogies and examples

Go to where people are - not just offline but online too - have a facebook group, write a bebo application

What are the precedents for this project - Greenmap, Springwatch, Frapp, Sohonet (Infrastructure project)

Example in the USA where colleges follow ex-students progress so they understand how they can feed back into, and benefit, their old institution

www.imdb.com Maps movies into series of credits. Is it possible to find an entry point into this graph so you can follow the individuals involved in the production of knowledge? Can your own connections be threaded into this?

Tool might not map, it might be similar to webcrawler and be an accumulator

Local government association has an online social network which works well.

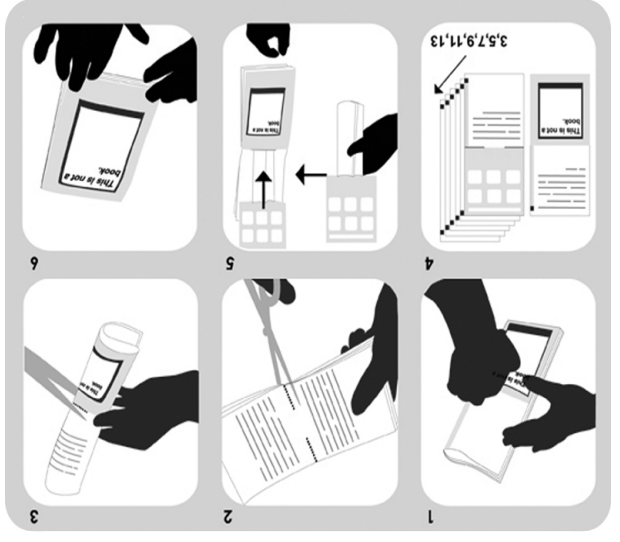
Crowdvine: Different categories of relationship - 'friend', 'fan of' etc...

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Workshop Participants

Manchester Beacon Workshop, June 2008
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created on: Mon Apr 14 14:38:38 2008

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Manchester Beacon Project

University of Manchester
Manchester Metropolitan
University of Salford
Museum of Science and Industry
Manchester : Knowledge Capital

The Manchester Beacon's activities will be shaped and informed by the creativity and dynamism of the people of Manchester and Salford to ensure that all members of the community, particularly residents from the poorest and most excluded neighborhoods, benefit from their work.

They will focus on "reaching out", "listening to" and "learning from" local people. Their programme of activities will be delivered in partnership with a wide range of local businesses, sports clubs, cultural venues, community groups and media organisations.

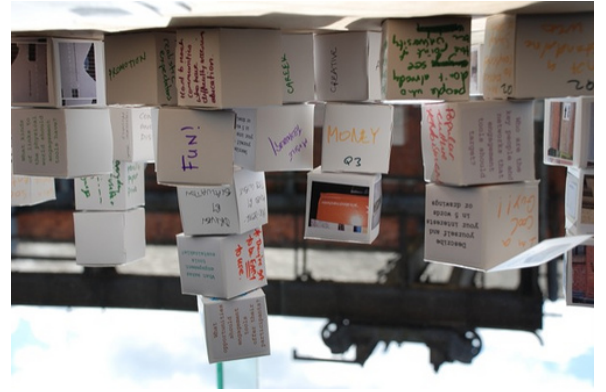
Beacon Engagement Tool

Just b. and Manchester Beacon will be commissioning an online service that maps connections between people, places, knowledge and creative activity in Manchester an new tool for public engagement and knowledge transfer for Manchester.



The day began with an exercise to draw out the connections between everyone present at the workshop - this revealed not only how we were all linked, but also the 'absent friends' who were the hubs of many connections, as well as key events and institutions that operated as nodes in the network of relationships.

Social Mapping Exercise



Outdoor Inspiration

The mapping exercise was followed by breaking into small groups who were tasked to wander the streets of Manchester researching and recording evidence of the different modes in which creative activity is communicated in the city. The images captured by the groups were printed onto 20 StoryCubes over lunch and used to stimulate the main discussion of the afternoon.



- Notes from the Discussion**
- What the tool might be**
- Core project points are:
 - Related to Manchester
 - Working out what 'knowledge objects' might be
 - Collaboration around making
- The tool should be acting as 'feedback' to the general population describing what is being done in universities.
- Should enable innovation, learning and facilitation of conversation. It should be a two-way process removing barriers.
- Important that it becomes definably useful to people.
- Needs definable outcomes.
- Two main motives for projects of this kind: Usefulness and Entertainment
- Possible outcomes**
- Outcome might be more than one project in more than one format, could include theatre production for example.



Is there a role for audio, sensory stimulation?

Be good to see the relationship between research in the universities and what happens out in the wider world as a result of this

Find out what people are doing, who they are working with and how they might be helped.

Build bridges between theory and practice

Perhaps there isn't a single solution, perhaps it's a series of overlaid, relatively simple projects

Can we connect a number of Manchester beacons and develop projects with them? Make them magnets for other projects and communities

Act as a networking tool or service to facilitate dialogue

Opportunity for emergence, to touch some of the work that's already out there

Challenges

What constitutes a successful outcome from the Beacon project? Sometimes it's useful to define what doesn't work

Visual language carries baggage, e.g.

Cornerhouse has modernist aesthetic, and this

needs to be considered in the design. Do you try to avoid language or acknowledge the differences in interpretation and work with these.

Can the tool be flexible enough to 'translate' the content for different audiences?

There are difficulties of interpretation - even between us here at the workshop - and research is going to mean different things to different people

How do we make people realise it'll be useful to them?

How to get people to use the tool is an analogue question not a digital one. Technology can't be isolated from people.

What other activities will be seeded alongside the digital tool? How will it engage with people?

Are universities willing to share their data?

Maxim of 'Build it and they will come' should be re-written as 'Deploy and die'

Don't think 'build it and they will come', instead think, 'build it and invite them to come'

Conversion of browsers into participants: For 100 readers only 2 will contribute and the length of

Final Questions for b.TWEEN StoryCubes

- Who are the key people and networks that engagement tools should target?
- What makes engagement tools sustainable?
- What themes would inspire people to connect using engagement tools?
- What opportunities should engagement tools offer their participants?
- What shouldn't engagement tools be or do?
- What are reasonable and achievable expectations for engagement tools?
- What local communities should benefit most from engagement tools?
- What kinds of links to the physical world should engagement tools have?



time for the conversion from reader to contributor is approximately two years.

Understanding the context of networks

Important elements include physical location of the team building the tool, the organisational structure and the individuals involved. How could these be contextualised?

Perhaps good to think of public squares, urban space, as analogy. What would a site analysis look like?

Provide trusted intermediaries into communities

What is the economy of this network we are building? What can be moved around the system?

Knowledge is transferred / carried with people

Track the thing that gets made rather than the person who made it

Personal relationships build on professional needs. Relationships change and move on over time.

Ownership, responsibility and commitment

Question not only who is it for, but who will own it. Will universities seed and host it?

- what else?
 - how might information be used after?
 - what would sustainability be like?
 - what happens if the platform is successful?
 - what do we mean by 'community'?
 - how much on outreach activities for the project?
 - how much should be spent on technology and
- Other Questions from the discussion:**

- users?
- how could you allow artefacts to be tagged by
- how do you keep context with information?
- how do you navigate the information?
- a closed-off silo?
- how to capture information without it becoming

Group D

- what might spark big interest?
- how to link to the physical world?
- and how?
- virtual platform?
- which communities could benefit most from a
- lightest touch solution?
- what would be the easiest achievable and

Group C

- that might take the majority of the budget.
- drawing them in, persuading them to participate,
- It's the invitation, i.e. engagement of people,
- is going to offer people
- Brokering: What is the opportunity that this tool
- choices?

- they want? How can people learn to make
- have the ability and language, to ask for what
- people what they want? Are they empowered, or
- maybe we need to turn this around? Could we ask
- We've been thinking from a 'push' perspective,
- interests, significant people or significant events
- Possible to build a network around shared

Engagement and Participation

- participation
- Importance of trust relationships in motivating
- beyond deployment?
- What will the commitment to the project be
- connectors, linking the participants?
- Who is organising this tool? Who will be the
- Responsibility is different to ownership
- participating? Issues of moderation
- Could ownership be devolved to those