

## **Report on the JISC-funded digitisation and e-content workshop held by the British Cartoon Archive**

### **1. Background.**

The British Cartoon Archive (BCA) received funding to digitise material for its online catalogue - [www.cartoons.ac.uk](http://www.cartoons.ac.uk) - and to update its website, under two JISC digitisation funding streams. These projects created new functionality allowing users to create their own “groups” of cartoons, add their own comments, and publish them for general access on the web. In order to ensure the rapid take-up of this grouping functionality, the BCA obtained further JISC funding for a workshop that would teach participants to create and deliver groups tailored to their own teaching needs.

### **2. Contacting potential participants.**

The BCA is routinely in touch with a number of regular users of its online catalogue, and also has a general list of users who have registered to gain access to specialist facilities on its website. In order to identify potential participants, directed emails were sent to known users of the BCA catalogue, inviting them to participate in the workshop, and a similar invitation was sent to all registered users in a mass emailing.

The aim was to attract 10-15 participants to the workshop from around the country, drawn from a variety of institutions and with different backgrounds. The call for participants attracted expressions of interest from 30 users, of whom 10 finally registered for the workshop:

Krista Bonello, School of Arts, University of Kent

Ian Coulson, History adviser for Kent Local Education Authority

Christopher Davison, South East Grid for Learning

Diane Heath, postgraduate researcher, University of Kent

Barry Hoffbrand, postgraduate researcher

John Hubbard, History teacher, Abbs Cross School and Arts College

Mike Lieven, tutor at The City Lit: Centre for Adult Learning

Marshall Mateer, National Education Network

Anita O'Brien, Curator, The Cartoon Museum, London

Michael Smith, Honorary Fellow Staffordshire University

The number of participants was at the bottom end of the expected range, but it proved to be a convenient number, allowing personal interaction with BCAD staff during all the practical elements of the grouping workshop.

### **3. The workshop venue.**

The workshop was held in London on Friday, 18 September 2009. The BCA staff gave some thought to the possibility of holding the workshop in Canterbury, where the BCA is based. This would have enabled participants to visit the archive itself, and view uncatalogued original artwork. However, it was felt that London would be more accessible for a wider range of potential attendees.

Two rooms were booked for the workshop at Birkbeck College, University of London. One room with networked computers was booked for the practical sessions on group creation, but an additional breakout room with a screen and white boards was booked for presentations, lunch, and discussions. The computer room was available all through the morning to the end of lunch, but the breakout room was available all day.

This proved a very convenient arrangement for both organisers and participants, and in retrospect it would have been very difficult to hold the workshop in a single computer room.

### **4. The workshop agenda.**

The workshop was structured as a mixture of presentations and hands-on sessions, with the following agenda:

10.00-10.30	Introduction to the BCAD project.
10.30-11.00	Creating and publishing groups on the BCA website.
11.00-11.15	Break.
11.15-1.00	Assisted creation of groups on the BCA website.
1.00-2.00	Lunch.
2.00-2.45	Discussion of grouping functionality and potential use of groups.
2.45 - 3.15	The BCA's digitisation programme, and its un-digitised holdings.
3.15 - 3.30	Break.
3.30 - 4.00	Discussion of the future digitisation and cataloguing of BCA holdings, and their use in teaching.

The first three hours were devoted to the new facility of group creation, with opportunities for participants to create their own groups of cartoons on the BCA website, and to make them publicly available if they wished. If they wanted to continue working into the lunch break, to complete their groups, this was allowed for. A booklet was produced for participants, and distributed in advance, to help them understand the grouping process.

The final two hours of the workshop, after lunch, were devoted to discussions of the grouping functionality, and of ways in which the BCA could structure its future digitisation programme to ensure that users are offered the most suitable material for group creation.

## **5. Group creation at the workshop.**

An important aim of the workshop was to add new cartoon groups to the BCA website, so that general users would get a better idea of what could be done with the grouping functionality, and have access to a wide range of useful groups for teaching purposes. The pre-publicity, and the distribution of the grouping booklet, were arranged with this in mind.

The outcome was far better than expected. The interest generated by the workshop, and the workshop itself, resulted in the publication of 21 new thematic groups of cartoons on the BCA website, which are now available to all users. Some of these groups were created by people who were interested in the workshop, but unable to attend.

The new groups followed a number of different patterns. Some of those created during the workshop were built around questions for students to answer - such as the group on the cartoonists' representation of Hitler <http://www.cartoons.ac.uk/group/how-did-british-cartoonists-portray-hitler-1942> Others incorporated more contextual material, such as the group on Guernica - <http://www.cartoons.ac.uk/group/guernica-reality-and-representation>

The groups created in response to the workshop were on the following topics:

<i>Decolonisation in Ireland</i>	Created/updated: September 10
<i>Czechoslovakia 1938</i>	Created/updated: September 11
<i>League of Nations - Italy and Abyssinia</i>	Created/updated: September 11
<i>League of Nations - Aims, Membership and Powers</i>	Created/updated: September 11
<i>League of Nations - Japan and Manchuria</i>	Created/updated: September 11
<i>The First World War cartoons of W.K. Haselden</i>	Created/updated: September 11
<i>Margaret Thatcher and the Cartoonists</i>	Created/updated: September 15
<i>The History of British Political Cartooning</i>	Created/updated: September 15
<i>Bad Behaviour</i>	Created/updated: September 18
<i>David Low et al - views on Appeasement</i>	Created/updated: September 18
<i>How did Giles portray Mussolini?</i>	Created/updated: September 18
<i>Evolution</i>	Created/updated: September 18
<i>European? Over my dead body.</i>	Created/updated: September 18
<i>The early days of the League of Nations: 1920.</i>	Created/updated: September 21
<i>David Low's cartoons of the Russian Revolution</i>	Created/updated: September 22
<i>How did British cartoonists portray Hitler in 1942</i>	Created/updated: September 23
<i>Nazi-Soviet Pact 1939</i>	Created/updated: September 23
<i>Votes for Women</i>	Created/updated: September 24
<i>Guernica - reality and representation</i>	Created/updated: September 24
<i>League of Nations - Disarmament Conference</i>	Created/updated: October 1

The complete list of groups published on the BCA website, and available to all users, can be found at <http://www.cartoons.ac.uk/available-groups>

## **6. Discussions.**

The final two hours of the workshop took place in the breakout room, and were devoted to discussing the grouping functionality and its future development.

The feedback from participants was very positive, and the grouping functionality was agreed to be straightforward and easy to use. There were some suggestions for slight changes in operation, and these were fed back to the University web designers.

Some participants suggested that users should be allowed to add their own images to groups, and the copyright implications of this were discussed. The BCA staff felt that it would be difficult to monitor such a system, and that the University would be unlikely to accept the copyright risks involved. However, they undertook to investigate the possibility of allowing the uploading of images, with a take-down policy for potential infringement.

The downloading of cartoon groups for use in PowerPoint presentations was also discussed. The ubiquity of PowerPoint was acknowledged, but it was explained that the BCA has always been reluctant to tailor its facilities to particular software packages. However, BCA staff undertook to examine the possibility of downloading groups for teaching purposes, and to continue the BCA policy of clearing rights for classroom use.

The Head of the BCA then gave an overview of the BCA's holdings, and described the BCA's digitisation programme. The range of undigitised collections was described, as outlined on the BCA website at <http://www.cartoons.ac.uk/uncatalogued-collections>. Participants were asked whether they had any suggestions for additional material that should be added to the BCA catalogue, or priorities for its digitisation programme.

Participants felt that it would be useful if the BCA website could include representative images from the undigitised collections, so that users could see the type of material held. As priorities for digitisation and cataloguing, and thus potential incorporation in groups, they particularly mentioned the recent cuttings collection, including cartoons from 2003 to 2009.

## **7. Outcomes from the workshop**

- Publicity for the new grouping facility among users of the BCA website;
- Training and encouragement for workshop participants in using the BCA catalogue, and acting as advocates for the new grouping facility;
- Useful feedback for BCA staff on the use of the grouping functionality, and possible modifications to ensure ease of use;
- A greater number of published groups on the BCA website, available to all users for teaching and research;
- Useful feedback for BCA staff on how to tailor future digitisation and cataloguing to the needs of users, especially in the construction of teaching groups for classroom use.

The workshop also helped to inform the University of Kent about the benefits of the grouping functionality on the BCA catalogue. One unexpected outcome is that the University has undertaken to fund two grouping workshops on its own campuses at Canterbury and Maidstone, to encourage the greater use of this facility by its own staff.

Dr Nicholas Hiley

Head of the British Cartoon Archive

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