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Leveraging mobile technologies and Web 2.0 tools to engage those with an interest in the centenary of the First World War in the stories of the people of the era using strategically placed Quick Response Codes

## Student Dissertation

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## MON: Leveraging mobile technologies and Web 2.0 tools to engage those with an interest in the centenary of the First World War cont..... (Jonathon Vernon)

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Cloud created by:



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

4 February 2014

Full title:

Leveraging mobile technologies and Web 2.0 tools to engage those with an interest in the centenary of the First World War in the stories of the people of the era using strategically placed Quick Response Codes.

Abstract:

In relation to the First World War, during its centenary commemoration, there are many places, such as war memorials, cemeteries, historic houses and battlefields that are bereft of quality, supporting information. With consideration for the needs and interests of visitors to such sites rich, multimedia information, such as audio guides and photographs, links to databases and to others with a similar interest can be provided through the use of Quick Response (QR) codes. Of interest here is to personalise commemorisation through the use of a self-generated QR code and content with the code put onto a British Legion Poppy.

This opens up the possibility of providing information at war memorials, large and small, even down to the single name, as well as at sites, buildings and on battlefields, for example informing walkers and cyclists that the old airfield was once a training area for the Royal Flying Corps showing them photographs of what it looked like or that that council building that was a convalescence home or that part of the Downs that had trenches dug in it for training or the concrete pill-box on the former Western Front where it is known an officer and two of his men died.

QR codes, originally the creation of a supplier to Toyota, have grown in popular use in Japan and China in the 1990s, then the US, Canada and Germany. They are now used at point of sale for marketing purposes, and increasingly in libraries and museums where research is indicating how they can best be used. Implementation issues relate to the percentage of the population that do not have smart devices, the possible cost of 2G and 3G away from free Wi-Fi and adequate support for the use of QR codes which are not yet ubiquitous in the UK.

The purpose of this paper is to pull together current experiences of the use of QR codes in order to consider ways they could add to our collective understanding of the events of the

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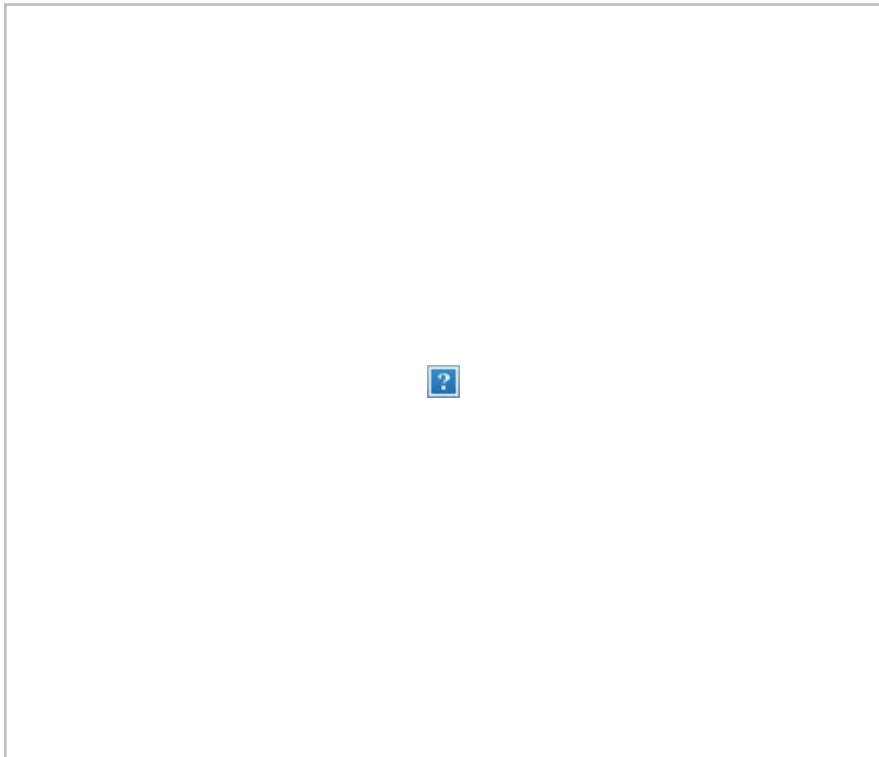
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First World War. QR codes offer multiple potentials, not simply providing rich mobile multimedia content, but letting people create their own content and QR codes, to share, form hubs of like-minds and respond in their own way whether by contributing to the historical debate, offering their own family stories or being inspired or angered by the events as described and wanting to express their views in prose, poetry, painting or performance.


## Extra content



All we see are names on memorials to those who died in the First World War.

But we'd like to see something like this ...

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 OU H818 'The Networked Practitioner' online conference 2014

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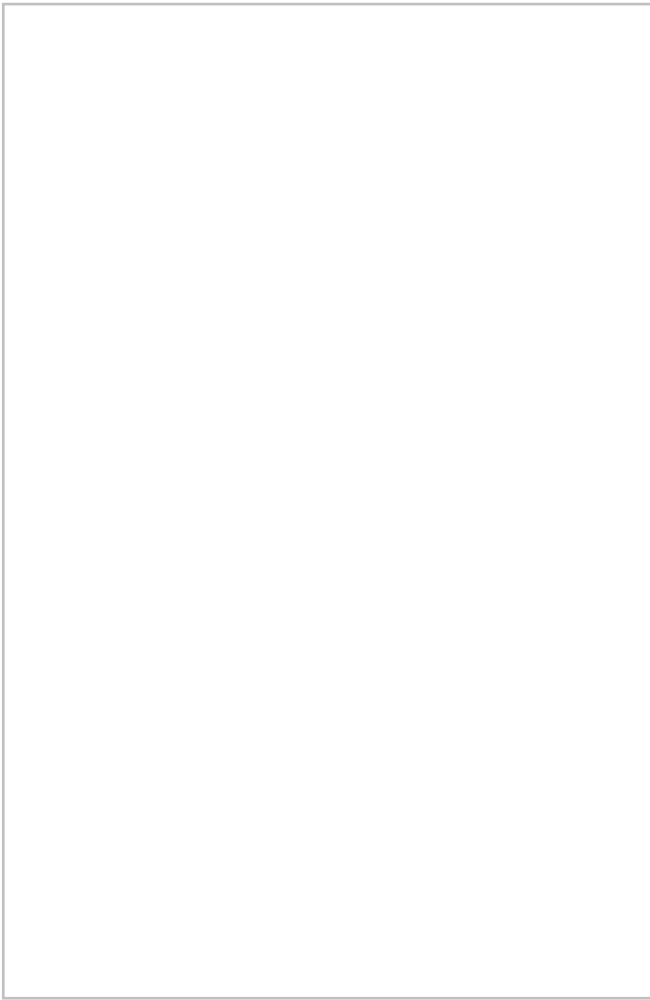
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To attach faces to the names and add their stories too, to know where they lived and went to school and who their families were.

So we pick a name, go online, research the records, find where he lived and what he did, learn when he joined up, follow his Division and find where he died.

We uncover a photograph that appeared in a local paper and learn that his older brother served too and survived. We create a web page: a picture and a short biography.

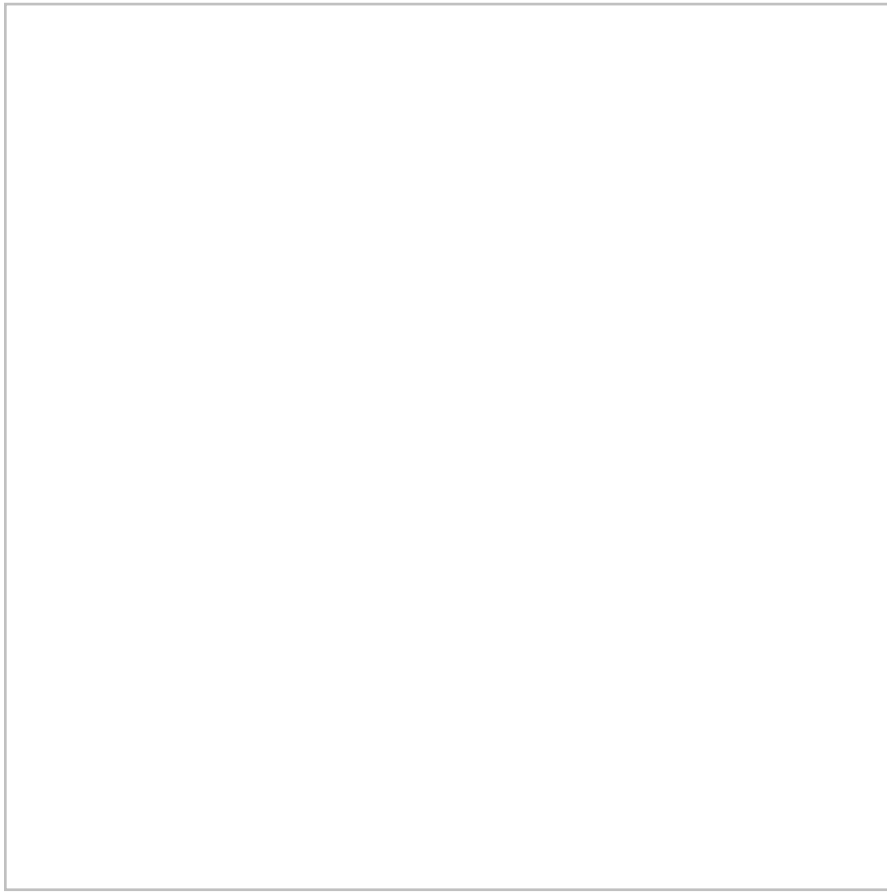


And then we generate a Quick Response code that we print off and stick to our Poppy.

And when asked what it's all about on Remembrance Sunday I say that I'm remembering Lieutenant Gerald Woods who is named on the war memorial on the hill. I say that he was in the Machine Gun Corps and before that he worked in the Brewery down the road.

And over time, the word spreads, and as others take part we are eventually able to find pictures and stories for almost all the 365 names on our war memorial.

In some cases grandchildren and great grandchildren join in, adding family photographs to the website.



And our research adds the survivors too, even unearthing an audio recording held in the Imperial War Museum of one of 'our' veterans.

There are 365 names on our War Memorial to those who died in the First World War - over 3,000 served. Over 900,000 died from Britain and the Commonwealth, their names on the 54,000 war mementos in Great Britain and others in Commonwealth countries. Over 3 million served.

Our world is that way it is because of the events of 100 years ago. Let's not forget them.



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

22:09 on 11 February 2014

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[Jonathan Vernon](#)

23:27 on 12 February 2014

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Whilst is is simply one idea on how to express a Quick Response code my 'mashup' of a British Legion Poppy with a QR code (See Above) does not have permission from the copyright holder 'The British Legion'.

The poppy is the symbol of Remembrance and forms part of the logo of The Royal British Legion. This logo is copyright.

I am speaking to the British Legion about this idea being taken up as part of their 'Everyman' centenary commemoration programme.

I have identified this as a 'problem' with alternatives very simply:

I hand draw/pain 'design' my own poppy - the flower isn't a copyright image, only the way it is interpreted by the British Legion.

Someone sticking a QR code for non-commercial purposes to a poppy they have purchased is probably perfectly legitimate - unless it is considered defacement?

I am look at alternative 'badges' that can be worn with a QR code on them, such as working with the Western Front Association or putting the QR code on a faked up medal like image - the basic idea is that people wear the code and identify themselves with the content you are taken to.

If the British Legion's response is 'take it down' or to add such and such a copyright notice I will do so. There is no commercial use here so I believe there are legitimate 'educational' uses.

I can draw and take a photograph. I ought to doodle up every image myself to overcome any and every copyright issue. This is what would be done in a commercial, publishing context, though for a 'work in progress' I believe that such bespoke work is the very last thing you do as you can otherwise find you do a great deal of work on images that have to be cut at a later stage..



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

07:42 on 14 February 2014

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***This is the text that is closest to the presentation given on Monday 17th February***

**Leveraging mobile technologies and Web 2.0 tools to engage those with an interest in**

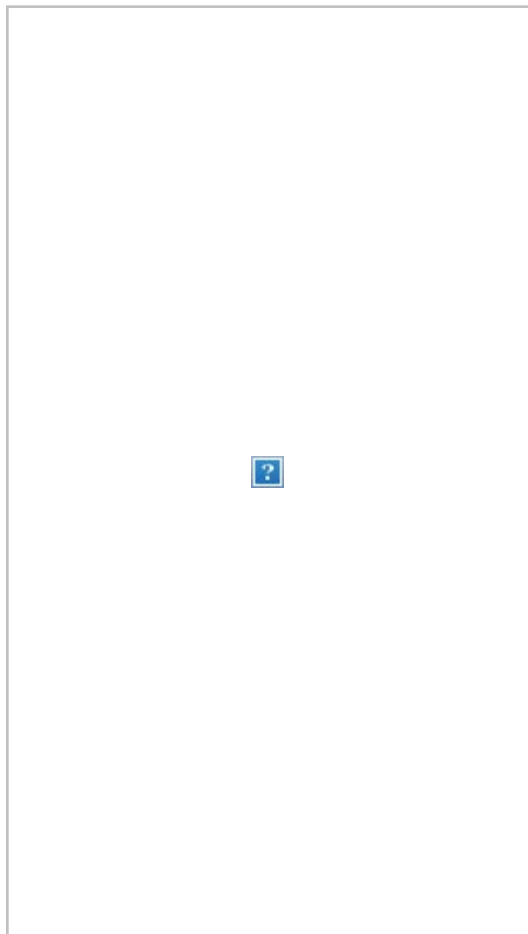
the centenary of the First World War in the stories of the people of the era using strategically placed Quick Response codes.

Open Education in an Open Landscape

**Inclusion: Innovation: Implementation**

*An OULive presentation by Jonathan Vernon 17th February 2014 @20:45*

**Who are them men and women whose lives are remembered on British War Memorials?**



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***Fig. 1 Lewes War Memorial***

The problem with war memorials is that those named on them risk becoming forgotten words on a list. By using the Web we can find out who these people were and where they lived: we can try to put a face to the name and a story to the name - and then we can share what we find online.

There are more than 54,000 war memorials in Great Britain, most of these put up after the First World War; there is barely a community without one. There are some 900,000 names. Significant interest already exists, especially as we approach the centenary of the First World War making this initiative a potentially easy one to add, to what is already taking place.

**“Fast, cheap and out of control”**



Brian Lamb (2010) described those technologies that 'lend themselves to ... the networked and open approach' (Weller, 2012 KL 244) as 'fast, cheap and out of control'. It was with this in mind, taking an interest in the centenary of the First World, that I started to think about using Quick Response codes as a personalized entry point to the Web that anyone could generate in order to share a story about someone who served in the conflict, and to do so both online and on the street.



© J F Vernon (2014)

***Fig. 2 How a Quick Response code might be used on a Royal British Legion Poppy in order to personalise your commemoration.***

Quick Response (QR) codes are fast – they are easy to use, they are free; however to be effective in learning there has to be a 'modicum of control' - the initiative has to come from somewhere. Worn in this way, I'd like to think that you can share directly with others the person whose name you have researched and whose life you wish to remember, as well as directing people to the content online and inviting them to 'adopt' a name from a war memorial

themselves. This is designed as a 'blended experience', that uses 'face-to-face', 'community' and 'classroom' experiences, trips to monuments ... and qualities of being and going online.



***Fig.3 QR codes are a product of the car manufacturing industry***

Faced with increasingly complex components, Denso, a supplier to Toyota, came up with what is a 2d barcode in the 1990s. (Denso, 2014) Made free of patent, and using free software anyone can now generate their own unique QR code; you can even print them out on standardized sticky label stationery. There are a myriad of uses for QR codes, from embedding information that is read and stored by the device to a quick link to rich content online. The interest here is to use QR codes to link to learning resources, in mobile, or 'm-learning' contexts in particular, and for users to both 'read and write' such content. I liken QR codes to using your phone as a remote control to click to a TV channel. You point a smartphone, or tablet at the QR code to read it and go instantly, pretty much, to a web page. Unlike a TV remote though, you can just as easily create and share your own content too.

**The use of QR codes in education in the last decade has been limited**

Refereed papers are few, but between these and other published reports, suggestions can be made regarding their strengths and weaknesses. If QR codes are to be used successfully then champions need to be identified to take up the cause. Whilst QR codes use the power of the Web to connect people to rich content, that they may create themselves, a good deal of thoughtful planning will be necessary, not just explaining how to make use of QR codes, but also working them in, where appropriate to current learning schedules where QR codes can contribute to meeting clear learning objectives.

The 2009 Horizon report identified six technologies that were expected to be significant in the following few years, of these, five relate to this proposed innovative approach to learning by wearing a personalised QR code:

1. mobile devices,

2. cloud computing,
3. geo-positioning
4. the personal web and
5. smart objects.

### **Use of QR codes in learning has had mixed results**

Simply putting a QR code in front of a museum artifact, as they've done at the Museum of London and did at the Design Museum does not work (Vernon, 2013) – there isn't enough to attract or necessitate their use, not everyone has a smartphone or tablet, and the technology is often not robust. While outdoors QR codes added to signs in the South Downs National Park, (Kerry-Bedel 2011) for example, barely received a view a day during a three month trial and in some instances there was no signal anyway.

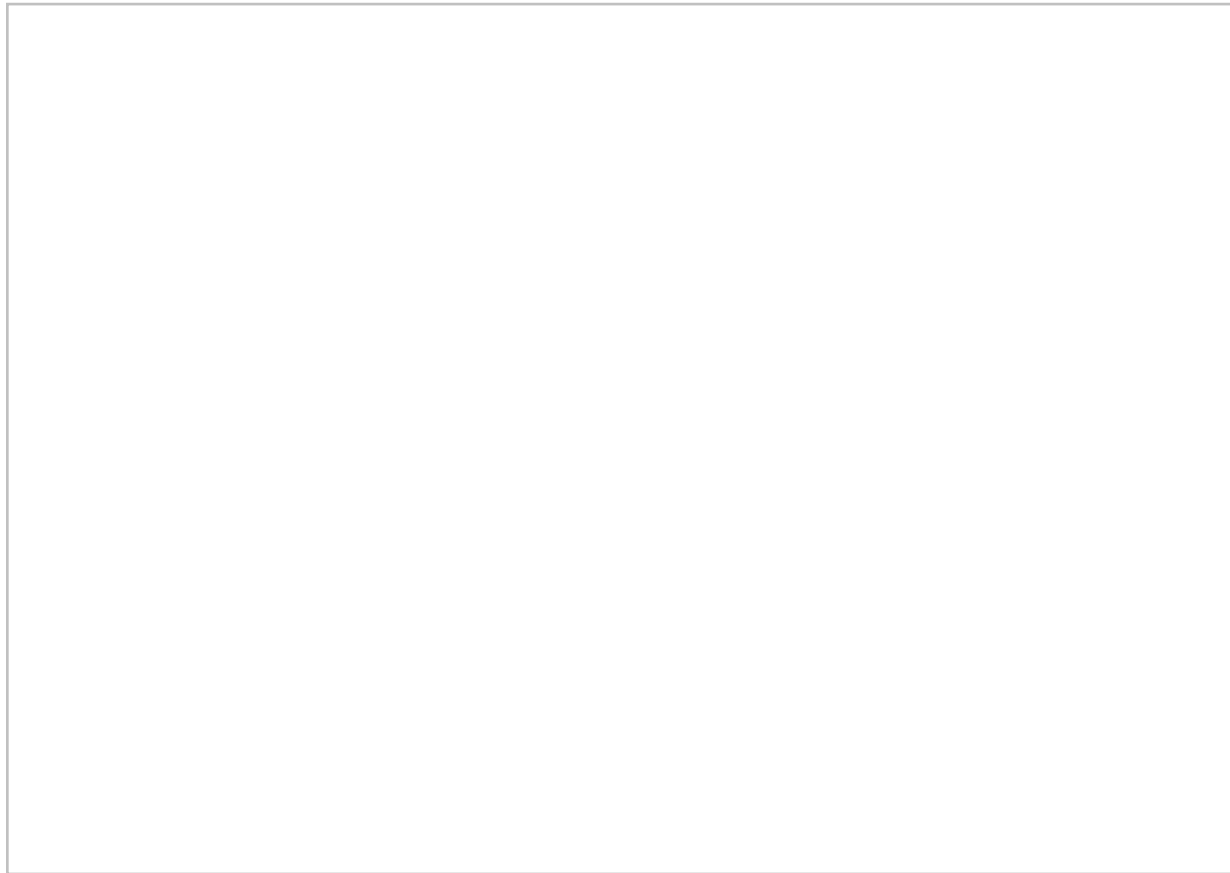
Where QR codes have been successful is in targeted learning experiences in schools (Gradel & Edson, 2012), where the affordances of the QR code have been exploited to form part of an engaging, constructive and collective learning experience.

To be effective this initiative with war memorials requires galvanizing people to take part in a joint exercise – easier with a class in school or college, less easy with the general public.

Examples where QR codes work include:

- ▶ where participants are 'equipped',
- ▶ where they can take an active role, such as with 'on the spot' surveys or quizzes,
- ▶ where they are prompted into cooperative learning
- ▶ and where timely 'Frequently Asked Questions' are given.

(Awano, 2007; Information Standards Committee 2008; So 2008; Robinson, 2010; Hicks & Sinkinson, 2011; Ryerson Library & Archives, 2012.)



K Lepi (2012) Copyright 2013 © [Edudemic](#) All rights reserved

***Fig 4 . A Simple Guide to Four Complex Learning Theories. Lepi (2012)***

The theory behind the idea of using QR codes in a mobile and open way, is that in the digital age 'connectivism' is the modus operandi. In Fig. 3, an infographic produced by Edudemic (Edudemic 2012) traditional and digital theories are shown. All are relevant, each has its place, with the digital environment offering new approaches to learning.

Learning 'in the digital age' enables and benefits from a level and quality of interaction and connectedness that is easier to achieve on the Web. It is particularly effective where the body of learners is large, where 'birds of a feather, flock together' (Li & Chignells, 2010) at a hub (Efimova, 2009) and their behaviour is open and shared so that knowledge acquisition comes through the challenges and rewards of sustained interaction. (ibid)

Only a fraction of an online population are naturally inclined to generate content. Nielsen (1999) suggested that only 1% create content, 9% might comment, while the remainder are readers or viewers. Nielsen cites the Amazon book reviewer who wrote 1,275 reviews in one year. I liken these people to what advertisers call 'champions.' The key influencers of a cohort or group, early adopters, who innovate first and do so with conviction and passion. (Vernon, 2012).

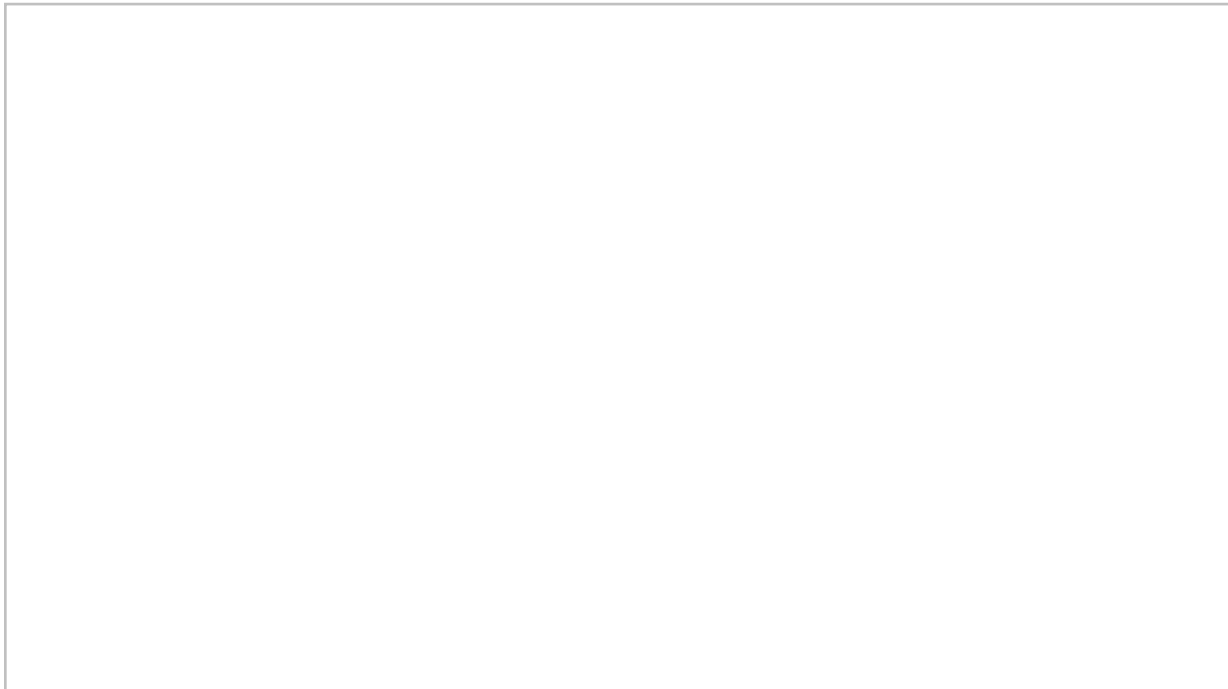


***Fig 5. Creators, commentators and readers – how use of the Web stacks up. Vernon (2010) after Nielsen (1999)***

So if we are to rely on participants to generate content the total numbers taking an interest as viewers and commentators needs to be large. Building on Nielsen, and authors who have called groups who identify with each other through connected blogs as ‘like minds’ and my own experience in advertising I devised Fig. 4 to suggest degrees of participation.

How I would see it work with War Memorials is that as well as the key creators, there would also need to be, say branch members of an organisation such as the Western Front Association, they have over 3,000 members with branches across the UK, as a body of ‘like minds’ supported to work on the content, a figure increased further by engaging local schools or colleges – especially where the work is made part of formal assessment.

A balance has to be found, I believe, between the qualities of a tool that is ‘fast’ and ‘cheap’, and where, if it is ‘out of control’ – but you want to use it, to do so by creating parameters or ‘scaffolding’.



© J F Vernon (2013)

**Fig. 6. Following 'City Walks' near Bloomsbury Square, London.**

The potential weaknesses of using QR codes include the requirement for participants to have a suitable device, say a smartphone or tablet and communication fees. QR codes may not be so easy to stick to, then read from, a standard Poppy either. Reading from and using a smartphone or tablet presents accessibility issues. Though these devices are also being used in resourceful ways to support people with disabilities, and an audio guide, say a minute per name, for a war memorial, has its appeal.

There are plenty of examples too where local councils feel a war memorial is so important that there are information stands on site though it is unlikely and unrealistic to give physically the details of the thousands named.



**Fig. 7. Google Search 'Quick Response Codes Education Images' (2014)**

If permission is not given for personalization of the iconic Poppy then alternatives may be suggested, such as working with the Western Front Association or simply wearing a QR badge alongside your poppy.

In relation to creating and sharing content in an open culture, Robert Capps (2009) coined the expression 'the good enough revolution'. This precludes being prescriptive or from expecting perfection. Whilst output on the First World War from the BBC and the Open University should understandably attain a certain professional standard, the kind of creation required of those researching names on war memorials themselves should take inspiration from this 'good enough revolution'. Examples include 'pinning' names from a war memorial to a home address, photographs in a gallery on Flickr, 'pinning' World War One photographs to battlefield

maps, numerous inventive YouTube videos and memoirs presented as blogs.

What has been shown, in museums and 'out in the field', is that simply 'put out there' QR codes are ignored. This makes the idea of 'wearing your Poppy featuring your QR code' appealing, as each person becomes an ambassador on the ground, in the street, on site, for that nugget of information, especially so if they are also responsible for - and proud of creating the content you then link to. The opportunity exists to engage people in bringing the stories of those named on our war memorials alive and sharing this knowledge in an invigorating, dynamic and Web 2.0 way. As a result, a deeper and more meaningful connection is made with the past and our relationship to it.

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[Jonathan Vernon](#)

04:48 on 18 February 2014

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## Embedded Content

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## Contribute

**Discussion (20)**

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[Jo Jacob](#)

8:08pm 10 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

This sounds like a really exciting project Jonathon. I like the fact that QR codes are fairly unobtrusive compared to information boards, so could be used almost anywhere.

Although I have a smartphone, I never click on QR codes - I'm not sure why, but maybe because their most common use in public life is in marketing. Your suggested application here sounds far more intriguing - I might click if I thought a relevant historic photo or piece of music would be waiting for me!



[Ulrich Tiedau](#)

10:26am 11 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

This sounds like a fab project indeed and one that interests me both content-wise and technologically. Two related projects you probably know of already, that come to my mind



are the QRator project of the Grant Museum for Zoology (<http://www.qrator.org/>) and one whose name I have forgotten by the Imperial War Museum. As far as I know they are building a 'Facebook'-type site for fallen WWI soldiers ...

Best  
Uli



[Avril sweeney](#)

11:40am 12 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jonathan,

I'm looking forward to your presentation. Last week I read about King Richard III Discovered in England: DNA Testing Confirms. I think your project Leveraging mobile technologies and Web 2.0 tools to engage those with an interest in the centenary of the First World War in the stories of the people of the era using strategically placed Quick Response Codes could be replicated in some way by historians?

Avril

<http://www.scienceworldreport.com/articles/4730/20130204/king-richard-iii-discovered-england-dna-testing.htm>



[Sarah-Louise Quinnell](#)

11:06pm 15 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Jonathan,

I'm really looking forward to this because I find the work done with QR codes really interesting. My favourite to date is the Qrator project that UCL have done in the Grant Museum to make the artefacts come alive.

Have you looked at the possibility of collaborating with the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries and Museum) sector to develop this? I think Digital Humanities have done more with QR codes than education?



[Helen Johnson](#)

1:41am 18 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jonathan, I think this is a really interesting project, and I can see loads of applications for it. I mentioned before that I tried using QR codes in a museum once, but the setting wasn't suitable (too dark and dirty). I think it would be really effective outdoors, and would add a totally new dimension to it as well.

If it's any help I can put you in contact with people in a couple of museums, particularly the Royal Armouries in Leeds and the Fusiliers in Bury. <https://www.fusiliermuseum.com/> The Fusiliers is really small, but very inovative, and put a lot of emphasis on the personal stories behind the names, so it would fit in with their exhibition very well.



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

4:49am 18 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Thanks Helen. I'm determined to 'get on the road' to start seeing and talking to people.



[Clem Wilkinson](#)

7:05am 18 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jonathan,

I think I mentioned this before but if not; if you get the chance, do go and talk to Bert from Brighton Untold. <http://www.bhuntold.co.uk/> [@BHuntold](#) It's a fairly recent project and I think it would be useful to learn and share how they (he), as a small local community went about it.



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

4:44pm 18 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Hi Clem

This is magic. I will certainly be in touch and try to reach this standard with a couple of stories I have to tell. By serendipity researching 'Lewes' I ended up looking at a page on the Isles of Lewis where someone has done precisely what I have been looking at in terms of putting a name and story to those on their war memorial.

In terms of the tightness of the community I am sure this also is the way forward too - small groups or interested parties and enthusiasts doing their bit to share a story that they feel matters.

With thanks, J



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

9:16pm 18 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Following the live presentations, we asked each speaker to respond to questions posed by audience members. In the short time available, it was not possible to put all of the questions submitted to the speaker for a response. We asked all speakers if they would respond to the unanswered questions here on Cloudworks. Here are all of the questions asked during the session:

- ▶ Who do you see using this resource? It seems ideal for those tracing family trees.
- ▶ I think this is brilliant and I want to connect you with the Digital Humanities centre at UCL they would love this
- ▶ Agree that it's important to have robust exhibits in museums.
- ▶ Need to be for war memorials too
- ▶ I trialled them once in a science museum, but it was in an old steelworks and it was too dark and dirty, we were constantly cleaning them and it was very unreliable. I think it would work much better outdoors at memorials

- ▶ there are a few museums using them, with mixed results I was at Magna in Rotherham, but we had to take them down
- ▶ Who do you think would be your creators of content? How could they be supported?
- ▶ maybe QR codes in open spaces need to have info on wifi access to, this may help, is 3/4G is not accessible?
- ▶ I like the approach of increasing the creation side of information. Have you had a response to this approach?
- ▶ So anyone can upload the information on a name to a central database? If I have that right are there any controls of what is uploaded? How do we know the information is accurate?
- ▶ Do you think image recognition has overtaken QR codes?
- ▶ is there a database of QR codes and could they be reused etc
- ▶ I tried these on pieces of engineering equipment to link to specifications and systems diagrams.
- ▶ thinking of connectivity, can you do a screen shot of these codes and look them up later when you have a connection? I've never used them so no idea how they work!
- ▶ Perhaps you could also create a virtual tour of these monuments
- ▶ I think this type of resource is really important so that stories are not lost
- ▶ Would an app to input content be sensible



[Lucy Spalding](#)

10:52pm 18 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Hi Johnathon. I am a history teacher and since seeing your presentation I have had a few ideas about incorporating this project into a history club at school... I have a number of students who I think would be interested in getting involved with researching the monuments in their own towns (I have students all over the world). Is this something that would be of interest to you?



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

4:16pm 19 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Yes, very interested Lucy. I've been into schools with recordings of a veteran of the First World War, even spent a term flying through England in 1066 getting students to be time travelling video-journalists. I want to get in front of people as soon as possible to trial this exercise and overcome any issues - generating QR codes should be free. Then creating content, from my point of view and in an Open context 'anything goes', though for schools suited to the curriculum.



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

5:55pm 19 February 2014 (Edited 6:00pm 19 February 2014) [Permalink](#)

bUhparsset='utf-8'>

Golly! I set myself a timer to answer all of these in 30 minutes and I think it has taken nearly two hours. All girst to the mill and invaluable as I both rework and develop the ideas

behind this. I'm keen to get some momentum behind it so will happily turn up at a school or local history association to talk it through and make it happen. At this stage QR Codes would at best be on standard sized sticky labels - not to graffit local war memorials, but put on badges or in local museums perhaps until it can be figured out how best to put them onto or with a Poppy, or an alternative ... say a Medal like brooch? Cap Badge? Wristband? The QR code I generated by the way should take you to a webpage that in 1000 words and a dozen images gives my late grandfather's service record: Durham Light Infantry, Machine Gun Corps, Royal Flying Corps via the Somme and Passchendaele serving between April 1916 and December 1917 on the Western Front, then in Flight Training as a pilot.

Who do you see using this resource? It seems ideal for those tracing family trees.

I agree that those tracing a family tree might both benefit from and engage with this exercise. Since the conference I found the on the Isle of Lewis a research programme has indeed put a face to most of the names of those on the war memorials and with service records and some family details a brief insight into the person is given.

Searching service records is operated by Ancestry, one of the main providers of family research tools - for a fee from home, though free from libraries and the National Archive at Kew. Service records are only 40% complete though - the rest were destroyed in the Blitz.

For the reasons given in the conference I see the key audiences as:

Schools - where trips are made to the local war memorial and for GCSE students to battlefields and typically the Menin Gate Memorial to the missing.

Universities - to contribute to the construction of a richer archive.

Those already showing their interest in an ancestor or names on war memorials through enrollment with a local or national history association. The Western Front Association has some 3,500 members. Conversations I have with members invariably indicate that a distant relation took part in the conflict and they are interested to find out more.

The Imperial War Museum and Royal British Legion have projects related to identify people and adding data to lists. The Open University and BBC are of course involved in output on the First World War over the next four years.

I think this is brilliant and I want to connect you with the Digital Humanities centre at UCL they would love this

Please do. I would like to put together a short presentation I can take to organisations. Just down the road the University of Sussex has a new 'Stories' project that celebrates life stories as worthwhile historical record. I am a postgraduate student with the University of Birmingham studying for an MA in British First World War studies - so there is a little bit of credibility there. I have been putting content online for six or more years. At some stage a doctoral research student from Kings interviewed me at length about the way people, I'm one of them, commemorate a long gone family member and

combatant in the First World War in a blog. I'm trying to raise fund to get the 3 ½ hours of interviews I did with my late grandfather between 1989-1991.

Agree that its important to have robust exhibits in museums.

I have always loved museums and galleries. For me nothing is ever better than having an enthusiastic and well informed relative at your ear to talk you through rather than an audio guide. For over a year now I have scrutinised the gadgets and guides museums and galleries offer and have clocked up some wonderful experiences - funny that a printed guide book never fails. Almost always, with digital and interactive responses, I have found one or several consoles 'out of order'. I really question the value of encyclopaedic touchscreen resources where either the Web will do or less information chosen with some thought and imagination would be better. With QR codes, as a innovation, people are ignorant of how easy they are both to create and to use, but they are only a key, or switch into content - the content has to be worth it, readily downloaded or streamed and offers something fresh or alternative. At the Museum of London they had short videos done by young people from local colleges - DIY presenters to camera, musicians, artists ... all a memorable and unexpected contrast. Too often designers of these things are asking for trouble - they are just too complex or bound to be prone to errors. Increasingly the device will be the one a person has in the pocket or bag with the museum guide downloaded in a choice of formats, levels and 'sizes'.

Need to be for war memorials too

With war memorials a number of problems are addressed: you cannot display, for example, a photo and short biography of 1000 people with any ease on site in the middle of a street ... though a rolling display on a railway station concourse would be interesting. At Commonwealth War Graves every named soldier is given a short typed up biography in a file at the entrance - usually only service details, so somewhat impersonal. These, with permission, could be digitised on mass and connected to individual graves - in fact a Belgian company may have already done this. My interest is taking this further though, to have visitors, as they do in the visitor's book, to offer something themselves, especially where they are a great grandson or great niece who can offer a little more insight into the person.

I trialled them once in a science museum, but it was in an an old steelworks and it was too dark and dirty, we were constantly cleaning them and it was very unreliable. I think it would work much better outdoors at memorials.

QR codes can be read at an angle and when 30% dirty. They could be the size of a building, on a placard or about 1cm square. I would expect them to 'transmogrify' in time - morph into the background even, and drop in size. This doesn't change the necessity of their satisfying a need - at memorials or on a battlefields they could offer something that isn't there. There is a rule of thumb with new software that goes 5:3:1 in relation to the amount of advertising/promotion required, followed by support, then in proportion 1 for the creation of the tool. This is how they go about it in North America whereas we do it the other way around in England spending far, far, far too much time on making an app leaving nothing to promote it. Far better to keep it simple and cheap and promote it, then use the experience of how a thing is used (or not used) to improve. Like all technologies, they have to solve a problem or satisfy a need rather than being used simply for the sake of it. I've seen how iPod touches are used in a gallery, pre-loaded with audio content, in this instance the QR code at every picture triggers the audio content for it so that you can go around in any order you like.

There are a few museums using them, with mixed results I was at Magna in Rotherham,

but we had to take them down.

I have struggled to get any research or findings out of museums. At the Museum of London I was there all morning on a busy day but they were never used. On the other hand there were some very popular, busy groups of children with teachers - they are the 'champions' who ought to be introduced to things like QR codes. If and where they know what the QR code offers they can then organise that enough smart devices are available. The content has to be offering something different though - at the Museum of London I was blown away by the variety and quality and inventiveness of all the exhibits anyway so the QR code wasn't so much the cherry on the top, as an overused comma in a long paragraph.

Who do you think would be your creators of content? How could they be supported?

The QR code is simply a one view read and link URL code - it takes you to content. Like any digital content anyone could produce it. It therefore depends very much on the learning objectives being met - perhaps if coloured green, amber, red (traffic lights) then three streams of content format could be offered. In this came targeting in turn: primary, secondary and tertiary level students. I enjoyed the Museum of London content which used inventive short video pieces from non professionals offering a take. I enjoy and value the Open University's 'One Minute' campaigns were professional content generated - 60 seconds audio per name then, scripted and recorded. Still quite an undertaking. Pooling skills in a hub, or connecting people is vital - something that is being supported and encouraged during the 1914-18 centenary years by the BBC, Imperial War Museum, Open University and Royal British Legion ... perhaps also the National Trust, and by a variety of regional and local associations around the country.

There is funding from the Heritage Lottery fund of £1,000 to £3,000 to support creation of content such as this. Through a support network perhaps people dotted around the country could each apply and make a start with a memorial dear to them.

Maybe QR codes in open spaces need to have info on wifi access to, this may help, is 3/4G is not accessible?

I agree. Looking at war memorials though, say compared to signage on walks or entering protected land and so on, it is tricky to see sometimes how information can be displayed without perhaps diminishing the reverence required. Often there is a cross, and we wouldn't expect to see posters or QR codes stuck on church altars would we? Having seen when displays and information posts have been created next to significant memorials I could see this scaled down for medium sized memorials by putting in a stand - all would require planning permission and costing of course and with these can 3 / 4 G be offered? There are often community services anyway. From a tourist office a person could pre-load the info given by the QR code.

I like the approach of increasing the creation side of information. Have you had a response to this approach?

Having been online for several years with content on the First World War I have connections with a handful of fellow 'creators' - if the statistics say the figure is 1% my current experience would be that it is far less than this. This is why I see that it has to be part of a formal learning experience. At Talbot House, Poperinge on the former Western Front, a group of young people from a local college have filled a small exhibition room with responses to this First World War Museum. I photographed everything and have these to share on Picasa, or via my blog, with some posted into earlier expressions of my presentations. Here students produced paintings, photographs, sculptures and

exhibits/mobiles - I like the most surreal that included handguns firing fluffy dusters and knitted hand-grenades, also images of a stream of water hitting a person's face that, without being a blunt as showing a person being shot or blown to pieces, was evocative of the events of the period. At the 'In Flanders Fields' museum the artist Stephen Hurst has an exhibition that shows paintings and sculptures, as well as preliminary sketch books. I think the next step would be to invite visitors to 'leave their mark'. They did this for the London 2012 Olympics where 'volunteers' coming through the recruitment process were given a pen and pointed at a wall to write their thoughts - these vast sheets were constantly changed, until they had, I guess, messages from some 10,000 recruits (I photographed my doodled and message). Again, it needs to be driven by a teacher, tutor, tour guide or other champion who for different settings and groups might invite them to post online a poem or song, or go home and make something, or write their thoughts, or research a name as a wiki-like contribution.

So anyone can upload the information on a name to a central database? If I have that right are there any controls of what is uploaded? How do we know the information is accurate?

There are initiatives via the BBC World War One commemorations and the Imperial War Museum where a number of 'national tasks' have been identified where visitors are invited to research then type up and submit data that uses the 'power of the crowd' to get through tens of thousands of names or events and to have them in a digitised form. My take on this is to work with local associations or councils, who have responsibility for war memorials. Nothing is stopping anyone creating their own blog to post content which can be linked and where permissions are given for them or others to cut and paste it into a central or formal database. In terms of controls, like all content that is published to the web, on the one hand anything does, on the other there needs to be some moderation. This is down to the digital literacy skills of the 'web master' but with spam controls in place I believe that you can for the most part rely on the public to self-regulate - like wikipedia. In terms of accuracy, at this level again, viewers have to understand to what degree they trust the information given and verify it for themselves. In fact, checks and balances between names on a memorial and details given are likely to occur - mistakes will go up and in due course be corrected. One hopes. Those 'in the know', know that a search in the a Service Record or National Census record will attest to accuracy.

Do you think image recognition has overtaken QR codes?

I love image recognition and all that it can do, and expect QR codes, like Near Field Codes, to be replaced or improved or complemented all the time. Curators and councils will decide what technical advances to adopt and which ones to leave until they are ubiquitous, and as more and more apps are created this diversity will have to be matched, with reason, to the learning or communications objectives or creative brief.

Is there a database of QR codes and could they be reused etc

An interesting idea and necessary to avoid having dozens of QR codes for the same information - or does it matter? They are as random and as different as the URL code that is generated every time I post a blog. They are as unique as a fingerprint.

I tried these on pieces of engineering equipment to link to specifications and systems diagrams.

You should look at the original work that Denso did to come up with QR Codes in the first place to support how car parts were being sourced, distributed then put into cars by Toyota. They have serious, practical applications - and came from business. There are

tables that indicate a multitude of uses. I am looking at a variety of different uses already. On drugs packaging - if they aren't there already. On my asthma inhaler to tell me if it is on empty! To inform the stubborn or ignorant of the importance of adherence. And to deliberately place in obscure places on an obstacle course.

Thinking of connectivity, can you do a screenshot of these codes and look them up later when you have a connection? I've never used them so no idea how they work!

The code is read in real time - so it has to exist beyond the lens of your camera to be read. You could snap it on your phone, then upload the image to a second screen ... and THEN scan it.

Perhaps you could also create a virtual tour of these monuments

A great idea. Now think how spooky it would be if on arriving at a monument you find a crowd of people there ... and discover they are avatars of the people commemorated ... like ghosts! There has been a programme to interview victims of the Holocaust using 3D technology not simply to have a 3d image, but to cover enough content so that using the original interviewees words and intonation you can then ask them questions in real time even after they have died. Getting into the realms of science-fiction here but I like the idea of being able to ask for a name on the war memorial and have the person speak to you - through the voice of an actor in most cases.

I think this type of resource is really important so that stories are not lost

Because of Web 2.0 we can share and research the stories of the many millions who served and the millions who died. History interprets the past, so this is a 21st century interpretation of events of 100 years ago - perhaps some soul searching between 2014-18 will prepare the world for how we research, share and interpret the Second World War between 2039-2045. There is something, from an anthropologist's standpoint, that is intriguing about our desire and need to remember those who died 'on our behalf' - remembering too that nearly 50% of those serving in the British Army were also volunteers - not that I would decry the sacrifice made by those conscripted.

Would an app to input content be sensible

An App would be great. Anything that makes the process easy and probably keeps it on the device that is being used 'on location' - which will be a smartphone or tablet. There probably is one ... or it will be released shortly. When you research something like this it is surprising actually how much has already been done. QR Codes were invented in 1994. They have been patent free since 1997. And you can get a 'virtual tour' of British Commonwealth Graves with an App that you can get using a QR code put up in apposite spots along the old Western Front.





[Jonathan Vernon](#)

6:05pm 19 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

## REFLECTION

Four years blogging on the OU Student Platform and at best I've had seven responses, and these pithy rather than enquiring. A combination of the OULive conference preparation, event and post-event clearly shows that to galvanise us into contributing like this required more than simply 'making a platform available'.

The key has been to herd us collectively over a number of barriers - I mean this in the nicest possible way, more cajoling, designing it in, persuading, getting us to go with the flow - not wanting to be left out.

And I'm sure putting in far many more hours that we perhaps had expected - like putting on a show and realising what it will take to ensure that it is 'all right on the night'.



[Susan Hobbs](#)

7:24pm 19 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

I was really inspired by your presentation and it is really good to see a positive use for QR codes. My experience of them up to now was of a technology waiting for a 'grown-up' use, as much of the uses I have seen have been rather gimmicky.

I have had a go at producing some myself and I know it's not difficult to do. As a result of your presentation I now have lots of new ideas for using them.

Thank you.



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

10:19pm 19 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

QR codes all over the house on everyday objects - hand a smart phone or tablet to a six year old and every object tells them what it is in French? Stuck in the ground with your plants the QR code taking to you a set of pages that changes with the weather or seasons?

I'm sure there are some very serious business uses - vast quantities of car parts prior to distribution, for example. On containers to provide an immediate inventory of what they contain?

I could use them to 'peg' facts to objects using that technique of taking a journey through the house to trigger a long string of facts.

'Learning at the speed of need' was a sentence used by a director of the eLearning Agency Kineo the other week ... QR codes in a yacht charter to advise on uses, fixes and safety? I could do with one on our boiler :(



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

8:01pm 20 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

This morning I got a lengthy email from someone whose grandfather is featured in a 1918 photograph of RAF cadets, I also got a lengthy email from someone sharing a review on a book on the First World War on Amazon. Today, Dan Snow helped launch an initiative through the Imperial War Museum that aims to repeat what the IWM started to do in 1919 - campaign for people to share photographs, artefacts and stories of people who served, suffered, thrived or survived the First World War - this is at the 'Who do you think you are' exhibition at Olympia - I will try to get over on Saturday. And finally, a fascinating conversation with my brother in law on way a gallery curator is inviting people to feedback and respond to works of art through social media - and the curator's philosophy of 'openness' and a desire to move away from the grand voice of the patron in favour of multiple voices and interpretations. He particularly like to describe the value of 'dirt' to challenge perceptions and permit the points of view of anyone, and called this dirt 'soil' that would nurture fresh and vibrant ideas - he's Italian, speaks with an accent and chooses his words carefully (he is a tutor in fine art and art history). We got into discussions on learning and why as a student he'd have to queue up early in Bologna in order to hear Umberto Eco. This enthusiastic, reflective discussion continued as he prepares supper and I help - eager to pick up some culinary tips too.



[Claire Griffiths](#)

10:32pm 25 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

I like the layout of the poppy page and the placing of the objects. I think I might try a multimedia presentation like this for a World War One project I am involved with at present (P7). They have been studying the names on the war memorial and have gathered a variety of material on each person. I like the QR code idea. In terms of getting local community interest I think their follow on topic of WW2 might get more response though it is a small village/town so to idea might build.

Trying to get my head around how to create a WW1 themed-multimedia poster which will work on my Moray Memory Project blog . Funnily enough I think it might be easier in Powerpoint. Can't remember if Prezi is blogged in schools. I will check tomorrow. Did you look at [www.bhuntold.co.uk](http://www.bhuntold.co.uk), which Clem suggested above, with the Google map for the village? I am definitely doing that. We have a map already so it is matter of getting the children to add the pins to the map.

I am just listening to your presentation again. Well Done.



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

6:05pm 26 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Thanks Claire, I am following all the activities and following leads where I can. I do know that there is considerable interest in local communities to get behind the stories from this era somehow and share them in ways that works for everyone - in Lewes all the 360 or so

names were pinned to local addresses and school kids do a moving walk around the centre of town. As the home to the 'bonfire societies' we have several thousand who march to the War Memorial every November anyway so I'd like to see a tie in there with a few hundred dressed as World War One combatants ... (some do anyway), while carrying QR CODES on banners, rather than poppies so that the crowds who will the streets on Nov 5th can take a phot and link to some info ... so this tie in between what is online and communities on the street is vital I feel. Schools especially so I look forward to going in and 'give talks' at least and am looking at booking a room to give some presentations anyway.



[Claire Griffiths](#)

2:32pm 1 March 2014 [Permalink](#)

Thank you again your presentation. I have followed up most of the links given including the Edudemic infographic link. The full poster is a really interesting idea of learning theories and how they combine to a single complete learning theory.

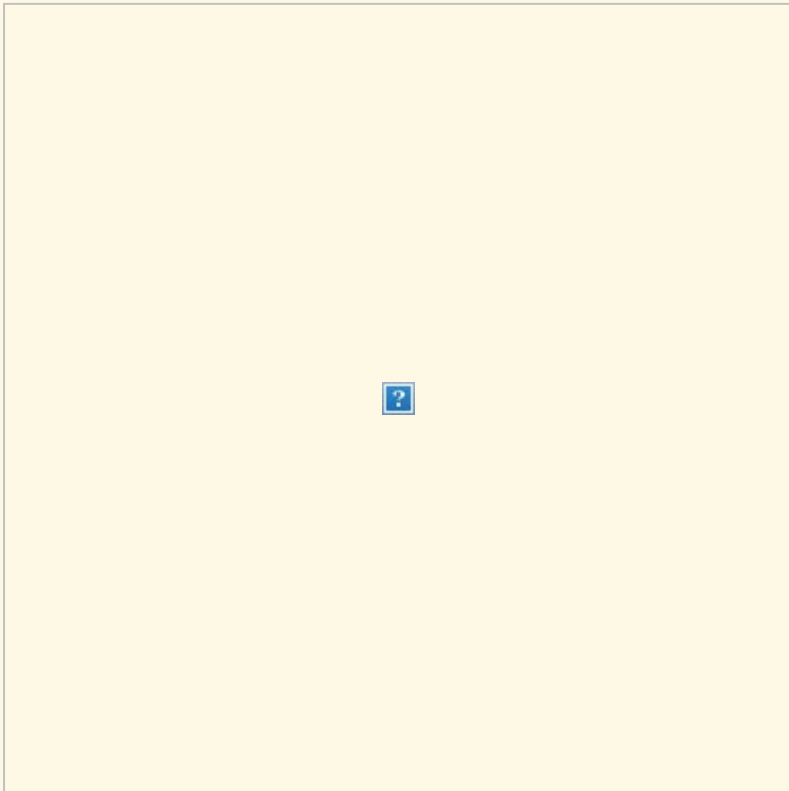
I still like the posters you created and posted to your Open Studio area. I will definately look at ways of presentling information in a similar way from a historic period which features local members of a community.

After we created the mulitmedia poster in A0 size I won't be restrictly myself to A4 either.



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

6:21am 25 March 2014 (Edited 6:45am 25 March 2014) [Permalink](#)



Though I completed the MAODE last year I didn't feel like a 'master' - further modules as continual professional development have realised this: H809 for research and H818 for

applying and sharing in an open and 'directed' way. My background is a producer in corporate learning and training so the aim has been to support the shift from linear to interactive, to connected and open learning founded on applied knowledge of a number of learning theories.



H818 pulled together or touched on a number of personal interests: Can creativity be taught or managed online? What are the parameters, pitfalls and potential of open learning? Recognition not just of an interface between online and 'offline' learning, but the blended mix where lessons from either world can inform the other. There's a difference between open (small 'o') and Open (large O): the latter, as I have done over 14 years posting content, is akin to 'exposure' - putting it all out there; whereas the Open movement to be effective, ironically, requires parameters and goals. From H818 the need to, reasons to and how to 'ask' became apparent.



The outcome of H818 is the Quick Response code in a Poppy to support open and connected learning about the First World War. As a creative exercise despite being unable to single out a 'partner' the working process has been akin to that in advertising where the creative team is a copywriter and a visualiser, with one if these or both likely to have programming skills - or the creative team becomes three. Openstudio online is like the studio I worked in at the School of Communications Arts where I was a student and now

mentor.

The ask component has two parts to it: I post then share blog posts on the QR Code idea via Wordpress and a number of platforms: LinkedIn, Google+, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and Stumbleupon. This at best makes serendipity a possibility but is small 'o' - though the connections directly from this include BBC TV, BBC Radio 4, the national trust, King's College London and a couple of people with direct, personal connection to the content I have posted - they recognise a face from a 1918 postcard.



The second part is, still early days, putting the idea to individuals and groups directly and asking questions that I take care to recognise where they are forthcoming. Using the above social platforms the request is directed at an individual, or to a specific specialist group. The 'use of QR codes' in education has uncovered far greater use and interest than the current papers suggest. Direct questions have gone to niche interest groups such that 'talks' on the use of QR codes in this way will be given to schools and to regional history associations. Not all that I approach have responded - this kind of 'ask' is a kind of selling or PR. It isn't simply connectedness, it is networking too that expects a professional offering and response.

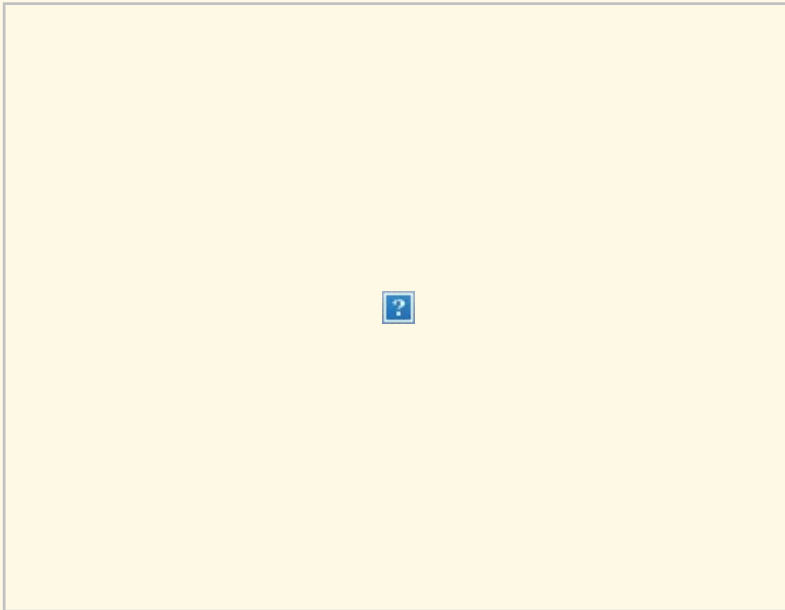


'Consultancy' is one thing, but the production side of it - seeing content successfully briefed in, financed, designed, scripted and delivered is my aim and so with tentative steps 'Mindbursts' is coming to fruition and will build on some 15 years of creating learning content in the corporate sector.



The second outcome of H818 is to try and continue and build on the relationships that were developed. In LinkedIn two groups have been set up: 'The online masters' and 'MAODE' - early days, but experience from the Open University Business School shows

how from tiny beginnings great things can grow. The challenge in the early days will be to keep the kindle alight so that there is just enough 'vibrancy' to make it a worthwhile place for current and future members. Similarly, a blog where all members have 'editor' rights has



been set up.

Returning to the idea of big 'O' and little 'o' it strikes me that my little 'o' behaviour is akin to being lonely in a crowd while big 'O' requires directed engagement and responsiveness. Which has me wondering that a journalist writing for a paper with its parameters and audience is more open than hiding behind the obfuscation of the blog. And that writing for an open academic journal or proding an open educational resource to meet a specific creative brief and learning objective is active open practice that expects and invites use, sharing and comment. Which in turn, as has occurred throughout H818 has seen me completing a huge loop into an online world of the possible to the offline world of the actual and realising that quicker than I imagined learning is increasingly blended whether you put an 'e' or an 'o' or an 'm' in front of it.

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