

THE YOUNG EXPLORERS' TRUST

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Notes from 17th Forum on Youth Expeditions

Date: 19th December 2012

Venue: Coopers' Company & Coborn School (CCCS), Upminster, RM14 3HS

“Communicating the expedition experience”

In attendance:

Jamie Buchanan-Dunlop (digital explorer)
Mike Cross (YET)
Adrian Ferraro (Specialist Travel Consultancy)
Tony Land (YET)
Mike Blakey (YET)
Michael Edney (CCF, guest of M. Blakey)
Ted Grey (YET)
Margaret Grey (YET)
Helen Littlejohn (Peter Symonds College)
Kensa Cooper (Inspire Worldwide)
Graham Derrick (YET)
Dom Hall (Training Expertise)
Justin Major (Malvern College)
Chris Blessington (YET)
John Cameron (Air Cadets, guest of M. Blakey)
Ralph Durbridge (John Lyon School)
Ardy Mohammadi (John Lyon School)
Paul Cornish (Coopers' Company & Coborn School)

Apologies:

Steve Bull
Vivien Moore
Pete Allison
Michael Kingscote / Outposts
Chris Short
Roger Davis
Quincy Connell
Bob Schroter
Tony Whiting
Ellie Bevan (Raleigh)
Matt Lacey
Beth Chapman
John Cooper
David Williams
Richard Mayon-White
Mark Salmon
Shane Winser
Martin Robinson
Dave Watkinson
Liz Gray
Mike Rosser
Tim Stott
Hayley Meredith (DofE)
James Dyer (BE)
Peter Harvey

Opening & welcome:

Mr David Mansfield (Head at CCCS) welcomed The YET to the School. CCCS has a long history of independently organised expeditions, from the South Sea Islands to Bolivia, Southern Africa and Madagascar. The school was delighted to host the event and YET thank them very much for their kind hospitality.

Graham Derrick (Chair of YET) – set the scene for the day:

We only ever tend to hear about the negative side of communication i.e. when something goes wrong. Potential issues with easy access to communication and ill-thought through text messages can easily result in ‘Chinese whispers’, enhancement of stories and incidents, as well as problems of containment for providers and schools.

But there are also many positive opportunities that modern day communication can bring to the expedition experience. They offer the chance to broaden the expedition experience to a wider base and open up the possibility for community interaction.

Today is the chance to discuss and debate the pros and cons of our connected expedition world.

The need and means to bring the educational benefits of expeditions to a wider audience.

Jamie Buchan-Dunlop, Digital Explorer

Jamie is director at Digital Explorer and posted his first blog 'from the field' back in 2001. A former teacher, he is now a specialist in enhancing education through communicating the expedition experience. Digital Explorer inspires young people to be better global citizens through transforming everyday adventures into learning journeys.

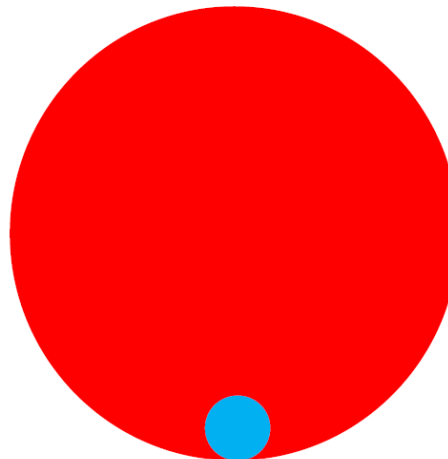
Jaime works on three basic principles:

1. "It is important to connect young people to other environments and cultures"
2. "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well" (i.e. we should aim for the same standards as a professional expedition)
3. "If you scale rubbish, you just get more rubbish" - there is no point in churning out useless information. You need good content.

Jamie talked about the need for expeditions to contact a wider audience than just those going abroad.

The Challenge per school*

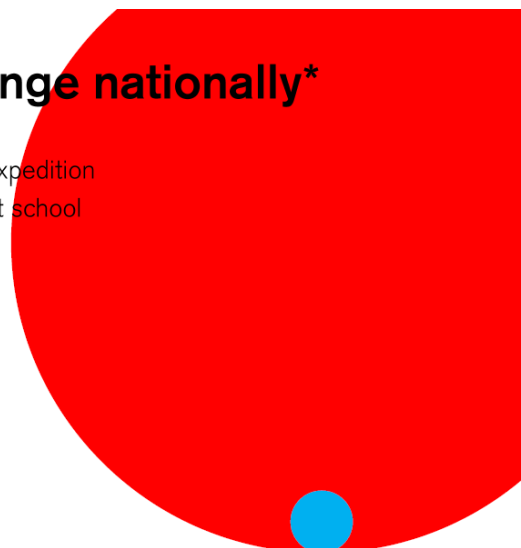
- 20 pupils on expedition
- 1,000 pupils at school



*typical numbers

The Challenge nationally*

- 40,000 pupils on expedition
- 4,000,000 pupils at school



*estimated numbers, accurate data would be wonderful

Pakistan Expedition 2010

- 6 pupils on expedition
- 40,000 online audience

http://offscreenexpedition.com/2010_pk/

By posing various questions, Jaime invited us to think about utilising resources already at our disposal:

- *“What could be achieved if the school community invested the cost an ‘extra’ expedition participant into bringing the expedition experience to a wider community?”*
- *“What could be achieved if the whole school were part of the wider expedition team and all the resources within a school were utilized to the full?”*

Multiple expedition teams

Do school expeditions place an overemphasis on the field team?



It need not cost a fortune. Resources, communication tools and opportunities include:

Blogs – often free to set up. All you need is access to the internet.

- Wordpress
- Blogger.com
- Moonfruit

Social Media:

- Facebook
- YouTube
- Twitter
- Vimeo
- Google+

Question: What would be the total audience from a school’s combined social media network?

BYOD (Bring your own device)

You needn’t have hugely specialist equipment. Smart phones can record video, upload photos, track via GPS, video link via Skype, blog and update social media.

Planning how to communicate the experience

Start long before you travel. Plan expeditions around the curriculum and how it can be overlapped with school life and educational goals. It is important to plan each day in advance and analyze how the story should be told.

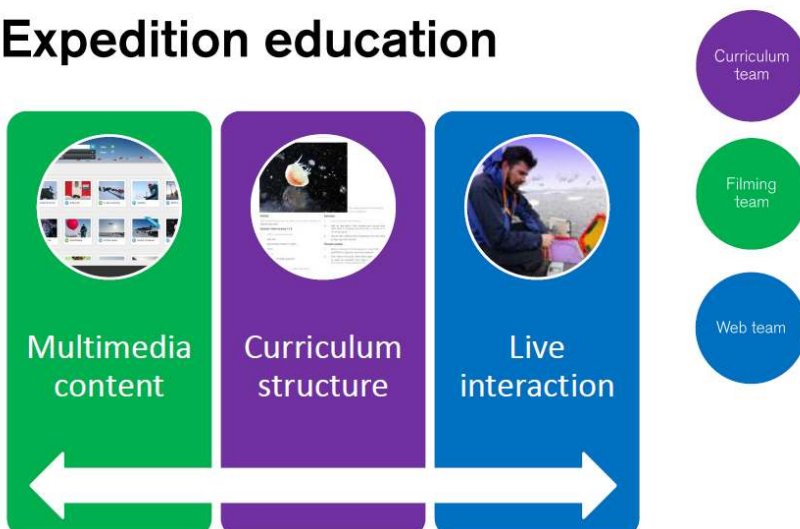
Plan how best to make use of potential content for the day:

- Photos
- Video
- Blog posts
- Links to curriculum

Plan how you can use live interactions:

- Twitter (live text chat)
- Skype (voice & video)
- Google+ (voice and video)
- ipadio (voice)

Expedition education

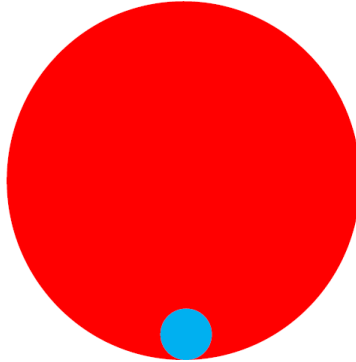


Changing the old expedition model

If we make full use of the opportunities and communication potential, then the 'old model' of expeditions could morph into a new model where more people learn and benefit from the expedition as a whole.

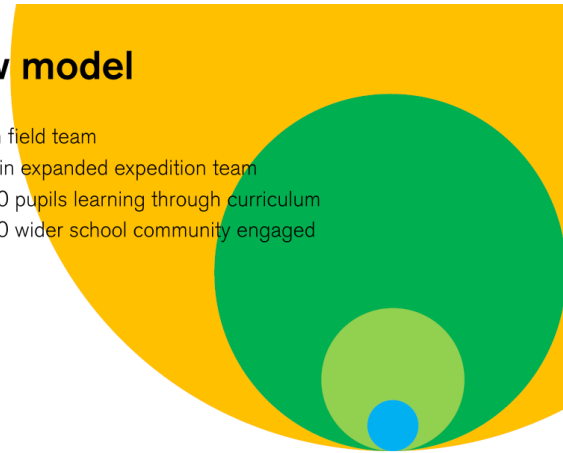
Old model

- 20 pupils on expedition
- 1,000 pupils at school



New model

- 20 in field team
- 160 in expanded expedition team
- 1,000 pupils learning through curriculum
- 5,000 wider school community engaged



Key to making the 'New Model' work:

- Not all the expedition team have to travel.
- Set / create wider educational opportunities for the whole school
- Work across departments (business studies to help with fundraising, art department to help with logo design, geography to set research / photo evidence gathering etc)
- Consider including the cost in 1 extra participant to increase the learning opportunities for whole community.
- Make use of all the resources within the school / expedition community
- Make use of free tools to communicate and share the experience
- Create a legacy that extends the life, reach and value of the expedition

Debate on Jamie's presentation:

The following are some of the comments that we aired after Jamie's talk:

- There is a potential issue with persuading a head teacher to buy in to the bigger picture as it is a structural shift in current thinking.
- Teachers often meet resistance with colleagues unwilling to assist in someone else's trip – reasons could be that they resent the trip going ahead while they are stuck at home, they are too busy with their own department, or they have a trip of their own.
- It is a privilege to go on an expedition in another environment/culture. Participants and teachers have a responsibility to ensure the educational benefits are brought home to a wider audience
- Highlighting the benefits of interdepartmental co-operation is key
- Schools need enlightenment as to the possibilities
- Are there enough skills within a school to make it happen – (most agreed "Yes").
- Needs to be a meaningful contribution from each department.
- The cricket teacher is not going to give up his/her tour for a 'whole school' expedition
 - Response: We're not talking about expeditions 'replacing' other trips, it's about ways to enhance an expedition's educational value within the school community
- The expedition team could consist of:
 - 1 artist
 - 1 geographer
 - 1 sportsman
 - 1 IT guru
 - ... it needs to be a multi-talented team. Schools tend to divide things up, but that's not usually the way of the world.
- How do we get combined thinking, cross-curriculum expeditions?

- Moving from the old style set up to the 'New Model' is a gradual process. A couple of departments together at the start would be a good starting point. A 'bit by bit' approach is required.
- The very act of communicating the experience increases the learning opportunities.
- Think beyond just the school that is organizing the expedition. Link up with other schools in the area (including primary) to increase the community aspects of schools in an area. A primary session on food provision for expeditions (linking food vs calories vs weight) would be a great learning experience.
- Consider assigning a blogger (or communicator) for each day of the expedition, so that individuals on the trip have time away / out of communication.
- This approach is not right for every expedition – it is really important in some trips with some kids to keep that sense of isolation / self development. You go away to BE away, and not be connected to back home.
- The 'new model' broadens the base of who benefits from an expedition though.
- The RGS has a booklet on blogging
- How do we get this message out to schools and teachers?
 - CPD?
 - Courses?
 - Conferences / Papers?

Expedition reporting: Communicating expedition field research & results

The Green-Lyon Greenland Expedition – a research and mountaineering expedition

Ardy Mohammadi, (Student) Chair of the Mountaineering Club at The John Lyon School

Ardy described their two year expedition experience starting with training in North Wales and the Alps (reaching 4021m) for crampon and winter skills training. Via Ferrata and crevasse training also took place in anticipation of the 28 day expedition to Greenland.

Fundraising:

Funds were raised by various methods including raffles, quizzes, sales, auctions, a sponsored walk and a sledge pull in Hyde Park to raise awareness.

Food planning, kit and camp establishment:

The teams used hydrated food on rest days and dried food elsewhere to keep weight low. Food was planned in minute detail and was vital to get right. Total food weighed 365kg, of which 46kg was chocolate. Camps were established through shuttling of gear and supplies. Once a suitable campsite was found (taking into account flat ground, water supply etc), technical kit was moved first with tents and personal kit last. Clothing taken on the expedition was kept to a minimum do keep weight low. Regular check ups of the group were done to ensure everyone stayed healthy.

Aims

The main aim of the expedition was to climb peaks in East Greenland's Liverpool Land.

Additional goals include:

- **Mapping:** The findings from the mapping process have been submitted to the Royal Geographical Society, with whom the team have been working closely with.
- **Scientific data collection:** the team worked with Dr Helen Findlay of Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML) prior to the expedition. The collection of data was to contribute to the study of glacial melting and the affect this had on the sea's pH levels. Along a 45 km tract of Hurry Fjord the team collected water samples from nine different locations, each with a 5km distance from the previous location. A smaller team is returning to Greenland in summer 2013 to take further samples.
- The team visited a weather station which monitors weather patterns, gathering vital data. Scientists demonstrated the use of state of the art monitoring equipment, including the launch of a weather balloon.

- The team also established links with the school community at Ittoqqortoormiit.
- One boys interest led to rock samples being collected on the trip which have now been used as a reference for geology in this area of Greenland.

Communicating the experience

Images and Video were taken in the field and we were shown an excellent video of the expedition experience. A book is also being planned with each boy writing a chapter. To date the team have presented their findings to the Royal Geographical Society and continue to work with Dr Findlay of the Plymouth Marine Laboratory.

Educational Journey of the Year – presentation from winning trip in 2012

Paul Cornish, Coopers' Company and Coborn School

Paul talked us through the pre-expedition planning and in-country experience of the Copper's Company and Coborn School's 2012 expedition to Madagascar. Great emphasis was placed on the importance of community relations and the establishment of a school with long term funding and help. The expedition won the Stretching Horizons 'Educational Journey of the Year' award, following votes from a panel of 6 experts.

Full details of the expedition are available on a beautifully presented 'prezi' available here:

<http://prezi.com/5pddajyqgrey/madagascar-expedition-2012/>

An excellent video is also available and can be found here:

<http://youtu.be/fL6RriVLmOA>

Afternoon round table debate:

“Social Media, Mobiles and Safety management” – managing information flow from the field. The pros and cons of a connected world & How to manage mis-communication and non-containment of incidents.

Adrian Ferraro set the scene for this debate with a story of a teacher's experience of mobile 'intrusion' at a desert camp in the Sahara.

The scope of communication was clarified into two areas:

- Emergency communications
- Information, updates and questions to and from the expedition team.

Mobile policy

There was general agreement that some limitation of the use of mobiles by participants on expedition was a good thing. Limiting mobiles can:

- Ensure young people concentrate on the experiences around them, not what is going on back home.
- Limit home sickness / feeling of connectivity to life outside the expedition
- Prevent small-incidents (easily managed in the field) from being embellished through Chinese whispers and mis-understandings, creating a crisis where there wasn't one.
- Limit accidental divulgence of issues / crisis information in the event of an incident (i.e. assist in containment).

However, it was also stated that some information from the outside world, as long as trickled through at appropriate times, was a good thing and could be felt as a 'bit of a luxury' rather than an intrusion into the expedition environment. It creates conversation and makes you feel that you are involved with the rest of the world, even if for a short time.

Many initially agreed it is good to have a complete ban on all student mobile phones. However, it was pointed out there are issues with a complete ban:

- If you ban, then you risk students finding a way around it and mobile use going 'below radar'.
- As a society, there is a commonly held view that young people don't take responsibilities for their own actions, yet if we ban mobiles, we are removing the chance for them to handle responsibility.

Pointers to successful mobile/communication 'policy':

- Ensure parents are well briefed on what is and isn't expected in terms of communication and the potential issues with ill-thought through text messages.
- No news is good news.
- Be aware of the issue of packet data being sent through in bundles – if you turn off the mobile / Sat-phone too soon to save battery, only some (or perhaps none) of the message may get through.
- It is vital to involve the students in the development of rules and regulations to do with communication and the issues of text messages and incident containment.
- It is important to build trust with parents through clear definitions of who to contact and at what times (both ways).

Incident communication, trip rules and Insurance issues:

Tour/expedition rules should be established in conjunction with reading the schools insurance policy. Certain wording may affect what rules are established. Paul Cornish (CCCS) gave hypothesized example of a claim potentially not be agreed if an off duty staff member had been drinking (as the insurance policy wording stated under the exclusions "if *any* staff members are under the influence of alcohol"). As a result, it was agreed that alcohol for staff was not allowed.

In the event of an incident, travel insurers will provide emergency procedures and resources. HOWEVER, they do not get involved in the parental management side of things. That would be left to the provider and/or school. Key point is to ensure people are well trained in managing information.

Consider key team / school members go on a media course to help establish school policies and be able to manage situations if they arise. **Hill Dickenson** provide a crisis management course that may be of interest.

Communication in the event of an incident back home

Some time was spent discussing whether it is good practice or not to tell young people of a disaster back home (e.g. parent dying / relative seriously ill, serious incident at school).

- There was general agreement that in some circumstances (e.g. if evacuation or returning home would be difficult and/or lengthy), it may be better to not tell individuals of an incident back home until nearer the time of return or likely evacuation.
- The leader does need to know though
- Managing communication into the group (e.g. mobiles and/or comments on blogs/social media etc) is critical in case bad news is revealed to an individual in a poor situation.
- Be wary of press 'underhand' techniques to get information other than through official channels

Mike Blakey asked if YET could/should provide advice to cover emergency response options.

Key point: It is all about ensuring those on the trip, and parents, know the issues. Especially why management of information / mobiles is so important. Ensure the long term build-up of trust between teachers, students, parents (and provider if applicable). Getting students to help establish the rules will mean they are more likely to be followed.

Where Next?

I'm pleased to announce the next forum will be held at:

Peter Symonds College
Owens Road,
Winchester,
Hampshire,
SO22 6RX
www.psc.ac.uk

Date to be decided, but likely to be in late April or early May.

Our thanks to **Helen Littlejohn** for kindly offering to host the next event.

The topic will be:

Inclusive Expeditions: Issues, opportunities and ensuring expeditions remain open to all, whatever background, behaviour and/or physical ability.

Final programme to be confirmed in due course

Miscellaneous, Forth coming events, courses and reminders

Water Safety Management

It was pointed out that water safety management on an expedition is not just the responsibility of 1 or 2 trained members of staff. It is really useful to get as many students trained as possible – pool life guard, life saver, beach life guard qualifications – the more the better.

Someone offered the amazing statistic: "More people drown in cars in the UK than drown in water sport related activities".

Training Expertise will be delivering the Water Safety Management Programme (RLSS) on 2-3 March 2013 in South England. Cost is £175 per person (10% discount for YET members if booked before End January)

More details here: <http://training-expertise.co.uk/first-aid.asp?id=91>

Technology, GIS, GPS

Paul Cornish at Coopers Company and Coborn School kindly offered to host a training session on tools and techniques for reporting from the field. Using technology, GIS, GPS and mapping to help tell the story of a trip and enhance the educational benefits and reporting. Anyone interested in attending such a day / afternoon, please let me know (adrian@thestc.co.uk) and I will try and get something arranged.

YET Webguide

Tony Land invited YET members to let him know if they would like to review any of the chapters (or write missing ones) for the YET webguide for expedition leaders. There are 35 chapters covering all aspects of setting up and organising expeditions. If you would like to volunteer your expertise, **please contact Tony on a.land@virgin.net**

My thanks once again to Paul Cornish and the Copper's Company and Coborn School for their hosting of this forum.

Adrian Ferraro
8 January 2013

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