1. REPORT PURPOSE

SPHERE (Stormont Parliamentary Hansards: Embedded in Research and Education) is 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 is 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.

This report describes the web survey performed by the SPHERE project to examine current use of the Stormont Papers and determine functionality that would improve utilisation in the future. The survey uses a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. In our survey, we deal with quantitative data but actually do not look at them from the point of view of statistically significant research, but as hints that support or contradict other data gathered by the project team, in the qualitative study, workshop, and the web analytics: for example, the interview protocols were designed to be comparable to the web questionnaire.

The online survey gathered information on four key topics:

1. Communication methods that have proven most effective for raising awareness of the resource;
2. Purpose for which the resource is currently used
3. Effectiveness of provided functionality to perform the intended purpose;
4. Future enhancements that could be made to better support users to perform their work

Both the survey and the interviews revealed that users whom provided feedback primarily use it for research purposes and are, for the most part, satisfied by the functionality offered. However, it found that respondents would like to see modifications to the visual appearance of the site to make it more visually appealing, and enhanced functionality for browse, search, and general navigation. In terms of the addition of new content, the inclusion of Committee Papers and Bills & Acts were considered to have particular value.

2. 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 - March 28, 1972 – from Partition with the Irish Free State, and 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 Province. 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. The project was organised by the Centre for Data Digitisation and Analysis (CDDA) at Queen’s University Belfast and made available 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.

3. QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Our structured interview protocol was designed by the project team based on feedback from users gathered for our first project Workshop, which took place at Queens University Belfast in November 2010.
In Winter 2010, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders representing different user communities, including library, archive and academic communities of practice. The list of specialists to be interviewed aimed to involve professionals with different user profiles – lecturers and researchers which should help to identify specific issues related to the use of resource in research and teaching; librarians and managers which would provide the point of view of those who are involved in the delivery of cultural heritage digital resources.

The Interviewees were:

1. Mr 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. Dr. Gabriel Doherty Lecturer, University College Cork, School of History
6. John Knowles Information Services - Library Services and Research Support, Queen's University Belfast
7. Dr. 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. Dr. Susan Schreibman Director, Digital Humanities Observatory DHO
11. Gordon Dunsire, Digital Library consultant, Edinburgh (interviewed by Milena Dobreva)

Interviews were carried out by Paul Ell and Elaine Yeates at Queen's University Belfast.

The survey protocol can be found in Appendix 3. Interviewees were asked to complete a consent form, which can be found in appendix 4.

The interviews included only conversation with the participants and lasted typically between 40 minutes and 1 hour. Participants did not have to perform any hands-on tasks during the study but they were aware what digital resource would be discussed during the interview; even if they were not using the resource at all, they had a chance to have a look at the website and form their opinion about it prior to the interview. However the interview questions were not sent in advance. Detailed transcripts of the interviews had been made and analysis of the repetitive patterns and suggestions is presented below.

4. SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW FINDINGS

In total eleven interviewees agreed to be interviewed by the CDDA project team. This resulted in nine completed structured interview forms, with one interview attended by two interviewees. Interviews were held either in person for Northern Ireland based stakeholders, or by conference calling for other stakeholders. The shortest interview lasted for 30 minutes, the longest for over 60 minutes.

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

- Although most stakeholders were aware of the Stormont resource, a number 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.

Extent to which the resource was used:

All interviewees had used the resource but almost exclusively they had used it infrequently.

Key improvements to the site suggested included:

Providing a better history and context for the site/material.

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.

User documentation

Case studies

Pictures

RSS Feeds

Tip bits of topical information

Some potted biographies of members

User interface feedback:

The majority liked the basic user interface.

Keeping it simple would help the wider public gain access (although use cases would demonstrate the scope of the content.)

The majority thought that a more advanced tiered approach to a search would be useful to a knowledgeable user. A facility to cite papers/journals and link back to outside collections would be valuable.

Searching:

Most would like key word searches as well as free text searching.

The majority had not looked at the index.

The material was very dense and brought up too many hits potential from free-text searching.

Searching across volumes would make searching faster and prevent the need for repetitive searches for each volume.

A few thought timelines might assist searching.

Linking to other topical sites would give the user a more comprehensive search, perhaps through linked searches.

Enhanced functionality:

Concordance, timelines

Possible users mentioned:
academics, local historians, politicians, students, information management practitioners (assessing approaches to information retrieval), international users interested in NI History.

Point was made that the content was of national interest. The debates reflect the activities of a devolved government, not an English county council. The widespread interest in Irish Studies in England and abroad, should provide many potential user opportunities.

- New Content that could be added:
  NI Parliamentary Papers, Senate Debates, Command Papers, Prior Assembly, Bills and Acts. See G. Woodman (two catalogue volumes referred to often)
- 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.
  The majority would not blog or twitter. It was regarded as costly and time consuming.

5. CONCLUSIONS FROM INTERVIEWS

The finding of the interviews can be summarized as follows:

1. The resource is widely used for public engagement, and is well known internationally. Usage is generally high.
2. Research use of the collection is not as high as expected, and any proposed interventions to the resource should be targeted at academic use of the site. These include:
3. Development of use cases demonstrating the use of the resource for research, including use cases demonstrating the integration of advanced ICT methods.
4. Similarly, use cases for teaching would be helpful. As the resource is widely used outside academic, we wish to explore further the integration to the resource into the national curriculum
5. The resource has not been widely linked in key places, for example, Irish Studies blogs, and thorough the PRONI and CAIN websites. A review of places where the resource could be publicized will be undertaken and implemented.
6. The interface needs to be reviewed and recommendations made for revisions.
7. There is need for more semantic web oriented tools - like authority files, ontologies, etc. which could help interoperability - this is not something which any project need to resolve on its own - but it seems to me JISC might support some future work in this direction.
8. The resource would be significantly enhanced with the addition of more content pertaining to Irish Parliamentary History, including the Committee Papers, Bills and Acts and the Senate Papers. An integrated Corpus of Irish Parliamentary Papers would have far greater value than the House of Commons papers alone.
1 Appendix 3: Structured Interview Protocol

Field work version

This version of interview protocols is designed for two purposes: 1) to prepare the investigator to conduct interviews on-site; 2) to provide form for inputting the answers of the interviewees. We do not distinguish between interviews for people with different roles but it would be helpful to know to which group interviewees belong: 1) institutional policy makers; 2) professional archivists, curators, etc., 3) end-users of the digital resource. This should help to establish which types of users could best champion the resource in their professional communities. The interviewer may adjust the interview schedule according to the specific features of the domain and the institution under investigation. The key-words in bold in the questions are supposed to help the interviewer to keep the track of the answers that are already provided by the respondent.

The table is divided into four columns: 1) a question; 2) different wording or explanation to the respondent – this is helpful if the first question is not directly answered and additional elaboration might help the interviewee; 3) a comment to the interviewer; 4) answer (to be recorded during the interview and using the recording afterwards). This form may be used for preparation for the interview as well as for the recording the answers during the interview. If you find this form too cumbersome use an alternative interview sheet (the one Gareth distributed).

Note: the questions are not intended to use for interviewing one person but should be adapted to the job functions in the organisation under investigation.
1.1.1 Standard introduction

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this research. We very much appreciate your participation, and the opportunity to learn from you. We hope to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of the current Stormont papers resource and identify how to best develop it so that it serves its users even better.

***This is a consent form for your participation in the study. Please feel free to ask any questions you have about the form. If you agree, please sign and date the form. I will also sign and date a copy of the form and give it you for your records.*** MD: Not sure if you had to go through an ethical approval for the study – this might be redundant but if yes the ethical form needs to be signed in the beginning of the interview.

If there’s any question you would like to skip over, or if you would like to stop or take a break at any time, just let me know.
Table 1: Interview protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Explanation to the respondent</th>
<th>Comment for interviewer</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>You are already familiar with the resource. How would you best <strong>describe</strong> it in one sentence or few words?</td>
<td></td>
<td>The idea is to see what the users associate the resource with – a primary source collection, specific functionalities, specific theme, or a mixture of those.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>How often do you use the Stormont Papers site?</td>
<td>Try to have an answer consistent with the values in the web questionnaire.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Frequently (daily, weekly)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Occasionally (monthly, every 1-3 months)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Infrequently (a few times each year)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Have not used previously used web site</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>How did you become <strong>aware</strong> of the site?</td>
<td>Try to have an answer consistent with the values in the web questionnaire.</td>
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</table>
| 3 | What **purpose** do you use the Stormont Papers resource for? | Try to have an answer consistent with the values in the web questionnaire.  
- Research  
- Teaching  
- Personal Interest  
- Other, e.g. media. [free text] |
| 4 | Please describe the research/teaching/personal interest/other work? | Here the familiarity with the interviewee could help to prompt uses; may be in some cases the interviewer would be aware of aspect of the work of the interviewee which are not prompted – if this happens it would be helpful to ask, e.g. "And wouldn’t Stormont papers also be useful for your course on …?"

5 | Has the resource enabled you to **produce** interesting | For example, have you used any materials from the |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>research</strong> or other findings? If so, please describe them.</td>
<td>digital resource to support particular view, or to illustrate any particular historical/political development? Or have you been checking for details on any particular parliamentary debates?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong> Please can you provide reference to any <strong>published information</strong> on this work?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Details on use and possible development.</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **7** How do you **utilise** the Stormont Papers site? | • General content searching  
• General content browsing  
• Integration with other sources  
• Searching for biographical information  
• Searching for specific topics or other criteria  
• Other |   |
<p>| <strong>8</strong> How do you <strong>navigate and use</strong> the content? | E.g. do you use specific keywords or search for particular themes? What path do you take to locate the content that you require? |   |
| <strong>9</strong> If you use the resource in your own work, how do you <strong>cite</strong> it? | Do you cite the analogue or digital copy of the resource, or both? |   |
| <strong>10</strong> Have you <strong>recommended</strong> the |   |   |
|   | • Academic researcher |   |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Reason</th>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>What other types of user might benefit from knowing of/utilising the resource? What approach should we take to reach them?</td>
<td>For example, Would the Stormont papers be of interest to underground students? Politicians? Overseas researchers in Irish studies?</td>
<td>These are two questions – try to establish a list of types of users first and ask specifically how to reach the different types. Try to elaborate as much as possible what would be the differences in the interests of these various types of users according to the interviewee.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Please rate the usefulness of the following aspects of the resource on a scale of 1-5 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest rating) [1-5 scale for each]</td>
<td>Search interface Browse interface Navigation Visual layout User documentation</td>
<td>It is important to clarify the reasons – also to what extent users make a difference between search/browse/navigation – are all of them speaking this language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>What new or enhanced</td>
<td>Full text search,</td>
<td>First try to see if the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Functionality</strong> would you like to see in the resource?</td>
<td>Semantic links to external resources, Timelines, Enhanced Mark-up of text</td>
<td>Interviewee will make any suggestions and then make the prompts. Try</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>content</td>
<td>to have more details how essential is any feature. You can also ask</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of any resources which currently use such functionality as examples.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>14</strong> If new <strong>content</strong> were to be added to the resource, what</td>
<td>Committee papers, Bills and Acts, Additional parliamentary papers</td>
<td>Again see if something is suggested first before being prompted.</td>
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<td>material would be of most interest to you?</td>
<td>(please provide examples) e-Learning materials, Thematic collections on</td>
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<td></td>
<td>key issues (e.g., socio-economic, etc.). Please provide examples</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other. Please state</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>15</strong> Are there related resources that you would like to use in</td>
<td>E.g. other parliamentary papers, CAIN, Belfast City Library, PRONI,</td>
<td>Ditto</td>
<td></td>
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<td>closer conjunction with the Stormont Papers resource?</td>
<td>JSTOR, contemporary parliamentary materials, etc…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>16</strong> Do you have recommendations for how these resources might be</td>
<td>E.g. linked data</td>
<td>Ditto</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>integrated</strong>?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>17</strong> Do you have any recommendations for embedding the resource in</td>
<td>For example, how the resource could be used in university courses on</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>teaching, research and public engagement?</td>
<td>history, social studies? Or in what type of research it would be</td>
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<td></td>
<td>beneficial but is still not actively used?</td>
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</table>
18. **How should we improve user interaction with the resource?** Please prioritise the order in which you think these should be addressed.

- For example through integration of User fora
- Social media interaction (e.g., facebook, twitter, etc.)
- Blogs
- Subject specialist websites and associations
- Bookmarking
- Shopping baskets

Try to see what the interviewee will suggest; after you feel his/her list is complete ask to prioritise. You can also ask if the user mentioned the resource on his facebook page/tweets/blogs.

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**Closing questions**

19. **Do you have any other comments/questions that you would like to add?**

20. **Do you have recommendations for other people whom we should contact about the resource?**

Ask specifically about identifying people who are in roles for which no interview has been set up or conducted yet.

21. **Would you be willing to work with us to develop a use case based on your experience of using the resource?**

May be this is an optional question for those interviewees we plan to develop case studies with – do we want to ask everyone?
1.1.2 Standard closing

1. Do you have any questions for me?

2. Thank you very much! I really appreciate this opportunity to learn about your perspective on this. It has been very helpful.

3. If you should have any questions later on, or think of additional information you'd like to share with us, please don't hesitate to contact me.

4. Would you mind if we contact you again, if we have further questions?
Appendix 4: Consent form for interviewees

SPHERE: Stormont Parliamentary Hansards: Embedded in Research and Education

The SPHERE project is funded by JISC, 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. It will start Nov 1st, 2010, and conclude in April 2011.

Project website: http://sphere.cerch.kcl.ac.uk
Resource website: http://stormontpapers.ahds.ac.uk/stormontpapers/index.html

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Dr. Paul S. Ell the Principle Investigator from Queen’s University Belfast. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about a digital resource. I will be one of approximately 10 people being interviewed for this research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

2. I understand that most interviewees in will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by project staff from Queen's University Belfast. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. If I don't want to be taped, I will still be able to participate in the study.

4. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

My Signature
My Printed Name
Date
Signature of the Investigator

For further information, please contact:
Dr. Paul S Ell, The Centre for Data Digitisation & Analysis
Queen’s University, Belfast Paul.Ell@qub.ac.uk
or Project Manager Mrs Elaine Yeates - e.yeates@qub.ac.uk