Gathering the Voices: Disseminating the Message of the Holocaust for the Digital Generation by Applying an Interdisciplinary Approach

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Introduction

The Gathering the Voices project (GtV) was started by a group of volunteers from the Glasgow Jewish community with the purpose of taking oral testimony from refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe and making them freely available, digitally. It is partly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and its objectives include: setting up a freely-available website, developing learning packs for use in schools and involving groups of undergraduate students in creating educational materials using the testimonies as a basis. The rationale for involving students in university, as well as school pupils, is that although pupils in primary and secondary education in Scotland learn about the Holocaust through formal education, education on the subject of the Holocaust in higher education remains primarily in the domain of history and social science. This project offers a means of introducing knowledge of both the Holocaust itself and aspects of the refugee experience as integral parts of students' learning experience in other subjects. The stories of the survivors illustrate that refugees can become major contributors to society and citizenship. By demonstrating these contributions to society, the lesson can be learned that refugees are worthy citizens in their own right and should not be viewed as being merely dependents on the host country.

The Gathering the Voices project is using blended learning approaches to engage with the general public and, more specifically, young adults and children of school age. Its website enables teachers to link sections easily to the school curriculum. The website contains digitized oral testimonies of Holocaust survivors in Scotland. To ensure accessibility, all of the interviews have been transcribed, and these transcriptions have also been placed on the website pages. The interviews have been divided into sections, and paragraphs have been numbered, as this allows teachers to easily identify the relevant sections for their pupils.

The outcome that will be the focus of this paper is the description of two projects in which students working in interdisciplinary teams, in the disciplines of digital media and design within the School of Engineering, Built and Environment, have contributed to the aims of the GtV project. By involving students from this School in the project, the intention was two-fold: firstly for the students to produce innovative ideas that will appeal to contemporary young learners and, secondly, for the students themselves to learn about the Holocaust from accessing the testimonies on the Gathering the Voices website.

The Concept of Employability Skills

In Glasgow Caledonian University, the academic staff in the School of Engineering, Built and Environment (EBE) have enthusiastically endorsed the concept of developing modern, accessible and, where possible, interactive products for the project. This form of engagement is also clearly consistent with GtV's objective, which is to develop artefacts for the project. Staff

have therefore engaged with undergraduate students in the disciplines of graphic design, product design, interior design and serious games with the aim of enhancing students' knowledge about the Holocaust, but within the discipline, by using the materials from the GtV project as the source material for the assessment, thereby gaining incidental learning rather than the material being regarded as an unrelated topic.

The Role of Digital Storytelling

The act of digital storytelling helps to present the narratives of the Holocaust survivors in a form that is suited to 'digital natives', but at the same time, we need to recognize that mature adults also wish to listen to the stories. This means the recordings have both to sensitively reflect the entirety of the interviewee's story, but also be in manageable listening chunks. By the end of the project, there will be more than 30 interviews on the website. This rich tapestry of individuals' experiences lends itself to digitally diverse platforms. The combination of the spoken voice with photographs, written words and film extracts makes the narrative a powerful experience that engages the audience and increases the accessibility of the material.

Further, the outputs from the project are aligned with the ethos of open education resources (OER). The Higher Education Academy defines open educational resources as "…digital materials that can be used, re-used and repurposed for teaching, learning, research and more, made freely available online..." Open educational resources range from digital assets from course materials, content modules, collections and journals, to digital images, music and video clips. The OER ethos was deliberately selected to apply to all of the GtV resources, because the project team wanted to showcase them to the widest international audience possible. OER has a certain sense of social responsibility in providing "education for all", and the GtV philosophy fits in with this thinking. Lessons about the Holocaust must be taught to future generations, and those involved with this project have a moral duty to ensure that as many people listen to these formerly unheard voices as possible. It is not only that the listener is being educated about the horrors of the Holocaust, but the listener is also being taught about the resilience of the human spirit and that children have become contributing citizens who have integrated into their new country despite the difficulties they have faced.

Moreover, sometimes, it is not worth the effort to keep the resource closed. If it can be of value to other people, one might just as well share it for free. Primarily, the aim of the GtV project is to educate, and it would therefore be morally irresponsible to block users from accessing the resources of the project. The Gathering the Voices Association holds the copyrights to the testimonies, and every interviewee signed a declaration agreeing to the digitization and curation of the resources. Due to the sensitive nature of the oral testimonies, it was also decided that Creative Commons Licensing would not be a suitable approach and that digitized resources should be accessed only through the Gathering the Voices website. This was to ensure that no information was misrepresented or amended.

Conclusions

As knowledge has increased about the project, new refugees from across Scotland have approached the Gathering the Voices Association keen to have their family history recorded on the website. For several of these people, this is the first time they have told their story, so it is incumbent on members of the GtV Association to ensure that their testimonies are recorded appropriately and sensitively. Sadly, the numbers of refugees are decreasing, and some have passed away before their interviews have been placed on the website. In those cases, family members have been asked to listen to the interviews before they are "live".

Lessons have been learned in that the interview process has proven to be more time consuming than was originally anticipated. This is because survivors have requested changes in their interviews and, on some occasions, re-interviews have taken place. When the project first commenced in 2011, interviews were carried out in the survivors' homes, as it was felt that they would feel more comfortable in their own surroundings. However, the survivors have stated a preference for the interviews being held in the Recording Studio. Although this has

necessitated an interview being repeated, it has proven to be more cost effective, as less changes have occurred post interview. The interviewees have also stated that they feel the recording is much more "professional" as it has occurred in the studio.

eLearning packs are also in the process of being developed together with colleagues from the Scottish schools' sector with the anticipated audience including primary and secondary school children across Scotland. Once, the three serious games have been developed and eLearning packs have been completed, training sessions will take place with teachers representing schools across Glasgow to ensure that teachers are familiar with the materials. Thereafter, the teachers' and pupils' experiences in using the material will be evaluated.

There has been widespread interest in the project, both nationally and internationally, as there is an increased awareness that the refugees' testimonies are an important part of Scotland's cultural heritage. The refugees want their stories to be told. They want younger generations to learn about the effect that wars can have on children, and yet, that children can leave war-torn areas and, with support from the host country, make a contribution to that society. […]

Questões

1. O que as histórias dos sobreviventes ilustram e que lição é possível extrair delas? (sugestão: 4 linhas)

2. Por que foram envolvidos, no projeto, estudantes da Escola de Engenharia, Construção e Meio Ambiente? (sugestão: 4 linhas)

3. Como a Academia de Ensino Superior define recursos educacionais abertos e quais são eles? (sugestão: 4 linhas)

4. O que a Associação GtV estabelece sobre os direitos autorais das entrevistas e o acesso aos recursos digitalizados? (sugestão: 5 linhas)

5. Como é descrito o interesse pelo projeto? (sugestão: 5 linhas)