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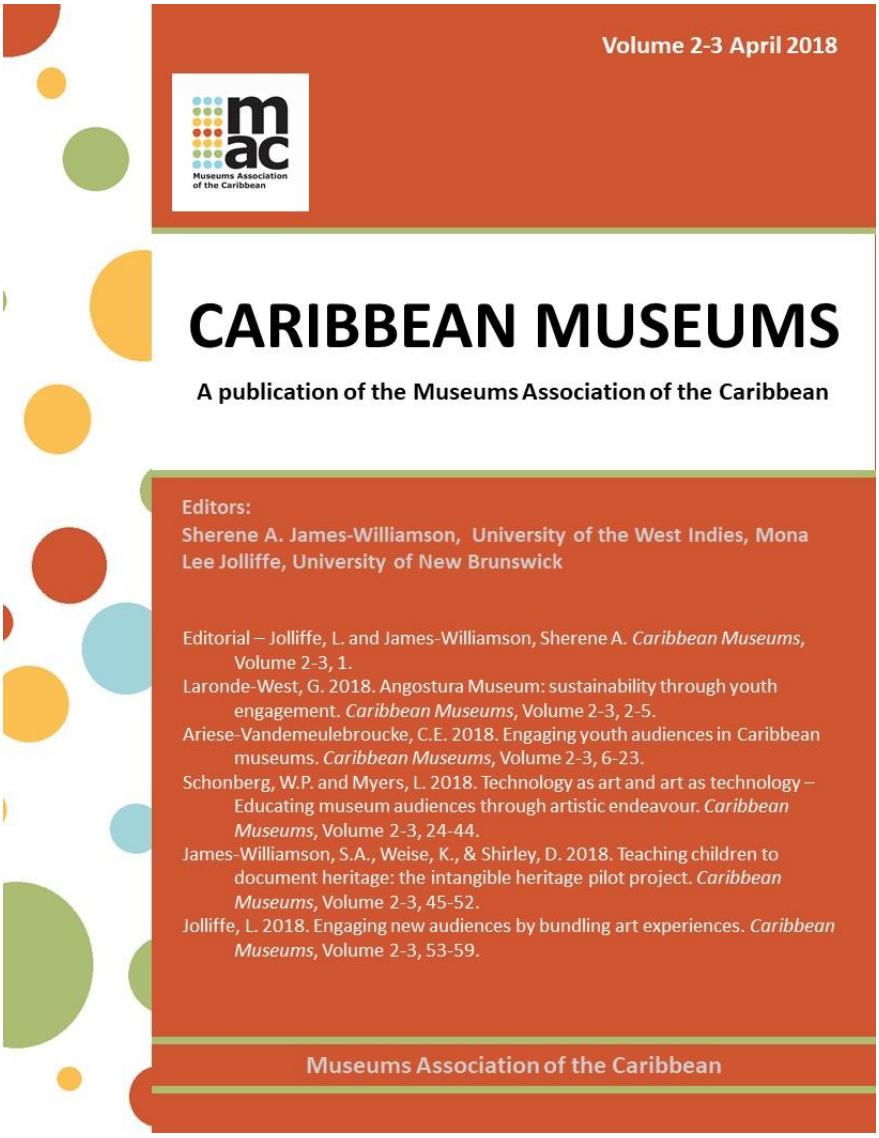

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Teaching children to document heritage: the intangible heritage pilot project

SHERENE A. JAMES-WILLIAMSON[1,2], KESIA WEISE[3] AND DAMIAN SHIRLEY[3]

[1]The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston 7, Jamaica & Heritage Clubs of Jamaica, 74 Arnold Road, Kingston 5, JAMAICA
[2]Heritage Clubs of Jamaica, 74 Arnold Road, Kingston 5, JAMAICA
[3]African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica/Jamaica Memory Bank, Ocean Boulevard, Kinston, JAMAICA.

sherene.james02@uwimona.edu.jm; kweise@acij-ioj.org.jm; dshirley@acij-ioj.org.jm

ABSTRACT. Smart phones and tablets are being used by a rapidly increasing number of students at all levels of education. The capabilities of some of these devices vary from one to another, most if not all are equipped with a camera. The various applications or "apps" that are available dependent on platform is wide ranging and are useful for many educational activities. Many users seem to spend most of their device time on social media platforms, posting, reading, watching videos and keeping in touch with family and friends. This project exploits the social media obsession and the photography capabilities of their devices.

Children will use their mobile devices to record videos, take photographs and record interviews in order to document heritage in their community. This project seeks to accentuate parts of the hidden curriculum as well as career development.

This paper outlines the stages of the project, lessons learnt and the way forward.

Keywords: documenting heritage, intangible heritage, memory bank

1. INTRODUCTION

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is defined as '*the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity*' (UNESCO Convention, 2003). The concept of ICH though predates the UNESCO Convention by about 40 years, has been formalized and used by UNESCO to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage; (b) to ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned; (c) to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage, and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof; (d) to provide for

international cooperation and assistance (UNESCO Convention, 2003).

Heritage education, akin to museum education is intended to draw children into an experience with a notion of that which is both affective and effective in ways very different from that of a classroom experience (Shepherd 2016). It gives them an opportunity to engage with history from an understanding of the living heritage (tangible and intangible) that exists around them, thus fostering a greater appreciation for their culture, as well as that of others. Community- or school-based activities are usually designed to enhance specific parts of citizen development or curriculum objective, respectively (Blankenberg 2016). A museum-initiated learning activity which takes place outside the museum walls allows for a different and holistic type of experience (Blankenberg 2016). Everything in the target audience's environment becomes part of the learning experience (Stevenson et al. 2009) while at the same time enhancing concept retention (Bauerle and Park 2012).

Allowing young persons to explore experiential learning is one way they can understand concepts relevant to history and heritage. Gone are the days when children can sit at the feet of a sage in the community and listen to stories. The story telling and the meaning and significance of experiences within the school or community are either slow in passing or none existent.

This project seeks to bring school children from two local schools into an experience about themselves, their community and their heritage. It is important to underscore that the hidden message in all of this is that what we do and what we create now will form the heritage memories for future generations. In any similar project, there are lessons learnt and as such the limitations to the project will be described and suggestions on how to overcome them explained.

2. THE JAMAICAN INTANGIBLE HERITAGE CONTEXT

Before intangible cultural heritage became a buzz word, Jamaica was actively engaged in the documentation and preservation of the nation's cultural heritage first through the work of the Jamaica Institute of Folk Culture under the leadership of the late Dr. Hon. Olive Lewin. This work continued in later years within the then Division of Culture in the Office of the Prime Minister, and segued into the Jamaica Memory Bank (JMB) which was also established in the Division of Culture in the early 1980s.

In 1973, the African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica (ACIJ) was formed by way of a Cabinet submission in an effort to broaden awareness through research, documentation and dissemination of African cultural contribution to the nation building and thereby foster an appreciation for African Heritage. By 1990, it absorbed the JMB.

The vision of the AICJ/JMB is to have a Jamaican citizenry which is informed of the diversities of cultures and ethnicities and lived experiences that constitute their common ethos, with an emphasis on their African heritage, and by so doing stimulate a sense of nationhood and pride while promoting a strong sense of self awareness and identity.

3. PROJECT BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION

This project was born out of the mandate of the Heritage Clubs of Jamaica (HCJ). The HCJ was created in 1996 out of a need to undertake a new range of community based activities focused on the importance of understanding and interpreting our rich heritage in nation building. The study and awareness of our heritage gives a sense of belonging, of identity and self-worth in the Jamaican society in order for 'us' [Jamaicans] to grow as a people. The provision of the HCJ programme in schools was to fundamentally deepen awareness of the habits, qualities and acquisitions derived from the past and which constitute our heritage and our history. The objectives of the HCJ are:

a. To promote, encourage and facilitate the study of our communities, identifying the sources of heritage, whether in the village, the town, the city or the nation.
b. To discover and learn practical ways to apply this knowledge to the daily lives of the club members and celebrate the contributions made by individual institutions and organizations to the growth and development of our communities.
c. To develop and inculcate positive attitudes, noble values and appreciative understanding of the interconnectedness of all our peoples.

The Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT) formerly, the Jamaica National Trust Commission was established in 1985 with the enactment of a new law. This move enlarged the functions of the Trust. The work of the trust was borne out of a list requested of historical sites, buildings and monuments in each parish by Governor Sir Sidney Olivier. The list was prepared by Frank Cundall, the then secretary of the Institute of Jamaica (IOJ). The list was published in the supplement of the *Jamaica Gazette* December 1909. Cundall suggested in his comments that steps be taken towards the preservation of the items listed which was incorporated as part of a report dealing with the preservation of historic sites and ancient monuments in the West Indian Colonies presented to the British Parliament. All HCJ activities are currently executed by or in conjunction with the JNHT.

The African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica/Jamaica Memory Bank (ACIJ/JMB), a division of the Institute of Jamaica which is an agency of the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment & Sport is the national focal institution for safeguarding through identification, documentation and awareness building in respect of the intangible cultural heritage of Jamaica. This work of the ACIJ/JMB fulfills Jamaica's obligation as a signatory in 2010 to the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH.

There is a concern that young people's understanding of heritage seemed only concerned with that which is contained in the curriculum and celebrated on specific national days throughout the school year. A project was conceptualized to afford children an opportunity to see heritage through their own eyes. The initial project was conceptualized in 2013 but carried a large price tag and as such was modified to the form outlined in subsequent sections. The basic tenets of the original idea were:

- It would be very good for career building and development

- It was a multimedia heritage project involving 15 schools with Heritage Clubs who would each be given a digital camera for children to: interview "old" persons in their communities (audio and video); take pictures of monuments, sites and buildings; write short stories on their project and upload material to social media
- It was connected to the mandate of the HCJ to help school children understand their heritage at the school and community level

ACIJ/JMB was contacted in late 2014 because of their experience in oral history research and documentation, and during discussions the project was revamped and the idea of smart phones and tablets confirmed. This eliminated the need for purchasing cameras, which reduced the project budget significantly - students would use their devices to capture the necessary material required for their project. The ACIJ/JMB team would host a series of workshops to prepare the children for the task of producing 10-minute videos on a heritage-related topic of their choice. The films would be showcased at a public event and be later uploaded to social media.

4. METHODOLOGY

Methodology from other similar projects completed at the ACIJ/JMB was employed. Four schools were selected, two primary and two secondary, but in the end only two committed and carried their projects to completion. These were the Aenon Town Primary and the Morgan's Forest Infant and Primary School, both located in the parish of Clarendon, Jamaica (Figure 1). The limited internet access in rural districts such as these, resulted in technological challenges for the project. A manual was prepared with information on documentation required for oral history projects (Table 1); the interview process, equipment and "how to" information for audio and video capture.

Four workshops were held with each school. A total of eight school visits were made to Clarendon seeing the team travelling more than 2,000 km in total over the life of the project.

- Workshop 1: This saw the launch of the heritage clubs within each school. Students were provided with an overview of the project and critical information in creating a documentary. This was done through handouts, PowerPoint presentation and videos.
- Workshop 2: Students dealt with the technical aspects related to recording audio and video. Students were allowed to take their smart phones to school (phones are not generally allowed in school) and were shown basic techniques in recording and transferring files. They were guided through the process of selecting a project and given assignments to be completed for the 3rd workshop.
- Workshop 3: This workshop was held after the students had completed their recordings. This saw the students being introduced to actual video editing. Students were given the opportunity to convert video and audio files to various formats so that they could be used with the movie maker programme. Students also interacted with video effect, caption, slide transition and various other video effects/tools.

- Workshop 4: This workshop was used to evaluate what the students had done after the third workshop and assist with resolving any issues that they may have had. This workshop was also to be used to provide students with suggestions on how to enhance their work.

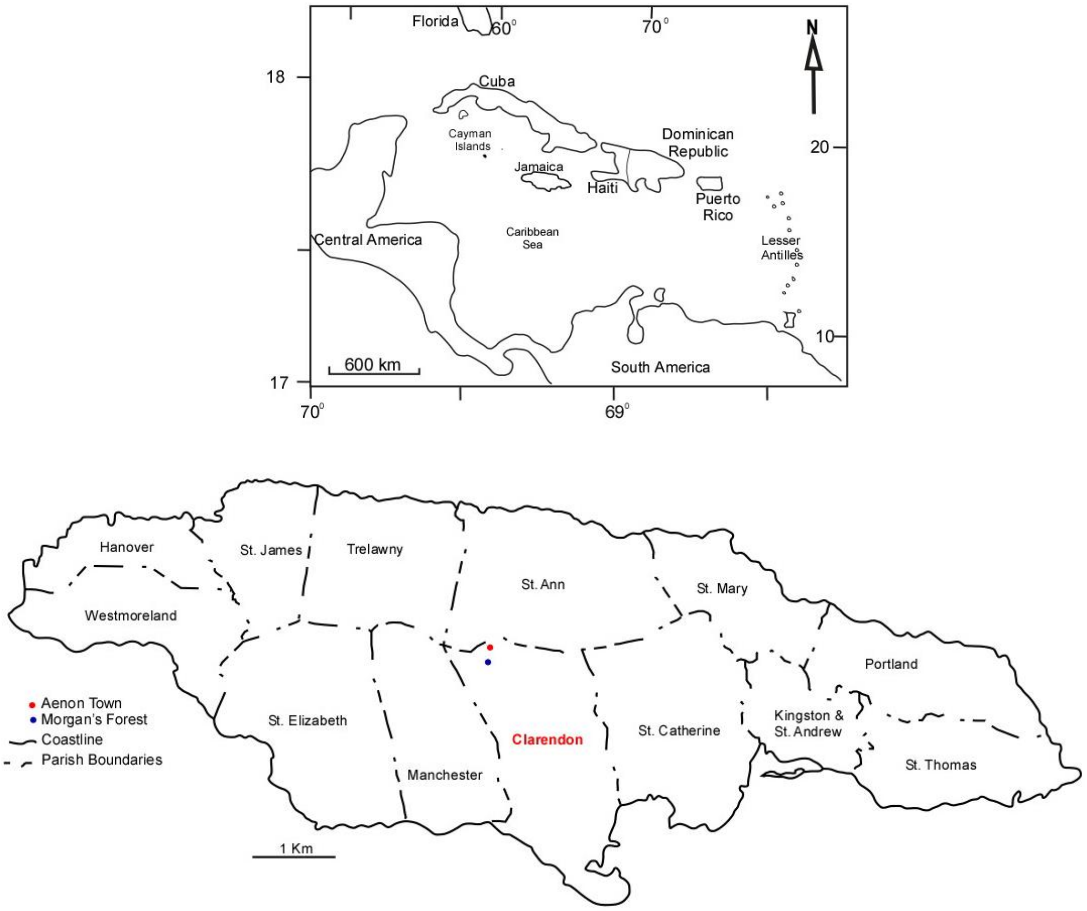

Figure 1. Parish map for the country of Jamaica. Inset shows Jamaica situated in the Greater Antilles in the Caribbean Sea.

Table 1. Table showing resources utilized in this project.

Equipment	Software & Internet Resources	Manual Contents
Smart phone or tablet	YTD Video Downloader	Heritage – types and importance
Flash Drive	Verbose Test to Speech	Responsibility of citizens in protecting heritage
Personal computer or laptop	Natural Reader	Learning about & sharing heritage
Notebook and Pencil	Windows Movie Maker	Project guidelines
	Wondershare Video Convertor	Data release & Consent forms
	Free MP4 Converter	Formulating your project
	IC Free Image Convertor	

5. PROJECT OUTPUT AND OUTCOMES

5.1 The projects

The project selected by the Aenon Town Primary School was "The Cave River Flood Plains." This project was related to the natural history of the community of Aenon Town. It documented the course of the river, various rock formations and the historical impacts of river on the environment and the community. The project selected by the Morgan's Forest Infant and Primary School was 'The Story of Morgan's Forest New Testament Church'. The photo documentary included a narrative on the early beginnings of the church, how it was established and described how the community essentially developed around the church as well as its continued importance to the community.

5.2 Successes

- Students grasped the concept of "heritage" and knew the exact story they wanted to tell about their community and so went out seeking information and tools to tell the story. The students conducted their own research (increase in research skills not directly related to the curriculum)
- Students maintained their enthusiasm about the project regardless of the many limitations.
- The students increased their knowledge of an aspect of their community, hence achieving the overall aim of the project.
- The students increased their knowledge and use of new software. The students were able to learn techniques and execute within a day. Most students did not own personal computers and so they had very little interaction with computers. All the students were using the programmes for the first time. The speed at which they learnt and the things they were able to accomplish in the one-day workshops were commendable.
- Two, 10-minute videos were produced

5.2 Lessons learnt – Limitations & Areas for Improvement

The final videos were good but could have been better if not for a few limitations. These are listed below with solutions employed as well as solutions to consider in future projects.

I. **Computers and Programs**: The schools' computing facilities were also limited and did not have required video editing and movie making software. Accessing these online programs was also challenging because the schools did not have internet service due to their remote location.

Solutions

a. The teachers were provided with software names and/or URL for download and installation of requisite software.
b. Internet café in the neighbouring town of Spauling in the Parish of Manchester was utilized for the downloading of online content.
c. Personal computers with the software were taken to the schools and demonstrations done, also, students could practice using the programs.

II. **Recording**: Variations in recording quality (audio and video) proved rather challenging. e.g. portions of video not audible; too few recordings; background noise in all videos, shaky videos, etc.

Solutions

a. Implementation team used software on their laptops to assist students in completing videos. The students and teachers prepared a script which was converted using text-to-speech software for voiceover for the missing audio. Still images were incorporated where videos were not available.
b. Allowing several persons with recording devices to capture content will help to ensure that information is captured.
c. Selfie sticks, tripods or similar mechanisms may be used to prevent shaky and poorly angled video footage.
d. Recording should be carried out in quiet areas with only the interviewee and the recording team in order to reduce background noise. Thus students should be encouraged to assign roles to each member of the recording team – photographer, note taker, videographer, interviewer, etc.
e. Re-enactments and short skits or illustrations could be made and recorded where video evidence was unavailable

III. **Credits and Interview Records**: There were missing names of persons interviewed and not enough notes from interviews.

Solution

a. Give more attention to recording of names and interview details in workshops.

IV. **Timing of activities**: The team had to work around school schedule, this made scheduling of workshops and field visits challenging.

Solution

a. In future, this could be done as a summer, Easter or Christmas break activity. This will allow more students to participate and more time for

research, recording and interviews.

6. FURTHER WORK

A "Film Festival" was planned to showcase the work of the students subsequent to which the videos would be uploaded to social media. The pilot schools now move on as facilitators (with some coaching) to introduce ad implement the project to neighbouring schools. It is hoped that this pilot can be used as a basis for funding similar projects to continue until there is island-wide reach of the project and the increase in relevant heritage material and oral history research on a more local level.

Acknowledgements. The students, principals and teachers of the Aenon Town Primary and the Morgan's Forest Infant and Primary schools must be acknowledged and commended for their enthusiasm and willingness to participate in the project regardless of the limitations which sometimes proved overwhelming. The time that was spent on this work even though it was not directly related to the curriculum is also a point of note.

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