Experimenting with Citizen Scholarship
‘Our Theatre Royal Nottingham: Its Stories, People and heritage’

Dr Laura Carletti
Horizon Digital Economy Research, University of Nottingham
Barcelona, 21st February 2018

laura.carletti@nottingham.ac.uk | @lauracarletti
Background: Animating the Archive 2014-2015
Focus Groups with the Public
Hidden Tales of the Theatre Royal

1760 – Nottingham’s First Theatre Royal
It may be surprising to some...

1898 – The Empire Palace of Varieties: A New Companion for the Theatre Royal

1865 – The Opening Night
Having taken just six months to build...

The Actors’ Digs: Life Away from the Theatre Royal Stage
Living close to the 19th century theatrical...

1970 – Should the Theatre Royal Survive?
As the government urged them to close...

The Wronged Chambermaid: The Haunting of the Theatre Royal
The true story behind the legend...

1860 – Tempting Treats and Rave Reviews: Reporting the Theatre in the 1860s
Nottingham Theatre: A Warning!
Without the new Theatre Royal opened in...

Theatre Street: An Insult to the Population and a Discredit to the Town

Hidden Tales of the Theatre Royal
Our Theatre Royal Nottingham:
Its Stories, People & Heritage 2017-2019

Engaging a new community of up to 30 volunteers over a 24 month programme that would develop two parallel archives:
- an analogue archive out of materials currently held by the Theatre and not currently accessible to the public;
- a digital archive that brings together this material with material held in different repositories across the city which are seldom accessed.
Key Themes

- Building a Theatre: Examining the venue's development and key characters from the original build in 1865, renovations in 1897 and closure and re-development in 1977.

- The Theatre Royal in Wartime: The role and operation of the theatre from 1914 to 1918 and 1939 to 1945.

- Pantomime: A key fixture in the Theatre Royal's calendar every year since 1865.

- Onstage and Backstage: From leading actors to local landladies - highlighting individuals and the social history behind the theatre's heritage.
The Community

• 16 volunteers joined the Oral History team: they have had two days training from the East Midlands Oral History Archive

• 15 volunteers joined the Archives team, including one volunteer who had previously worked as an archivist at the University of Nottingham

• 20 volunteers - 5 allocated to each of the project’s four research themes. Introductory sessions on resources and search strategies were run with Nottingham Local Studies Library

• 10 volunteers joined the Events and Exhibitions team, helping to organise the four main events throughout the two years of the project

• 8 volunteers are helping us to develop the website and upload materials generated by other researchers as well as to test and utilize the transcription software package embedded in the platform

• Additionally, a team of students from Nottingham Trent University’s MA Documentary Film course have volunteered to create a short documentary about the project as well as helping to film oral history interviews in different sites across the theatre building.
Analogue vs Digital
Curation of the Archive
BUILDING A THEATRE
The history of the building from 1865, and its relationship with the changing city of Nottingham.

THEATRE ROYAL IN WARTIME
1914 to 1918 and 1939 to 1945, including productions staged and the theatre’s role in supporting the war effort.

PANTOMIME
A key fixture in the theatre’s calendar since The House that Jack Built in 1865; an annual celebration for Nottingham audiences.

ONSTAGE AND BACKSTAGE
The stories of performers, audiences, stage door keepers, technicians, front of house and more; exploring the venue through people’s memories.
A while ago I posted a postcard depicting The Artful Dodger from a 1906 production of 'Oliver Twist'. I said at that time this must be part of a series to promote the show. Well, here's the next one I've found. Definitely one for our transcription team.
Final Notes

• Involving communities in a research-led process to co-curate local heritage

• From Citizen Scientists to Citizen Scholars: Citizens engaged and trained to contribute in arts and humanities research processes

• AHRC project aiming at evaluating engagement and replicability of community-centred initiatives

• Beyond crowdsourcing: partnering with volunteers to co-curate online and on-site
Website (under construction): http://ourtheatreroyal.org
Facebook: Our Theatre Royal Nottingham
Twitter: #TRCHARCHIVE

Email: laura.carletti@nottingham.ac.uk
Twitter: @lauracarletti

Thank you