

Dig It! 2015

The organisation

This case study focuses on Dig It! 2015, which was a year-long celebration of Scottish archaeology. Funding has been secured to run Dig It! 2017 which will coincide with Scotland's Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology in 2017.

In 2015, Dig It! 2015 promoted over 1000 events and ran bespoke events and projects. The team consisted of three members of staff, including the project manager, and volunteers were not originally a planned component in 2015, although a need was soon identified. 16-24 year olds and lifelong learners were the target audiences for Dig It! and volunteering was recognised a good way to reach both groups.

In 2015, 82 volunteers contributed 957 hours which equates to 137 days. This is a conservative estimate as many volunteers helped with development in the background.

Types of Volunteering

There were a smaller number of very engaged volunteers operating at a career or senior level. There was a marketing director on the management group, for example, although the volunteers were mainly students, particularly UK and international students who helped with the delivery (and occasionally running) of events. There were also volunteer projects, such as a YouTube channel (which was suggested by volunteers) and research which was carried out in order to run a MOOC in 2017.



"I think it appealed because it looked really fun. Everyone was dressed in pink t-shirts, we used lots of photos for promotion that made it look fun and appealing. We found we had more demand from people wanting to do stuff than we could offer. It was a great way of engaging 16-24 year olds and providing them stuff to do. We found we had a mix of length of involvement as some volunteers came once and others were really keen and brought others along to future events."

- Dr Jeff Sanders, Dig It! 2017 Project Manager

Innovative opportunities

A Roman flash mob was organised and run in Kirkintilloch. The storyteller's story was split across three different sites with 10 minutes at each site and the locations were only promoted on social media a few hours ahead of the event. Volunteers helped deliver the event on the day and brought great enthusiasm which added to the impact of the storyteller.

- *"What worked really well for us were the opportunities for co-creation. It was important to involve volunteers in what they want to do. One example was a St Andrew's Career Crawl where we went to organisations, rather than having a typical jobs fair. The YouTube Channel*

also came from two volunteers suggesting it. And we had volunteers trained to present the Minecraft project Crafting the Past.”Dr Jeff Sanders, Dig It! 2017 Project Manager

Benefits of involving volunteers

To the organisation:

- Reached target audiences
- Improved the events
- Helped with marketing – volunteers were in pink t-shirts!
- Engaged new audiences
- Added capacity for projects
- Involved specialist oversight and contact



For volunteers:

- Networking opportunities
- CV skills
 - *Communication*
 - *Teamwork*
 - *Organisation and time management*
 - *Problem solving*
 - *Motivation*
 - *Leadership*
 - *Creativity, flexibility and openness to change*
 - *Confidence/Assertiveness*
 - *Interpersonal, intercultural and global awareness*
 - *Information and IT literacy*
- Heritage career skills – photography / fieldwork / research
- References

Challenges

- One of the challenges was capacity both in terms of staff time and expertise. According to the Project Manager, “Involving volunteers was an eye opener and offered good CPD for all staff.”
- Costs to cover transport and food for volunteers.
- Office space for volunteers.
- “Linking in what they were doing to our strategy. It could be easy to involve volunteers but we had to think about how it fitted with furthering our own aims and objectives.” – Dr Jeff Sanders, Dig It! 2017 Project Manager

External Policy

Working with students and international students led to issues with work visas. For example, there was a PhD student who was brilliant at presenting the Minecraft project, but she had to return to the United States due to her visa situation.

“A lack of work visas hamper international students moving from volunteering to jobs; this is a potential problem if we leave the EU or restrict working with certain countries; we need the fresh talent programme back!”

– Dr Jeff Sanders, Dig It! 2017 Project Manager

Future of volunteering

Due to Dig It 2017's project focus (2015 and now 2017) there is a chance that long term data might not be kept or held by heritage organisations.

“I think we will see more people looking to volunteer in order to get a job. We're keen to emphasise the need to create more funded internships which would force organisations to think strategically.”

– Dr Jeff Sanders, Dig It! 2017 Project Manager

Support needs

“We work with over 200 organisations but our sector is very diffuse. It would be good if there was a person/hub to match volunteers to opportunities in the sector. For volunteers there is the question of how they get in and navigate their way to the right opportunity. It's often very organic engagement through word of mouth. This would also give the opportunity for someone to think at a strategic level about creating volunteer opportunities. OPiT includes aims on addressing sectoral skills gaps and this would give an opportunity to take a long term look that will benefit everyone.”

– Dr Jeff Sanders, Dig It! 2017 Project Manager

Contact Details

Jeff Sanders
Dig It! 2017 Project Manager
jeff@digit2017.com

