

## A Report on the HEDS Client workshop held on 8th June 1999

Joanne Lomax, HEDS Consultant

Representatives of twelve organisations were invited to attend the workshop. The twelve were the technical contacts for HEDS client projects over the past year. The aim of the workshop was to provide an informal atmosphere for each of the clients both to showcase their own project and to ask questions of both the HEDS staff and each other.

Due to clashes with other events and with it being a busy time of year only four clients were able to attend, however they have all said how useful and enjoyable the afternoon was.

### Attendees:

Joanne Lomax and Simon Tanner, HEDS  
Andrew Hampson, BUILDER Project  
Sonja Kielty, Bretton Hall College  
Christine Wise, Fawcett Library  
Catherine Moriarty, Design Council Archive, Brighton

Each of the attendees gave a short presentation about their project, with an emphasis on what they had learned from working on the project.

**Andrew Hampson** gave a presentation about the BUILDER Project, an eLib funded project which is developing a model of the hybrid library. HEDS provided digitisation of the Midland History journal for the project. Andrew talked about the importance of the preparation of the material and the need to know the originals well. Lessons that he had learnt included the realisation that scanning is only a small part of a complex digitisation workflow. The project had also learnt that team work is essential in a project such as this and that vital tasks such as Quality Assurance are time consuming and important to get right.

**Christine Wise** spoke about the digitisation of the Fawcett Library's collection of suffragette banners and artwork for the JIDI project. The issues faced by the project included choosing how to scan the original materials, including large banners, and how to select which items to digitise. A decision was made to use photographic surrogates as the digitisation material. As the BUILDER project had found, Christine emphasised how they had been surprised by the effort needed on the preparation of the originals and on vital things such as clearing copyright for the use of the digitised images. Christine also praised the way in which HEDS had been able to support the digitisation effort.

The issues faced by **Sonja Kielty** at Bretton Hall were similar to those faced by the Fawcett Library. The A E Halliwell collection consists of large posters which proved in the feasibility stage of JIDI to be unwieldy to handle and to run the risk of damage if the originals were to be scanned directly. Photographic surrogates were commissioned to be used by HEDS for scanning. These surrogates were a useful by-product of the JIDI

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funding and will serve the collection well in their own right - rather than taking the originals to talks and exhibitions the slides will be used instead. As well as the creation of surrogates the needs of the JIDI project forced Bretton Hall to produce indexes of the collection which will be of great use to their users in future.

**Catherine Moriarty** of the Design Council Archive also found that the JIDI funding had allowed her to spend time getting intimate with her collection of photographic negatives and positives of design objects and events such as the Festival of Britain. A large proportion of the collection are on glass plates - a format which is easily damaged by handling and is therefore not on general access for the public. After the feasibility study showed glass plates to be prohibitively expensive to scan from directly Dr Moriarty commissioned 35mm transparencies to be produced and these were scanned by HEDS.

The issues presented by **Simon Tanner** included lessons that HEDS has learnt from projects undertaken over the last year and how these are influencing the way the service will develop into the future. These lessons include that which was mentioned in the all of the previous talks - the importance of preparation. HEDS has found consistently that the best prepared materials will produce the best scanned results.

Other issues include the administrative side of Service Level Agreements and contracts - these are now being fine-tuned by the experience with previous projects. An overview of current and forthcoming projects was also presented.

## **Conclusions**

The presentations and discussion confirmed the HEDS theory that projects have more than enough to do even if the physical digitisation is removed to a third party. The importance of preparation, even in the simple tasks such as labelling slides and preparing inventories cannot be emphasised enough and HEDS tries to promote this whenever appropriate, particularly when potential clients are building project plans for funding applications. Sending materials to HEDS is not an easy option in terms of removing responsibility for preparation from the client. However, clients have said that this need to become intimate with their collection has led to better understanding and more informed use of the collection, even without the use of the new digital versions. Removing the conversion from the chain of tasks undertaken in house means that effort can be concentrated in different areas and the technicalities of scanning do not become more important than they ought.

The workshop also revealed that some of the HEDS clients remain relatively unaware of the technical aspects of digitisation. HEDS has guided them through the process in such a way that they understand the output but have no need to know the process by which it was created. By acting as an intermediary HEDS has got the most appropriate product for the clients without them needing to be technically adept. This is not meant as uncomplimentary but instead that the client can confidently leave the technical side to HEDS and concentrate instead on the academic issues involved in the digitisation - selection, preparation and indexing.

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