

DIGITAL

f^olk



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DIGITAL FOLK

A report on digital technologies and practices among
folk arts practitioners in England

UNIVERSITY OF
WESTMINSTER



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Of
Sheffield.



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

Digital tools used by project participants

abc notation
amazon
ballad index
bandcamp
bodleian ballads
bright young folk
british library sound archive
country dance and song society
celebrating cotswold morris
chiff and fipple
concertina.net
contra
digital trad
dropbox
earmaster
english ceilidh dance
eceilidh
english folk dance and song society
english broadside ballad archive
englishfolkinfo
facebook
farne folk archive north east
fiddleforum
flickr
folk against fascism
folk north west
folk tune finder
folkopedia
folkplay.info
forscore
full english
fun with folk
garageband
glasgow broadside ballads
glos christmas
glos trad
google
hallam traditions
henrik norbeck site
instagram
irish traditional music archive
itunes
jc abc
linkedin
magisto
mainly norfolk
master mummings
morris dancing discussion list
melodeon.net
metronome app
mike harding
morris.org
mudcat cafe
museum of british folklore
musical traditions online magazine
mustrad
myspace
newzik
notateme
how many morris dancers are on facebook
online academy of irish music
oral history society
pinterest
recorder plus
reverb nation
roud indexes
shape note
shazam
sibelius
skype
snapchat
song collectors collective
soundcloud
soundhound
spiral earth
splashtop
spotify
squares
strathspey
suffolk folk
sussex traditions
symphony pro
take six
the craic
the session
thumbjam
trad connect
traditional song forum
tumblr
tunable
tunebook SD
tunepal
twitter
village carols
village music project
web feet
west cumbrian music
whatsapp
wikipedia
yorkshire garland
youtube

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Morris dancers at 3 Shires event, 2015

1 - Overview of project

This report presents the key findings of the **Digital Folk** Project. Since 2014 this study has been investigating the ways in which folk arts participants make use of digital resources and networks in order to learn, collaborate, reinterpret traditional material and create new work. It focuses on the folk scene in England, considering music, dance, and related traditions. The project is a research collaboration between the University of Sheffield and the University of Westminster, and has been funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (Grant no. AH/L014858/1).

Research questions

- ▶ What digital tools and resources do folk artists in England use?
- ▶ How do folk arts participants in England perceive their engagement with digital materials?
- ▶ What are the effects of digital tools and resources on the folk arts in England?

Scope, scale and methods

The project has been based around a combination of ethnographic interviews, participant observations and surveys of participants in various genres across the folk scene in England. The research was carried out from 2014-17, and included:

- ▶ Observation of how people use digital technology in connection with folk arts.
- ▶ Face-to-face interviews with over 50 people with a range of ages and experience.
- ▶ Fieldwork at events in Sheffield and festivals at Towersey, Sidmouth and Lowender Peran.
- ▶ Online and face-to-face surveys.

The qualitative data which constitutes the bulk of the research is supported by an online survey which produced over 600 responses from across 4 continents, via posts on *Facebook*, *Twitter*, researchers' blogs and the project website. The survey asked questions on the following topics:

- ▶ Demographics/geography of respondents.
- ▶ Digital participation - what, how long?
- ▶ Online resources used.
- ▶ Digital devices/software used.
- ▶ Sharing.
- ▶ General attitude to digital technology.

The Researchers

Dr Simon Keegan-Phipps, University of Sheffield: Principal Investigator; Senior Lecturer in Ethnomusicology with specialisms in contemporary English folk music and dance cultures.

Professor David Gauntlett, University of Westminster: Co-Investigator; Professor of Creativity and Design with specialisms in the social implications of everyday creativity.

Dr Cinzia Yates, Research Associate: specialisms in Manx/Celtic traditions of music and dance.

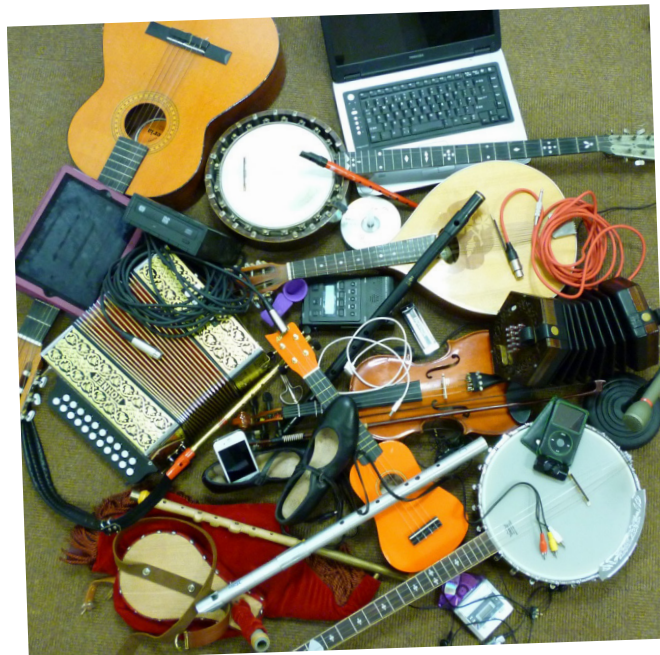
Dr Lucy Wright, Research Associate: specialisms in participatory arts, including carnival troupe dancing, folk and punk.

Dr Jo Miller, Research Associate: specialisms in education and traditional music in Scotland.

Will Quale, Research Assistant: responsible for online survey data mapping.

Other outputs

The project has kept a blog, engaged with *Twitter* and *Facebook*, held a launch event at the University of Westminster, a symposium and conference at the University of Sheffield and delivered presentations at numerous academic conferences in the UK, Ireland, the USA and China. Forthcoming publications include a chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Social Media and Music Learning*, and a book-length study of **Digital Folk**.



Acknowledgements

Digital Folk would like to thank all who assisted with the project: interviewees (listed at the end of this report), survey participants, conference contributors, and the English Folk Dance and Song Society. Photographs are cc. by **Digital Folk** unless otherwise stated.

2 - What?

Digital tools and practices are embedded in folk arts participation, and ubiquitous in most activities surveyed for this research. Folk-oriented digital pursuits range widely in their nature and their significance for different individuals, and are often used in combination with 'general' digital behaviours. As with non-specialist search resources like *Google*, some popular folk and traditional music tools have taken on status as vernacular verbs (such as '*Tunepal* it' or '*Mudcatters*'), illustrating the extent to which they are established in folk activities and identities. People have also devised their own digital solutions to help with particular tasks like programming an evening of dance, and new developments build on past innovations. Digital resources used by folk arts participants range from general and broadly popular social networking sites, to more specialist or tradition-specific ones; users of *Tunepal* and *The Session* are mainly instrumentalists, while those consulting the *Morris Dancing Discussion List* are, clearly, morris performers.

Websites and forums

Research for **Digital Folk** found that the discussion board *Mudcat* and tune-sharing site *The Session* were the most popular folk websites: both are over twenty years old, and share a long-standing crowd-sourcing and community element. Event and festival sites were also visited frequently, as well as those of local and national organizations such as the English Folk Dance and Song Society. The most common use of websites was said to be learning songs and tunes, but other purposes included keeping up with news, connecting with friends and promoting and investigating events. There was a general awareness that sites need to be coherently designed, well maintained and regularly updated in order to retain their appeal.

The majority of survey participants who responded to a question on folk-oriented discussion forums described themselves as occasional users (71%), while others (29%) were regular users. Notably, many folk arts participants are not recent digital converts, but have been involved from an early stage. Aside from *Mudcat Café*, longstanding specialist dance forums, like the *Morris Dancing Discussion List* and the *ECeilidh* list, were noted as significant in the research. A large proportion of respondents also cited the forum-like function of *Facebook* groups. Asked if they posted things, a minority (8%) said they did this regularly. For many, then, forum archives appear to serve as a historical repository for consultation.

If you want to find stuff out you tend to go to *YouTube*, don't you? (Alex Lee)

In the past [...] one of us would go on holiday to Ireland and we'd root and we'd find new stuff and bring it back [...] Now, we go to iTunes. (Bernadette Twomey)

When I joined digital there was already a couple of folk groups bulletin boards on the internet, and that was in '86, '85. (Stephen Rowley)

Most of the participants on *ECeilidh* actually know each other in real life [...] If you go for larger communities [...] that's where the misunderstandings can happen. (Peter Crowther)

Social media

The vast majority (87%) of the people who took part in the survey consider themselves regular users of social media, and all reported to use *Facebook*, which concurs with the findings of *Digital Culture 2017* (MTM: Nesta & Arts Council England, Sept.2017, p16). Most organizations and groups involved in the research demonstrated considered digital strategies such as linking accounts across social media. Favoured networking sites were *Twitter* and *YouTube*, although still-image oriented sites - *Imgur*, *Flickr* and *Instagram*, for instance - were less commonly used.

Archives

Many folk musicians and dancers are engaging with a growing wealth of internet-based digital archives such as The Full English. This project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and National Folk Music Fund, involved the digitization of part of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, and was launched in 2013 by the English Folk Dance and Song Society as ‘the largest searchable digital archive of early 20th century English folk arts’. As well as national resources like this and the British Library Sound Archive, there are smaller local and genre-specific archives. Such digitization projects are attractive to funders, but require long-term maintenance, and it can be difficult to assess the extent and nature of their impact for individuals, groups, amateurs, activists and professionals within England’s various folk scenes. **Digital Folk** gathered responses from a variety of users on their experience of consulting The Full English, and these have contributed to the recommendations at the end of this report.

Tools and apps

New digital tools are constantly being produced and adapted, and performers’ own curiosity or requirements may provide the stimulus for these, as in the case of *abc* notation, which enabled further developments. Other innovations have included virtual instruments such as the *Englitina* concertina app, playable on handheld digital devices. The inventor’s motivation in this case was not to replace the original instrument, but to make it more accessible and enable wider participation. Such apps have further potential as compositional tools.

Social media’s primary function has to be either organizing an existing team or seeking to promote the team, to recruit new members or new bookings elsewhere.
(Tom Besford)

On the [*Glos Trad*] website we’ve been able to put a lot of material which just wouldn’t have seen the light of day otherwise.
(Gwilym Davies)

[I was] trying to remember tunes that I’d heard in a session the night before [...] I’d write the notes down on a piece of paper like on a beer mat or something. That was sort of the start of *abc*. (Chris Walshaw)

There would be no *Tunepal*, no *The Session.org* without the *abc* language.
(Bryan Duggan)



Rob Harbron with the *Englitina*
photo: University of Westminster

If you start that up and play it away and start the voice recorder, it'll record it. I can go into the pub and go 'ooh, that's a nice idea', and whack it in [the *Englitina*] and no-one need ever know!
(Rob Harbron)

Research participants identified their smartphone as the device they used most regularly while involved in folk activities, followed by their laptop, as shown in the table below:

device	occasional users	regular users
smartphone	164	201
laptop	144	178
tablet	111	127
sound recorder	149	78

The idea [with the *Englitina*] was to come up with a way that people could have the experience of playing the instrument [...] to the point where they can maybe play a tune or something on the iPad or the iPhone. And then, you know, maybe they would be interested in getting a real instrument.
(Michael Eskin)

3 - Who?

Individual approaches, cultural tendencies

There is no monolithic set of processes for using digital media and technologies. The participants we talked to displayed a variety of views towards digital technologies and their role in folk activities. Individuals tend to develop a core set of digital practices (usually involving more than one device, application or website) that they feel provides them with the opportunity to enhance their participation, whether it be taking part in online discussions, searching for material on archive resource sites, or uploading recordings to *SoundCloud* from their mobile phone.

Beyond an obvious gravitation by specialists towards corresponding websites (for example, concertina players were likely to consult *concertina.net*), few clear differences could be distinguished between the digital activities of participants in particular genres. However, some cultural tendencies did emerge. For example, the greater availability of digital resources for

instrumental musicians of Irish and Celtic traditions appeared to mirror a slightly lesser engagement by English instrumental musicians with equivalent sites, particularly those online resources that have been crowd-sourced. Meanwhile, cross-cutting themes were also apparent: generally, for instance, access to video seemed to play an important role in learning across all activities, including instrumental and vocal music, where the audio element might otherwise appear the more important aspect.

It's not 'all about the young people'

As already mentioned, some key examples of online folk activity, such as listserv communities and .net sites, date back to the earliest days of the web. The late 20th century maturing of the folk revival coincided with rapid digital developments, as shown by the timeline inside the cover of this report. These factors may partly explain the age distribution of contributors to the online Digital Folk survey, illustrated below:

age	%
60-99	41%
50-59	19%
40-49	12%
30-39	13%
18-29	13%
0-17	2%

Educators

Many folk educators are enthusiastic users of digital resources, managing communication with students via Email or *WhatsApp*, uploading audio-visual items and notation to websites, directing students to resources on *YouTube*, or conducting lessons via *Skype*. *Tunepal*, designed originally for session playing, has also been observed being employed by tutors to 'have a name' on a tune being taught. The Folk Educators Group is the most active of the online communities run by the English Folk Dance and Song Society, and our research participants gave very positive feedback on that organization's Resource Bank, assisting teachers to quickly find website materials in a usable format. Learners may engage with digital material designed as an educational resource, and also draw on other user-generated content to aid their development.

There's a thing called the Scottish [country] dance database [...] which has a huge selection of instructions [...] Often there'll be a *YouTube* link you can go to, to watch a video of the dance being done.
(Andrew Kellett)

I've been a member of a [morris] team where you might get half of them who were in IT technology.
(Stephen Rowley)

I've been an internet user since it virtually started [...] Anyone I know who is doing any research in folk is very au fait with online.
(Sue Allan)

[The Full English] has been essential for my practice in delivering traditional song and customs instruction for school pupils.
(Mary Humphreys)



Recording street dancing, and at a slow session, Sidmouth 2015

We [Silkstone Greens morris] have a private *Facebook* group, and we will upload films to there so that new dancers in between practices can sort of look at the dance [...] so they keep the learning going.
(Melanie Barber)

Performers

Digital tools facilitate working on repertoire between live rehearsals and classes, and are also used in performance settings, where they may give performers more control and options for sound production. Ceilidh band 'Urban Folk Theory' describe an example of this:

On stage we take a [programmed] laptop [...] so that the drummer has a click track playing in his ears [...] all the whizz bang sounds are starting to go off and they're all set to trigger on the track at various points. As the music goes forward it just builds up.
(Nicholas Haynes)

Many folk performers often have several roles beyond live performance, using social media extensively to communicate with each other and with audiences, managing aspects of their own publicity and recording activities.

[We] record something, send it to each other and send it back, and then call each other on [...] *Facebook* [*Messenger*], or [*Google*] *Hangout*, or *Skype* and [...] talk about it.
(Alex Cumming)

I carry around an old BT home hub [...] and just wander around the floor with an iPad to mix [...] We don't necessarily need a separate sound engineer.
(Peter Crowther)

4 - Why?

Digital practices are generally intended to enable, promote and enhance participation and therefore considered a means to an end, rather than folk activities in themselves. **Digital Folk's** research found that digital technology was typically articulated as a 'tool': something to facilitate involvement (learning new repertoire, communicating with others, finding out about events) and likened to print media as a means of spreading information widely and efficiently. When asked about possible conflicts between oral transmission and digital dissemination, most rejected this. However, some kind of hierarchy appears to exist which positions learning directly from a person as ideal, learning from older media

I prefer to use it as a work tool actually, in terms of what persona, which parts of myself I want to be available for anyone to see.
(Laurel Swift)

(such as a book or CD) as somewhere in the middle, and learning from more recent (digital) media as less desirable. Curiosity about its potential has been a factor in motivating some to engage proactively with digital technology, but innovation has not, on the whole, been the driving force in most folk artists' use of digital materials.

Digital aids are primarily used for 'learning' (material, style, techniques) for live events or performance and 'researching' contextual information about repertoire. Learning and researching mirror the two main audiences for digital resources, and are also closely interlinked, since the latter is considered by many to be an important proficiency for a folk participant. The Full English has demonstrated this connection via the extensive educational outreach and promotional activities that accompanied the launch of the digital archive.

Learning

Many practitioners are acutely aware of the key role of transmission processes in learning and teaching the folk arts, including the uses and potential impacts of digital tools. One of the most effective uses of social media is as a tool for communication between teacher and students, and among students themselves, facilitating the sharing not only of practical information about classes, but also repertoire, supporting rehearsal between meetings. All this contributes to nurturing a community of learners. Learners are, moreover, proactive in generating as well as sourcing digital materials from which to learn. Mobile phones, for example, are widely employed as recording tools, enabling learning from a live-recorded rendition of an unfamiliar tune or song by privately studying the recording. In this way recording technology has enabled a form of enhanced or augmented 'oral transmission' that supports a musician's ability to learn 'by ear', but with the opportunity to slow down, pause or scan through the recording.

Researching

The internet offers a time-saving resource for research purposes, and facilitates consultation and combination of multiple sources. Even where transcriptions are available, researchers are excited by seeing original manuscripts, and the 'pilgrimage' and the 'thrill of the chase' continue to play an important role in research. The 'chance discovery' also remains a popular narrative. However, it is worth noting that digital activities may mean that other practices, such as creating a physical archive, are neglected in favour of the instant impact.

If you [...] want to find a recording of a tune, you just ask someone on the internet, and someone knows the answer somewhere.

(Nicola Beazley)

A digital community [...] means that people that aren't locally near [...] can learn tunes online whenever they want, there's forums and stuff that they can engage with it, sort of keeps it alive a little bit.

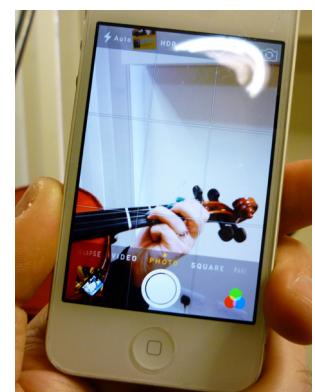
(Laurel Swift)

When you teach anywhere they say, 'can I film you?' And they have it on their phone, they put it on their tablet [...] It's a huge aid to learning.

(Melanie Barber)

You're always after the real thing, you're always after the authentic, you're always after the earlier version.

(Steve Roud)



5 – Digital Democracy

Digital media is characterised by a sense of homemade ‘democracy’. Discussion on sites like *Facebook*, *Mudcat Café* and the *Morris Dancing Discussion List*, for example, indicates significant differences of opinion and approach within the folk scene in England, such as some perceiving ‘folk’ as a context, others as a canon. Expanded possibilities for interaction with people in the wider folk scene also emphasise differences as well as similarities, one view being that online forums merely mimic and facilitate the peer-to-peer exchanges of oral tradition. Perceptions of anonymity online, however, may pose challenges as well as apparent equality of opportunities for participants. Discussion forums, whether attached to websites or free-standing groups, may be online extensions of real-life relationships, but have the same potential as any other online community space for ‘flaming’ or anonymized, off-topic confrontation, and are not easily navigable as an archived resource.

The development of sites and media, such as *abc* notation, demonstrates how individuals have explored ideas and created solutions to problems not only in order to satisfy their own curiosity, but also to help others. The overriding ethos appears to be one of community ownership, mutual support and encouragement.

Authority

Who is producing the content of online collections? Who has authority as ‘tradition bearer’? And how far does the ‘democratic’ ethos of the internet fit with the community ethos of folk? **Digital Folk’s** research illustrates a broad understanding of ‘folk’ primarily as ‘vernacular’, rather than purely archaic. Most interviewees were knowledgeable about debates of ossification, mediation and living tradition, and few considered digital media as problematic for folk. Again, digital activities were seen as a means to an end, not outcomes in themselves. One impact of this vision of folk as ‘of the people’ is that folk participants have an appetite for local and small scale resources as well as larger, institution-led projects like *The Full English*.

Volunteers and crowd-sourcing

A significant legacy of the second folk revival has been a generalised do-it-yourself ethos, manifest in peer-to-peer learning conducted informally at folk clubs and sessions, and more formally through workshops held as part of the growing festival circuit. This activity is translated in the digital realm through folk practitioners’ contributions to websites such as *Folkopedia*, *Village Music Project* and *The Full English*, which make use of volunteers to input data,

There’s like all these forums for teachers [...] I don’t like to get involved, you just end up getting into an argument.
(Emma Durkan)

Just because it’s on *YouTube* doesn’t mean they’re doing it right.
(Colin Hume)

In most cases [singaround circles] are not interested in being found; they are groups of friends who go in order to share songs [...] It would change the dynamics of what they’re doing.
(Steve Thomason)



transcribe manuscripts and write news and blogs. Mutual support exists amongst online communities, and the local and global reach of the worldwide web has the potential to subvert the elitism of mass-media.

The relative anonymity of the online environment may offer encouragement to learners who wish to avoid the scrutiny of others while they improve their skills. It also increases the agency of learners to access the tools which best suit them. Non-music readers, for instance, can select and manipulate other means of learning, such as audio-visual items, bypassing the need to master staff notation. The *abc* language enables participants to make and share transcriptions of tunes digitally, fitting a self-consciously organic and vernacular process of transmission. Future research could further explore how musicians combine digital and live learning, and the roles of 'teachers' in this process.

People who can't read [music] can take a code and they can put it into the computer and they can play that slowly, and it will beep it out and they can follow it note by note by note and then speed it up, so the fact that they can't read music is not important.

(John Adams)

6 - Boundaries

The **Digital Folk** Project considered the issue of boundaries and limits to the acceptability of digital activities among folk practitioners.

Authenticity

Many participants still confessed to a feeling of inauthenticity surrounding the sourcing of material online, or too heavy a reliance on any media, in favour of face-to-face interactions and transmission. This raises a well-rehearsed debate about capturing performance in any medium, and the potential impact of 'one-off' performances or interpretations on the future development of aesthetic judgements and the folk canon. Implications of the digital format include problems in the crediting of sources, and the commodification of folk has heightened awareness of recordings as potentially commercial products. Participants occasionally perceived a tendency by others to use the internet predominantly for marketing. Indeed, the monetization of folk performance is raised in interviews as something which might impact more negatively on the practice than digital technology per se, but which digital technology has the potential to encourage.

Digital devices in participation and performance spaces

The encroachment of digital devices into face-to-face spaces is contentious, and there is a willingness to accept digital activity in some aspects of participation but not others. For example, most feel it is fine to use *Facebook* to organize or find a singaround or session, but many consider it less acceptable to use an iPhone or laptop as a 'crib sheet' for song lyrics or tunes at the actual event. This suggests that aspects

You would not put someone on a festival stage really with their iPad with the music on [...] you're putting up a barrier [...] also it shows you haven't bothered to go into it a bit.

(Sue Allan)

of ‘participation’ are valued in contrasting ways. Performance is viewed as distinct from preparation, for example, and implies an emphasis on outcome or product rather than process: so long as the end result remains intact, the journey to get there may be less important, or governed by different ‘rules’. Digital is widely accepted as a tool to facilitate social interactions, but less accepted as a fundamental or obtrusive presence in the performance space itself.

However, subsections of the folk scene appear to use digital technology differently. Ceilidh is an area where there may be greater willingness to experiment with digital aspects of performance, perhaps occupying a space between presentational and participatory. Who is ‘performing’ at a ceilidh? The band performs, but are not usually scrutinized by a (presumed-passive) audience, to the extent that a concert band might be, while the dancers ‘perform’ particular steps, but are also participants. The dancers themselves are not required to use digital technology in order to participate, but appear tolerant of electronic instruments and devices to create a soundscape for the participation. Professional performers may be happy for audience members to photograph or film gigs, and these are often shared online during or after the event.

I have no objection to people recording in sessions providing they ask, which they rarely do.
(Rod Stradling)

I didn’t get any ‘Oh you shouldn’t be doing that!’ [...] I think the general attitude was ‘Well so long as it helps him to call the dances and he’s doing a good job, we don’t care’.
(Colin Hume)

Mobile phone users, Mabon concert, Lowender Peran 18.10.15

- ▶ Festival organizers, to gather material for future publicity
- ▶ Audience members, reporting to friends how the gig was going
- ▶ Family of band, so ‘the boys can see it from a different angle’
- ▶ Sound engineer for Mabon, recording for future publicity
- ▶ Member of another band tweeting ‘we’re just about to play!’

I wouldn’t contemplate [...] having no folk instruments live [...] I think that would be the limit if you’re going to play in a ceilidh band or a concert band, you’ve got to have the live instruments.
(Nicholas Haynes)

Recognition of ‘tradition vs. digital’ juxtaposition

Despite regular statements by folk participants that the involvement of digital technology is clearly compatible with folk contexts, awareness of the potential disjunction between ‘tradition’ and the digital world is often expressed through humour (circulated online). Examples include the *Facebook* group *How many Morris Dancers are on Facebook?* and the name of the band Contra Alt Delete, who ‘take great pleasure in taking traditional tunes found in video games and the depths of the internet alike and turning them into something suitable for a contra dance’ (<http://contra-alt-delete.co.uk>).



Digital tuner, Sidmouth 2015

7 - Challenges and opportunities

The findings of **Digital Folk** demonstrate widespread recognition of opportunities to create new digital resources. Technological possibilities include the creation of new apps, or the wider sharing of existing ones, and the trend is to adopt and adapt what the technology offers.

Skills training

A number of respondents reported lack of knowledge about how to access the necessary skills training to help them digitize, curate and disseminate folk material online. Such training is available, but not widely known. A central portal for training opportunities and skill sharing relating to digital archiving, for example, would be useful.

Digitization of archives

While the digitizing of cultural heritage remains attractive to funding bodies, related ‘non-digital’ activities like cataloguing and updating are less so. There is also a perception (especially in the case of digitized archives of analogue materials and documents) that considerations of expected users are secondary to the ‘digitizing imperative’. In other words, there was a general awareness of pressure felt within the cultural sector to digitize, label and upload material to the internet, without a clear sense of who would find and engage with it, and how.

Recommendations for resource development

Identify/anticipate your audience

- ▶ Anticipate the likely (and unlikely) uses of the resource, and build this into the initial layout. Consider the needs of both experienced folk enthusiasts and newcomers. A ‘beginner’s guide’ such as that on the EFDSS website might be good for novices.
- ▶ Consider multiple ‘entrances’ or interfaces dependent on users’ interests. Digital collections could have a greater impact if tailored pathways into them were available.
- ▶ Where possible, build in the means of identifying the level of use of the resource, and gathering regular feedback.
- ▶ Consider local and general use; how do ‘national’ resources relate to local or specialized ones? Micro-sites could play this role.
- ▶ Where possible, extend the usefulness of resources by designing selections for teachers and learners, such as the resource bank on The Full English. Education and outreach need not only be aimed at young people; consider the needs of adults.

[The funder] can see an end product. What’s much harder is to get money for cataloguing, because it takes time.
(Steve Roud)

Some teachers and some older young people might be really interested to see the archival side of it, but many of them just want to see ‘right, what am I going to teach year 8 tomorrow?’
(Rachel Elliott)

Practical matters when designing a resource

- ▶ Plan for use on mobile devices such as iPad and iPhone.
- ▶ Make it clear how to enter/begin, with a portal showing more images and less text. Combine concise text/images on introductory pages to draw users in and give hints as to content.
- ▶ Consider embedding a short introductory 'how to use' video.
- ▶ The facility to create a personal digital tune book or song book could be an asset: consider account-based 'favourites' or 'bookmarks' function, or easy 'copy link' stable URL options, enabling archiving from multiple sites.
- ▶ Consider ways to embed geographical location as a search/display function of the resource.
- ▶ Consider a 'featured selection' to enable chance discoveries. This might take the form of a regular randomized selection, an 'editor's choice', or perhaps a blog, podcast or curated selection by a high profile musician.
- ▶ Enable 'full screen' feature, and use easy-to-read size text.
- ▶ Keep website navigation and searching steps to a minimum (no more than 2 clicks to begin searching), and have a 'back' button rather than generating multiple open tabs.
- ▶ Consider including searchability of items by tune/song type.

Think multi-modally

- ▶ Link together documentary and audio-visual items wherever possible, to animate - or demonstrate - the items listed.
- ▶ Have audio recordings of real instruments and voices (rather than midi) if possible.
- ▶ Consider the needs of particular users. For dancers, for example, video steps from different angles, and link to notation and film of complete performance(s).

Use the crowd

- ▶ Accept and encourage crowd-sourced links to closely related items and performances.
- ▶ While it is valuable to have original archive items, to display the source material, transcriptions are helpful. Seek volunteers, perhaps via developing links to Higher Education institutions, for example, for transcription or keyword tagging of manuscripts.
- ▶ Consider pros and cons of a users' forum on a site; there are many existing forums for the exchange of views.

It wasn't the thing I was looking for, it was always the thing that I stumbled upon.
(Erika Timar)

If your website updates frequently then people won't mind going back to it, but if [...] nothing's really changed then you'll lose them.
(Paul Woodhead)

Aim for quality

- ▶ Aim for best quality when recording, filming or photographing. Consider potential future uses such as archives or education, as well as immediate purpose.
- ▶ If digitizing a physical item, preserve originals for safekeeping and work with digital copies.
- ▶ Address issues of ownership, internet protocol and copyright.

Organized teams that had an archive would collect things [...] Digital media [...] makes people not think to write it down and record it anywhere.
(Tom Besford)

Next Steps

Digital Folk has sought to engage in discussions about how the folk arts influence - and are, in turn, shaped by - digital interactions, as a way to explore the broader meaning of 'doing tradition' in the modern world. The topic is, however, vast. The focus of this project has been on opening up the territory to map out themes and glean ideas for ways ahead, and the findings have illuminated potential areas for further research and development activity. These include a fuller exploration of how research of this type can support future work by stakeholders, and how Higher Education institutions and organizations can work in collaboration to identify and address recommendations such as those listed above. The recent proliferation of web-based tools and resources means that there are new opportunities for folk arts bodies to work together, for example, by sharing analytics, skills and resources, in order to make the most of the potential offered by digital tools and practices to support engagement with folk activities.

We would now welcome the opportunity to talk directly with any individuals or organizations who are interested in exploring how the details of the project's findings can help them to plan or shape their digital practices or resource developments. Contact us via the social network links on the cover of this report, or email digitalfolk@sheffield.ac.uk

Interviewees

John Adams, musician, founder of the Village Music Project (Yorkshire)
Sue Allan, researcher, journalist, performer
Melanie Barber, president of the Morris Federation, clog dancer,
Nicola Beazley and Alex Cumming, young folk duo (Sheffield and Boston, MA)
Tom Besford, rapper, morris dancer
Richard Butterworth, English Folk Dance & Song Society digital media design
Daisy Black and Andrew Swaine, English ceilidh callers
Peter Crowther, bassist in Alberio Ceilidh Band
Gwilym Davies, Single Gloucester project, collector of gypsy songs
Bryan Duggan, inventor of *Tunepal*, lecturer at Dublin Institute of Technology
Emma Durkan, Scottish fiddle player and teacher
Rachel Elliott, English Folk Dance & Song Society education director
Michael Eskin, inventor of apps for melodeon, concertina, flute and others
Sean Goddard, Sussex Traditions website
Mike Greenwood, Royal Scottish Country Dance Society digital marketing communications officer
Cate and Nicholas Haynes, Urban Folk Theory (Shropshire)
Colin Hume, dance caller, especially Playford dances
Mary Humphreys, folk singer, scholar
Jeremy Keith, founder of *thesession.org*
Andrew Kellett, Scottish country dance tutor (London)
Bev and Ray Langton, Shrewsbury Morris facilitators
Alex Lee, guitarist, new to folk
Frank Lee, melodeon player, rapper sword maker (Northeast)
Elly Lucas, photographer, folk musician (Sheffield)
Peter Millington, Master Mumpers website
Derek Holland Moore, folk singer, organizer (Devonshire)
Chris Parkinson, musician
Gordon Potts, Performing Rights Society folk music rep., ceilidh caller, musician (London)
Ellie Reed, PhD student, folk enthusiast
Christian Reynolds, post-doctoral researcher, folk enthusiast
Steve Roud, Roud song index
Doc Rowe, photographer, collector, owner of the Doc Rowe Archive
Stephen Rowley, artist, organizer, musician, Single Gloucester project
Derek Schofield, scholar, former editor of English Dance and Song magazine
Jenny Smith, Appalachian dancer with Kickin' Alice (Bridgnorth)
Laura Smyth, English Folk Dance & Song Society, library and archives director
Max Spiegel, founder of *Mudcat Café* forum
Rod Stradling, founder of Musical Traditions online magazine
Laurel Swift, performer, teacher, London Youth Folk Ensemble, Shooting Roots
Erika Timar, writer, folk enthusiast
Steve Thomason, singer-songwriter, session-goer, self-confessed digital non-participant
Bernadette Twomey, principal of Scoil Rince Nua Irish dancing school (Sheffield)
Mike Walsh, PhD candidate, Irish flute player and teacher
Chris Walshaw, *abc* notation
Trevor Wilkinson, tenor horn player
Paul Woodhead, Oakenhoof Folk Development Agency

TIMELINE of (selected) digital folk developments

- 1962 First portable cassette player
- 1979 Sony Walkman
- 1982 First commercially available CD player
- 1983 First version of MIDI released
- 1987 DAT tape introduced
- 1980s automated mailing list manager (Listserv) developed
- 1988 Digital Tradition song database
- 1988 MDDL began
- 1995 Original email software 'Listserv' patented (used since 1986)
- 1993 abc notation software released
- 1993 First edition of mp3 format released
- 1996 Henrik Norbeck site
- 1996 'The Session' website started
- 1996 Original version of Mudcat café started
- 1999 Blogger
- Late '90s First version of Tunepal
- 2001 Wikipedia
- 2001 Colin Hume's 'dance organizer' programme
- 2003 Myspace
- 2004 Flickr
- 2004 Facebook
- 2005 YouTube
- 2006 Twitter
- 2006 Spotify
- 2007 Soundcloud
- 2007 iPhone
- 2008-9 Take 6 archive project (EFDSS)
- c.2009 ABC website
- 2009 Tunepal website launched
- 2009 Thumbjam app
- 2010 Tunepal iPhone app
- 2011 Tunepal Android app
- 2013 Full English digital archive launched by EFDSS

DIGITAL

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