Stormont Parliamentary Hansards: Embedded in Research & Education

SPHERE

Summary impact analysis

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2011
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SPHERE PROJECT: SUMMARY IMPACT REPORT

INTRODUCTION: THE SPHERE PROJECT

SPHERE (Stormont Parliamentary Hansards: Embedded in Research and Education) was a JISC-funded project based at King’s College, London and Queen’s University, Belfast, working in Partnership with the Northern Ireland Assembly Library, and the NIA Official Report (Hansard). Its purpose was to assess the use, value and impact of The Stormont Papers digital resource, and to use the results of this assessment to make recommendations for a series of practical approaches to embed the resource within teaching, learning and research among the wider user community. The project began in November 2010 and was concluded in April 2010.

THE STORMONT PAPERS: SITE OVERVIEW

The Stormont Papers web site (http://stormontpapers.ahds.ac.uk/) provides free access to an electronic library of the full text Official Record, or Hansard, of the House of Commons for the Northern Ireland Parliament during the period from June 7, 1921 to March 28, 1972 – from Partition with the Irish Free State, to Direct Rule from Westminster. It includes over 92,000 printed pages from 84 volumes of debates of the Stormont devolved parliament. These provide a rich source of information on the government of the Northern Ireland. The debates reflect the holistic nature of powers devolved to Stormont including both social and economic policy in Northern Ireland and relations with the British and Irish governments. It includes coverage of issues relating to Home Rule, security and the Northern Ireland troubles and has largely been used as a source reflecting these issues. The historiography of Northern Ireland over this 50-year period has largely ignored the day-to-day process of governing a state with devolved powers in all areas save that of Foreign Policy. Digitization of the source was undertaken by the Centre for Data Digitisation and Analysis (CDDA) at Queen's University Belfast and the electronic text and page images was made available online by the Arts and Humanities Data Service Executive using funding provided by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC). It is currently hosted by the Centre for e-Research (CeRch), at King’s College London.
IMPACT ANALYSIS: METHODOLOGY

This report describes the analysis performed by the SPHERE project to examine current use of The Stormont Papers and determine functionality that would improve utilisation in the future. The analysis is based on use of selected components of the TIDSR (Toolkit for the Impact of Digitised Scholarly Resources)\(^1\) methodology, adapted to the nature of The Stormont Papers content and user base. The SPHERE project used a mixed methodology, combining four key methods to understand use of the resource for teaching, research, and public engagement. These were:

1. A web-based survey
2. Interpretation of the web analytics data
3. A series of semi-structured interviews with key users of the resource
4. Stakeholder workshops

This mixed approach was an effective combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. In our web-based survey, we dealt with quantitative data but did not look at them from the point of view of statistically significant research, but as hints that supported or contradicted the semi-structured interviews, and the web analytics. The interview protocols were designed to be comparable to the web questionnaire, and this helped form a composite analysis of use and impact. Similarly, a stakeholder workshop at the very beginning of the project helped identify procedures and structure of data gathering. Another workshop took place at the end of the project, to help develop our results into recommendations.

This report is a synthesis of process and results of each of these methods, describing what quantitative data were collected and the qualitative input, with an overview of the findings of each aspect of the study, and the overall conclusions they informed. These findings were then used to develop recommendations for enhancement of the existing resource, and this is presented as the conclusion of this report. Detailed information of each of these methods of analysis is available on the project website: [http://sphere.cerch.kcl.ac.uk/](http://sphere.cerch.kcl.ac.uk/)

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\(^1\) [microsites.ooi.ox.ac.uk/tidsr/](http://microsites.ooi.ox.ac.uk/tidsr/)
IMPACT ANALYSIS 1: THE WEB-BASED SURVEY

The SPHERE project team used an online questionnaire as a research instrument on users’ current and potential future usage of *The Stormont Papers*. A questionnaire, particularly in its online form, offers the potential to collect a combination of quantitative and qualitative information from potentially a significant number of respondents with focused effort by an investigator\(^2\). The questionnaire asked ten questions on four key themes: awareness of the site; current resource use; effectiveness of functionality, and future enhancements.

I. AWARENESS OF SITE

A. PROMOTION

The distribution of responses (Figure 1) implies that a combination of different methods have been effective in communicating the existence of the resource, rather than the success of one specific communication method. The announcement of the launch and continued development of the resource through relevant mailing lists (31%) appears to have been the most effective method of informing a large number of interested parties that the resource exists, while targeted emails to selected people has had some success (8%). The indication that the largest percentage of respondents (38%) heard of the resource through ‘word of mouth’ is also reassuring, suggesting that a degree of community-driven promotion has begun to emerge.

![](chart.png)

**FIGURE 1: RESPONSES TO QUESTION ON HOW RESPONDENTS BECAME AWARE OF THE SITE**

\(^2\) Depending on the nature of the questionnaire, the topic and the community addressed numbers of respondents can vary significantly
However, the lack of references to third party web sites, forums, or other online resources, is a concern, possibly indicating that the resource has, so far, had only limited impact upon the wider research and teaching community. This may reflect the lack of definitive sources of information for the large and disparate Irish Studies community with interests crossing a host of disciplinary areas. It seems that there is not a ‘one-stop-shop’ for Irish Studies and reflecting its diverse nature this is significant for few other subject areas could more effective interactions between users be needed. In order to partially address this, the project organised a stakeholder workshop, which took place at PRONI (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland) on April 8th, 2011. It also may reflect the lack of a similar one-stop-shop for parliamentary materials, of which many different types in many jurisdictions already exist in digital form. The existence of parliamentary content data silos, and the lack of standards for documenting and interrogating these data is a serious concern.

B. COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROMOTION

The project sought to determine if respondents had made recommended the web site to their peers for use in their own work. The question had a dual purpose: to determine if respondents considered *The Stormont Papers* to be a valuable resource for research and teaching purposes (respondents would not recommend a web site if it did not meet the users’ needs), and to establish the extent to which the user community contributed to ongoing promotion of the resource. A statement that the respondent had recommended the resource to others was also seen as evidence that the resource was benefiting from self-sustaining, community-driven promotion, enabling a larger audience to become aware of its existence and value.

As indicated in Table 1, academic researchers were the most common user group to whom the respondents recommended the resource. Other users included postgraduate students, undergraduate students, library staff, archives staff, the media, School/FE colleges and politicians.

TABLE 1: USER TYPES MOST COMMONLY RECOMMENDED TO USE THE RESOURCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User type</th>
<th>Percentage of total responses</th>
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<td>Academic researchers</td>
<td>69.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>53.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>46.20%</td>
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3 Please note that the sum of percentages is not 100% because the option was for multiple answers. However, the distribution of responses demonstrates that the value of the resource is seen mostly for researchers followed by use in teaching and different types of memory institutions.
Library 38.50%
Archives 23.10%
Media 23.10%
School or FE College 15.40%
Politician 7.70%
No one 7.70%
Other 7.70%

II. CURRENT RESOURCE USE

A. CURRENT USE

Respondents were asked to reflect on their current usage of the resource, citing any tangible research, teaching, or other outputs that had been produced as a result. Frequent visits to the web site may be indicative that the site has a key role in the work activities of the respondent, while reference to the purpose and subject domain show how the resource is used.

FIGURE 2: RESPONSES TO QUESTION ON HOW RESPONDENTS BECAME AWARE OF THE SITE

As indicated in Figure 2, the majority of respondents (84.62%) use the resource for research purposes. Of these, 46.15% use it for ‘personal interest’, 38.46% for teaching
purposes, 23.08% for political reference, and 23.08% for journalism and media research. Only one respondent provided further information – the respondent indicated use of the resource for personal interest, research, and teaching purposes, stating that they were investigating the devolution process. It is notable that users were using the resource for multiple purposes – reflecting the percentage figures that exceed 100% which would be the case if the site was used for a single objective by each visitor.

B. SUBJECT DOMAIN OF USERS

The majority of respondents (76.92%) stated that the resource was used in the history domain only. In the response listing multiple subjects, the history domain was the first subject to be stated. Smaller numbers of respondents cited other subject domains – one respondee indicated the resource was used for scientific study in research, teaching and journalism, but did not provide further explanation of the area of study; a second respondent indicated it was used for political research and teaching; and a third respondent indicated that they used the resource for research into economics, finance and history.

The frequency in which the history subject appears is perhaps unsurprising – *The Stormont Papers* is a historical resource, documenting political debates that took place 40 to 90 years prior, and the listing of history as an example subject domain may have influenced respondents to some extent. However, its use in this manner is ambiguous due to the wide-ranging nature of the subject area. Responses would have benefited from further information indicating specific types of history, e.g. local history, political history, constitutional affairs.

C. FREQUENCY

The question responses were well distributed, covering all three time categories: more than half of respondents (54%) indicated that they visited the web site at least once every 1-3 months, 23% indicated that they visited the site on a daily or weekly basis, while the remaining 23% indicated that they visited the site infrequently, a few times every year. As noted above, these figures may be indicative that the resource has a key role in the work of a number of researchers, and a role in a larger user group.

III. EVALUATION OF CURRENT FUNCTIONALITY

The survey also sought to determine if the current design and structure of *The Stormont Papers* met the current needs of the user community. To aid recall, the questions about content included hints on existing functionality; further, users were asked about additional tools/services/functionality they would like to see available for this resource.
A. SEARCH FUNCTIONALITY

The largest percentage (69%) of respondents indicated that the web site was easy to use; 8% of respondents indicated that it was relatively easy to use, dependent upon the purpose or objective that they are attempting to achieve.

The majority of respondents considered the search interface to be useful: 46.2% considered it to be excellent, 30.8% stated it was good, while 15.4% indicated it was satisfactory. One respondent, who was involved with the initial work on the resource, found the search interface to be very unsatisfactory. Although they did not provide additional comments in the survey, their response to a follow-on question on enhanced functionality implies that they are dissatisfied with current search functionality associated with mark-up.

B. BROWSE INTERFACE

The majority of respondents considered the browse interface to be useful: 38.5% considered it to be excellent, 30.8% considered it good, while 15.4% indicated it was satisfactory. One respondent who chose the satisfactory option indicated their reason in a text box for the ease-of-use question (Q6): "search results could be more intuitive".

C. SITE NAVIGATION

The majority of respondents considered navigation functionality to be appropriate: 38.46% considered it to be excellent, 30.77% considered it good, while 15.38% indicated it was satisfactory.

D. VISUAL APPEARANCE AND LAYOUT

The majority of respondents considered the visual layout of the site to be sufficient: 53.85% considered the visual appearance to be excellent, 30.77% considered it to be good, and 7.69% considered it to be sufficient. One respondent who considered the visual appearance to be only sufficient provided further explanation in response to the ease-of-use question (Q6), stating: "[The site] just looks a bit out of date".

E. USER DOCUMENTATION

The majority of respondents provided a positive response regarding the suitability of user documentation: (38.46%) considered it to be excellent, 30.77% considered it to be sufficient, while 7.69% indicated it was good.
The majority of respondents were positive about the functionality offered by the Stormont Papers resource. Many considered it to be excellent or good, while a smaller number expressed satisfaction. However, it is evident that the site does not meet the needs of all respondents. It is recommended that further investigative work is performed to trial the use of new functionality that revises and refines the method in which content is accessed and manipulated.

IV. NEW/ENHANCED FUNCTIONALITY

A. DESIRABLE FUNCTIONALITY

Respondents were asked to indicate the functionality that should be added or enhanced on the Stormont Papers web site. Respondents were allowed to select one or more choices, or enter other suggestions in a free text field.

Responses show that full text search would have value to the largest number of respondents (69.23% of total response), followed by enhancements to existing semantic mark-up of text content (53.85% of responses) (presently, text searching is controlled by volume number). The addition of timeline functionality and semantic links to 3rd party resources were considered useful by an equal number of respondents (23.08% of respondents). One respondent used the free text box to request that a small modification be made to the existing site to allow searched-for terms to be highlighted in the search results. Surprisingly, one respondent indicated that new functionality was not necessary, since it was "already excellent".

B. NEW MATERIAL

Respondents were asked to indicate the material that would be of most interest to them, if new content were added to the Stormont Papers web site at a later date. Results are presented below.
As illustrated in Figure 3, the addition of committee papers would have value to the largest number of respondents (39% of respondents), followed by bills and acts (31% of respondents). The addition of e-learning materials and thematic collections on key issues (15% of respondents). The addition of further parliamentary papers or other content was not considered to be of primary interest to any of the respondents, although this does not necessarily indicate that the respondents would not find it beneficial if they were provided.

**SUMMARY OF WEB SURVEY RESULTS**

The online questionnaire performed by the project suggests that the majority of users who responded are, as a minimum, satisfied with the functionality of the online resource. On the basis of the limited information gathered using the online questionnaire, the following conclusions may be drawn:

- Several methods have proven to be effective in promoting the resource in the wider user community, the most notable being ‘word of mouth’ communication through peer recommendation and announcements/discussion on mailing lists. Targeted emails to specific individuals have proven to be effective in a small number of cases. This result may reflect the lack of a budget for other types of promotion.

- Respondents to the online questionnaire have recommended the resource to a number of people working in different areas, most notably academic researchers, postgraduates, undergraduates and library staff.
• The majority of respondents use the resource for research purposes, followed by personal interest, teaching purposes, political reference, and journalistic purposes.

• Respondents consider the search, browse, navigation, visual appearance and documentation to be appropriate to the site, with a number of people considering it good or excellent. However, there is evidence to suggest that improvements could be made to provide greater flexibility of access particularly for wider public access.

• If enhancements were made in the future, respondents would like text search functionality to be improved and enhancements to semantic mark-up, followed by the addition of timeline functionality and semantic integration with third-party resources.

• There were different views on the type of content that should be integrated into the site in the future. Many respondents would prefer that committee papers and bills & acts were integrated into the site. A small number of respondents were interested in e-learning material and thematic collections.

IMPACT ANALYSIS 2: WEB ANALYSIS OF CURRENT USE AND IMPACT OF THE STORMONT PAPERS WEB RESOURCE

A second strand of the project focused upon the use of access logs and third-party services to perform a quantitative analysis of the use and impact of the Stormont Papers. The broad aims of the work were to address three key questions:

1. How popular is the Stormont Papers web site, in terms of the number of new and returning users that access it?

2. What user communities utilise the resource?

3. What route do users take to locate and access the Stormont Papers web site?

4. To what extent is the existence and use of the Stormont Papers evident in academic researcher papers, blogs and other information sources?

METHODOLOGY

As before, the project team reviewed the Toolkit for the Impact of Digitised Scholarly Resources (TIDSR) produced by the Oxford Internet Institute, selecting four research methods for application to the Stormont Papers resource:
1. **User Analysis:** The analysis of user information collected by the web server or other tools.

2. **Referrer analysis:** A method for identifying third-party resources from which traffic to a website originates. Referrals may provide evidence of the use of a resource for academic research or in a taught course.

3. **Content Analysis:** A method of locating textual content that refers to the designated resource and analysing it to understand the type of content it contains. Content analysis may provide useful information on the community that has developed around a web resource and the purpose for which they use it.

To collect and analyse quantitative data on the use of the resource, the project utilised several information sources, tools and services. These include:

- Apache server logs that contain information on access requests to the web server.
- Google Analytics logs that contain access information associated with tagged pages.
- Google Blog Search ([http://blogsearch.google.com](http://blogsearch.google.com))
- Google Scholar ([http://scholar.google.co.uk/](http://scholar.google.co.uk/))
- Yahoo! Site Explorer ([https://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com](https://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com)) to identify third party websites indexed by the Yahoo! search engine

These information sources offer a diverse range of data that may be used to analyse the impact that a web resource has made within the wider user community.

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**I. POPULARITY OF THE WEB RESOURCE**

To determine the popularity of the web resource, the project sought to determine the number of users who have visited the website during a designated period of time. The time period selected for analysis was influenced by the amount and type of information describing usage that was available to the project team. The Google Analytics account had began recording access requests from January 7th, 2009 onwards. However, the earliest Apache logs that could be obtained were from 27 May 2010 onwards. Web server logs for earlier periods had been deleted by an automated script designed to prevent log files filling all available disk space.

Google Analytics and the Apache web server use alternative approaches to record site accesses - Google Analytics adopts a page tagging approach, enabling a web master to identify accesses to all tagged pages, even those that are cached by the visitor’s web client.
or third party service. However, it is unable record information on accesses to non-tagged data. Web server logging services, by contrast, capture a record of all transactions that take place on the web server, including access attempts to non-tagged data, such as binary (e.g. PDF documents and ZIP archives) and dynamic pages. However, it is unable to gather access statistics for cached data stored in other locations. Rather than attempt to combine information provided by these overlapping capture methods, the project treated both types of result individually, exploring reasons where the figures differed. During the analysis period of 27 May 2010 - 25 November 2010, it was found that 6,514 visitors accessed the web site - an average of 35 visitors per day - that originated from 3,817 unique IP addresses. Google Analytics recorded a lower figure, recording 1,881 visitors during the same period - an average of 12.08 visitors per day - from 1,267 unique IPs. The majority of visitors were located in the UK, while a significant number were located in Ireland, the United States, Canada, Norway, and France.

Visitor loyalty is an indicator of the popularity of a resource within its designated community, indicating the number of times that a user will revisit a web site. A combination of new and returning visitors is considered to be preferable – a large number of new visitors may imply a growing awareness of the web resource in the user community, while a large number of return visitors is considered to show evidence that the user community considers the web site to have value to their work. Analysis of the web server logs indicate that 59% (3,817) of visitors access the Stormont Papers one time only, while a smaller number 41% (2,697) are returning visitors that access the resource on two or more occasions. Interpretation of these figures suggests that the web resource has value to a small number of users, as evidenced by the frequency that they revisit the site. However, further work is necessary to retain the larger percentage of visitors who access the site, but do not return at a later date.

II. THE USER COMMUNITIES THAT USE THE STORMONT PAPERS

To determine the user community that access the web resource, the project analysed the type of institution through which visitors accessed the resource, performing an IP lookup to identify service providers. The investigation reveals a mixture of governmental, academic, commercial and consumer ISPs. Of the top 500 service providers identified by Google Analytics, 120 were recognised as FE and HE academic institutions and government bodies. Examples of government bodies that have accessed the site include the Northern Ireland Civil Service, Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service and Houses of Parliament (UK). Academic institutions that access the web site include King’s College London, Queens University Belfast, Bergen University Norway, National University of Ireland, Galway, University of Ulster, Trinity College Dublin and Oxford University.

III. ROUTE BY WHICH USERS LOCATED THE STORMONT PAPERS
Visitors located the Stormont Papers resource via third-party referrals and search engines. The analysis of referrals in web logs uncovered a mix of web sites operated by different types of organisation, including the following:

- Academic institution or academic services,
- Non-academic research sites, such as Wikipedia
- Email services (e.g. Gmail, Microsoft Hotmail),
- Official and unofficial party political web sites,
- Social media sites, such as Facebook, blogs and bookmarking services,
- News portals, such as BBC News.

An analysis of terms passed by search engines and recorded in Apache logs and Google Analytics suggested that four types of user visited the site:

- Researchers seeking an online copy of the Stormont parliamentary debates, but are not necessarily aware or looking for the Stormont Papers
- Researchers seeking information on specific topics discussed in the Stormont parliament
- Researchers seeking access to the Stormont Papers web site
- Researchers seeking information on parliamentary (not limited to Stormont) matters

IV. AWARENESS OF THE RESOURCE IN THE BROADER COMMUNITY

Finally, the project sought to determine awareness and use of the Stormont Papers web site in academic research, as evidenced through reference to the resource in academic researcher papers, blogs and other information sources. The project utilised several search tools, including Google Blog Search, Google Scholar, Google News and Yahoo! Site Explorer to identify reference to the web resource, each of which were analysed to determine the type of coverage. The analysis proved to be challenging – the Stormont Parliament and associated documentation were widely discussed, but it was difficult to distinguish between information that had been obtained from printed and digital sources, or a combination of both. In total, only 23 resources provided direct evidence of the use of the Stormont Papers in online form for their research. These results could be classified into one of five categories:

- Articles and blog posts on launch of Stormont Papers web site
- Articles, blog posts, and discussion on Irish politics that referred to evidence on the Stormont Papers web site;
• Articles, blog posts and discussion on non-political research topics, such as Irish history, that referred to the Stormont Papers web site;

• Articles related to change in AHDS funding

• Articles written by project staff on web statistics associated with the web site

A number of additional web articles, blog postings and forum discussions were identified that may have been written with reference to the Stormont Papers web resource. However, these cited the print edition or did not contain citations at all.

The analysis of third party resources revealed little evidence of the use of the web resource by academic and non-academic researchers. However, we know from other evidence gathered by the project team that many academic researchers used the web resource, but considered it necessary to cite the paper copy of the parliamentary debates, a consideration that may disguise the true usage of the web resource for research.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE WEB ANALYSIS

As a result of the quantitative analysis performed using access logs and web accessible tools, several conclusions may be made:

• The designated community of the Stormont Papers resource is composed of a mixture of researchers working or studying within the FE/HE academic and local/national government sectors. Further work should be performed to provide access to content of relevance to researchers, and build awareness of the resource within these sectors

• The web resource is used on a regular basis by a significant percentage of users. However, the majority of visitors to the web site access the site once only and do not return. Further work should be performed to enable content to be located using diverse, easy to understand access methods.

• There is relatively little evidence of the use of the Stormont Papers for academic research. However, anecdotal evidence suggests there are “hidden” researchers who use the online resource to perform their work, but cite the printed book. It is recommended that the site developers investigate simple methods to encourage researchers to cite the digital edition, e.g. providing citation in several formats that can be copied into the researchers’ work.

IMPACT ANALYSIS 3: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS
I. INTERVIEWS

The semi structured interviews were a qualitative approach to the data gathering. Eleven subjects were interviewed by members of the SPHERE team. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders representing different user communities, including library, archive and academic communities of practice. The Interviewees were:

1. Conail Stewart,  
   Researcher, Queen's University, Belfast, School of History and Anthropology.
2. David Huddleston,  
   Head of Records Management, PRONI, Belfast
3. Eileen McVerry,  
   Heritage Services Manager, Libraries NI
4. George Woodman  
   Stormont Librarian, Stormont
5. Gabriel Doherty  
   Lecturer, University College Cork, School of History
6. John Knowles  
   Information Services - Library Services and Research Support, Queen’s University Belfast
7. Paul Seaward  
   Director History of Parliament, London
8. Janet Hancock  
   Responsible for PRONI website and the Enquiry Service, PRONI Belfast
9. Heather Stanley  
   Head of Public Services, PRONI Belfast
10. Susan Schreibman  
    Director, Digital Humanities Observatory DHO
11. Gordon Dunsire,  
    Digital Library consultant, Edinburgh

Interviews were carried out using a survey protocol developed by the whole project team at our first project meeting in November, and asked to complete a consent form.

II. SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW FINDINGS

A number of common trends can be identified from the interviews.

• Although most stakeholders were aware of the Stormont resource, several had used it rarely.
• Several had not appreciated the comprehensive nature of the content and its value in providing contextual information.

• There was a feeling that the resource was not widely known about and hence not widely used.

• Several stakeholders advised that they would be either using the resource themselves in future, or recommending it to others.

• There was some consensus from respondees that the resource had not been marketed sufficiently.

• There was a feeling that the resource should be integrated, at least through simple linking, to other complimentary resources including several holdings of the Public Record Office Northern Ireland.

• Descriptions of site included:

  ‘A digital resource on Stormont Parliamentary Papers.’
  
  ‘Useful, surprising and comprehensive, covering a significant period of NI history.’
  
  ‘Unsure of how to describe it.’

• Most interviewees were unsure of how they became aware of the web resource. In most instances they were aware of the Stormont Hansard through other work conducted by CDDA, or through attendance at the project formal launch. Some had located the resource through Google. A number were clear that post-project marketing of the resource was needed.

• When asked about the extent to which the resource was used: All interviewees had used the resource but almost exclusively they had used in infrequently.

• Key improvements to the site suggested included:
  
  o Providing a better history and context for the site/material.

  o Links to (and from) related resources and sites such as contemporary Hansard debates for Westminster, historical Hansards for Westminster, CAIN, PRONI, DIPPAM, IRIS, DHO, BOPCRIS, OPSI (HMSO), Law Database, Houses of the Oireachtas and more.

  o User documentation

  o Case studies

  o Pictures

  o RSS Feeds

  o Additional pieces of topical information
• Some potted biographies of members

• User interface feedback:
  o The majority liked the basic user interface. Several noted that keeping it simple would help the wider public gain access (although use cases would demonstrate the scope of the content.)
  o The majority thought that a more advanced tiered approach to a search would be useful to a knowledgeable user.
  o A facility to cite papers/journals and link back to outside collections would be valuable.

• Searching:
  o Most would like key word searches as well as free text searching.
  o The majority had not looked at the index.
  o The material was very dense and brought up too many hits potential from free-text searching.
  o Searching across volumes would make searching faster and prevent the need for repetitive searches for each volume.
  o A few thought timelines might assist searching.
  o Linking to other topical sites would give the user a more comprehensive search, perhaps through linked searches.

• Enhanced functionality:
  o Several indicated the potential usefulness of a concordance, timelines

• Possible users mentioned:
  o Academics, local historians, politicians, students, information management practitioners (assessing approaches to information retrieval), international users interested in NI History.
  o Point was made that the content was of national interest. The debates reflect the activities of a devolved government, not an English county council.
  o The widespread interest in Irish Studies in England and abroad should provide many potential user opportunities.

• New content that could be added:
  o NI Parliamentary Papers, Senate Debates, Command Papers, Prior Assembly, Bills and Acts.

• Suggestions to increase embedding of the resource:
Route map of possible uses

Citations in journals from authors who had used the site as a resource.

Links from mention of debates in the JSTOR Ireland Collection (funded by JISC) to directly link journal papers and the Hansard primary source. Such linking would also demonstrate the extent to which Hansard was used by scholars.

Linking outside the collection preferably through deep-linking.

• Improving interaction:

  The majority thought linking to specialist websites would be helpful.

  The majority would not blog or twitter. It was regarded as costly and time consuming.

IMPACT ANALYSIS 4: STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

The project organised two stakeholder workshops. The first took place at Queen’s University, Belfast, in November 2010, and brought together selected members of the user community. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the development of the web survey and interview protocol, and to discuss the resource, its use and sustainability and development. A group discussion helped the Project Team shape an understanding of usage and users of The Stormont Papers for research, education and public engagement. The discussions helped focus the aims and objectives of the initial user analysis, by identifying users and formulating questions for the survey and interview. There was also a discussion about future plans for digitization of additional Stormont Papers.

Once our initial study was complete, it became apparent that there were several generic issues that had an impact on the use, embedding, and promotion of e-content relating to Northern Ireland, and to Ireland more generally. Our final SPHERE project workshop therefore developed into a wider meeting of stakeholders with interests in Irish Studies e-Resources. This event took place at PRONI in April 2011, and was an opportunity to report the findings of the initial impact analysis to the user community, and to gather input from the community on these findings. It showed that digital resources relating to Irish Studies could be better embedded in research, teaching and outreach. The group made a number of strategic recommendations:

• Leadership is required to co-ordinate activities in all aspects of resource development from the selection of strategic content to digitize, to adopting best
practice in information collection and management, to sharing expertise, and developing dissemination strategies. It seems unlikely that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) is able to provide this leadership and the development of alternate strategies are required. Indeed, this lack of leadership may be island wide.

- There are opportunities to learn lessons from past resource development activity when shared in a collaborative environment.
- A joined-up approach to content development, and cross-sector sharing of resources is required.
- A digital infrastructure to link e-resources together and breakdown data silos is necessary.
- There are enhanced opportunities to secure funding available across different sectors and internationally through a collaborative approach. Possible funding sources include the Heritage Lottery, educational charities, the International Fund for Ireland and academic Research Councils. In all instances cross-sector impact is of importance.
- There seems little doubt that if content were interlinked an integrated resources would be of greater value than its component parts.
- Sharing of resources – content, hardware, expertise – is likely to result in overall cost reductions than stand-alone project development.
- Collections of critical mass are likely to ease sustainability concerns

This event also formed the basis of the SPHERE use case on impact.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS FROM IMPACT ANALYSIS

The project team found that undertaking the TDSR-based analysis was an extremely useful activity, and a valuable opportunity to apply quantitative and qualitative analysis to the use of a resource for the humanities. It has helped the team better understand the user communities, and how the resource is used for teaching, research, and by the public. Significant findings across the four methods used in the impact analysis are that:

- the resource is widely used for public engagement, is well known internationally, and usage is generally high.
- research use of the collection is not as high as expected, so the resource should be enhanced for academic use, by including:
• development of use cases demonstrating the use of the resource for research, including use cases showing the integration of advanced ICT methods.

• use cases for teaching are required. As the resource is widely used outside academic, we wish to explore further the integration of the resource into the northern Ireland national curriculum.

• the resource has not been widely linked in key places, e.g., Irish studies blogs, and through the PRONI and CAIN websites. There will be a review of places where the resource should be publicized.

  • the interface needs to be reviewed and refreshed, and recommendations have been made for revisions.

  • the resource would be significantly enhanced with the addition of more content, e.g: committee papers, bills and acts. An integrated corpus of Irish parliamentary papers would have far greater value than the house of commons papers alone.

Semantic integration with other parliamentary content – not northern Irish - would increase use even more. An obvious example would be the ability to track debates at Westminster on Northern Ireland and compared them to the Stormont content.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE

The four components of the impact analysis study revealed several recommendations for functionality that should be investigated and implemented within the Stormont Papers resource. To ensure that these recommendations are acted upon, post-project work will focus upon the development of an implementation plan, charting a path from initial specification through to implementation. The implementation plan will define the resourcing requirements necessary to undertake the work and timescales associated with each task. As a precursor to the creation of an implementation plan, the project team has defined three resourcing categories, based upon increasing level of effort required, and used them to sort the set of recommendations by the level of effort required to implement. These classes are:

1. Recommendations for implementation in short term using existing resources

2. Recommendations for implementation in short to medium term, subject to availability of resources

3. Recommendations for implementation, subject to future development funding
CLASSIFICATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

After careful consideration of the recommendations received through the different methods for user study and presented above, the project team summarised possible future actions taking into consideration two dimension – how urgent it is to take action, and what is the effort required to undertake action. These recommendations are summarised below.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN SHORT TERM USING EXISTING RESOURCES

The recommendations outlined under the first heading may be performed by KCL and QUB staff associated with the Stormont Papers/SPHERE project in the short term (1-6 months), without the provision of additional resources, beyond an allocation of time.

TABLE 2: RECOMMENDATIONS THAT CAN BE INCORPORATED QUICKLY AND WITH NO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Summary of required activity</th>
<th>Effort&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss linkage with other similar resources</td>
<td>QUB staff to engage with similar projects in academia and government that publish parliament data and discuss simple methods of promoting each others’ resources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify specialist websites &amp; SIGs which can be involved in utilizing data made available through this resource</td>
<td>QUB staff to engage with Special Interest Groups to promote use of existing resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify possible data champions who would champion the resource in teaching</td>
<td>QUB staff to identify institutions that utilise parliamentary material for teaching purposes and work with key staff to embed use of resource within the department</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor on systematic basis user suggestions for additional content</td>
<td>KCL/QUB staff to guide the development of a feedback form and to regularly monitor comments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>4</sup>This column is colour-coded. Since recommended actions differ in complexity and effort required, and subsequent work would require more detailed planning, here we use darker colour to mark more effort- and respectively resource-consuming tasks. Lighter colour is used for tasks which are not effort-intensive.
II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM, SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES

The recommendations outlined under the second heading may be performed by KCL and QUB staff in the short-to-medium term (1-18 months), subject to the provision of resources within the institution, such as software developer time.

TABLE 3: RECOMMENDATIONS THAT CAN BE INCORPORATED INTO EXISTING RESOURCE QUICKLY AND WITH NO ADDITIONAL RESOURCING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Summary of required activity</th>
<th>Effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate consistent citation of web site</td>
<td>KCL software developer to implement citation plug-in, capable of producing citations in appropriate citation formats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability study with different types of users</td>
<td>QUB/KCL team to continue to analyse usability of existing system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce search across volumes</td>
<td>KCL software developer to implement search functionality to query and return results from two or more volumes chosen by user</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combine search indexes into one</td>
<td>KCL software developer to implement search functionality to combine search indexes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce truncated keyword search</td>
<td>KCL software developer to modify search function to enable truncated keyword search, locating pages with all instances of the root word and the root word combined with any possible ending.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop content strategy</td>
<td>KCL/QUB staff to develop set of policies for content creation, delivery, and governance of data held by the resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION, SUBJECT TO FUTURE DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

The recommendations outlined under the third heading are resource intensive and cannot be achieved using existing resources. They may be incorporated into bids for future research funding, as component of larger project to add new parliamentary material and metadata.

TABLE 4: A RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION, SUBJECT TO FUTURE DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Summary of required activity</th>
<th>Effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop/implement branding and marketing strategy</td>
<td>QUB/KCL staff to work with marketing team within institution to develop a consistent branding &amp; marketing strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey of similar resources in UK and overseas</td>
<td>KCL/QUB team to identify projects in academia and government that are digitising and/or publishing parliamentary data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop use case for research use</td>
<td>KCL/QUB team to work with designated users to develop use cases that define new methods of searching and browsing resource, tied in which achieving defined research objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce elements of personalization on the web site</td>
<td>KCL/QUB staff to develop personalisation use cases for personalisation features and implement in site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revise web site for use on mobile devices</td>
<td>KCL/QUB staff to work with a mobile interface expert to revise web site UI and provide functionality suitable for mobile devices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce tag clouds, timelines, Google maps, mash-ups</td>
<td>KCL/QUB staff to develop appropriate use cases for personalisation features and implement in site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce additional advanced search functions</td>
<td>KCL/QUB staff to develop appropriate use cases for personalisation features and implement in site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>Action Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply semantic web approaches using linked data and controlled vocab</td>
<td>KCL staff to investigate feasibility of converting textual content into linked data and implement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organise a series of promotional events</td>
<td>KCL/QUB staff to work with marketing team to organise events to raise awareness of resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate the resource in suitable VREs</td>
<td>KCL/QUB staff to identify VREs in active use and develop test cases for interoperation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a connection to the national curriculum</td>
<td>KCL/QUB staff to engage with academia to discuss methods of promoting use of digital resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The recommendations outlined above describe a diverse set of measures that should be adopted to develop the resource further, better meet the requirements of users and amplify its impact especially in research and teaching. Avenues for undertaking these activities, including the location of development funding, will be investigated during the coming year.