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Finding the way

Improving access to the collections of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society

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Abstract

Category: Case study

Purpose: The paper describes the Images for All digitisation project at the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and lessons learned from it.

Design: This paper describes the background to the project and collections held. It focuses on the development of the project website, the digitisation of 100 images from the collection and the nature of project management in a small scale project.

Findings: There are many potential challenges faced by project managers working in small voluntary organisations, but these can be overcome.

Value: This paper gives a direct insight into some of the challenges facing smaller organisations with limited full time staff and so reliant on volunteers, which are often overlooked.

Keywords: Project management; Digitisation; Archive management; Digital libraries

1. Introduction

This article describes and discusses the Images for All project of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, a two- year project financed primarily by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project had several aims, and two of them are discussed in detail in the paper:

- development of the project website;
- digitisation of 100 of the most engaging images held by the Society.

The Society itself is described as well as the collections held by the Society, and the background to the project is also described. Finally, challenges faced and lessons learnt during the project are discussed.

2. The Royal Scottish Geographical Society

The Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) was founded in Edinburgh in December 1884 as the Scottish Geographical Society and was granted its royal status by Queen Victoria in June 1887. The aims of the Society were diverse, with the first objective being to advance the study of geography in Scotland. The *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, an academically oriented publication with an international circulation, was published from the outset of the Society.

Today the RSGS has a full-time Director and a further two full-time and two part-time staff. RSGS headquarters are currently located in Glasgow, although the Society is planning to relocate to Perth in 2008. The activities of the RSGS include publishing the learned journal, the *Scottish Geographical Journal*, which is successor to the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, and also the RSGS quarterly newsletter *GeogScot*. The Society has approximately 2000 members, with 14 Members' Centres throughout Scotland hosting a programme of approximately 100 talks each year. In addition, the Society awards grants for research and expeditions, presents a number of medals each year, stages exhibitions, runs competitions and organises overseas excursions. The ruling body of the Society is the Council, to which the Director reports, and there are a further nine committees which also report to Council. One of these committees is the Library and Information Committee which had overall responsibility for the Images for All project.

3. The collections

The Society's collections have been acquired by donation, exchange and purchase since its founding. When the Society moved from Edinburgh to Glasgow in 1993 the majority of the book and serial collections were deposited with the Andersonian Library of the University of Strathclyde, and are now managed by staff in that Library. Within RSGS headquarters are held collections of maps and charts, photographic materials including prints, lantern and 35mm slides, the archives of the Society itself, travel guides, reference books, atlases, full runs of a small number of journals, paintings and artworks, historic geographical objects, diaries and journals of explorers, and moving images in various formats. It has been estimated that there are approximately 150,000 items held at RSGS headquarters. This material was stored in several rooms which are also used by staff as workspace, two large store cupboards, and corridors, often stacked ceiling high in unlabelled boxes. The majority of the rooms used for storage are south facing with an open air car park directly below, meaning that the rooms become very warm in summer and cold in winter, leading to the deterioration of the older, more fragile material.

One of the most significant holdings of the Society is the collection of approximately 1,000 early maps published from the 16th to 19th century. In addition, many of the slide collections, both the 19th century lantern slides and some of the 20th century 35mm slides, are of considerable geographical significance. The Society receives regular donations of maps and travel guides from Harper Collins Maps, charts from the Admiralty and slides and other material from Society members. A part-time map and photographic curator has managed the collections since the Society moved to Glasgow. However, due to the extent of the collections, the volume and frequency of donations and the part time nature of the post, he has been able to manage effectively only specific parts of the collections.

4. Background to the Images for All project

The Images for All project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for two years from 1 September 2005 to 30 August 2007, with a grant of £160,000, and employing two full-time staff. This funding was awarded as part of £3 million granted by the HLF to allow important archives and collections across Scotland to be bought and made more available to the public. The funding was raised by a group of four voluntary members of RSGS, who acted as a Project Management Group (PMG) overseeing the project. The members of the PMG had experience in geography, project management, library administration, curation of large map collections, cartography, Geographical Information Science (GIS), databases, finance and outreach, but no formal training in library or archives work. The Project Manager had an academic background in information science and geography as well as 10 years' experience of providing information services, and the Information Officer had just completed her postgraduate degree in information studies. The staff of the RSGS were not formally involved with the project, although a key relationship for project staff was close collaboration with the map and slide curator.

Funds were also contributed by RSGS itself, and some of this had already been spent before the project formally started. A report had been commissioned from a photographic conservator on the conservation of the photographic collections, and a batch of damaged books had been professionally conserved. The main recommendations of the photographic conservator's report were that collections should be stored in more suitable conditions where temperature and humidity were more stable, and that the collections needed to be weeded before further work was undertaken.

The specified aims of the Images for All project stated in the application for funding were:

- Implementing an ongoing repair and conservation programme
- Scanning 100 images and making them accessible via the project website

- Cataloguing all items in the collections to an international standard
- Making catalogues available via the project website
- Promoting the collections to a diverse public.

The majority of funds (after salaries) were spent on storage containers such as plan chests for maps and cabinets for slides, and conservation of paper and photographic material by professional conservators.

One of the initial problems which needed to be resolved before the project could get seriously under way was a lack of space for staff desks, and also for working with the collections. With boxes stacked ceiling high in many areas, there was little space to open boxes and spread material out in order to ascertain what material was held, before sorting and cataloguing. This problem was never satisfactorily resolved as further accommodation was not secured, and the unsatisfactory solution was to turn the board room over to the project. The board room was already full of furniture and artefacts and, in order to create space to store these items, a large storage cupboard had to be cleared and organised, and unwanted items identified and discarded. This was a time consuming activity outwith the remit of the project which ate into project time.

Given the aims, time scale and staffing of the project along with the size of the collections and lack of space, work had to be clearly prioritised. Items which needed to be professionally conserved had been identified prior to project start up, and rehousing and cataloguing these and the more valuable parts of the collection was a clear and relatively simple work stream to establish and undertake. Some work on cataloguing maps had been undertaken prior to the project, but not in a consistent way, and a cataloguing standard was devised after consultation with various parties including staff at the National Library of Scotland Map Library and Glasgow University Library. Work on maps consisted of stock checking and enlarging existing catalogue records by, for example, adding sheet sizes to early map records. Identifying other parts of the collections for rehousing and cataloguing was less straight forward, and the archives of the RSGS itself were identified as a priority as these are crucial to the Society itself and little work had been undertaken on these prior to the project. As making collection catalogues available via the project website and digitising the 100 chosen 'gems' were identified as the main aims of the project, these were also made priorities.

The proposed move of the Society headquarters to Perth somewhat overshadowed the Images for All project. A substantial publicity campaign to raise awareness of the proposed move with Society members and to raise funds was undertaken, applications for funding were written and submitted and there were many meetings with trusts and architects. This meant that Society staff and volunteers were stretched and not as much time and energy was put into the project as might have been otherwise.

Another result of the proposed move was that packing and transporting the collections to the new headquarters was in everyone's mind, and greater physical access to the collections by the users was perceived to be something which would be promoted once the move had been completed. Part of the planned move to Perth involved raising sufficient funds to generate income in order to employ a full-time curator to work with the collections and users, although as it was uncertain whether this would be successful, the future accessibility of the collections was also uncertain.

5. Project website

RSGS had an existing extensive website (<http://www.rsgs.org>) which was well crawled by Google, and as the project website (<http://www.rsgs.org/ifa>) was linked from the RSGS site, it was quickly picked up by Google. The graphic style of the RSGS website was very much plain HTML, and is seen in Figure 1. There is a strong use of colour to differentiate subject areas.

Figure 1. Royal Scottish Geographical Society website (as of April 2007)

The Royal Scottish Geographical Society

Patron: Her Majesty the Queen
 President: The Rt Hon The Earl of Lindsay
 Chairman of Council: Professor W Ritchie OBE BSc PhD FRSE FRICS FRSGS
 Director and Secretary: Dr David M Munro BSc PhD FRGS FSA(Stat)

Founded in 1884, the RSGS is an educational charity the aims of which are to advance the science of Geography and create a greater understanding of the wider world, in the belief that geographical knowledge makes a significant difference to the way in which we view and shape the world we live in. These aims are pursued largely through: -

1. support for geographical research and the [teaching of geography](#);
2. a community programme of nearly 100 [illustrated talks](#) throughout Scotland for both the Society's members and the wider public;
3. the publication of a [journal](#), [newsletter](#), and occasional [books and pamphlets](#) on geographical issues; *and*
4. the provision of a [geographical information](#) service drawing on the Society's extensive collections of [books](#), [journals](#), [maps](#), [photographs](#), and [archives](#).

The Society, which has a membership of about 2,500, maintains four permanent [staff](#), with the current addition of two fixed-term (2005-2007) "Images for All" Heritage-Lottery-funded project-workers, at its headquarters in Glasgow. Policy decisions are made by the [RSGS Council](#), which represents a wide range of educational/geographical interests.

To find further information on the RSGS, its work or research facilities, etc., please follow the links in the table below: -

General Information	Talks and Activities	Education and Awards	Facilities and Services
Joining the Society	Illustrated Talks (PDF*)	Geographical Education	Geographical Information
Geographical History	Calendar of Other Events (PDF*)	Support for Expeditions	Research Collections
Officebearers and Staff	International Excursions and Field Trips	Small Research Grants	Publications
RSGS Regional Centres	Photo Competition	Small Travel Grants	Expedition Reports
Sponsorship	Past Events	Medals and Other Awards	On-Line Shop

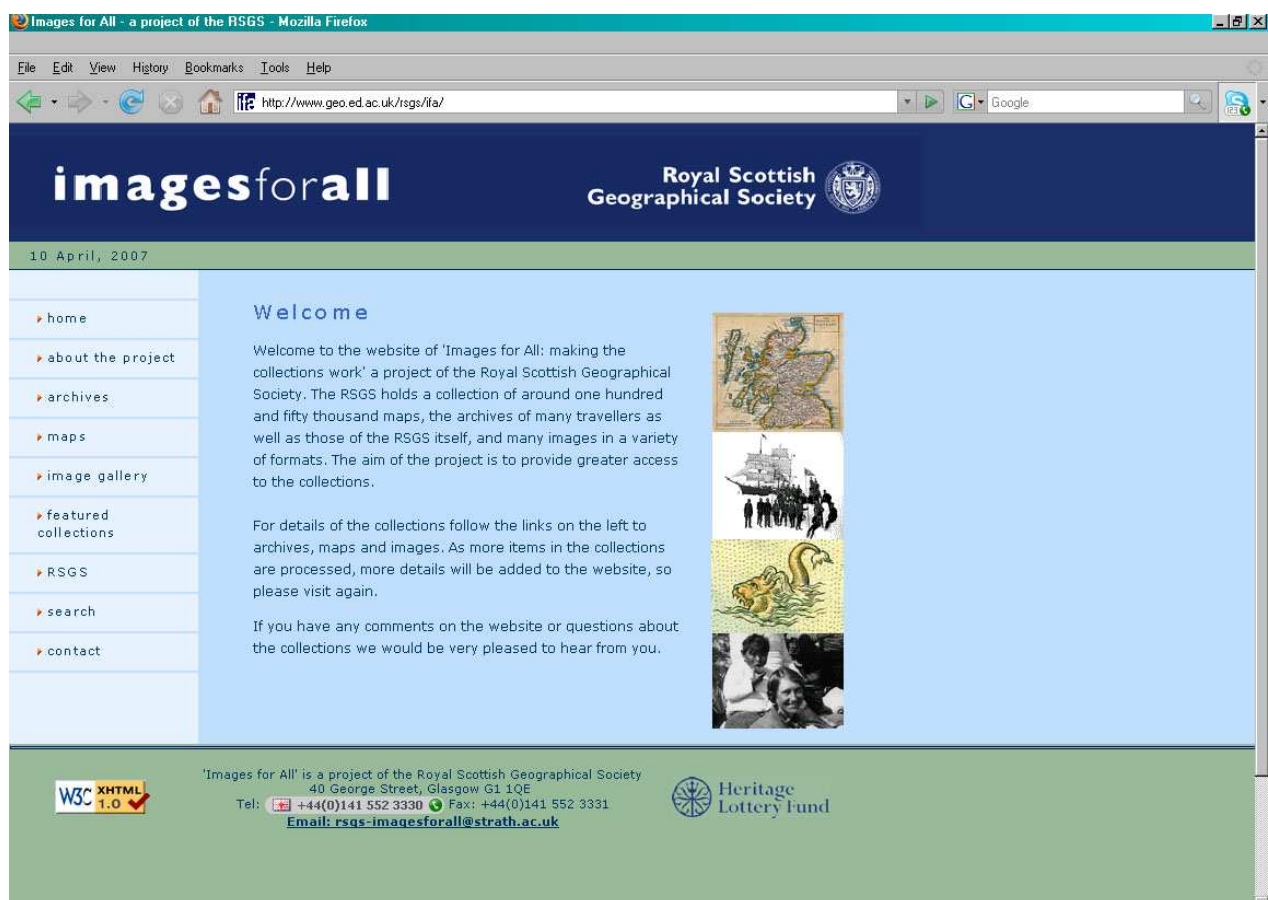
Alternatively, you can search our web-site using [Google](#) by entering one or more complete words in the following box:

If these methods do not answer your query, then please [contact](#) us directly for further information.

It was decided to go for a different look and feel for the Images for All project website, and to have a more explicit structure. One of the weaknesses of using colour to indicate subject areas on a website is that people with colour vision deficiency cannot discriminate between colours, so making the site less accessible. For the project website one of the main aims was to have a very clear and consistent layout,

so that all users could navigate the site easily and clearly identify the site with the project. A graphic identity for the project had been established for use on all project visual material to create a strong, easily identifiable brand. One of the main elements of the visual identity was a solid dark blue band bleeding off the top of the page and this banner was used on all website pages. A favicon (or favourites icon) was also created and used with 'ifa' in lower case white lettering on a dark blue background, and this appears if the site is added to a favourites or bookmarks list within a browser, and again allows easy identification of the site. The project website visual identity chimed with that of the RSGS, as it also makes strong use of a similar shade of dark blue.

Figure 2 Images for All project website (as of April 2007)



The site was designed very much with users in mind, and the primary audience was Society members. It was essential to have a clear website layout with consistent, explicit navigation especially for older users less familiar with the Web. For this reason it was essential to have a clear website layout with consistent, explicit navigation, as it is easy for naïve users to become disorientated in a site with an unclear layout. The website was designed and built using Dreamweaver 4 and a template was used for all pages; in addition to the banner, a footer was used at the bottom of the page including contact details and the logo of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Not all users enter the site via the homepage, and including the contact details on the bottom of all pages meant that users always have access to this information. Using a template sped up the page creation process, as well as providing a consistent look for the whole

site. To enable consistent navigation around the site a navigation bar was used on the left of the screen, with nine buttons navigating to the project homepage and sections About the Project, Archives, Maps, Image Gallery, Featured Collections, RSGS homepage, Search and Contacts. These navigation buttons reflected the structure of the website, with the Archives, Map and Image Gallery buttons indicating the main areas of output of the project. In addition to the template, a modified cascading stylesheet (CSS) available within the Dreamweaver software was used for formatting text, to provide a consistent and easy to apply look to the site text.

Accessibility of the site for all users including those using screen readers was also a primary consideration during the design phase. Although it is a legal obligation in the UK under the Disability Discrimination Act that websites should be as accessible as possible, this is not always the case. Making a website accessible also means that it will be well indexed by search engines, as well designed and laid out sites are easy for screen readers to interpret and also easy for search engine crawlers to index (Jackson, 2007). Accessibility guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) were used, and all pages were run through their validation service, and their code validation logo added to all pages. This also provides users with an assurance of the quality and accessibility of the site.

Feedback from as wide an audience as possible of potential users was sought during the design phase and overall feedback was very positive. However, it was difficult to elicit feedback, partly because during the project the whole Society became very concerned with the proposed move to Perth and fund raising for the move. Initially, Society staff and the PMG were consulted on design, content and layout. Later, after changes had been made in line with feedback and more content added, further feedback was requested from the RSGS Council members and changes made as appropriate.

As more content was added to the site, a simple branching directory structure was used, similar to sites such as BUBL, the Bulletin Board for Libraries (<http://bubl.ac.uk/>) and the Navigational Aids for the History of Science, Technology & the Environment (NAHSTE at <http://www.nahste.ac.uk/>). The top level is the home page, and the second level the five subject area pages of: About the Project; Archives; Maps; Image Gallery and Featured Collections. Each of these pages has a series of links down to the third level of pages, which contain the main content of the site. This structure is consistent throughout the site and allows easy navigation up and down the tree structure, or via the navigation buttons. As users do not always scroll down to see what is at the bottom of a page, an attempt was made to keep the second level pages down to one screen depth of text, although the volume of text filling a screen varies depending on a user's screen size and resolution.

Within the About the Project, Archives, and Featured Collections areas of the site, the third level pages

comprise a straightforward list of links to pages on specific subjects, such as the Project News links being arranged chronologically in the About The Project area of the site. Within the Maps and Images Gallery pages the structure is a little more complex.

The Early Maps collection is one of the strengths of the Society's holdings, and it was decided to describe them in easily accessible 'flat' lists. This decision was reached bearing the needs of the Society members in mind, as maps are a major interest of Society members and a bibliographic map catalogue can be challenging to search effectively for naïve users. Maps are more complex documents to describe than many other types of printed material, and users usually search for them by place and for historical maps by date. Given the number of Early Maps being approximately 1000, and the geographical area covered by the collection being mainly Scotland, it was anticipated that it would be possible to break the maps down into a manageable number of meaningful lists of a suitable length.

Classifying maps by area is problematical as they vary in scale, and one map sheet at a small scale may cover a whole country, whereas many sheets may be needed to cover the same country at a larger scale. At a larger scale still, many countries may be covered by one sheet. In addition, when dealing with historical maps, borders and boundaries may change over time. Compromises therefore had to be made, and a solution of best fit was sought, and various factors were taken into account when compiling the Early Maps lists. The main aspects by which the maps were classified into lists were by geographic coverage and date, the two factors most often employed when seeking maps. This resulted in areas covered by few maps being combined in slightly unusual ways, such as maps of Germany, Poland, Russia, Ukraine and Switzerland comprising one list. At the other extreme, areas covered very heavily by the collection, such as Edinburgh, had to be broken down chronologically. As with the main site structure, a directory structure of lists was used for the design.

File size of the web pages was a primary consideration, so that pages would not take too long to download for users with dial-up connections, so page file size was not over 70kb and this limited the number of maps included in one list to 50. The second consideration was that each list should include enough maps to be meaningful, and three was the number selected as being small enough to comprise a list. The maps therefore had to be classified into lists of between three and 50 by area covered and date of publication.

The flat structure of the Early Maps lists and the high discriminating power of unique place names generated one of the first enquiries from the website. A user e-mailed to ask about a map listed in the Early Maps listings of Pitkellony Estate in Perthshire. The enquirer was from Edinburgh and researching Pitkellony House, and wanted to know the overall design and orientation of the building.

The map held by RSGS was a copy and the original held by the National Archives of Scotland in Edinburgh, and this was explained to the user should they want to examine an original, although the house was also described as requested. This raised the question of why the enquirer had not consulted the map in Edinburgh, and after a simple Google search it was found that using 'map' and 'Pitkellony' as search terms the project's Early Maps webpage for Perthshire came near the top of the results list. The enquirer had therefore not consulted the catalogues of map collections held near to them which may be consulted online, but searched Google and sent off an e-mail instead. This illustrates the value of putting flat lists of holdings onto a website, rather than using a database catalogue, as it draws in users unaware of, or unwilling to use, catalogues online.

6. Digitisation

Digitising and making available over the web 100 'gems' from the collection was an output included in the original grant application of the project. The aim of digitising images from the collections was not to preserve or conserve them, but to showcase the Society's collections, with the conservation of the collections by professionals being another main aim of the project. The original selection of 'gems' was made by a group of PMG and Society staff, although many of the items selected were subject to copyright and the Society did not have permission from the rights holders to copy them. There was a belief held by members of PMG and Society staff that if an item had been gifted to the Society, rights were automatically assigned to the Society also, even though this was not the case. PMG members and Society staff could only be dissuaded from this view by consultation with staff from The National Archives and from the National Library of Scotland, who eventually persuaded them of the truth of the situation, although this was a time consuming activity. It was therefore decided to select a second group of 'gems'. This time mainly items which were out of copyright, or to which the Society held the rights, were selected in groups on a theme so that together they may be more meaningful. Some items were selected which were 'orphans', where the copyright status was not clear, for example where the date of a slide being taken or the photographer were unknown. With 19th century material where provenance is not clear, digitising images involves a certain amount of risk management. Scanned images were not intended to be sold for profit, and it was anticipated that if rights holders contacted the Society with objections, images could be removed from the website and original scans destroyed if necessary.

The following subject areas for the images were selected: Early Maps and Charts of Scotland; Views of Scotland; Scottish Landforms; Construction of the Forth Rail Bridge; St. Kilda; Barra; Polar Images; H M Stanley Events of 1890; Fridtjof Nansen Events of 1897; Isobel Wylie Hutchison; Ella Christie and Early Mediterranean Port Charts. This spread of subjects indicated the range and depth of the Society's collections, reflecting the map, chart and various photographic formats held. As the 'gems' selected

were grouped by subject it was anticipated that the images would be of greater educational use than a mix of 100 diverse images, and this proved to be the case, with, for example, the website being recommended by the Kings College London MA in War Studies course listing of Documentary Sources and Archives (<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/content/1/c6/01/32/67/MAWarStudies07.pdf>). The subject headings also have a strong Scottish theme reflecting the nature of the Society, a theme of exploration, and an emphasis on the photographs taken by lady Victorian travellers, one of the strengths of the Society's holdings. An unashamed attempt was made to promote Scotland and its landscape using the images of Scottish landforms, with images taken on bright, sunny days being used as far as possible, and the images of sunny beaches and seascapes being placed at the top of the page to give them more emphasis.

The items selected to be digitised were maps and charts, both sheet and bound, 35mm. colour slides and black and white lantern slides. Facilities were not available in-house to undertake such large and small scale scanning, and as only 100 items were to be scanned, it was not economic to buy in specialist equipment. Organisations which had previously undertaken digitisation projects locally were consulted about who could undertake the scanning, although no one could be recommended, as the majority of archival scanning projects in Scotland had been undertaken in-house. The PMG were categorical that the material should not go out of Scotland, and a local reprographics house was used to scan the large sheet maps, and a local scanning company whose core business was scanning high volume office documents used to scan the slides. Neither company had undertaken such work before, and it took some time to communicate the aims of the project and the specifics of the work to be undertaken.

Every time an item such as a slide or map is copied, some aspect of it is lost and it is difficult to anticipate future uses of images and the technology which may be used to view them. An archival approach was taken to the scanning, with as much information about the process being recorded as possible. This was done with a long term view so that, in say 100 years, those looking at an image may have some idea of what the original was like and how the copy was created. This is particularly pertinent if original items are lost or destroyed, and the only representation of the image available is the copy.

Three items were sent to each company for scanning, as a test in order to iron out any problems arising and look at quality issues. The whole process from uplift and transport, to data to be recorded, was discussed at length with the companies undertaking the work. Both companies uplifted and transported the items themselves, kept them on their premises for as short a time as possible, and made sure they were stored in the most secure way possible, such as being locked into the manager's office at night. Items were to be scanned and saved as TIFFs for long term storage, and also as JPEGs for mounting

onto the website, and saved onto DVDs and CDs. The TIFF format is 'lossless' in that it retains all the information scanned and is ideal for archiving, but creates large files too big for mounting on a website. The JPEG format compresses files, so that they are suitable for web mounting with little perceivable loss of quality. Maps and charts were scanned at a resolution thought appropriate by the reprographics house staff, as the originals varied in sheet size and were produced by different processes such as aquatint and engraving, and saved down at 72dpi for the JPEGs. Both lantern and 35mm slides were scanned at 2700 dpi and again saved as TIFFs for archiving, and 72 dpi JPEGs for mounting onto the website.

A specification was drawn up for scanning based on that used by The Glasgow Story project (<http://www.theglasgowstory.com>), and data requested to be recorded about the scanning process were: date of scanning, archival format, capture device, software used, colour scale, colour bar, colour profile, archival file size, derivative format, derivative resolution, derivative width, derivative height, derivative file size, and producer. This data was to be saved as plain text files onto the same discs as the scanned files, so that it would be difficult to separate the data files from the image files. A file naming format was specified, although this was not adhered to by one of the companies employed. There were a number of problems with the scanning process, and both companies omitted scanning items they had in their possession, or scanned them at too low resolution, so that only after checking the returned items and image files did the errors and omissions become apparent, and the process had to start again. A problem which occurred with one of the trials was that the scanning data was printed out on paper and returned as a paper file, rather than being saved as a text file onto the same disc as the images. A further incident was that some of the lantern slides of Barra were given file names by the scanning company using a transcription of text labelling the slides themselves. Transcribing 19th century handwriting is not an easy task and the word 'herring' was transcribed as 'housing', even though the images were of fishing boats at sea and fish being gutted.

The JPEG images were then tidied up by project staff with Photoshop Elements, which mainly involved altering the contrast and lighting so that the image could be seen as clearly as possible on a screen, and erasing some dust and dirt marks on the slides. The original slides had been chosen because of their visual quality, as well as their geographical or historical significance, so little cropping or other such manipulation was needed. Test images were then put up onto a webpage and viewed on different monitors to see how they looked and then further alteration took place if necessary. The TIFF scans for archiving were not altered in any way so that they were as true to the originals as possible. One copy of the TIFF files was made available for office use, and a second copy of the CD and DVD placed in the Society's archives for long term retention in good storage conditions, although the storage media and format will become redundant over time. RSGS, as with many other organisations, had no policy

on preservation of electronic records, making them vulnerable to developments in hardware and software, and changes in file formats.

The images for digitisation had been selected by three individuals, and an attempt was made to get agreement on the style of caption to be written. This did not prove possible, so three distinct styles of caption were written and used, which led to inconsistency and this compromise was accepted. The captions for some of the images such as the Scottish landforms are approximately 50 words long and use short sharp sentences, whereas for a further set of images are approximately 100 words and go into more detail. For the final set of images such as the Maps of Scotland, captions are approximately 200 words long and employ a more verbose, subjective style. Some gentle editing of the captions did occur however, such as the term 'Eskimo' being replaced with 'Inuit' when describing indigenous people from the northern Polar regions, as the term 'Eskimo' is found derogatory by many such people.

One of the problems when digitising sheet maps is representing a large sheet on a small screen; if a whole large sheet is represented on screen it may not be possible to see details such as place names. It is possible to scan a map and save it in sections and see a section on screen at a time, as has been done by the National Library of Scotland Map Library and others, but the time and resources to do this were beyond the scope of the project.

A standard set of keywords was included in the header of the page template, but no other subject metadata was added to individual pages, as the captions described the images using a variety of terms and all place names relevant to the images were also included in the captions. Alt tags were assigned to all images, as this is good practice and also enables those using screen readers to know something about the images. Lengthy alt tags were used in order to describe images as fully as possible, and this may also improve retrieval by Google. At present this enables reasonably effective retrieval using Google, which is the dominant web search tool at present, although as the search engine develops this may not continue to be the case. The way in which Google indexes webpages is famously a closely guarded secret, and it is impossible to know how this may develop. Place names have high discriminating power in information retrieval, and in some ways this was relied on. Conversely, when there are many places with the same name such as 'Tarbert' in Scotland, this can make effective retrieval more difficult.

7. Challenges faced

The main challenge faced by the project was the volume of material to be dealt with and the lack of space in which to do it. Lack of space meant that an excessive amount of time was spent moving

material around to create space in which to work, and spaces and material had to be measured and thought about very carefully before anything was moved. The response to the volume of material and space problems was to work first with the material which had already had some work done to it, and to build on that work. Priorities were then set with the deliverables of the project clearly in mind, and the most valuable and immediately appealing material dealt with first. This 'beauty contest' approach was unsatisfactory as it meant that it is probable that many valuable items were not given the attention they deserved. A five-year project and sufficient workspace would have been able to undertake the work the collections deserve.

Working with a voluntary management group was a further challenge faced, and this is a potential challenge for professional staff working with volunteers on similar projects. The lack of demarcation between the roles of project staff and the PMG was particularly difficult, especially as the PMG often tried to work outside their sphere of competence, concerning copyright for example. The response to this was to draw on the help of experts in the field who generously contributed their time and expertise to the project, and whom the PMG would accept as authorities. A further problem was project scope creep, where the PMG attempted to introduce extra tasks to the project, and this was resisted by referral back to the original project description.

8 Lessons learnt

The main lessons learnt concern the nature of project management. As a general rule the first third of a project should be spent in planning and setting up the necessary tools needed to undertake the work. This approach was adopted although it involved undertaking tasks not initially anticipated, such as an initial information audit of collections. Establishing an overview of what material had to be dealt with was essential before planning the work to be undertaken. One of the problems of spending a significant amount of time planning a project is that there are no concrete outputs for some time, and this is often not understood. A further lesson learnt is that clear outputs have to be agreed at the beginning of the project, and stuck to religiously. The final lesson concerns project management in a small organisation, and how the whole focus of a small organisation can shift, as happened with the RSGS and the proposed move to Perth which diverted attention from the project.

The major problem with the digitisation was the amount of time that had to be spent talking to those doing the scanning about how the work was to be undertaken, and then checking quality and sending work to be re-done. There are companies in the UK who have a track record of undertaking scanning for the heritage sector, and it is recommended that if possible one of these experienced companies be used by anyone considering such a project. The captions written for the images were not wholly

satisfactory as different styles were used by different authors, and it would have been preferable to have had agreement on the style at the outset.

Finally, how to index images on a website and get them to the top of a search result list is a serendipitous process, as the way in which Google indexes images is opaque. Working to standards such as those of the W3C for accessibility, and using full descriptive alt tag for images are recommended.

How the collections will be managed in the future is uncertain and it is not clear whether the work of the project will have any impact on the Society's strategic approach to its collections. There are plans to employ a full time curator when the Society moves to Perth, but whether funds will be available for this is not confirmed.

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge the help received in the Images for All project from a wide variety of people from various institutions and also to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding the project.

Editor's Note

Since the author left the project in April 2007 there, inevitably, have been many developments which, hopefully, may be covered in a subsequent paper. This paper is an individual opinion and does not represent the views of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society or the 'Images for All' Project Management Group.

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