AccessArt Sketchbooks in Schools

www.accessart.org.uk/sketchbook

Final Evaluation Report

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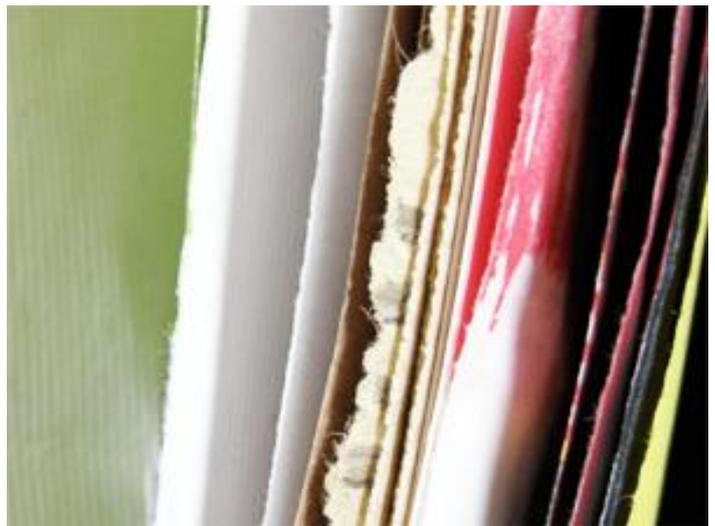
Esmée Fairbairn
FOUNDATION

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1 INTRODUCTION TO SKETCHBOOKS IN SCHOOLS

*"Sketchbooks in Schools aims to **promote, inspire and enable** the creative use of sketchbooks in primary schools. Sketchbooks can be a vital tool to encourage creative and critical thought and action across the whole school, and beyond the art curriculum"*.

Sketchbooks in Schools has been produced by AccessArt www.accessart.org.uk and funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (New Approaches to Learning Strand). AccessArt was founded, and is led, by Paula Briggs and Sheila Ceccarelli.

Sketchbooks in Schools is a selection of online resources (videos, animations, teachers' notes, information sheets) which sit side by side with AccessArt's main website – a well established and highly regarded collection of innovative online arts workshops. www.accessart.org.uk/sketchbook

Behind all of AccessArt's online activity, there is always hands-on experience. That is to say, all the workshops within the original AccessArt site started as workshops in schools or galleries and were then translated into digital form.

For *Sketchbooks in Schools*, this worked in a new way. AccessArt recruited, or identified, key groups who would feed into the creation of the new site, trialling and contributing to content as the site evolved:

- advocates
- partner primary schools
- contributing primary schools
- users and subscribers who would contribute via the Digital Conversation

Ten **advocates** were recruited (from 220 applicants) to brainstorm key issues surrounding sketchbook use, and to contribute content for some of the on-line resources.

The advocates were:

- Eileen Adams
- Jo Evans
- Marion Gager
- Gill Hope
- Alison C Mountain
- Madelaine Murphy
- Zoe Pepper
- Shabana Rehman
- Alice Stallard

Five **Partner Primary Schools** were recruited (from 68 applicants) who were committed to working with a whole school approach to trialling the resources as they were published, feeding back to AccessArt with images and suggestions for future resources, and acting as a focus for the evaluation process. One of these schools was very small (26 pupils). The fifth school (Pensans) was recruited because of a very strong application however, due to the distance from Cambridge it was agreed that they would not receive a visit.

The Partner Primary Schools were:

- Chapel Haddlesey Primary School, Chapel Haddlesey, North Yorkshire
- Hawthorn Park Lower School, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire
- Pensans Community Primary School, Penzance, Cornwall
- Powell Corderoy Primary School, Dorking, Surrey
- Wilberforce Primary School, London W10

Contributing Primary Schools were other schools that used the site and began to provide feedback and content via the Digital Conversation.

The Digital Conversation was a defining feature of this project. Embracing the new communication tools of blogging, feedback forms and forums, AccessArt actively invited users of the site to become co-creators by submitting content (in the form of images and comments), suggestions and feedback, and to engage in debate around some of the big subjects such as inspiration, ownership, motivation and engagement.

This evaluation is of the PILOT PHASE of the Sketchbooks in Schools site. Whilst it has been freely available (and actively promoted) from 20 March 2009, the period up to August 2009 has been the pilot phase – a period of exploration, trialling new content, varied formats and different ways of engaging in dialogue with the site's users (and contributors).

2 EVALUATION PROCESS

This evaluation has been undertaken by external consultant Jo Buffery from Arts and Learning (www.artsandlearning.org.uk). A detailed Evaluation Plan was drawn up and agreed between Jo Buffery, AccessArt and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. This is attached as APPENDIX i – Evaluation Plan

Importantly, this Evaluation Report is only one aspect of the evaluation process which has been largely formative, feeding into the evolving site through dialogue with the Partner Primary Schools and the AccessArt team.

It was intended that the core of the evaluation process would be an exploration of the two key questions:

- *How far can the sustained use of sketchbooks in primary schools improve learners' motivation, engagement, ownership and aspiration?*
- *How effective are the collective "digital resources and digital conversation" in promoting, enticing and enabling schools to take these ideas on board, and in creating connections between learners, educators and policy makers?*

To a great extent agreed plan has been followed closely with two significant variations:

- two rounds of visits were made to the Partner Schools (rather than one round). It was decided that face to face dialogue towards the end of the pilot term, and the chance to see and photograph sketchbooks would be beneficial.
- the evaluator did not contribute to the Digital Conversation and create a Forum Board as planned. This was because the scope of the Digital Conversation was not as anticipated (see section 6 Digital Conversation).

3 QUANTITATIVE SUMMARY

The key statistical data in the table below has been drawn from meetings with/feedback from Partner Schools, on-line surveys, and the statistical analysis of site usage (*Wordpress blog stats* and *Google Analytic*). Generally, it covers the period March 20th to August 29th 2009. Where stated, figures relate to term time usage when site traffic is busiest.

A RESOURCE is defined as a page within the site that provides an activity or learning module, or a page that contains in-depth information about sketchbook use or values. There are, inevitably, several pages that are not resources e.g. *Terms and Conditions* or *Contact Us* pages. The non-resource pages have only been included in the total views figure.

viewings:	stats
resources produced (target 8-20) see 5.1 Resources page10	58
viewings of resources	39,783
estimated monthly views of resources during term time	8,659
total number of views (not just resources)	64,440

visitors:	
average monthly visitors to site (during term time)	2,559
unique monthly visitors	1,917
returning monthly visitors	642
percentage of returning visitors	33%

traffic sources: (May to August 09)	
direct traffic	20%
referring sites (see 5.2 Dissemination and Referrals page 13)	43%
search engines	37%

advocates:	
number of applicants (150 for paid role, 70 for voluntary role)	220
number recruited (target 4) - remainder became subscribers	9
advocates (and other artists) offering content	30
pages based on content from advocates (and other artists) NB this is likely to increase to at least 20 – some content that has been received has not been posted yet	13

schools (partner):	
number of applicants	68
number recruited (target 4)	5
numbers of pupils directly involved (TARGET 300-800)	849
numbers of staff directly involved (TARGET 6-16)	48

schools (contributing):	
numbers of pupils directly contributing to digital conversation (TARGET 20)	0
numbers of staff directly contributing to digital conversation (TARGET 10-30)	18

digital conversation:	
subscribers / registered users	249
number of contributions	78
number of contributors	42

In summary, the figures show that all targets, apart from one, have been met and many have been dramatically surpassed. The target that was apparently not met (numbers of pupils directly contributing to digital conversation) was actually fulfilled via different routes. That is to say, there is content on the site provided by children but it has been via their teachers. This has been addressed more fully in section 6.2 Contributions from Children, page 15.

4   OUTCOMES WITHIN SCHOOLS

The feedback from schools that have been using the *Sketchbooks in Schools* site has been powerfully positive, recognising the high quality and integrity of the online resources created and the huge potential that embedded sketchbook use might have in changing the way that schools and children work.

> *"Fabulous site with plenty of ideas to excite the imagination and creativity of our children. We are having a staff development on making the elastic band sketch books which we shall put into practice in September of this year. The children will have access to their elastic band book in the morning on arrival to school as part of the activities they are engaged in before registration".(The Vine School)*

This evaluation focuses primarily on the Partner Primary Schools who have had visits and dialogue with the Project Evaluator as well as high level support from AccessArt, pointing them towards new resources and encouraging feedback. However, feedback has also been incorporated from some of the many schools that have started to use the site having come across it through referrals, or even by chance.

All five Partner Primary Schools embraced elements of the project. For most it was a whole school (or virtually whole school) initiative with all teachers and classes getting involved at some level, and some teachers and classes pursuing the 'sketchbook mentality' in greater depth. In one school the activity was mainly focussed in a single class with one teacher.

4.1 Getting Started

The Partner Schools tended to start by making or customising sketchbooks using some of the *Making Sketchbooks* resources on the site. Some pre-empted this by running inset sessions to clarify sketchbook making techniques and also to explore the *Sketchbooks in*

Schools site and begin to discuss the rationale behind sketchbook use beyond the conventional art lesson format.

To add impetus to the process, AccessArt sent each of the schools a 'goody box'. This contained materials, triggers and a digital camera. Explanations were included within each box and developed further on line.

4.2 A Broad Range of Positive Outcomes

It is the stated intention of the *Sketchbooks in Schools* site that:

> *"Sketchbooks in Schools is about delivering flexible, open-ended teaching and learning modules, which we hope will inspire, extend and develop your practice.*
>
> *The project is NOT about following a set curriculum. Each of the modules is designed to empower learners towards a more self-directed learning model, so we don't want to be didactic in our methods".*

As a result, each school has personalised their use of the resources and then developed the work in different directions:

As a cross curricular tool:-

> *"It's been a really effective way to begin new subjects especially in Science. As it was not done in their Science books the children were much more confident in putting anything they thought was to do with the topic word rather than checking with me first if it was relevant or not. They knew that if they thought it was relevant then it was great."* Partner Primary School.

Stirring up images and ideas for future discussion:-

> *"The children were invited to cut out a favourite image, and then to select a part of that image they really liked and take it from there. [We] ended up with Barack Obama in a jag, sharks talking to lions and other surreal ideas. Lots of 'fighting' images from the boys (the papers are filled with Iraq images) and wondered how to deal with this. [We have] decided this could be a good focus for a future session, exploring the reality of guns etc, what we like about them and what we don't".* Partner Primary School.

Developing creative thinking skills:-

> *"I used your site as a very useful addition to my lessons on sketchbooks, using a range of media, presentation styles and choices and thinking beyond the obvious with my Y12 class. I gave them the website as part of a homework research activity, then they used the how-to-do sections when making a sketchbook. Sketchbooks were not something new to the students, but your site really helped to get high fliers thinking more creatively".* Secondary School (via online survey).

A reception class which has recently adopted the habit of going on 'Thinking Walks' (in Darwin's footsteps) has decided to create 'Thinking Books' to take with them. The idea is to use them to reflect upon, record and question what they see and hear on their walk.

The variety of names that schools have given (or considered giving) their sketchbooks, suggests that they have really taken on board the range of functions and formats they may have. For example:

- Thinking Books
- Sketch Books
- My Space
- Journal
- Notebook
- Morning Book
- Scrap Book

This diversity is encouraged within the Sketchbooks in Schools site and schools should continue to explore different options. However there is a risk that this breadth is translated into an 'anything counts' attitude. It might be useful for schools to define what **isn't** a sketchbook. This is probably mostly clearly defined by looking at intentions rather than outcomes.

4.3 Motivation, Engagement, Ownership and Aspiration

In response to the key question:

> *How far can the sustained use of sketchbooks in primary schools improve learners' motivation, engagement, ownership and aspiration?*

many schools were able to provide early evidence of this.

> *"My pupils love to work in their "thinking books" for the last twenty minutes or so of the day. They take to their books with glee and settle down right away, sometimes to complete tasks set by me previously, sometimes to begin or finish work of their own choosing and creation. Working in the thinking book has become a kind of meditation for them. They work intently, sometimes fiercely so, sharing what they are doing with each other and with me as the classroom fills with that most beautiful of sounds: the quiet hum of children fully engaged in their own thinking, learning, and doing". Cate (via the Digital Conversation).*

One of the partner Primary Schools had specifically cited the motivation of their year 6 pupils during the very difficult post-SATs period as a desired outcome of the pilot project. At the completion of the project the Head Teacher felt that this had been achieved. Using the *Sketchbooks for Design and Thinking* resource, the pupils were invited to design a new logo for the school. A number of 'very disaffected year 6 pupils were thoroughly engaged by the design tasks'. The pupils had been able to explain the evolution of their ideas demonstrating higher level thinking.

In another Partner Primary School year 1 and year 3 children had their sketchbooks made available for their own use during *child initiated activities* and several children chose this option regularly.

Several schools recognised that the fact that their children were making books at home and bringing them in to share with the teacher and with one another, clearly demonstrated ownership and motivation.

There were also stories of individual children having been particularly inspired by the project. In one school a boy entered the school Talent Contest and demonstrated sketching as his special talent. The class teacher felt it was unlikely he would have done this, had he not been involved in the Sketchbooks in Schools project.

A year 6 boy at a different school, whom the teacher described as 'disorientated' and not usually able to sustain a whole morning in the classroom, particularly enjoyed the positive feedback that he received about work in his sketchbook. In this instance, triggers or tasks were given by the teacher but they were suitably broad allowing a vast amount of space for each child's interpretation. Through the pages of his sketchbook, this boy demonstrated growing levels of perseverance, experimentation and skill.

And finally, a clear illustration of ownership:

> *"I felt we'd fostered the right attitude when I found one of our most troubled, and hard to engage children waiting outside the head's office for her foster parents, clutching her sketchbook which she'd sneaked out of the classroom to show them!" a Partner Primary School*

4.4 Assessment

Even before the site was launched, the debate about assessment of sketchbooks had begun. The dilemma was whether this was a private space for personal exploration, a place for fulfilling teacher-set tasks or (as was often the case) something between the two.

It was broadly acknowledged that there was a value (for both child and teacher) in the teacher looking through each child's sketchbook (with permission if necessary), but that it was not appropriate to 'mark' it in a conventional sense. Teachers approached this in a range of ways:

- using post-it notes to add comments (as suggested on the Sketchbooks in Schools site)
- informal one to one chats
- children volunteering to share their sketchbooks with one another or the whole class
- prizes being offered for best sketchbook use during the summer holidays
- collating evidence (by photographing or scanning sketchbooks) so that a portfolio of good practice can be maintained within a school

4.5 Professional Development for Teachers

The professional development activities undertaken by staff ranged from 'being given the website address' to a whole staff twilight session exploring the website and experimenting with sketchbook making techniques.

Key members of staff in each Partner Primary School (and any others who had subscribed) were notified of updates to the site. This prompted them to revisit the site regularly and to, in turn, to update their colleagues in school.

It is evidently true that in order to teach (facilitate) sketchbook use you have really got to understand its value, and in order to do that as a teacher you really need to be creating and working within your own sketchbook.

> *"I think [staff] don't quite see the benefits even though I have given examples of how it's been great for the enthusiasm of my children. I wonder if that's because they've never worked this way before. I have during my A level Art this year and so have personally seen the huge benefits...." Teacher from a Partner Primary School*

> *"Another method which I promote to my teachers in West Sussex for giving direction is to use your own sketchbook in class to model or exemplify a point alongside the child. . . . This provides a useful scaffold / starting point for some children". Art and Design Adviser, via the Digital Conversation*

For a number of teachers, information on the site provided significant Professional Development:

> *"This has really changed the way I look at art within my classroom and also within in the school. As a new subject leader I didn't really know where to start, but this project has really made me think about how we look at art as a whole". Teacher, via the Digital Conversation.*

4.6 Embedded Practice

It is acknowledged that the time frame for this pilot project was very tight (exacerbated by the time of year which is notoriously busy for primary schools), so to see practice truly embedded was ambitious. Many of the Partner Primary Schools expressed a degree of frustration at not having covered as much ground as they would have liked and simply not having the time to photograph, upload and submit examples of their work.

However, the commitment from many schools to sustain and develop their use of sketchbooks after the initial term of activity, combined with the 'early evidence' above, is extremely promising. This is likely to flourish most where there is a whole school approach that is well supported by the Head Teacher and driven by a teacher with the enthusiasm, experience and influence to do so. It is important for schools to embrace the idea that the 'sketchbook mentality' is an approach to learning and teaching across the curriculum rather than simply an element of art teaching. For it to work best, a school must have a consistent approach to sketchbook use with built in progression.

"A really positive experience and one we want to continue and feel could be highly beneficial to us in the long term". Fran Tokely, Pensans Primary School.

"This is one of the only on line sites that is really useful and connects all practitioners. As always, it takes time to embed but I think it is a great resource". First School (via online survey)

"Several teachers have expressed real interest and determination to continue with sketchbook use. In assembly next week (last week of term) there will be awards for 'best users' for the term and an incentive to use or make sketchbooks over the summer with awards in September. [We shall] re-launch in September to remind teachers and pupils about use." Partner Primary School

4.7 Recommendations relating to the schools' experience.

It is recommended:

i. that relationships with the current Partner Primary Schools should be maintained for at least 12 months through half-termly online surveys, to encourage and track their ongoing use of sketchbooks, their specific use of the site, and their contribution to the digital conversation.

ii. that relationships with a small number (3 or 4) of local (Cambridgeshire) schools should be developed so that when new resources are launched their impact can assessed. (It is simply cheaper and quicker to visit local schools and for them to network with one another).

iii. that the website addresses a specific page to Head Teachers to make the strong case for the 'whole school' and 'beyond the art curriculum' approach.

iv. that a specific resource about assessment should be included within the *Teaching and Learning Pathways* section which is currently under construction.

v. that the resources and digital conversation around the questions *What is a Sketchbook?* should be extended to explore *What isn't a Sketchbook?*

vi. that specific guidance should be given to teachers (within the planned *Teaching and Learning Pathways* section) about the value and importance of their own sketchbook use – either alongside children, or independently.

5 OUTCOMES WITHIN ACCESSART

5.1 Resources

Feedback about the quality of the content in the site – ideas, examples, illustrations and explanations - was consistently extremely positive.

"Fantastic!! These are just the sort of pages I want to show the children at school, to inspire them to use their sketchbooks more". Teacher, via Digital Conversation.

"Inspiring and motivating". Teacher via email.

By the end of August 2009 AccessArt had produced and posted 58 resources for schools and others to use, and had several others planned or drafted. The resources included:

- slideshows such as *What is a Sketchbook*?
- demonstration videos (e.g. *Making Sketchbooks)*
- teachers' notes
- photographs of ideas (e.g. other people's sketchbooks) with written commentary

and ranged from single practical ideas to the exploration of broader concepts. In many cases a single resource was presented in a range of formats.

The table below lists the Resources and the number of times each had been viewed by the end of August. (NB a small number of these may no longer be online as the site is constantly evolving with resources being refined and restructured.

Title of Resource:	Views:
9 questions to deepen and widen understanding	464
AccessArt	174
As a primary teacher	541
Be Inspired!	141
Collage as Paint	266
Collect and Collage	211
Debbie Greenaway: illustrator, printmaker	454
Doodle Ball	763
Drawing and composition	476
Drawing speed	244
Drawing: Introduction	279
Emma Davies	672
Felix Liebig	519
For secondary school teachers	113
Gemma Longbottom	239
Good practice	559
Isabella Whitworth - textile artist	608
Jonathan Ford - sculptor	650
Landscape and Colour	238
Make a shy drawing	582
Making a Washing Line Sketchbook	1,096
Making it theirs - 10 ways to nurture ownership	406
Making Sketchbooks - an Introduction	1,115
Making sketchbooks - Elastic band sketch	818
Making sketchbooks - Hole punch sketchbook	643
Making sketchbooks - Sewn sketchbooks	613
Making sketchbooks - Simple folded	729
Making sketchbooks - Thinking laterally	516

Making sketchbooks accessible	83
More about Sketchbooks in Schools	407
Nominate a pupil who best demonstrates the impact of the sketchbook	365
Other educators & creative practitioners	135
Remembering Colour	204
Reportage!	67
Resources, links, services etc	119
Rob Gill - illustrator	512
Shared sketchbook inspired by words	199
Sketchbook Club	319
Sketchbooks as tools to help personalise learning	344
Sketchbooks for Design or Thinking	668
Sketchbooks: an active way to display!	210
So... What's so great about sketchbooks?	510
Starters for 10 - Using Sketchbooks in t	850
Starting with magazine imagery	808
Submit a child's sketchbook	19
Submit a Sketchbook - Adult Creative	66
Submit a sketchbook type...	54
Suggested teaching approach	2,439
Suppliers of sketchbooks	90
Teaching & Learning Pathways	77
This is my school	186
This is what WE think you need to prepare	132
Welcome to Sketchbooks in Schools	13,240
What is a Sketchbook?	1,704
What shape are your thoughts?	413
What's so great about sketchbooks	10
When to use sketchbooks	947
Yumi Okuda - illustrator	477
TOTALS resources: 58 **views:**	**39,783**

Content for each of these resources was produced by AccessArt, by independent artists (some of whom had been recruited as advocates) or by schools. This has ensured that the site is populated with a rich variety of images and ideas. Indeed the content submitted by independent artists is among the most visited.   However, all content was then presented and structured by AccessArt to ensure visual and pedagogical consistency and to guarantee that no *inappropriate* content was posted. This is a reasonable task with the current volume of contributions, but consideration needs to be given to the possibility of increasing numbers of contributions at a time when no funding is in place to pay for this work. (See also DIGITAL CONVERSATION page 15).

The site was created using WordPress as the publishing platform. This was a new departure for AccessArt and was selected because it made user feedback and contributions throughout the site very straightforward whilst also enabling high aesthetic standards, dynamic presentation and technical stability.

Initial feedback from Partner Primary Schools who loved the content but found elements a little difficult to navigate, led to a comprehensive restructuring of the site (during July and August) which is now even more crisp and appealing (see screenshot below).
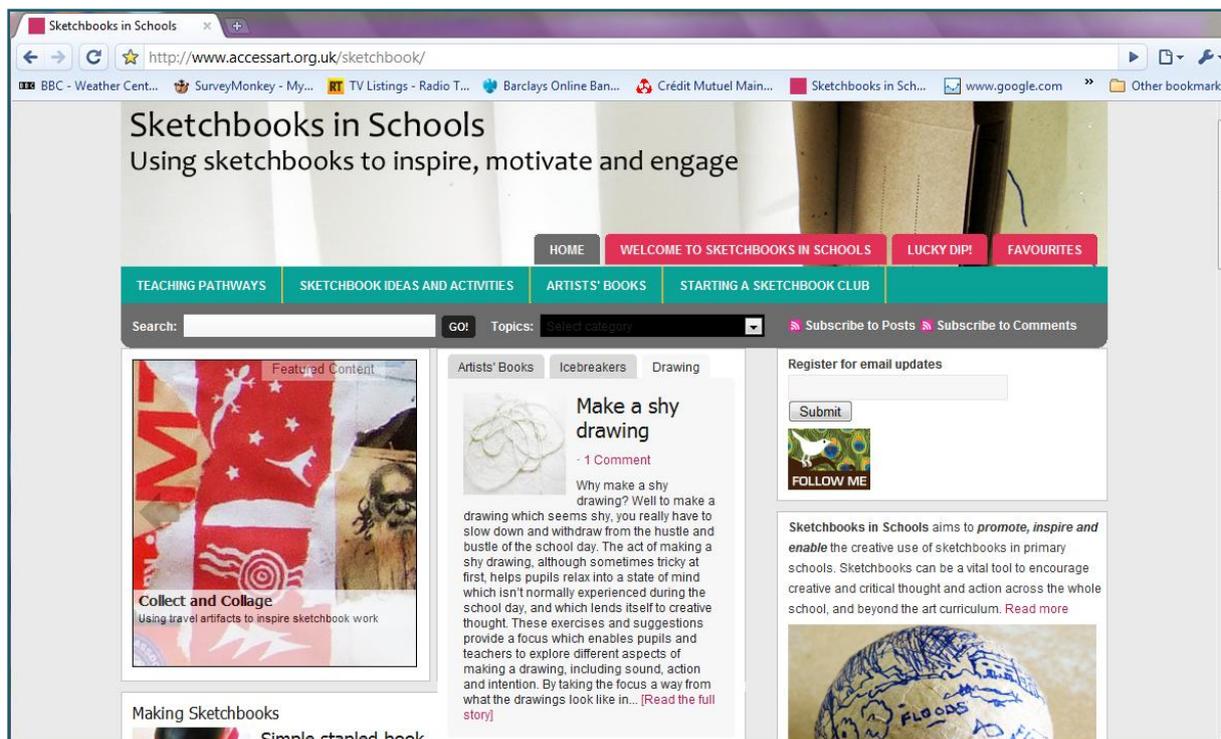
One slight dilemma remains and that is the desire from some users for the whole site to be made more 'child friendly'. Whilst many resources are designed to be used by children with minimal, or no, adult support, this is primarily a site for teachers who then act as brokers between the site and their children. The only complete solution would be to create a parallel site with the 'child friendly' resources presented in an easily accessible format. This would clearly be an expensive, and potentially confusing, option. A compromise might be to create a page within the site, designed to appeal to children, which provides links to all the self explanatory resources that speak directly to the child.

5.2 Dissemination and Referrals

A vital role for AccessArt, in parallel with creating and developing the site, was to promote it in order to encourage visitors as well as contributions in the form of photographs, articles, ideas and questions.

Promotion was done through:

- publicity via the AccessArt (e)mailing list which includes Local Authorities, individual schools and Grids for Learning
- direct contact with key strategic players (including BECTA, NSEAD, The Big Draw, QCA, Canterbury Christ Church University) who have been very keen to endorse and promote the site. This has led to, for example, an article in NSEAD's publication

Start, 2 items in Inspired (Futurelab), face to face meetings with QCA and an invitation to present at a conference.

- press releases sent to arts and education publications (leading to inclusion within the TESconnect resources section)
- opportunities for site users to subscribe (so that they are informed of updates to the site etc.)
- link from the front page of the original AccessArt site (which has approx 1000 visitors per week)

The success of this strategy is borne out by the very high volumes of traffic for such a new site (see QUANTITATIVE SUMMARY page 4).

The following sites have been responsible for a significant number of referrals. Some of them also provide 'forward links' i.e. they have content from the Sketchbooks in Schools site embedded within their own sites. There are several others (not listed) which have produced less than 10 referrals. Particularly significant are the TES figures

arted20.ning.com	42
artjunction.org/blog/?p=835	96
bakersandastronauts.blogspot.com	90
bgfl.org/index.cfm?s=1&m=231&...	95
campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/flf/...	77
e-gfl.org/index.cfm?s=1&m=1&p...	36
forum.bytesforall.com/showthread.php?...	19
google.com/reader/view	61
hawthornparklower.co.uk/page_viewer.a...	23
homeschooling.gomilpitas.com/explore/...	16
inspired.futurelab.org.uk	88
ngfl.northumberland.gov.uk/home.html	283
sn118w.snt118.mail.live.com/mail/Inbo...	18
standards.dfes.gov.uk/new	340
teachernet.gov.uk/news/?id=1998	70
tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6015...	1796
thegrid.org.uk/learning/art/news	180
thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t...	20
thrivingtoo.typepad.com/thriving_too/...	20
whiteoakschool.com	212
total referred sessions	**3582**
number of significant referrers	20

This chart demonstrates how vital 'referrers' are in ensuring high traffic volumes, and therefore, how important it is that AccessArt continues to encourage the 'referrers' to include the *Sketchbooks in Schools* site in articles, listings and published materials. Of course, none of these figures shows the number of people who are referred to the site via paper publications who then do a search or key in the website address. These are included within the *Search Engine* or *Direct Traffic* figures.
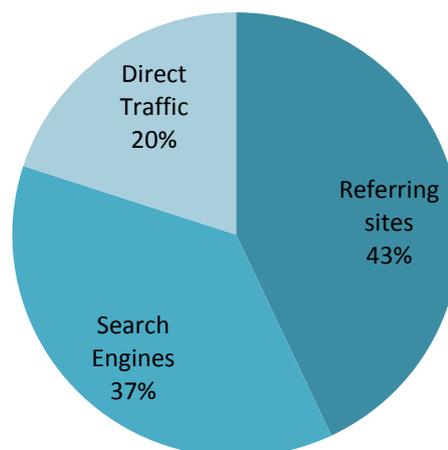
5.3 Recommendations relating to Maintenance, Development and Dissemination of the Site.

It is recommended:

vii.   that a page should be created within the site (designed to appeal to children) which provides links to all the self explanatory resources that speak directly to the child, and that this page should be accessible from the home page

viii.   that core funding is sought to cover the costs associated with hosting, maintaining and developing the site in response to feedback and usage trends. This sum (around £3000 p.a.) could possibly be raised through sponsorship.

ix.   that profile raising events and activities within the site are planned (such as widening the audience to secondary and adults learners, launching new resources, competitions etc.) which will provide a focus for the site's ongoing promotion

x.   that relationships with key strategic players are maintained and new ones developed (e.g. CCE (Creativity, Culture and Education) – through their *Creative Partnerships* programme it may be possible to set up whole school Sketchbook projects that would be tracked for 2 years).

xi.   that particular effort is made to ensure the site is listed on all local authorities 'grids for learning'

xii.   that early discussions with Teachers TV be vigorously pursued as a potential route for dissemination and income.

xiii.   that the high standards of content and clarity of presentation are maintained even if this slows down growth in the number of resources posted

6 DIGITAL CONVERSATION

6.1 Content

The *Digital Conversation* is the aspect of the project that did not play out in the way that was anticipated. Prior to the launch of the site there had been the beginnings of serious and heartfelt debate around some of the key issues such as:

- the function of sketchbooks
- personal initiative vs teacher guidance
- assessment

The discussions, which initially took place via the JISCmail Drawing Research email network, were developed further through the brainstorming sessions led by AccessArt involving the project Advocates. Within these sessions the key questions included:

- what is a sketchbook? – what is its purpose?
- is the look of the sketchbook important?
- what makes a good sketchbook?
- who has ownership of the sketchbook – the child or the school?
- how can the project help schools to get started?
- what are the golden rules for sketchbook use (to prevent pitfalls)?

The brainstorming sessions, which took place over two full days with two separate groups of Advocates, were recorded through detailed notes. These then informed the structure and content of the site and for this reason the advocates' role was fundamental. However the depth and heat of the debate did not really move across to the digital (online) conversation.

That is not to say that the site is without deep, reflective and even challenging content – there are several good examples within the resources (e.g. *Meet an Architect's Sketchbook*) and in feedback provided by AccessArt to users' comments and questions. The slight surprise is that comments were rarely posted in response to that sort of content.

This is an example of the kind of reflective comment I had expected to see more of:

> *"I like the potential for pupils to experience the cyclical nature of working in sketchbooks - the stages above could be repeated or children could be asked to make drawings in response to pages on the line, and then more reflection, reaction etc. I think it's good to acknowledge that creativity isn't linear - or always a neat package starting with exploration to final piece". Teacher, via the Digital Conversation.*

I would not want to suggest that the Digital Conversation was therefore a disappointment. This evaluation is rich with quotes because of the enthusiasm of some 'visitors' to get in touch. In fact, for each quote that has been included, several others have been left out that could have illustrated the point equally well.

The contributions to the Digital Conversation have tended to range from 'where can I buy....' to 'great site' to detailed descriptions of activities undertaken in the contributor's school. As a result of this, the site is gradually becoming populated with images provided by schools.

To some extent, it is likely that when the site extends its remit to include Secondary Schools and Adult Learners the nature of debate and discussion will shift. However, it is interesting to note that there has already been very positive feedback from teachers working in these sectors.

In response to the way that the Digital Conversation evolved, elements of the site were redesigned – removing the forum and wiki pages but keeping a comments box at the foot of each resource. This also helped with streamlining the appearance and functionality of the site.

6.2 Contributions from Children

It has been recognised in section 3 QUANTITATIVE SUMMARY page 4 that no children contributed *directly* to the Digital Conversation (the target had been set at 20). This is no cause for concern as children <u>are</u> using the resources on the site and images of their work <u>are</u> beginning to appear online. The only real difference is that their contributions are coming via their teachers. Indeed 4 teachers have nominated pupils who 'best demonstrate the impact of the sketchbook', and work from some or all of these will be used in a new online resource very soon.

It may be helpful to identify what is behind the fact that children are not submitting work *directly*. I suggest two contributing factors:

- this is <u>not</u> a children's site. Although many of the resources have been designed for children to use with minimal adult support the feel is very different to, for example, the CBBC site. They are therefore less likely to 'log in, explore and get in touch' independently (see 5.1 Resources page 10).
- teachers and parents may well have reservations about children making direct contact with unknown adults via this site. Indeed schools will have in place an 'Acceptable Use Policy' which may explicitly prohibit this, and settings on school and home PCs may restrict email contact. Just as all content within the site is mediated by AccessArt (see 5.1 Resources, page 10) it seems entirely appropriate that all contributions from children should be mediated by an adult working with, or caring for, them (see recommendation xv).

6.3 Numbers

In interviews with the Partner Primary Schools it was a recurrent theme that schools found the Digital Conversation useful:

> *"I was quickly able to see strengths and weaknesses of the activities and was able to gather additional pointers". Teacher, Partner Primary School*

but felt they did not have the time (or sometimes the expertise) to contribute to it. It must therefore be recognised that the value of the Digital Conversation cannot simply be measured by the number of contributors but also buy those who follow the discussions. It is inevitable that the Digital Conversation will only ever be the tip of the iceberg in relation to overall site use, but as over all traffic volumes grow, so too will the number of comments and Digital Conversation will build its own momentum. This will simply take more time than was available for this pilot project.

Source of comment	Number of posts	Individual Contributors
AccessArt	22	1
Partner Schools	13	5
Other Schools /teachers/ LEAs	21	18
Strategic Organisations	10	7
Others	12	11
totals	**78**	**42**

It should also be recognised that people using the site also post comments, and therefore extend the conversation, elsewhere – either on completely different sites.

6.4 Recommendations Regarding the Digital Conversation

It is recommended that:

xiv.   a 'question of the month' could be posted in order to develop discussion around a given theme

 xv.   information should be provided within the website in order to reassure parents and teachers regarding online safety in relation to their children's use of the site. Adults should be advised that they must mediate all contributions provided by the children for whom they are responsible.

xvi.   data relating to the Digital Conversation should be collected over an extended period (12 months)

7   BUDGET AND ANTICIPATED OUTTURN

The figures below show the original budget. Spending has been carefully monitored through appropriate accounting systems, and it is anticipated that the outturn figures will be closely in line with the budget and will balance. The only significant variation is that *Material Costs** were £0 so no *Sponsorship*** was sought to cover this.

EXPENDITURE	£ budget
AccessArt fees (design, dissemination, etc.)	17,125.00
advocate fees	4,000.00
evaluation fees and costs	3,400.00
Office Costs	600.00
Hosting costs	150.00
Travel Costs	400.00
Material Costs*	2,500.00
Total expenditure	**£ 28,175.00**

INCOME	
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	24,525.00
AccessArt	1,150.00
Sponsorship**	2,500.00
total income	**£ 28,175.00**

Based on actual and anticipated usage of the site, this represents extremely good value for money.

8   RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The success of this project in meeting its aims has been explored, illustrated and affirmed throughout this evaluation. The recommendations have been made in order to ensure that this valuable project thrives beyond its pilot so that the impact it is having upon the learning of a number of children in a range schools, becomes embedded and extends to others.

AccessArt is strongly committed to the ongoing development of the site and its dissemination at all levels – to individual schools and key strategic players alike.

Funding has recently been secured from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) (Transformation Fund) to promote the use of sketchbooks to connect, widen and deepen informal adult learning. This initiative will clearly build upon and enhance the success of the Sketchbooks in Schools project. Over 50 partners have applied to work with AccessArt on this project, which will run from October 2009 to March 2010.

To conclude, it is recommended:

i.   that relationships with the current Partner Primary Schools should be maintained for at least 12 months through half-termly online surveys, to encourage and track their ongoing use of sketchbooks, their specific use of the site, and their contribution to the digital conversation.

ii.   that relationships with a small number (3 or 4) of local (Cambridgeshire) schools should be developed so that when new resources are launched their impact can assessed. (It is simply cheaper and quicker to visit local schools and for them to network with one another).

iii.   that the website addresses a specific page to Head Teachers to make the strong case for the 'whole school' and 'beyond the art curriculum' approach.

iv.   that a specific resource about assessment should be included within the *Teaching and Learning Pathways* section which is currently under construction.

v.   that the resources and digital conversation around the questions *What is a Sketchbook?* should be extended to explore *What isn't a Sketchbook?*

vi.   that specific guidance should be given to teachers (within the planned *Teaching and Learning Pathways* section) about the value and importance of their own sketchbook use – either alongside children, or independently.

vii.   that a page should be created within the site (designed to appeal to children) which provides links to all the self explanatory resources that speak directly to the child, and that this page should be accessible from the home page

viii.   that core funding is sought to cover the costs associated with hosting, maintaining and developing the site in response to feedback and usage trends. This sum (around £3000 p.a.) could possibly be raised through sponsorship.

ix.   that profile raising events and activities within the site are planned (such as widening the audience to secondary and adults learners, launching new resources, competitions etc.) which will provide a focus for the site's ongoing promotion

x.   that relationships with key strategic players are maintained and new ones developed (e.g. CCE (Creativity, Culture and Education) – through their *Creative Partnerships* programme it may be possible to set up whole school Sketchbook projects that would be tracked for 2 years).

xi.   that particular effort is made to ensure the site is listed on all local authorities 'grids for learning'

xii.   that early discussions with Teachers TV be vigorously pursued as a potential route for dissemination and income.

xiii.   that the high standards of content and clarity of presentation are maintained even if this slows down growth in the number of resources posted

xiv.   a 'question of the month' could be posted in order to develop discussion around a given theme

xv.   information should be provided within the website in order to reassure parents and teachers regarding online safety in relation to their children's use of the site. Adults should be advised that they must mediate all contributions provided by the children for whom they are responsible.

xvi.   data relating to the Digital Conversation should be collected over an extended period (12 months)

9 APPENDIX i – Evaluation Plan

AccessArt: Sketchbooks in Schools – Evaluation Plan.

1. AIMS

It is intended that the core of this evaluation will be a formative exploration of the 2 key questions:

- How far can the sustained use of sketchbooks in primary schools improve learners' motivation, engagement, ownership and aspiration?
- How effective are the collective "digital resources and digital conversation" in promoting, enticing and enabling schools to take these ideas on board, and in creating connections between learners, educators and policy makers?

This evaluation is intended to go beyond the model of an objective, summative evaluation of the project that simply measures outcomes against agreed aims.

The formative evaluation will explore and extend the key questions by:

- working with partner schools to establish a baseline in terms of sketchbook use – amount of use and its function.
- working with partner schools to establish a baseline for each school in terms of pupils' and teachers' attitudes to motivation, engagement, ownership and aspiration etc.
- monitoring evidence of sketchbook use (amount of use, how they are used)
- monitoring the impact of sketchbook use on improved motivation, engagement, ownership and aspiration (having previously worked with all stakeholders - schools, advocates, AccessArt and Policy Makers - to agree relevant evidence/success criteria)
- monitoring the use of, and response to, specific digital resources
- tracking, distilling, disseminating and challenging the digital and actual conversations that flow out of the project
- highlighting opportunities and good practice (within and beyond the project remit) and sharing these between participating schools, advocates and others
- highlighting problems en route so that these may be acted upon
- identify funding requirements and opportunities for future developments

2. PROCESSES AND COMMUNICATION

AccessArt – There will be regular email, telephone and face to face dialogue between the Evaluator and AccessArt. This is an external evaluation. However, key to its value is the tight feedback loop which ensures that AccessArt, at the centre of the project, is aware of all opportunities and issues as they arise, so that they can act upon them.

Advocates – the Evaluator will attend part of the initial Advocates' Brainstorm session. Dialogue will subsequently be developed through email and telephone as well as via the Digital Conversation.

Contributing Schools - Dialogue will be developed via the Digital Conversation. There will be focussed use of questionnaires.

Digital Conversation (DC) – the Evaluator will monitor and contribute to the Digital Conversation as it unfolds. She will use this forum to ask questions as they surface within the project (where appropriate a survey facility will be attached to these questions). Depending on the volume of traffic there may be a specific Evaluation Strand within the Digital Conversation, (See also Notice Board)

Forum Board – the Evaluator will maintain a board within the Digital Conversation. This will include project updates, examples of good practice, new questions, feedback of the week etc. This Notice Board will not be interactive, but will direct people back to the DC or encourage them to contact the Evaluator direct.

Partner Schools – the Evaluation will focus primarily on the experiences of the Partner Schools. The Evaluator will have initial face to face meetings with 4 out of 5 of the Partner Schools. Dialogue will subsequently be developed through email and telephone as well as via the Digital Conversation. There will be focussed use of questionnaires.

Policy makers – It is hoped that Policy Makers will be engaged to some extent via the Digital Conversation. Beyond this they will be contacted at key moments e.g. establishing success criteria, dissemination of Final Report.

3. THE FINAL REPORT

To be published on line (PDF) as well as via a small number of illustrated hard copies, the Final Report will contain:

- brief project description
- distillation and analysis of the Digital Conversation – drawing out the key themes/issues, and highlighting the decisions and changes made during project
- outcomes within schools - focussing on improvements in learners' motivation, engagement, ownership and aspiration
- outcomes within AccessArt – focussing on the effectiveness of the collective "digital resources and digital conversation"
- recommendations and future opportunities – for schools, Policy Makers and AccessArt
- quantitative summary measured against targets

4. TIMETABLE

March and April	• advocates' brainstorm • agree initial success criteria (which will continue to evolve during project) • visit partner schools • feedback loop with AccessArt
May – July	• monitor DC • contribute to DC • maintain Forum Board • continue dialogue with schools (within and beyond DC) • continue dialogue with Advocates • feedback into creation of 2nd tier of resources • feedback loop with AccessArt
August – September	• draw together data, evidence and themes • present very draft findings to all stakeholders (to ensure that they accurately reflect stakeholders' experiences) • receive final contributions / feedback from stakeholders • write final report • feedback loop with AccessArt • disseminate and promote final report (with AccessArt)