Politics, Populism, and Professionalism: Reflections on the Role of the Academic Historian in the Production of Public History

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Abstract: This article explores some of the challenges and opportunities facing academic historians involved in large British public history projects and examines how government priorities and the particular ways in which public funds are deployed can affect the critical intellectual content of such projects. To this end it first broadly outlines the context in which British public history has recently developed and then focuses on my own experiences as leader of a British public history project on 1001 years of ethnic minorities in Bristol, England, which was sponsored by the "England's Past for Everyone" initiative.

Key words: public history, ethnic minorities, heritage, Bristol

Introduction

Public history, Rob Perks tells us, is "History in a public space. To work . . . it must be relevant and it must be engaging." But how is this requirement for relevance and engagement to be practically expressed? Is it at odds with

the need for the historian to have the autonomy to make rigorous and critical judgments?

Since public history is such a protean term, let us restrict it for our purposes here to refer only to such publicly funded projects as historically oriented museum exhibitions, community-produced books and Web sites, and related arts initiatives.[1] In Britain, such projects have all attracted an increasing amount of government support over the past decade and usually involve professional historians working either as advisors or researchers as part of a wider team. But the function and status of academic historians within such projects is as variable as is their target audience. Like "community," "the public" is a term that masks a number of different possible constituencies, distinguished from each other not only by age, class, ethnicity, locality, and educational attainment but also by their willingness to engage at any particular moment with the complexities of nuanced historical interpretation. So if Peter Stanley's so-called third law of public history is true and "an historian's autonomy declines in direct relation to the magnitude of his [or her] audience,"[2] we need to consider what implications this might have for the quality of the history that such public history projects can produce.

John Tosh and Ludmilla Jordanova both assert that the best public history is that which keeps its critical edge, which counters the cozy assumptions of popular memory, and which raises more questions than it answers.[3] This article, whose main aim is to encourage good practice, explores some of the challenges and opportunities facing academic historians involved in large British public history projects. How crucial are they to the production of a critical public history, and how do government priorities and the particular ways in which public funds are deployed affect their work?

To this end, this article will first consider some of the broader material and cultural contexts in which public history in Britain has recently developed. It will then focus more specifically on how Heritage Lottery Fund, arguably the major funder of heritage projects in this country, has helped to re-shape the ways heritage and, by implication, history are conceptualized in the public arena. Using a case study based on my own experience, it will delineate the implicit tensions between the demands for public accountability, consultation, and outreach characteristic of publicly funded history projects, and the autonomy of the academic historians they employ.

My involvement in public history goes back to the 1980s, but the reflections that follow are largely distilled from my work in public history over

1. John Tosh, *Why History Matters* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 99–119; Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder Arnold, 2006), 126–31; Robin McLachlan, "Definitions of Public History," www.publichistory.org/what_is/definition.html.
2. Peter Stanley of the Australian Monuments Commission's contribution to the "Roundtable Discussion" chaired by John Beckett at the 2006 IHR Public History conference, http://www.history.ac.uk/public.
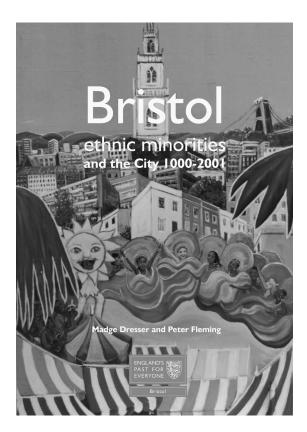3. Tosh, *Why History Matters*, 22–24, 100; Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 149.

the past decade as co-director (with Peter Fleming) of the University of the West of England's Regional History Centre (1997–2005) and as an individual scholar.[4] In this period, I have worked as an academic advisor to various museums, Web sites, archives,[5] and community history projects, served on boards of various public history bodies,[6] and helped to devise and teach an undergraduate public history course at UWE.[7]

This piece, however, is based on my experiences as project leader for *Identity and the City: 1001 Years of Ethnic Minorities in Bristol*. Financed largely by Heritage Lottery Fund,[8] this was one of fifteen local history projects comprising a £5.23 million initiative known as England's Past for Everyone (EPE).[9] Launched in 2005 under the aegis of the Victoria County History (VCH),[10]—one of three main research centers at the University of London's Institute for Historical Research—EPE's brief was to publish a series of local history paperbacks, an accompanying Web site, and learning resources for schools as a more popular complement to the VCH's specialist publications.[11]

"England's Past for Everyone" produced a book, *Bristol: Ethnic Minorities and the City, c. 1000–2001* (Phillimore Press, 2007), written mainly by Peter Fleming and myself with contributions from three specially commissioned authors,[12] and a Web site www.englandspastforeveryone.org.uk/Bristol.

The cover of Bristol: Ethnic minorities and the city, c. 1000–2001. (Cover illustration from a street mural in St. Paul's, Bristol by local artist Gloria Ojulari Sule. Book cover © University of London by kind permission of Gloria Ojulari Sule)

The Bristol project[13] distinguished itself from EPE's other projects (whose briefs ranged from the histories of an individual estate or village to the changing townscape of an industrial city) by taking ethnicity as its key theme.[14] That theme also accorded closely with the government's new aim to use heritage and public history to promote a more cohesive sense of national identity among marginalized groups.[15]

By Peter Stanley's "Third law" the project's clear accord with the government's aims in finding "England's Past for Everyone" might have led one to expect real limitations on our professional independence. While limitations

13. It was a £137,000 project if match funding is included.
14. For a full range of project titles see www.englandspastforeveryone.org.uk.
15. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport report, "People and Places: Social Inclusion for the Built and Historic Environment" (2002) calls on professionals within the built and historic environment to think about how they can reach out to excluded individuals and communities. Cited in http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/4789.aspx. Those least likely to visit heritage sites are the 16–24-year-olds and those over 65, working-class socio-economic groups, ethnic minorities, and those on low incomes: Research Study for Heritage Lottery Fund Final Report, "Developing New Audiences for the Heritage," http://www.hlf.org.uk/english.

did arise, they were generally more of "how much" and "in what form?" rather than constrictions on our critical independence. Though we had at times to exercise vigilance, political and popular participation generally cohabited reasonably well with historical investigation and even could be said to have enhanced it in Bristol in the sense that it availed critical professional history to popular encounter.

Since its accession to power in 1997, New Labour's mantra of inclusivity, its emphasis on cultural institutions as potential economic regenerators, and its consequent willingness to spend public monies on heritage have done much to accelerate the proliferation of public history projects.[16] Museums, historic buildings and parks, archives, Web sites, and community histories were targeted as some of the main conduits through which Britain's heritage could be promoted.

This push to widen the concept of heritage served to stimulate more public interest in history, which was itself further strengthened by other factors, both demographic and technological. An aging population affluent and literate enough to take an unprecedented interest in family and local history has guaranteed history a key audience base.[17] The facility to digitize historical sources and to share them on the Internet has, within a short space of time, revolutionized both the process of historical research and the potential for its wider dissemination.[18]

If the past decade has seen an unprecedented level of government support for public history projects, the more recent diversion of funds to the 2012 Olympics and the exigencies of the recession make this an opportune moment to consider the relationship between public history and the British state.[19]

In 2000, the government commissioned English Heritage[20] to undertake a policy review regarding England's historic environment. The resulting report, entitled *The Power of Place: The Future of the Historic Environment*, attested to the way reforms in approaching the historic environment could help

16. For a useful overview of the proliferation of public history projects in the UK see Alison Twells, "Community History," Making History: The Changing Face of the Profession in Britain, Institute of Historical Research Web site, http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/community_history.html.

17. Graham Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 17–19; Wendy Duff, Barbara Craid, and Joan Cherry, "Historians' use of archival sources: Promises and Pitfalls of the Digital Age," *The Public Historian* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 21–22; "History and the Public Conference Proceedings," especially Liz Forgan (Heritage Lottery Fund) "Whose Heritage?" and the "Roundtable Discussion" chaired by John Beckett, http://www.history.ac.uk/public/; ESRC Society Today: Ageing in the UK, http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/facts/index8.aspx?ComponentId=6991&SourcePageId=13142.

18. Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Cultures* (London and New York: Routledge), 90–104.

19. HLF Annual Report 2007–2008, 4, http://www.hlf.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/8ECC5360–D7D4–4203–A98D-C68C6CF34268/0/HLF2008AnnualReportA_Web.pdf.

20. English Heritage is a nondepartmental public body of the UK government responsible for managing England's historic built environment and is, at the time of writing, sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

to promote social cohesion (although this particular term was not yet used), especially among those considered to be socially marginalized:

> People are interested in the historic environment. They want to learn about it. They want to help define it. They want their children to learn about it. . . . But many feel powerless and excluded. The historical contribution of their group in society is not celebrated. Their personal heritage does not appear to be taken into account by those who make the decisions. . . . If the barriers to involvement can be overcome, the historic environment has the potential to strengthen the sense of community and provide a solid basis for neighborhood renewal.[21]

Similarly, Heritage Lottery Fund, set up in 1994 to conserve the UK's heritage sites (using monies raised from the National Lottery), was also encouraged by the new government to address issues of social exclusion. HLF was to "involve a wider range of people in taking a more active part in their heritage," and also to "help people to learn about their own and other people's heritage."[22] As part of a wider brief to promote a "renaissance" of heritage in the nation's museums, archives, and heritage sites, HLF itself had by 2006 provided over £3.8 billion to some 24,000 heritage projects, an increasing proportion of which fell, to varying extents, under the public history remit as opposed to more traditional sectors such as building renovation, monument conservation, and contents acquisition in museums.[23]

The Labour government, it has been argued, has seen public history as a "useful tool of governance," a way to promote a "particular vision of social harmony."[24] Certainly, the distinction between heritage and history in this context was often blurred. The very concept of heritage, that term of "sub-lyrical vagueness," seemed to have been more often invoked than the concept of history in DCMS rhetoric.[25] According to the New Labour think tank Demos, by 2005 it had been changed

21. English Heritage, "The Power of Place" (2000), http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.1447, especially section 2.4.

22. We have helped hundreds of different groups to research their history, including people with disabilities, women, black and ethnic minorities, older people, former coalfield and rural communities; "Lottery Consultation: Past Performance and Future Potential. Response by the Heritage Lottery Fund," September 30, 2005, http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/HLF.pdf, see also Heritage Lottery Fund, http://www.lotteryfunding.org.uk/uk/heritage-lottery-fund; HLF Annual Report 2007–2008, esp. pp. 2–3, http://www.hlf.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/8ECC5360–D7D4–4203–A98D-C68C6CF34268/0/HLF2008AnnualReportA_Web.pdf.

23. Report by the Controller and Auditor General, "The Heritage Lottery Fund" (HC 323 Session 2006–2007; SE/2007/27 March 16, 2007), esp. pp. 2–3, http://www.nao.org.uk/system_pages/search.aspx?&terms=heritage+lottery+fund; a critical view of HLF policy can be found in "The Heritage Lottery Fund—Renaissance or Retrenchment?" *The Burlington Magazine*, 161, no. 1150 (January 1999): 3.

24. Kevin Myers. "Historical Practice in the Age of Pluralism: Educating and Celebrating Identities," in *Histories and Memories: Migrants and their History in Britain*, eds. Kathy Burrell and Panikos Panayi (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), 38–39.

25. See for example Chris Smith's foreword to the 2000 Annual Report of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport [henceforth DCMS], http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/AR00CoverContentsForeword.pdf, 4–5; "DCMS Objectives—Achievements 2000–01" in DCMS Report for 2001: 50, http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/dcmsannrep01

from being something that is exclusively defined by experts on behalf of soci-
ety to [something] that recognizes the importance of protecting a wide range
of heritage and also of getting more people involved in identifying and caring
for what is valued collectively.[26]

The subtext here is that heritage policies must divest themselves of elitist as-
sociations if they are to command the support of the British taxpayer.[27] Dame
Liz Forgan (HLF Chair, 2001–2008) made this clear:

Once upon a time, we could safely leave the future of the heritage to scholars,
specialists and the wealthy owners of our historic houses and objects. . . . But
the world has changed. . . . More and more of the money and commitment for
sustaining the heritage will increasingly have to come from governments or
public authorities. . . . This means that heritage needs political support, a broad
constituency which will compel our elected leaders to care for the heritage be-
cause their electorates do.[28]

And as the then Minister for Culture, David Lammy, put it in his 2005 speech
"Where Now for Ethnic Minorities and Heritage?" the very definition of
heritage was politically charged and intimately bound up with notions of
identity:

Heritage comes from the same root as inheritance. It's about what we want
to pass on to future generations. Our responsibility for heritage extends not just

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sec2.pdf; "Understanding the Future: Museums and 21st-Century Life: the Value of Museums,"
7, 19–22, http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/UnderstandingtheFuture.pdf; "Our in-
vestment in the heritage of the UK has not only transformed the landscape in terms of material
conservation; it has dramatically shifted the way in which heritage is defined and understood. As
a result our programs and approach are very different from those of other bodies. It needs to be
[a broad definition of heritage] because one person's definition of heritage is going to be differ-
ent from another person's. And HLF have to think about everybody." Citizens' Jury participant,
June 2005, cited in "Lottery Consultation: Past Performance and Future Potential. Response by
the Heritage Lottery Fund," September 30, 2005, http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consulta-
tions/HLF.pdf, 16; David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1985), 37. According to one official source, heritage "covers everything from
biodiversity, landscapes, buildings, museums, libraries and archives and archaeology, industrial,
maritime and transport heritage to intangible heritage such as cultural traditions, language and
oral history. In short, it is anything we have inherited and want to pass on to the future," "Lot-
tery Consultation: Past Performance and Future Potential: Response by the Heritage Lottery
Fund" September 30, 2005, http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/HLF.pdf, 2–3.
    26. Cited from the British-based think tank "Demos" in "Lottery Consultation: Past Perfor-
mance and Future Potential. Response by the Heritage Lottery Fund," September 30, 2005, 2.
    27. "The Power of Place," http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.1447, espe-
cially section 2.4; for a critical discussion of heritage before 1997, see Robert Hewison, *The Her-
itage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987), 46–47, 144; this ten-
sion between top-down and bottom-up interpretations of the nation's built heritage is paralleled
in both academic historiography and museum acquisitions policy. Just as "People's History" had
evolved in the UK to counter more elitist historiographies before 1997, so museum acquisition
policies varied between elitist antiquarianism and a more inclusive ethnographic approach. See
Gaynor Kavanagh, "Collecting from the Era of Memory, Myth and Delusion" in *Museums and
the Future of Collecting*, 2nd ed., ed. Simon J. Knell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 118.
    28. Dame Liz Forgan, "Conserving and Handing on the Heritage." Keynote presentation to
the First European Heritage Forum on Heritage and Dialogue, Brussels, October 23–24, 2008.

to the preservation of ancient bricks and mortar but to the custodianship of a legacy of ideas about Britain and Britishness.[29]

New Labour's reconceptualization of the nation's heritage and its concomitant drive for public accountability and accessibility implicitly conflated the notion of intellectual expertise with a socially exclusive vision of Britain's past predicated on the uncritical celebration of stately homes and past imperial greatness. As a result, although it had a genuinely progressive intent, it also had the potential to devalue critical academic methods. And although it is true that New Labour had gone through a formal consultation about how best to promote a good research culture in its museums and public heritage projects,[30] how this was to be practically achieved was often left unclear, making for "a potential conflict of objectives at the heart of government policy."[31] Reconciling these objectives would fall to the historians, from whose bastions of professional research a programmatic invitation to inclusivity, "England's Past for Everyone," would issue.

Culture Clash at the Institute?

If a new politics of prominence for heritage was one important element of the UK context, the situation in history's professional institutions was another. The Victoria County History represented historical scholarship at its most venerably professional.

When one enters the Institute of Historical Research in the University of London's imposing Senate House, the vestiges of an older, more sumptuous imperial tradition can still be sensed alongside the notices of cutting-edge seminars on postcolonial Britain.

In 1899 Herbert Arthur Doubleday established the VCH, the oldest of the Institute's research centers. It has since published 250 volumes of the famous "big red books"[32] whose positivist brief was to document the history of every

29. David Lammy's speech at "Where now for Black and Minority Ethnic heritage?" October 24, 2005, http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/minister_speeches/2038.aspx; Nelson Graburn, "A Quest for Identity," in *Museums and their Communities*, ed. Sheila Watson (London: Routledge, 2007), 129 defines it as an inheritance of both material objects and what might loosely be termed "cultural capital" from one's family and from other wider social groups such as one's ethnic group or one's nation. Andrew Wiese, "The House I Live In: Race, Class, and African American Suburban Dreams in the Postwar United States" in *The New Suburban History,* ed. Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 101–2.
30. The DCMS affirmed the importance of "a bedrock of high quality research and scholarship" for museums in this context and asked museums how it might achieve this: "Understanding the Future: Museums and 21st-Century Life: The Value of Museums" July 2005, Department of Culture, Media and Sport, http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/UnderstandingtheFuture.pdf, 7.
31. I am grateful to Holger Hoock for this turn of phrase. For the tension between outreach and expertise in the museums sector, see Josie Appleton, "Museums for the People" in *Museums and Their Communities*, ed. Sheila Watson (London: Routledge, 2007), 122.
32. VCH, "The Big Red Books," The VCH Web site, http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/NationalSite/AboutVCH.

parish in England, county by county. Taken over by the University of London in 1932, it employed bands of "professionally trained historians" often with subventions by individual trusts and local authorities to continue with the project. Although the range of historical material deemed relevant to this project was enlarged in the postwar era to include the history of landscape, local government, and aspects of social history, the style of the project remained largely unchanged.[33] But by the millennium, the big red books were getting harder to finance, and it became evident that the VCH would have to avail itself of new funding streams. To qualify for government monies, it would have to show itself to be adaptable to new imperatives of inclusiveness and accessibility.

It was in this context that the historian Professor Anthony Fletcher was recruited to serve as Director and General Editor of the VCH in 2000.[34] His inaugural speech announced plans for a Web site, geared to provide, *inter alia*, new historical source materials for schools. By 2001 he had secured a modest amount of money for this pilot scheme from HLF. His new agenda for the VCH, "offered in a spirit of discussion and debate," sought to focus not on the completion of the big red books but on widening the VCH audience by

> . . . coming out of the library into the bookshop and onto the Internet . . . to close the supposed gap between the professional and the amateur . . . the academic and leisure history. . . . The whole audience deserves the same scholarly standards, the same lucidity of writing. We should really mean it when we say we are seeking to analyze, interpret and make plainer England's past for everyone.[35]

He aimed to achieve this by means of a multi-million pound sterling bid made to Heritage Lottery Fund that would fund a five-year public history program, to be known as England's Past for Everyone (EPE).

The EPE bid was to involve VCH historians in producing a series of cheaper and more popularly written paperbacks and companion Web sites in order to attract a new constituency to the VCH and thereby revitalize it. Heritage Lottery Fund would supply the bulk of the funding on the understanding that partners attached to each individual EPE project would supply the rest. These partners were local authorities, universities, or other public bodies who would provide either salary subsidies for researchers and administrators or "in kind" subventions in the form of office space and IT support. Voluntary hours worked by local researchers were also calculated as matching funding.[36] The program as a whole was to be vetted, coordinated,

33. John Beckett, "Victorian Makeover," *History Today*, May 1, 2007, 20–21; John Beckett, *Writing Local History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 96.

34. IHR Annual Reports 2000–2001 and 2002–2203, http://www.history.ac.uk/annual/.

35. Anthony Fletcher, "'englandspast.net': A Framework for the Social History of England," *Historical Research* 75, no. 189 (2002): 314–15.

36. Volunteer contributions totalled over £200,000 for the project as a whole and were based on the level of experience of individual volunteers. Thanks to Catherine Cavanagh for this information.

and ultimately controlled by a central EPE project board at VCH head-quarters at the University of London.

Once the monies were finally awarded in February 2005, the central management team had to handle diverse provincial projects in a way that not only guaranteed the efficient delivery of a multifaceted public history product, but also advertised the fact that it was doing so. Thus the EPE brand was born, with its newsletters and press releases, logos and launches, design sheets and editorial guidelines. Central management had also to ensure that the process as well as the product was seen as sufficiently inclusive, hence the requirement that volunteers be used for research and that events and projects for schools be organized as part of the educational outreach program.

The response of the VCH's army of freelance historians and university academics to these developments was ambivalent. The £3.374 million secured was clearly a boon as it meant new research and publication opportunities for VCH researchers who were often dependent on short-term contracts, and all too familiar with the vagaries of local political patronage. Those eventually appointed to head the provincial teams varied in their receptiveness to the goals and demands of the HLF regime but in general assumed that the labor-intensive business of research and writing would naturally be their top priority.

Yet, so far as the London administrators were concerned, the requirement to "research and write EPE Project texts" was only one of eight points in the Project leaders' job descriptions. Others included the need to establish a strong profile for "strategic management and planning . . . in consultation with the project manager," "develop work with local educationalists," and "plan . . . and assist in the monitoring [of the] volunteer group work in the county. . . ." The very structure of the EPE initiative, then, necessarily generated elements of a "them and us" culture which variously informed relations between the provincial teams and the administrative center. [37]

Bristol EPE's Beginnings

When the VCH finally secured the major funding from HLF early in 2005, we at Bristol were to hit the ground running. Although a number of the projects were commissioned for the full five years, Bristol's project, scheduled to begin early in 2005, was to be completed by 2007. In reality we had begun work on the project in 2004 and had already delivered to the VCH an online "Bristol Slavery Trail" as part of a pilot project.

The stakes were high for us. Our involvement in this national project would

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37. "Job Description: England's Past for Everyone: Bristol Team Leader" various dates but c. 2005. Though these varied slightly from project to project, they were generally the same. My assertion about the project leaders' response was gleaned from informal discussions with some of them.

enhance our standing as historians in the forthcoming Research Assessment Exercise (the subject-based evaluation of the research performance of UK university departments) and thereby affect our future funding. For this reason, our university provided matching funding and administrative assistance to help broker the bid.[38]

This signals an obvious but not always explicitly articulated point about the power relationship between academic historians and their patrons in public history projects, namely that he who pays the piper calls the tune. But payers and players march to different rhythms, and the former may not necessarily know how the best tune is to be achieved. HLF presumed a linear notion of how historical research should proceed which was at odds with the actual organic process of going backward and forward between sources and interpretative drafts.[39] As our own research evolved, we found, for example, that the material on the eighteenth century was so rich that it deserved a fuller treatment than we initially anticipated, which meant we wished to add new chapters and exceed our previously agreed word limit. The extent to which we would be allowed to exercise our intellectual judgment and have the time to redraft and reconsider our material would very much depend on our relationship with EPE's management, whose own room for maneuver was in turn dependent on the quality of *their* personal relationship with HLF administrators.[40]

Our relationship with the London EPE team depended in part on whether we were seen to be able to deliver the goods, which as outlined above meant far more than simply writing the book and Web site. Although the administration of our project was partly devolved to our part-time research liaison officer, Pat Diango, who ran our office, fielded inquiries and, most crucially, liaised with the London office over the quarterly budget, we as historians still had to devote a good deal of our time to fulfilling these demands. The dilemma was that often such tasks could not easily be contracted out because they needed someone actively engaged in and knowledgeable about the historical project itself to be effectively done. Yet the very imperatives that necessitated our taking time out from the actual research implicitly devalued its importance.

The Book

The VCH head office pronounced itself anxious to ensure that the new EPE paperbacks were "characterized by clear and accessible writing" yet still "based on the high standards of historical research and fieldwork which have for so

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38. Each project had at least one designated partner to match HLF funding. Partners for other bids included local authorities, VCH trusts, and universities.
39. Jordanova, 159.
40. Minutes of the National Committee of Victoria County History, May 17, 2006, 4.e.ii.3 noted that the "50 special conditions" attached to the original HLF contract were now being rationalized.

long been associated with the VCH."[41] But what precisely did this mean? The call for clear prose seemed reasonable. Certainly the books would need to be less densely written than the standard VCH volumes if they were to have a wider appeal, but how exactly was this to be achieved? Would "reaching out" practically result in "dumbing down?"

The guidelines issued by EPE in March 2006, after informal discussions with academic publishers, contained some useful advice, but we had already submitted some draft chapters. Historians were now being explicitly asked to consider how they would bring "people into the story" and how they would "make sure the reader understands the national context of the history being described." Visual materials—maps, drawings, and photographs—were to be an integral feature, and archaeological, architectural, and topographical materials were to be used to convey a "picture of place." Text boxes and interesting and informative subtitles would be a key way to make pages of text more inviting.[42]

Less reassuring was the statement that these new "mould-breaking" history books sought "to inhabit a market between the very scholarly on one hand, and the "bygone age in photographs" category on the other. Historians were told to "avoid too much of the broad sweep of landscape and economic change" since "books are bought because the readers can compare themselves with the individual experiences related." This was a telling phrase that illustrated an implicit conflict between commercial and academic priorities and represented to some a shift away from the original emphasis on "high academic standards" referred to in the official publicity. We were told too that the text boxes were to include practical instructions on how to do historical research. The chapters were to be short (5,000 words), and the books as a whole were not to exceed 60,000 words.

Most worrying of all were subsequent discussions about the need to limit referencing. Footnotes, potential publishers informed the VCH, were off-putting to general readers, and although there was always a commitment to endnotes on the part of the editorial board, the pressure to limit their "number and heft" became increasingly evident.[43] This was no minor matter, for as Domna C. Stanton argues, this threat to careful referencing is

> . . . bound to have a nefarious effect on scholarship. For notes essentially make critical exchange possible. They show how a scholar engages with the primary issues and problems under debate in the past or the present, and in this way they help to sustain and renew a community of discourse. Footnoting—or 'endnoting'—also reveals how a scholar interacts with specific authorities in the field(s) that the work engages.[44]

41. EPE Annual Report for 2006, http://www.englandspastforeveryone.org.uk/resources/assets/E/EPE_Annual_Report_2006_810.pdf.
42. "Writing an EPE paperback," March 7, 2006. Draft paper sent to EPE project leaders.
43. This assertion is based on my recollections of meetings of the VCH National Committee and subsequent informal discussions with representatives from Boydell and Brewer Ltd (publishers), and members of the VCH Editorial Board.
44. Domna C. Stanton, "Foreword," in *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2008), xiii.

In the end, to the credit of the VCH, endnotes were allowed in EPE publications, albeit in a compressed and abbreviated format. The strictures on referencing meant that controversial statements made in the text about, for example, the racism of certain police officers in the 1960s, were not as fully documented in the initial draft as either the authors or the editorial board would have liked. After some robust negotiation, the assertions were pretty much allowed through intact, largely because they could be more suitably referenced.

Other more subtle pressures threatened at times to erode our control over our work. The standardized design of the book cover and table of contents, for example, actually limited our choice of title and affected the way we credited contributors. The London editorial board felt it would be less unwieldy to list Peter Fleming and me as co-authors rather than as editors. Although this decision suited us at some levels (as we had written the bulk of the book and wanted to have this acknowledged), we knew this was not entirely fair to our contributors, so we ensured that their names were featured on the frontispiece of the book and at the beginning of their respective chapters.

Volunteers and Public Outreach

Unpaid volunteer workers, giving their time and skills to heritage work, have been a central feature of HLF policy, since, as Liz Forgan recently made clear, the government could simply not afford to pursue its present diet of heritage programs without them:

> The heritage would simply fall over if it were not for those millions of hours given freely by hundreds of thousands of people. That is why we can't live with the idea of Heritage as the preserve of the scholarly and well-educated elite. We need all hands to the deck.[45]

The HLF requirement to use and to train volunteers as part of their research teams was thus presented as "an important and unique feature" of EPE, and the Bristol EPE project was required to recruit volunteers to help with our research. We shared with other project leaders the widespread concern that the task of enlisting and managing volunteer researchers was in practice proving more burdensome than official calculations recognized, especially with regard to quality control.

As it turned out, two categories of volunteers emerged. The first were those who enlisted onto the program as volunteers because of their interest in history and whom we engaged to do conventional archival research, oral interviews, or to help coordinate volunteer events. The second group emerged more organically from the community contacts I made while researching the

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45. Liz Forgan, "Conserving and Handling the Heritage," Keynote Presentation to the First European Heritage Forum on "Heritage and Dialogue," Brussels, October 24, 2008, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/aware/ehd/DGIV_PAT_JEP_2008_15_E_keynotespeech_FORGAN.pdf.

chapters on contemporary minority communities. Mainly from ethnic minority backgrounds, this smaller group included interviewees and community activists whose interest in the project was more community-oriented. Their contribution in terms of cultural advice, introductions to potential respondents, and location of primary sources proved to be a crucial complement to more academic research.

Most of the dozen or so volunteers in the first group may not have been what Forgan would have characterized as "the scholarly elite," but they were nonetheless highly qualified—all had at least a B.A. and two had doctorates. Most were retired, a few unemployed, and all seemed glad of the opportunity to do some interesting and worthwhile research and to meet other similarly interested people—though understandably at times of their own choosing—which sometimes made meeting deadlines more difficult. However the archival research most did was extremely helpful; some brought invaluable paleographic, interviewing, or computing skills to the project, and a few contributed authored text boxes to the book.

Generally less affluent, less leisured, and in some cases less well-educated than the first, the needs and nature of the second group of volunteers were less well understood by either EPE or by HLF. It struck me as particularly exploitative to expect members of this second group to contribute to the project on the same terms as the first, or to engage with the sometimes off-putting bureaucratic procedures regarding registration, consent, and expenses generated by the project. It seemed for example unfair to ask one local to provide me with tutorials about Islam and Bristol's Pakistani community without being able to offer her a fee for her time. As an academic researcher I needed to have the discretion to deal with these volunteers in a more flexible manner, and although I was in the end able to offer the person in question a small stipend, this was clearly seen as a departure from usual practice.

Both categories of volunteer added value to the project. They enriched the work of the academic historians with whom they worked by recording materials, locating sources, or offering new ways of approaching the subject at hand. For our part, we were able to offer some training, in for example how to conduct oral history interviews. But with a few exceptions, neither group was interested in putting their research findings into a wider analytical context; this remained largely the role of the academic historians, a point not always sufficiently acknowledged in HLF literature.

In theory, the recruitment, training, and support of the volunteers was to be managed by a volunteer coordinator who was to receive a small honorarium in installments for such work. In practice we had a high turnover of coordinators (three in all), so much of the work in managing volunteers devolved onto the project leaders. The volunteers needed to have direct access to us because of our specialist knowledge, and we were hard pressed to afford them the time because of our own deadlines. It is a matter of regret that we were not always able to give them as much contact time and personal attention as they required.

Notable too was the fact that none of the candidates who put themselves

Some Bristol EPE volunteers meeting together in 2006. The volunteers valued the social inter-action which these events offered. (Courtesy of the University of London)

Lindsay St. Clair and sons posing with picture of her Uncle Reuben St. Clair at the Bristol EPE launch 2006 illustrating how family history and academic history can inter-relate in the public arena. (Courtesy of the University of London)

Peter Fleming, Sir Howard Newby, Madge Dresser, the Rt. Honourable Tony Benn, and Professor Geoffrey Channon at the launch of the Bristol EPE Project. (Courtesy of the University of London)

forward as volunteer coordinators had either the time or the contacts to establish sustainable working relationships with marginalized and often hard-to-reach minority groups who constituted the second category of volunteer described above. This particular task, which was central to the success of the project, was left largely to the project leader.

Public outreach work was also an intrinsic part of this project, and as project leaders we historians were needed to publicize the project through launches, press releases, and news items, radio programs, online articles, and public talks, as well as the more conventional academic papers. Bristol's EPE program was not launched formally until the spring of 2006, when an elaborate public event featuring the British politician Tony Benn and various local notables addressed an audience of 130 people at a central Bristol arts venue. The London EPE team and UWE provided support for this and for the subsequent launch of the book in March 2008, which was an equally gala affair presided over by Bristol's Lord Mayor.[46] As worthwhile as these activities were (and they sometimes generated new contacts and materials for our research), the time they would take was underestimated by all involved.[47]

46. "UWE launches Bristol History project on ethnic diversity," http://info.uwe.ac.uk/news/UWENews/article.asp?item=811&year=2006.
47. Peter Fleming and Madge Dresser, "Migration, Immigration, Diversity and Difference" (paper presented at the 15th EUROCLIO Annual International Professional Development Conference, March 2008); "What history? My History? 40–nation debate at UWE," http://info.uwe.ac.uk/news/uwenews/article.asp?item=1241&year=2008. Other forms of public output in

Intellectual Property and Copyright

Understandably, EPE as a complex project needed to keep a handle on the material published under its name, but UWE also claimed copyright. This central control of copyright initially threatened to deter some of our volunteers from participating in the project. Polite contractual tussles between the Institute of Historical Research in London and UWE and between EPE and Bristol project leaders were in the end resolved by an agreement by which the Institute retained copyright but a license was awarded to both UWE and the volunteers. These licenses allowed both the authors and the volunteers to use EPE project material for their own noncommercial purposes but asked both parties to acknowledge EPE when so doing. Although the arrangement seems so far to have worked, the principle that one did not have direct ownership of one's own intellectual work is to my mind a pernicious one, which undermines the autonomy and thus the status of the academic researcher.

The Web Site

The Web site at EPE had great potential, but like many ambitious ideas suffered from a number of teething problems. Despite containing some innovative features, the Bristol part of the site has not yet fulfilled its potential as an easily searchable portal for good public history.

The central site itself was initially dogged by technical failures and personnel changes. The time and resources needed to locate or write materials, vet commentary, clear copyright for maps and images, and secure permission from members of the public photographed for the project was a serious drain on our time, despite the support of the central team. That said, the Bristol project was particularly fortunate in that its launch coincided with our involvement with two other public history projects—the Museum of Bristol and the Bristol Black Archive Partnership—so that we were able to negotiate an immensely useful arrangement by which all three agreed to share images and research findings without having to pay fees or arrange individual copyright agreements.[48]

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which I was personally engaged included: Madge Dresser, "Out of the Archive: Minority History and Academic Method" (paper presented a the History and Higher Education Conference, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, February 14–15, 2005, http://www.history .ac.uk/education/conference/dresser.html); Madge Dresser, "The Welsh in Eighteenth-Century Bristol" (paper presented to the Centre for Advanced Celtic Studies, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, December 1, 2005); Madge Dresser, "Beyond the Pale? Mary Carpenter and the Irish Poor in Mid-Victorian Bristol" (paper presented to History in Focus, Migration, http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migration/articles/index.html); Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming (HLSS), mini-series on *Dave Barret Show*, BBC Radio Bristol (March 3–7, 2008), http://info.uwe.ac.uk/news/UWENews/images/bulletinMay08.pdf.

48. "The Bristol Black Archives Partnership is an alliance of African-Caribbean organizations and individuals; the City's Museums, Galleries and Archives Service, Libraries Service, and Equalities Unit; the England's Past for Everyone (EPE) history team at the University of the

The centralized design of the EPE Web site was a bit of a Procrustean bed for our particular project. Accessing the different levels of information available on the site was not easy, and generally speaking the site seemed better geared for presenting archaeological and architectural material than for identifying the respective histories of different ethnic groups. The mapping facility by which key sites in a city are identified was also suited to a more conventionally focused project than to ours. Although a "diversity trail" has been commissioned by EPE to exploit this facility, along with a map identifying places of worship from different faith communities, these will have to be completed after the formal funding of the project has finished.

These last developments raise the question of quality control on the Web site. Who is to vet and edit the Web site after our contracts as historians have ended? Volunteers willing to upload materials onto the Bristol site have proved hard to find. That aside, given the cultural and political sensitivities intrinsic to a site dealing with ethnicity, is it good practice to leave the Web site to be edited by people (be they volunteers or IT experts at central office) without specialist knowledge of the subject?

Another point regarding quality control arose during the course of the project itself. We were on several occasions confronted with urgent requirements to find and post material onto the Web at short notice in order to meet a launch date or milestone.[49] This meant rushing material onto the site under great pressure, and on these occasions, one felt that the academic quality of the material was in danger of being compromised.

Despite these difficulties, the Bristol Web site undoubtedly has its positive points, most notably its capacity as a storehouse for a wide range of relevant primary and secondary sources, including family histories, ephemera, and student dissertations.

Perhaps most importantly, it is acting as a conduit for constructive dialogue between the academic researcher and the wider public. The most notable instance of this was the case of Dixie Brown, a prominent Bristol-based boxer of Caribbean birth from the interwar period. The Bristol Black Archive Partnership—another HLF initiative and one that became formally associated with the Bristol EPE project—produced a calendar of African-Caribbean history in 2007.[50] One of the stories I contributed to the calendar featured Dixie Brown. Using the testimony of three different respondents (all of whom

West of England; HM Lord Lieutenant of Bristol and others committed to protecting local black history." http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/press-releases/2007/mar/tony-benn-launches-bristol-black-archives-partnership.en; for more information on the Bristol Black Archive Project see http://www.englandspastforeveryone.org.uk/resources/assets/L/Learning_Strategy_2007 _2010_2193.pdf.

49.   For example on June 11, 2007 for the launch of the Explore Web site at Portcullis House, see "Parliamentary Launch for UWE History Projects," http://info.uwe.ac.uk/news/UWENews/ images/bulletinJuly07.pdf.

50.   Bristol Black Archives Partnership, http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/press-releases/ 2007/mar/tony-benn-launches-bristol-black-archives-partnership.en; http://www.englandspast foreveryone.org.uk/resources/assets/L/Learning_Strategy_2007_2010_2193.pdf.

Kathleen Charles at her home in Easton,
Bristol with her collection of photos,
documents, and artifacts relating to her
grandfather, the boxer Dixie Brown.
(Photograph taken by Karni Keogh
for the England's Past for Everyone
Project, reproduced with permission
of the University of London)

were white), I portrayed Brown as being reduced to a lone and beggarly existence after he was blinded. My portrayal provoked an outraged response from Kathleen Charles, who turned out to be one of Brown's many Bristolian grandchildren. Her complaint led to my meeting her and learning of the cache of photos, documents, and artifacts she had assiduously collected over the years. This material would otherwise have remained in the private domain, and the very existence of Brown's extended family would have remained undocumented. In the event, a public apology was made and we undertook to copy and digitize these fragile family photos and documents and post them on the Bristol EPE Web site.[51]

Politics, Methodology, and History

It was the section of the book dealing with Bristol's contemporary history that took us into the most difficult territory, both methodologically and politically. What research had been done on Bristol's postwar ethnic minorities was mainly sociological or policy-oriented. Existing oral testimonies did not address all the questions we wished to ask. Yet establishing trust with a representative range of potential respondents in marginalized and often deprived communities is an organic process that takes time and demands a personal commitment that could not be easily contracted out.

Although a few volunteers did some sterling work in this regard, it fell to the historians involved (Edson Burton and me) to do the bulk of interviews.

51. Madge Dresser, "KO'd! Or why academic historians need to get into the public ring," England's Past for Everyone Web site http://www.englandspastforeveryone.org.uk/Counties/Bristol/GetInvolved/Dixie_Brown_Document?Session/

While we obtained some revealing stories, we in no way had the resources to interview a truly representative range of people. The chapter on South Asians, for example, ideally demanded a specialist historian with a wide command of relevant languages, but none could be found who would undertake the brief in the time allowed. A final chapter on the city's displaced people, asylum seekers, and refugees, co-authored by a Zimbabwean journalist, Forward Maisokwadzo (himself a refugee) and me, could only begin to tap a rich and largely unexplored subject area. Moreover, we found that a number of people were fearful of talking openly about their experiences. In the case of asylum seekers and the professionals who worked with them, the reasons for this reticence ranged from a dread of deportation in the case of the former to worries about career progression in the case of the latter. Respondents from diverse backgrounds were worried that their testimony might jeopardize their reputations or even, in some cases, their personal safety if confidences were betrayed, communal norms were seen to be questioned, or criminal activity revealed.

Gaining access to documentary sources was a further challenge. Some invaluable sources held at the Bristol Council for Racial Equality disappeared toward the end of our project when the Council was disbanded and their offices closed. It was only because some duplicate records remained in private hands that we were still able to use them. These and the records recently deposited by the local constabulary in the Bristol record office raised issues around confidentiality and the specter of political controversy. These and other sources also contained observations or used terminology about ethnic minorities that present-day readers would find offensive and which once released into the wider public arena could prove a hostage to fortune by being subject to misinterpretation or misuse.

This certainly does not mean that such materials should be discarded, only that they should be deployed carefully. For example, we included primary sources that used the term "coloured" to describe Caribbeans of African descent, but we explained that we would only use that term when quoting directly from original documents. We also included mention of the role caste still played in the local Sikh community despite such divisions being counter to Sikh doctrine. We gave much thought to the caption contextualizing a medieval caricature portraying the figure of a Jewish man purportedly crucifying an English boy in Bristol, but decided that because of the continued credence given to the so-called "Blood Libel,"[52] we would not include it on the Web site where it would have been more likely to have been reproduced and disseminated without the accompanying explanation.

Pressures exist in public history projects to create a celebratory history that censors offensive descriptions, glosses over difficult issues, or otherwise avoids potential controversy. They are especially evident where the history of

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52. The "Blood Libel" is the centuries-old belief that Jews routinely murdered Christian children in order to use their blood as part of a religious ritual, a charge still being circulated today.

minority groups is being considered in publicly funded projects.[53] Yet, so far as the book was concerned, the EPE management largely left the Bristol historians to make their own judgments in this regard. For our part, we tried to produce a critical and fair-minded narrative that took account of different perspectives. How far we succeeded is for others to judge, although we were aware that the sheer chronological sweep of the book precluded us from examining controversial issues in the detail and depth we would have ideally liked.

We would never have selected a span of 1001 years for an academic monograph. It was in part a romantic device "recalling the feat of Scheherazade whose story-telling powers confirmed the importance of engaging one's audience."[54] Yet taking on such a *longue durée* was also liberating. It enabled us to discern continuities in the history of Bristol's ethnic minority communities of which we would otherwise have been unaware. It emboldened us to rush into areas where specialists feared to tread. As a historian focused mainly on the eighteenth century, my forays into twentieth-century history proved both daunting and stimulating, raising my awareness of the historiographical challenges involved.

Conclusion

The completion of Bristol's EPE project offers some perspective on the extent to which it has fulfilled its brief "to make a difference outside the academy."[55] How successfully have the tensions among academic rigor, political purpose, and public accessibility been negotiated, and what light does our experience shed on the way public history projects affect the reconceptualization of heritage and history?

A major distinguishing feature of the EPE project was that it produced books based on original as well as secondary research. Although not yet widely reviewed, the Bristol project book, *Bristol: Ethnic Minorities and the City c.1000–2001*, has so far attracted a positive response in both the local press and academic journals as a "beautifully produced" and pioneering study, full of "extraordinary stories, well told." The fact that its illustrations, text pan-

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53. Dresser, "Out of the Archive"; Madge Dresser, "Remembering Abolition and Slavery in Bristol," *Slavery and Abolition,* 30, no. 2 (June 2009): 223–46; Kevin Myers, "Historical Practice in the Age of Pluralism" in *Histories and Memories*, eds. Burrell and Panayi (2006), 49–53.

54. Report on the Launch of *Identity and the City: 1001 years of ethnic minorities in Bristol*, March 21, 2006, England's Past for Everyone Web site, http://www.englandspastforeveryone.org.uk/Counties/Bristol/News/Formal_launch_of_the_Bristol_EPE_project_?Session/

55. "Knowledge Transfer" is a goal of the HLF. The UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) defines it as a way to "exploit fully the new knowledge and learning that are generated in higher education institutions . . . [and then] apply [this knowledge] to areas of life [outside the academy] where they make a difference." Arts and Humanities Research Council Web site, "Knowledge Transfer" http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/About/Policy/Pages/KnowledgeTransfer Policy.aspx (accessed February 19, 2008).

els, and maps were singled out for particular attention, arguably confirmed the wisdom of EPE's emphasis on visual materials and accessible design. But as academic historians, the bottom line for us was that the material we offered was factually correct, that local events were set in a wider analytical context, and that the resulting narrative raised questions rather than foreclosed debate. It has been gratifying that reviewers have also praised us on these points.[56]

Yet given the limited number of readers EPE volumes have attracted so far, the uncomfortable thought remains that such a scholarly book-based approach, while reassuring to us, has failed to deliver a truly public history.

Commercial considerations determined a disappointingly small print run and although the 1,500 books originally printed soon sold out, plans for reprinting it (along with other EPE volumes) are on a similarly modest scale.[57] The Bristol library service, which purchased multiple copies of the book, reported these were issued to one hundred readers between March 2008 and August 2009 and that such figures (which seem pitifully small to us) were in fact "very good for a non-fiction title."[58]

However, it is too soon to pronounce on the book's eventual impact. It is already clear that its influence goes beyond the number of volumes sold or borrowed. The very fact that an authoritative and nonpartisan account of a much contested subject exists and is accessible is important in itself. Not only has the book already supported the work of community outreach workers for intercultural projects and provided the basis for related schools' materials,[59] but it has profoundly influenced the content design plans of a major new museum, the Museum of Bristol, due to open in 2011. Nor is the book's influence confined to the UK, as a chapter from it is being reprinted in a French anthology on the British slave trade.[60]

That said, it is to the project's Web site that we must turn for more reas-

56. Evelyn Lord, "Local Historian," review of *Bristol: Ethnic Minorities and the City c.1000–2001* by Peter Fleming and Madge Dresser, British Association for Local History Web site, http://www.balh.co.uk/tlh/review.php?iID=64&rID=7 [accessed 29/9/09]. Evelyn Lord also reviewed the book in *Huguenot Society Proceedings*, 29, no. 1 (2008); Paul Stamper, review in *British Archaeology* (July/August 2009): 54; Eugene Byrne, review in *Venue*, December 7–16, 2007 in feature "Moving Stories."

57. I am informed that fewer than one thousand copies will be reprinted due to the publisher's concerns about storage and sales given the present economic downturn.

58. Quotation from Andrew Cox, reading manager at Bristol Libraries; over a quarter of these issues were from inner-city branches where BME (Black Minority Ethnic) readers are concentrated.

59. England's Past for Everyone Web site, http://www.englandspastforeveryone.org.uk/schools/projects/diversity-through-time-bristol?page=3 (accessed August 29, 2009]. In an e-mail message to the author, August 27, 2009, Dr. Dean Smart states that funding is still being sought for a printed version of the materials which would include both teaching plans and town trails.

60. The EPE Bristol project leaders work closely with Museum of Bristol staff as seconded consultants; the point regarding intercultural projects was made by Asif Khan, Community Engagement Manager at Bristol Libraries in an e-mail message to the author, August 27, 2009; Susan Trouvé-Finding, ed., *The Abolition of Slavery in Britain 1787–1840: Debate and Dissension* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2010 forthcoming).

suring news about the project's wider impact. The Bristol pages of the England's Past for Everyone Web site have proved to be the most popular of all the county sites, attracting 10,000 hits in 2008 and some 1,500 each month in 2009.[61] Despite continuing problems with the Web site structure and ongoing difficulties in getting volunteers to upload new materials, the Bristol site also continues to stimulate the discovery of new material ranging from a unique early Victorian watercolor of "Four Indian residents in Bristol" by John Dempsey[62] to the personal testimony of a Bristolian of Jamaican origin who participated as a school pupil in the 1963 Bristol Bus Boycott against the color bar. It has generated queries from family historians and from local Black-run groups already interested in exploring their history.

The contacts developed through the use of volunteers also promise to generate a new type of collaborative public history publication on UK Somalis, one which aims to marry academic research with the ethnographic expertise of minority activists contacted during the original project.[63]

Moreover, the project has generated a number of spin-off public talks, nationally reviewed plays, local radio broadcasts and papers at academic conferences, all of which attracted robust audiences,[64] as well as an invitation to

61. The 2008 figures were kindly provided by Catherine Cavanagh. The 2009 figures are for January to August, according to Catherine Cavanagh and Melanie Hackett, "[Draft of] Bristol Summary Evaluation Report," EPE 2009, 2.

62. The picture was purchased by T. Longstaffe-Gowan and T. Knox, who have kindly allowed it to be made available on the EPE Web site. Tim Knox is the director of the John Soanes Museum in London.

63. I am currently seeking funding to finance a study of Bristol's Somalis which I plan to co-author with Ahmed Duale, a Somali refugee whom I interviewed for the book, and who suggested the idea of a jointly authored project.

64. Talks ranged from those jointly given with Peter Fleming on "Bristol's ethnic minority history" as part of Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives Service Winter Lecture Series (November 12, 2008) which attracted 130 people, to one given to the European Association of History Educators (April 1, 2008 in Bristol), which attracted over 100. My own contributions included academic presentations to the Public History Conference at the University of Liverpool (April 10, 2008) and the annual Local History Conference at the University of Leicester (July 10, 2009) as well as talks given to the Huguenot Society in London, the London Welsh Family History Society (October 4, 2008 in London), and various Bristol societies including Black and Jewish community groups. Peter Fleming has given academic papers relating to the EPE project at the International Medieval Congress at the University of Western Michigan, Kalamazoo, 2007 (Irish and Welsh in fifteenth-century Bristol), the University of Bristol's Bristol and Ireland Conference, 2008 (The Irish in later-Medieval and early-modern Bristol), and will be speaking at a session in the Britain and the North Sea conference at the University of East Anglia in April 2010 (Icelanders in fifteenth-century England). In addition he gave a paper at the VCH session at the Anglo-American Conference, University of London, 2009 (The City of Bristol). Plays included two short works by Edson Burton and me produced in July 2008 by Show of Strength Theatre Company, see "2008: Trade It," Show of Strength Web site, http//www.showofstrenth.org.uk (accessed August 28, 2009). Our radio broadcasts included a miniseries for BBC Radio Bristol and interviews on Salaam Shalom, a Jewish/Muslim internet radio station, Bristol Community FM, and Star Radio. Academic researchers corresponding with the Bristol project have included Charmion Cabellero of South Bank University, who secured a British Academy grant in 2006 to research mixed-race families in London and Cardiff in 1820–1850; Malcolm Dick of the University of Birmingham, who is similarly interested in the history of refugees and ethnic minorities in Birmingham, and Professor Hazel Carby of Yale University, who is currently researching a book on *Children of Empire.*

publish an account of the project in a collection about the changing nature of local history.[65]

In summary, the project has successfully demonstrated the cultural diversity of Bristol's past and has also established more clearly the city's involvement in the slave trade before the eighteenth century. It has helped to place the experience of specific groups in a longer historical perspective and challenged an essentialist view of ethnicity. If we could not treat such issues as police racism, the caste and clan divisions within the Sikh and Somali populations, educational under-attainment in the African-Caribbean population, interwar fascist activity, or the medieval blood libel in the depth we would have liked, at least we were left free to raise them for future consideration. In these respects at least, the Bristol EPE project has helped to redraw the way the city's history will be perceived in both the academic and the public arenas.

However, the pressures we experienced to a produce a popular public history consonant with government objectives about social cohesion and inclusivity illustrate a pervasive trend which is even more pronounced in those projects which are not book-based, such as museum exhibitions and community history projects. Here, in the push to appeal to younger and more marginalized groups by using visually sophisticated and less textually intensive media, design considerations can end up driving intellectual priorities and distort the quality of the history on offer.

There *is* a genuine case for making historical information pleasurably easy to digest, especially in public history projects. "History Lite" can be a means of enthusing new audiences about the significance of the past and ensuring that taxpayers get a return on the investment they have made in the nation's heritage. Undeniably, nuanced arguments and intellectual complexity are not everyone's cup of tea. But implicit in this argument is the temptation to short-circuit older modes of scholarship, and to denigrate them as fusty, irrelevant, or needlessly expensive. The lack of what we might call a referencing culture in museums and other heritage projects can all too easily undermine intellectual rigor and produce a history that is fatuously celebratory, brainlessly bland, or just plain inaccurate. At some point, even the most populist treatments of public history need to be able to draw on a body of sound scholarship. Expertise should not be confused with elitism.

By the same token, true public accessibility also involves the cultivation of trusting, organic relationships between the project in question and the public, particularly when individuals from more marginalized sections of the population are involved. This can be a time-consuming process needing imaginative and sensitive approaches. It is not always assessable by the reductionist tick-box methods so often favored by officialdom and can be at odds with the

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65. The conference proceedings of the 2009 annual Local History Conference at the University of Leicester is planned and scheduled to include my paper on Bristol and ethnic minority history.

constant requirements to meet publicity or publication deadlines. If, for example, public history projects are to take social inclusion seriously, they need to reconsider the way they define, manage, and recompense volunteers. Government policy needs also to afford public history projects the time and space to find out about and build upon the good practice already established in this regard.

To these ends, more and deeper links need to be established between museums, community groups, and academic historians for everyone's mutual benefit. The government-supported Arts and Humanities Research Council, formed in 2005,[66] has recognized this in its Knowledge Transfer award schemes, but as funding becomes ever scarcer, it remains to be seen how much this interchange between the academy and the public will be able to develop. In short, public history projects need to establish a culture where historians are assured that their intellectual concerns are taken seriously rather than routinely sacrificed on the altars of populism, profit, or political correctness. There *are* different types of knowledge, and not all of it is to be derived from the archive. Historians *can* learn much from volunteer researchers, from the contacts provided and the issues raised by community activists and from the priorities of concern expressed by the wider public. But in the end, considered historical judgment based on a nuanced assessment of often-contradictory evidence, must form the bedrock of even the most populist public history project. If it does not, then public history projects will ultimately betray rather than benefit the public they purport to serve.

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66. Arts and Humanities Research Council Web site, "Knowledge Transfer" http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/About/Policy/Pages/KnowledgeTransferPolicy.aspx.