**DEMONSTRATING MARKETING EXCELLENCE**

**Archives – Winner**

Marketing Excellence Award entry by: Ms Victoria Jackson, Archive Assistant and

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Organisation Profile/ Overview:

Gwent Archives is the official archive for the five local authorities in the Gwent area. We are also recognised by the National Archives as a place of deposit for public records and by the Church in Wales for parochial records. We hold maps, plans, school records, business records and some non-conformist registers as well as many other types of document. These are all made accessible for the public to view in our research room in Ebbw Vale.

Category Entered: Archives

Project Title: A Marketing Project for Gwent Archives Past and Present Reminiscence Walks.

Context:

This marketing project came about as a result of needing to promote a new series of events devised by Gwent Archives. These events, ‘Past and Present Reminiscence Walks’ were developed after we held a smaller series of events at Gwent Archives in Ebbw Vale for the ‘Explore Your Archive’ project in 2013 to increase awareness of our service throughout the area that we cover. These original events were intended to stimulate memories and reminiscences using facsimiles of documents we hold and we also offered free refreshments at the sessions. Attendance was rather low, though it was noted that the documents that sparked most interest were maps, topographical photographs, and shop adverts. Another concern that contributed to the idea was that our geographical position in the north of the area we cover made it costly time-wise and financially for people to visit the Archive, for example from Newport or Chepstow, for a short event. We decided to put on a series of outreach events using a similar formula with document facsimiles which gave us the opportunity to show people, outside of the controlled conditions in the Archive, the type and variety of document we hold for public research while demonstrating the history and changes of their local town. Structured tours around the towns were created giving the documents such as photographs, maps and architectural drawings context by visiting buildings and places associated with the documents to compare their past and present uses. Examples of some of the stories from our tours include: On our Usk tour we used our Usk Gaol records while outside the prison to tell the stories of two children who were imprisoned there in the 1870s. In Blackwood we used maps and photographs of houses that have since been demolished to show people how the town used to look. In Pillgwenlly we used documents to demonstrate how Pill has been a multi-cultural area since the nineteenth century, and also used our Quarter Sessions records to narrate the sad story of a murder that happened in the mid-nineteenth century. Our marketing challenge was to create enough interest to be able to stage five different tours in specific areas over the summer in 2014.

Aims and Objectives:

We wrote local history tours featuring our documents for five places in the former county: Ebbw Vale, Blackwood, Pillgwenlly, Usk and Cwmbran, one from each council area that we cover. Our aim was to attract 15 bookings for each tour which was a realistic and manageable amount for our walking tours. Our objective for these events was to take archives to local communities who may otherwise not be aware of us and our role for their community. As these were local events we decided to specifically target a local audience as we estimated that this would be where most interest would be for local history, and it was also achievable from a staff/resources point of view. Posters and fliers were handed out in the towns named above approximately three weeks before the tour (except for Cwmbran which was advertised in the Torfaen ‘Summer of Heritage’ brochure). We also wanted to evaluate the success of our different marketing media so that we could continue to use the most successful methods in the future for our localised events.

Strategy and Planning:

Our marketing strategy for these events was driven by various reasons. Following on from the Explore Your Archive campaign we intended with these events to target a new audience who didn’t necessarily know about us. The events themselves are a way of advertising Gwent Archives so we were hoping for a good response to our marketing campaign. We find that using traditional media works well for us and we have used a similar approach for our Your Place in History day schools to attract interest to locally themed events. We continued with this approach by concentrating on displaying posters and fliers in the specific town which was the subject of the walk, while still using newspapers, social media and email to target a wider audience. To measure and assess the success of our marketing strategy we produced a simple registration sheet with attendees’ names and asked them to provide their post code so we could assess whether we had reached our target audience, and we also asked where people had seen our event advertised.

Tactics and Implementation:

Firstly we created a poster for each event featuring an eye catching photograph of the town to spark local people’s interest (see attached poster for Blackwood). This poster was then distributed a number of ways in a timely fashion. We sent information about our events to our five council Communications Officers at least a month in advance to coincide with the publication dates of various newspapers such as the South Wales Argus, Abergavenny Chronicle, Western Mail, and Monmouth Free Press as well as other local newspapers. The officers may also advertise our events on their council Facebook pages. We emailed the poster to subscribers on the contact database, which includes local history societies and other heritage bodies, approximately 3-4 weeks in advance of the event, and posted it onto our website, Facebook and Twitter pages approximately 3-4 weeks in advance with a reminder posted nearer the time. We displayed posters and fliers in public spaces at work as soon as they were ready, then distributed them in the target area approximately 3 weeks in advance. Two members of staff took posters around the towns involved asking various places to display them. We find face to face contact with staff in shops and libraries etc. is also a good way of making ourselves known around the County. The types of premises in which we were kindly able to display the posters and fliers included pubs, shops, newsagents, fish and chip shops, cafés, libraries, and museums. We were also able to put posters on council notice boards. To implement the evaluation we asked attendees of the walks to fill in a simple registration sheet. The sheet had a dual purpose: firstly we knew if everyone had arrived so we could start the tour, and secondly it enabled us to analyse our marketing strategy.

We do not have a definitive marketing budget as such but being a council department we have to keep our costs within reason. For this project advertising on our social media pages and website cost nothing, marketing our events through the council Communications Officers also cost nothing. For the posters and fliers we cannot quantify the price of the printing as the ink is factored in as part of our printer rental, but we used approximately one ream of paper at £2.62 a ream for all five events. We managed to keep staff time and mileage costs down while distributing the posters and fliers by a combination of means. Two towns were done by members of staff who live there, who knew which shops and places it was best to advertise in, thus saving staff an extra journey from work. One town we distributed posters in while we were planning the route for one of the walks, therefore saving an extra journey and more staff time and expenses, and another place was advertised by Torfaen Council in their Summer of Heritage brochure so there were no costs to us for this either. Pillgwenlly did require an extra journey from work with mileage expenses of £23.40 but we were able to display our posters at places such as Newport Library, the leisure centre, the Riverfront Theatre, Pillgwenlly Asda, Pillgwenlly Millenium Centre, the Transporter Bridge Visitor Centre and Tredegar House. Visiting these places to display posters not only produced a huge response to this particular walk but also enabled us to interact with heritage and cultural bodies who would not necessarily know who we are. Talking to people at these venues also resulted in someone lending us an artefact to display with our WWI exhibition and Asda giving us access to the old cattle market building on their Pillgwenlly site as part of our tour.

Results/Measurements/Outcomes

The results of our marketing campaign for the overall series of events exceeded our expectations. Although we were only aiming to fill 15 places on each tour we had so much interest for the Blackwood and Usk tours that we were able to do two tours for each of the towns, and for Pillgwenlly we were able to stage three tours which in turn enabled us to make more people aware of the Archive and our holdings and role. (Please see attached marketing analysis sheet). Although not everyone on the tours filled in our marketing section, or there was one answer for a group of people for example, overall analysis of our registration sheet has shown us that our marketing approach using traditional media such as posters and newspapers continues to be the most viable option for us and that our targeting a local audience seemed to work.

Although we have increased our amount of followers on Facebook and Twitter greatly over the last year, the demographic that were interested in this series of events appear more likely to be reading a newspaper or noticing our posters in local shops. We will continue to use this method of marketing and evaluation for this year’s series of walks as a successful and sustainable way to attract interest to our events, and monitor how effective different methods of marketing are, and to see if there are any changes in the way that people use different media.

The events were also a good opportunity for networking as our attendees included members of local history societies and people connected with other local heritage projects such as the Abergavenny Urban Characterisation Project and the Pillgwenlly Regeneration Project. The events themselves were a means to market our wares but it is difficult to assess if this has translated into actual footfall at the Archive, in the future we should think about how we can evaluate this. Learning from our experience of marketing this project in 2014, this year we will release a list of the dates and locations of events in the next few weeks to generate early interest, however, we will still target local areas nearer the time. We have generated some income from the events from people purchasing copies of the documents used and this year we are going to make up packs to take with us on the tours so that people can purchase them at the time rather than having to contact our office. This marketing project would be suitable for other groups, especially local history groups as it can be achieved with relatively low costs and resources such as a computer and printer, and distributed by someone living within the local area.

Date of Project:

The events were held on: Ebbw Vale 12 April 2014, Blackwood 30 June 2014, Pillgwenlly 30 July 2014, Usk 30 August 2014, Cwmbran 30 September 2014.

Summary:

The Gwent Archives marketing project entered for the 2015 Marketing Excellence Awards centred around promoting our Past and Present Reminiscence Walks. We staged walks in: Ebbw Vale, Blackwood, Pillgwenlly, Usk and Cwmbran over the summer of 2014, and our marketing aim was to attract 15 bookings for each tour. Our strategy included specifically targeting the towns themselves with posters and through local papers to attract local interest, rather than solely advertising more widely around the large area we cover. Using a variety of marketing media we exceeded our expectations enabling us to put on nine tours in total. Although we used digital and traditional media, evaluation of our strategy using a simple form asking people where they heard about our tours revealed that newspapers and posters were by far the most popular way to distribute our information on these types of events.