

Documenting debate: Online communities and the expansive interactive documentary

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Abstract:

As a genre, the interactive documentary is no longer in its infancy and has developed to become an accepted format to deliver factual content. Currently, online audiences can collaborate in the creation of interactive documentation such as wikis, forums and message boards. They can now actively participate and disseminate views and opinions through social media. However, whilst the means of participation has greatly increased there remains a question over whether this same audience can enhance a traditional documentary with their contributions? If so, how would it be managed and what form would this take? To explore these questions, we present an analysis of the online debate, established as part of *A History of Scotland* – a five-part documentary series produced by BBC Scotland, intending to explore Scotland’s changing cultural identity. The social interaction that follows in response to this ‘factual’ artefact, presents an insight into the collective mind-set of online communities and the role they may play in the future development of the expansive interactive documentary form.

Keywords: Online communities, documentary, interaction, factual entertainment, debate.

Introduction

In 2005, the BBC commissioned a research study to investigate the role interactive entertainment plays in the lives of UK residents aged 6-65. The results of this study were published in a white paper titled “Gamers in The UK: Digital Play, Digital Lifestyles”. Author, Rhianna Pratchett, concluded that younger audiences – who view gaming as a core part of their daily lives – will grow up to demand more from interactive experiences and drive other traditional entertainment forms to evolve to meet their needs. In support of this, Lister et al (2009) argue that traditional approaches to producing media are diminishing, whereby there is now an “increasing requirement for producers to think about how their texts are in a co-

creative relationship with users which occur in the ‘community’ created around a particular programme, film or game.” Similarly, media convergence theorist Henry Jenkins (2002) understands the importance of audience analysis in terms of the development of new media forms. Indeed, Jenkins highlights a new culture of participation, stating that research should not focus on the technology that provides the platform for interaction but instead should “document the interactions that occur amongst media consumers, between media consumers and media texts, and between media consumers and media producers”. This presents an opportunity to analyse the interactive documentary in terms of the relationship between the designer and user(s), and in the case of the expansive form, amongst users.

Previously, Galloway (2007) presented a definition of the modes of interaction that can be used to categorise the potential forms of the interactive documentary. This paper builds upon these early definitions towards the development of conceptual and structural guidelines for the expansive interactive documentary. The central issue with the expansive form is that it involves mass-interaction within a community of users, who are all empowered to contribute to a ‘living’ artefact. This ultimately raises a range of interesting questions regarding the design and integrity of such a system. What rules and regulations would exist and how would they be presented and structured? What impact would these have on the spontaneity of user contributions? Can quality, ephemera and misuse be detected and how do they contribute to the documentary value of the system?

A crucial factor of user-driven content is the potential for user contributions to demonstrate vast differences in quality, however Agichtein (2008) suggests a more balanced opinion, highlighting the advantages these systems hold over traditional documentation in that “their rich structures offer more available data than in other domains...social media exhibit a wide variety of user-to-document relation types, and user-to-user interactions.” Therefore, whilst not being a fully-realised expansive interactive documentary, online debates and bulletin boards could be argued to be an appropriate technology for further analysis. When implemented and managed appropriately, these web-based systems can exhibit documentary value, whereby they can entertain, educate, persuade and enlighten. Therefore formally presented online debates, in particular those linked to a factual broadcast, can be viewed as artefacts, in which evidence is presented, and what follows is the user’s interpretation of the artefact albeit in the form of limited user-generated content.

A History of Scotland

First broadcast in November 2008, *A History of Scotland* is a five-part documentary series produced by BBC Scotland, intending to explore Scotland’s changing identity. Fronted by Neil Oliver, an archaeologist turned television presenter, the series features dramatic reconstructions, powerful music and stunning aerial photography. In the press release for the series, BBC Scotland Joint Head of Programmes Maggie Cunningham states that the series intends to “reach and engage as wide as possible a range of people across the country with up-to-date analysis of Scotland’s history”. This is supported by presenter Neil Oliver who argues that the programme aims to shatter the myths in our understanding of

Scotland's past and utilise current academic evidence to portray a more accurate historical account (HM, 2008). During production and in the run up to broadcast, the series caused a stir amongst academics and the wider community. Bignell (2008) reported that whilst some viewed the programme as a "genuine – and visually stunning – perspective on the nation's past", others were greatly concerned that the presenter was an archaeologist and not a historian, and that the series is guilty "of pandering to English perspectives". This debate played out in the national press with several academics voicing their displeasure with the approach of the production. Historian Professor Tom Devine refused to be on the advisory board and felt that the choice of presenter was inappropriate. Furthermore Allan MacInnes resigned from the advisory team, citing issues with the quality of the production, being expected to work for free and that the focus of the documentary was very "Anglo-centric" (Cornwell, 2008).

Arguably, any documentary production has a voice of its own – a specific bias in how it presents information to support the intended message. In a review of the series, Finlay (2008) points out the challenges in working with historians – "Ask ten historians to give an account of what happened in the past and you will get ten different versions of events. They will agree on the broad themes and chronology, but when it comes down to detail and interpretation, and on the particular significance and weight attached to events, they will each put forward their own particular reading of history". Perhaps, the conflict is irreconcilable, stemming from the fact that the production team has the task of entertaining and engaging a very wide audience, with the historical advisors keen to dive deeply into a detailed analysis of the past. The differences in opinion between the historical advisors and the production team may have helped stir up interest and audience anticipation, but this does not bode well for any rational, online debate. If the programme makers and the history experts could not agree (or at least share a mature dialogue), then how will this shape the online debate, when it is thrown open to the anonymous mass-audience of the Internet?

Scotland's History

After the conclusion of each episode of *A History of Scotland*, the presenter encouraged viewers to 'Join the Debate' by accessing the BBC website and navigating to the *Scotland's History* website. The website was divided into six main categories – Television, Radio, Online, Debate, Walking through History, and Events. The Television and Radio categories provide the user with scheduling information and additional facts regarding the range of programmes that are available. Online took the user to a range of historical information and multimedia content spread out across the BBC's separate History websites. The Events and Walking through History sections encouraged users to attend various events and undertake historical-themed walks with the support of an audio guide produced in conjunction with the Open University. Clearly there is an extensive amount of content within *Scotland's History*, however, the online debate section was chosen for further analysis as it had the potential to present a living catalogue of user interactions, which would emerge from an initial question or 'seed'. The debate itself is presented in textual and short video form,

challenging users to argue for or against a pre-defined motion. The *Scotland's History* debates ran from October 2008 to March 2011. They were run in conjunction with the two TV series *A History of Scotland*. At the time of closing the debates had received well over six thousand comments from members of the public. For the purposes of this paper the researchers focused on the debate and undertook detailed analysis of the user contributions for Series 1, placing a cut-off date for comments of 31 December 2009. This initial research shaped the approach to the analysis of the data provided from the BBC's revised presentation methods that accompanied Series 2. This approach was designed to capture a sense of the debate that followed the original broadcast and aimed at measuring whether this form of interactivity could be gauged as constructive for the audience and the programme makers. Furthermore it enabled an analysis of the lessons learned by the BBC in creating and presenting the online debate.

What has emerged could be argued to be a form of social landscape - a group view that utilises public opinion within a living, cultural document that is shaped from personal opinions, histories, beliefs and arguments. Although user interaction in this example only takes the form of text-based commentary, we are still presented with a summary of the user's thoughts and feelings through their individual contributions.

In terms of user interface (**Figure 1**), the debate section is clearly structured with the 'motion' and two video clips representing 'For' and 'Against' displayed at the top of the screen. Below this follows a list of comments from the community, sorted by date and showing the user's identity and location.

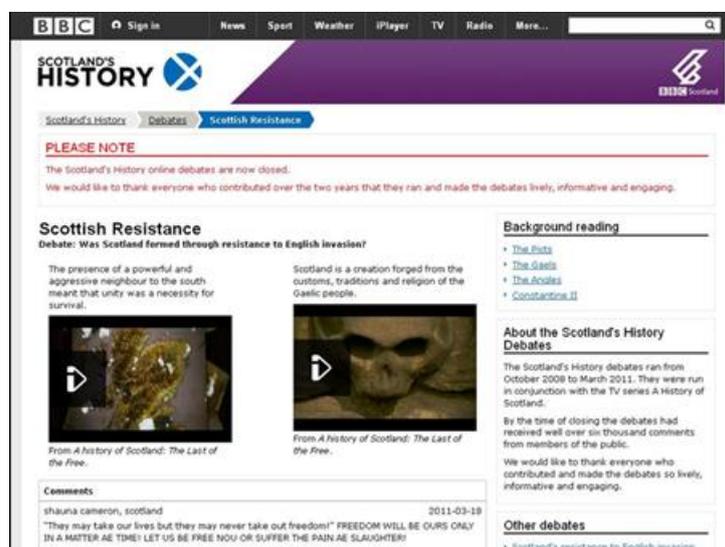


Figure 1: The debate screen and user interface of the *Scotland's History* website.

De Souza and Preece (2004) discuss the importance of clear "Designer-to-user communication" whereby the designer has the power to visually communicate the capabilities of the system to the user. In these terms, the debate section is very clear in its presentation with regard to the subject for debate and the method in which to interact with

the system. However, what is lacking is a sense of the evolution or indeed the current state of the debate – such as a visual snapshot of the collective public opinion. Through reading every single contribution, it is possible to get an idea of the leading point of view, but only through a large investment of time on the site. Perhaps some form of summary of the most contentious comments or a swing-o-meter could provide a form of feedback to users that their contributions hold a less transient value.

Contact was established with the team behind the interactive resources, in an attempt to gain access to ‘unedited’ user contributions, and gain further insight into the motivations for the production itself. Unfortunately, the producers were unable to grant access to this data as such, but instead provided a discussion regarding the moderation procedure and examples of the form of contributions that would not make it to online publication. Paul Adams, the online producer for *Scotland’s History* assured that although all comments must first be approved by a moderator, the debate itself was allowed to evolve naturally. Only on the rarest occasion would a post would be edited or removed, most likely due to it being derogatory or a clear attempt to undermine the system. This is clearly evident in the full transcript of user posts as there are numerous spelling errors and questionable contributions. It is clear that the production team tried to allow as much variety as possible and at no stage have they tried to chair the debate by requesting people to get back on track. Adams (2008) further explains how the users themselves are incorporated into the moderation process “...where we have allowed controversial views to appear on the site the public will flag up comments they feel are inappropriate. This level of self-moderation on behalf of the users is ideal for us - it shows there is a sense of ownership of the debate pages and also a strong sense of what is and isn't appropriate for a public forum”. Although fair in reasoning, is it possible to ascertain the contribution such methods provide towards the development of a functional and successful community?

Evaluating User Contributions

To facilitate the evaluation of an online community Preece (2001) presents a list of categories for assisting in measuring the success of an online community, “...obvious measures such as the number of participants in a community, the number of messages per unit of time, members’ satisfaction, and some less obvious measures such as amount of reciprocity, the number of on-topic messages, trustworthiness...number of errors, productivity, [and] user satisfaction.” Arguably, some of these measures are easier to gauge than others. For example, number of participants is a straight-forward process of gathering unique usernames, however categories such as ‘trustworthiness’ run the risk of analyst misinterpretation and bias. For the purposes of this study the following categories were selected, with a focus on gathering qualitative data:

1. Number of participants: How many unique user identities have contributed to the debate?

2. Number of comments: What is the frequency and overall amount of contributions a user makes to the debate? Are there specific periods of activity and inactivity?
3. Overall Stance: Is the user for, neutral or against the motion, and does this stance change over time?
4. Standalone Comment or in response to another: A high number of comments by the same person could suggest increased levels of engagement and participation. Do different communication patterns emerge, such as dialogues etc.?
5. Subject of Challenge: What is being challenged in the user's post? Is it another user e.g. personal like/dislike? The factual content of the documentary or web resources? The voice and presentation style of the documentary – the discourse?
6. Word Count: How much are people writing and is there a limit? This can suggest how much effort someone is willing to put in and how motivated the user is?
7. Tone: How does the user present their point of view and is it possible to ascertain a dominant characteristic within the contribution?

Clearly, there are challenges in gauging the tone of a user's contribution, and for the purposes of this study, any information relating to tone should not be viewed as conclusive. In a similar vein, analysing the grammar of a post presents an issue in that a contributor could be discredited despite there being a valid, underlying reason for the text having a perceived flaw or lack of quality. It is fair to state that allowances must be made for disabilities and varying levels of awareness of internet etiquette.

Nature of Online Debate

For the purposes of this research, five online debates were selected for analysis and user comments were gathered over a fifteen-month period. It should be noted that there were several debates in progress at the same time, with each one going live shortly after the broadcast of an episode of *A History of Scotland*. At the time the debates were to remain open for an indeterminate period of time, therefore limitations on the period of data collection was determined in order to include the immediate debate after broadcast but a significant period of time post-broadcast. The 5 debates identified for data gathering and analysis, and a summary of the specifics of the television broadcast that preceded each debate can be viewed in **Table 1** below:

<i>A History of Scotland and Scotland's History</i>			
Series One			
Broadcast Date	Episode	Title	Topic of Online Debate
9 th Nov 2008	1	Last of The Free	Scotland's resistance to English invasion
16 th Nov 2008	2	The Hammer of The Scots	Wallace's Legacy
24 th Nov 2008	3	Bishop Makes King	The Importance of the Declaration
1 st Dec 2008	4	Language is Power	<i>Lords of the Isles (rebranded and altered)</i>
8 th Dec 2008	5	Project Britain	James VI's Britain

Table 1: Series One Broadcast Dates and Accompanying Topics for the Online Debate

Over the period considered for analysis there were 1167 individual contributions, even taking into consideration the 6000+ users that the BBC recorded for the length of the extended debate until March 2011 the viewer to online engagement ratio is very low at <0.05%. (BBC 2008)

The initial broadcast and debate elicited the largest response with the first question posed in the series debate: "Was Scotland formed through resistance to English invasion?" Visitors to the site could align themselves to either the argument for: "The presence of a powerful and aggressive neighbour to the south meant that unity and a common purpose were necessities for survival" or the argument against: "Scotland is a creation forged from the customs, traditions and religion of the Gaelic people".

Initial analysis presented worrying evidence that a very small percentage of the contributors actually made a case for or against the question posed by the debate. Despite the website being very clear that its purpose was for a debate to revolve around a simple question, there seems to be little actual evidence of debate taking place. Instead, what seems to have taken place is a series of 'Points of View' style contributions criticising the aesthetic and intellectual content of the televised documentary itself. Surprisingly there were several complaints focussing on the graphical map, music and sound mix, with some users using humour as a method for conveying their annoyance -

The Picts, Gaels, Angles, etc., were extremely fortunate not to have had a loud miserable concacophonous [sic] sound to spoil their ventures. Another programme spoiled by a director with a strange musical ear."

Indeed, out of 384 individual contributions, 181 posts contained content that praised or criticised the presentation and content of the television series. In addition, the actual number of posts that clearly address the debate is a surprisingly low 37. This is composed of

17 posts for the motion, 8 against and 12 posts that present a more neutral stance. As a consequence of this, well over 300 posts are classified as unclear – a result of the user’s post either failing to respond to the motion of the debate or demonstrating a specific, overarching standpoint. Perhaps, the high number of comments about the programme can be explained by the fact that this was a BBC website linked to a BBC production; therefore users would naturally use the readily available comment box to voice their opinions. Users often challenged more than one subject in their post, with the majority of posts (213) concerned with the actual content of the programme. 118 posts mentioned the debate, 126 mentioned other users, 7 made reference to the website itself, 2 posts addressed the BBC moderator and lastly, 25 posts were classed as being wholly off-topic.

In terms of the number of participants there were 230 ‘unique’ usernames, with a further 30 contributions posted by ‘Anonymous’ users. Interestingly it appears that most users post around once, presenting their point of view and then ceasing to contribute any further. However, a small number of users did make regular contributions, with the most frequent poster commenting on twenty occasions. This user’s posts tended to be polite, influential, well-reasoned and at times, very entertaining to read. Furthermore, where there are peaks in the amount of posts per day, this particular user tends to have contributed to the discussion at some point. In relation to this, and user engagement in general, Owyang (2007) states the importance of ‘igniters’, a form of user who can, and often “by virtue of a single post, ignite a long chain of dialogue and conversation across multiple blogs”. By definition, these igniters fuel the debate through their contributions – be they supportive, contentious, thoughtful or ignorant. The impact of such a user is clearly evident throughout the online discussion and frequently leads to the debate descending into humorous, albeit contentious discussion, that presents a comedic, flowing narrative in which several users demonstrate their creativity and wit. In terms of the actual debate, such amusing exchanges may be viewed by some as an off-topic, and unnecessary distraction. However, structurally, periods of light-hearted banter provides a break in the tension, whereby a moment of humour and sociability is shared between active contributors, lurking readers and the BBC moderators. This fits with Preece’s (2000) definition of the three key contributing factors to sociability within online communities - Purpose, People and Policies. With regards to the online debate, Purpose relates to the “shared focus” that drives the audience to the site. People is defined by the individual users and their “different roles in the community, such as leaders, protagonists, comedians, moderators, etc.” Lastly, Policies refers to the “informal and formal” methods in which the community is governed and developed. Therefore an exchange such as the example above is unlikely to have occurred and/or been allowed to remain on view in a community with a more strict moderation procedure.

There are other instances involving ‘igniters’ that can be viewed as providing a more positive and valuable outcome. Several users commented on the location of a battle being misrepresented in the television programme. This resulted in the BBC moderator having to defend the content of the programme by publishing a message from the programme’s producer:

A couple of comments have been posted about the location of the battle of Nechtansmere as depicted in programme one. In locating the battle site we were advised by our historical consultant, Alex Woolf, University of St. Andrews. More information about Alex's reasoning for the battle location can be found in *The Scottish Historical Review*, Volume LXXXV, 2: No.220: October 2006.

There are clear benefits to this form of interaction as content can be challenged by the audience and a move towards greater accuracy in factual content can be achieved. In addition to this, the act of witnessing content being challenged also enlightens an otherwise unaware and accepting audience.

However there are a significant number of issues with an open anonymous forum that limit the format as an interactive form. In general the patterns identified for the initial debate are echoed throughout the other Series 1 online debates. The major standout is the low number of posts that clearly address the debate. Overall the vast majority of posts across all debates (95%) can be classified as unclear.

With regard to the level of user activity in response to each television broadcast, **Table 2** demonstrates that the number of individual contributions declined with each episode and only rising significantly with the final broadcast. When considering the number of unique user identities that contributed to the debate the number isn't even half of the overall contributions (540 unique users, with an additional 169 identified as Anonymous).

<i>A History of Scotland and Scotland's History</i>			
Series One			
Broadcast	Ep.	Topic of Online Debate	Responses to 31 Dec 09
9 Nov 08	1	Scotland's resistance to English invasion	384
16 Nov 08	2	Wallace's Legacy	331
24 Nov 08	3	The Importance of the Declaration	114
1 Dec 08	4	Lords of the Isles	97
8 Dec 08	5	James VI's Britain	241

Table 2: Series One Online Debate activity in relation to each television broadcast.

Only five users returned to comment and contribute to every debate (excluding those identified as Anonymous), and while this rises to 30 for 3 or more debates it further demonstrates the difficulty in maintain engagement and discussion. Those 30 users are arguably the most engaged contributing 29% of all the contributions. The number of unique users contributing to a single debate rises to 39% (453 users) of which the majority (402) contribute only a single comment to a single debate. The frequency and overall amount of contributions a user makes to the debate is measurable but only a small percentage can be truly analysed in order to see if their opinion or argument changes or sways. Given that the specific periods of activity are largely after the initial broadcast, it is significant to note that the debates themselves did not necessarily help in keeping the programme alive online in the periods where it wasn't on air.

Aspects of the data is so variable and inadequate that it is a challenge to draw meaningful conclusions and therefore not productive to inquire into the following categories. Whilst word count was initially perceived to suggest the level of motivation of a specific user, instead it struggles to communicate engagement and is perhaps more indicative of the user's ability to cut and paste from existing texts or ramble. As we have discussed, the majority of contributions were one-off comments by a non-returning user, therefore it would be difficult to ascertain complex patterns of emergent communication. Finally, the tone of a user's post is a relatively subjective measurement, and although there were interesting moments of humour, sarcasm and creativity, there is insufficient data to ascertain dominant characteristics or meaningful patterns.

The nature of freeform contribution allowed people to contribute whatever they wanted regardless of the debate and demonstrates the significant difficulty the BBC had in eliciting measurable responses without deliberately driving users to voice an opinion.

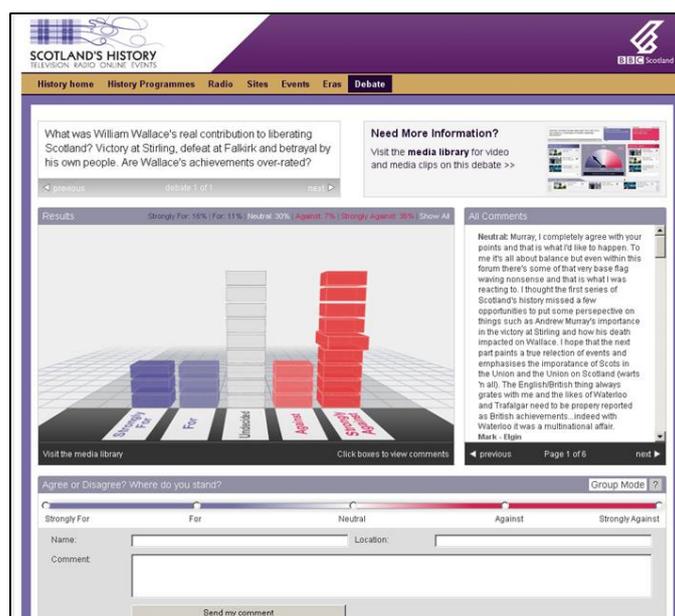


Figure 2: The BBC's revised interface for the Scotland's History Debate

For Series Two the BBC updated the resources for *Scotland's History* with additional content that attempted to address several of the previously mentioned issues. Visually the site was given a complete overhaul, with the debate section in particular benefitting from major changes in both the aesthetic presentation and the methods in which the user are encouraged to interact. The website adopted a 5-point scale of Strongly For, For, Neutral, Against and Strongly Against. As the BBC addressed these issues the website design changed to include more dramatic visualisations, as can be seen in **Figure 2** (above).

The structure for Series Two followed the previous series with 5 debates again being identified for data gathering and analysis. A summary of the specifics of the television broadcast that preceded each debate can be viewed in **Table 3** below:

<i>A History of Scotland and Scotland's History</i>			
Series Two			
Broadcast Date	Episode	Title	Topic of Online Debate
8 th Nov 2009	1	God's Chosen People	The Covenanters
15 th Nov 2009	2	Let's Pretend	The Jacobites
22 nd Nov 2009	3	The Price of Progress	The Empire
29 th Nov 2009	4	This Land is Our Land	Scottish Identity
6 th Dec 2009	5	Project Scotland	Home Rule

Table 3: Series Two Broadcast Dates and Accompanying Topics for the Online Debate

Following on from Series One the level of user activity in response to each television broadcast, **Table 4**, demonstrates that the number of individual contributions remained relatively low with the number of posts for debates 1-4 never reaching the average of those for Series One. However, the final debate completely reversed this trend with the final episode and debate on Home Rule receiving as many posts as all the other debates from the 9 previous episodes across both Series, perhaps an obvious benefit for a more controversial topic requiring less specialised historical knowledge and more impassioned political discourse.

As Users were provided with the choice to select their overall stance (Strongly For etc.), this assists in minimising potential misinterpretation of a user's post. The interactive bar charts could be argued to border on a form of playful interaction, with the mouse pointer triggering subtle animation effect and when selected a random user contribution is pulled from the graphic and presented in a pop-up text box. This results in the web resource being more mineable, whereby a user can now choose to find comments that are against or in support of their own point of view.

<i>A History of Scotland and Scotland's History</i>						
Series Two						
Broadcast	Ep.	Topic of Online Debate	Total Posts	For	Neutral	Against
8 Nov 09	1	The Covenanters	147	42	24	81
15 Nov 09	2	The Jacobites	185	70	46	69
22 Nov 09	3	The Empire	77	41	11	25
29 Nov 09	4	Scottish Identity	185	66	96	23
6 Dec 09	5	Home Rule	1677	1538	25	114

Table 4: Series Two Online Debate activity in relation to each television broadcast

Ultimately it was the lack of clear opinion in the series one debates that led the BBC to modify the format of the posts and force users into declaring a point of view. These improvements enabled each debate to be clearly visualised but more in-depth analysis of the comments demonstrate the problems with validating the users comments directly to the question posed remained.

The most obvious benefit for the researcher remains in the consideration that the online debate provided a modern-day equivalent akin to the analysis of a newspapers "Letters to the Editor" section that prevailed in the 19th and 20th century. Online responses could be garnered and analysed in part to determine public opinion as per a newspaper's editorial stance. The very nature of the online debate, the ability for immediate freeform debate helps give an indication of how opinion developed, divided and on occasion consolidated with each debate. Further consideration should also be given to the brand awareness and business objectives of the BBC. The moderation or lack of moderation in some cases on the debates can give an indication that part of the BBC remit is to entertain and therefore having a narrow debate could be counter-productive and by not allowing comment on the perceived quality of the graphics, sound, mix etc. was contrary to the BBC's underlying remit to the license payer. Essentially users are entitled to post comment and opinion about anything providing it is non-offensive and vaguely relevant.

Conclusion

Research and analysis has shown that online communities can easily contribute enlightening, interesting, and engaging content to an interactive resource. Conversely, the very nature of online discussions provides a massive challenge for the designer, whereby

they have very limited control over the range of content and the varying personalities that choose to interact. For the expansive interactive documentary to be a success it is vitally important to take into account the successes, failures and limitations of websites such as *Scotland's History*.

The user's first experience of the interactive system should be positive, therefore content should be visually engaging and easy to navigate. Indeed, the exploration of content should not be a barrier to users, quality material should always be easily discovered and specific elements should be able to be browsed via a range of appropriate criterion. The designer should provide an intriguing and clearly stated seed – this is a contributing factor in attracting users to the site, therefore if implemented poorly, the quality of contributions will likely be affected. From a management perspective, moderation of user contributions should be very light and transparent to encourage further user interaction. This could be further enhanced by positive moderation, in which quality and continued loyalty are recognised and rewarded. Similarly, feedback is an important part of all interactive systems; hence the user must be able to view the impact of their contributions via a clear, dynamic, textual and visual device. In terms of developing communities, it is valuable to facilitate like-minded users being able to join together into social sub-groups with similar world views. This further aids to instil a sense of purpose and belonging amongst the users – the life-blood of the system. Additionally, a fully-realised, expansive interactive documentary should reach some form of climax and not be left to run indefinitely. Prior to a conclusion there could perhaps be a number of milestones or goals to mark the progress and provide the users with an on-going sense of achievement. Without such elements, contributions will more than likely decrease in frequency as user's become increasingly aware of the futility of their efforts. It is also clear that the criticism of the artefact should not take place within the artefact itself.

BBC Scotland should be applauded for the desire to bring an online debate to topics that are deliberately controversial and can be hijacked by users with personal, political, religious and historical bias. Without the initial onus on providing a forum for online debate, we would be unable to determine how an increasingly technically aware audience will choose to participate. With the advent of tablets, and increasing number of second-screen applications available the lessons learned into overcoming barriers to participation will undoubtedly help design decisions to encourage further participation.

Through their readiness to embrace iterative development of these resources, it is clear that the BBC understands the importance and indeed the many benefits that arise through empowering an audience. Jenkins (2002) declares that the modern audience is not only "active, critically aware, and discriminating", but if involved appropriately can "archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media products". It could be argued that along with the educational and cultural value of such a multi-platform production, perhaps the most positive outcome for the BBC has been to engage with their viewers and maintain their long-held relationship with an audience that possesses constant and rapidly evolving needs,

desires and behaviours. The BBC continues to lead, respond and innovate with audience engagement where other corporations follow.

Biographical notes:

Iain Donald gained his doctorate in the field of History and an MSc in Information Systems, and enjoyed a career in IT and Game Development before coming back to teaching in 2010 when he joined the Institute of Arts, Media and Computer Games at the University of Abertay. Dr Donald's principal professional expertise and research interests lie in production and management within the creative industries. He is actively engaged in researching in the field of digital media where he has written and presented on the topics of practice-based teaching, user engagement, collaborative working models and the sharing of intellectual property for the Digital Media and Games industries. **Contact:** i.donald@abertay.ac.uk.

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