

The Rise Of Micro-Volunteering And A Very British Volunteer Revolution

By Claire Sully

Digital and social media makes it easy for volunteers to actively engage with their favourite museums, arts organisations and charities, while many more people are prepared to give short bursts of time rather than a longer term commitment to volunteering. Put the two together (digital and short bursts of volunteering activity) you have the rise of micro-volunteering.

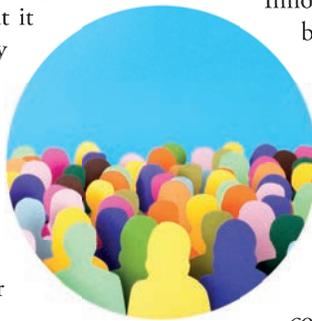
Micro-volunteering doesn't always require digital technology however, see the examples below, but it is an important impetus behind the popularity of micro-volunteering in the UK. Engaging volunteers in this way can create a long tail effect, simply driving the numbers up with many more people giving shorter periods of time creating more volunteering time overall.

Micro-volunteering can be performed remotely and is particularly attractive to younger

volunteers. Stats show that more and more young people want to volunteer, but in a way that suits their lifestyle. The UK is championing micro-volunteering.

More than half of all micro-volunteering activities took place in the UK during 2015. Australia (33%) saw the next highest interest in micro-volunteering in 2015, while in the US it is growing, but from the low base of 3%.

Innovation foundation Nesta has predicted 2017 to be "the year of micro-volunteering" – and lots of organisations are keen to use this flexible approach to 21st century volunteering. In England, 15.9m individuals volunteer frequently from an overall population of 53.9m. The value of this has been estimated to be between £23.9 billion (The Office for National Statistics) and £53 billion (DWP). The potential of effectively engaging volunteers is clear, while it can be argued that in this country we are experiencing a volunteer revolution.



Volunteer Makers is currently running a national programme promoting Blended Volunteering – supported by Arts Council England.

Our own technology can deliver both regular long-term volunteering with micro-volunteering. We are looking to prove a link between growing a community through micro-volunteering and increasing the numbers of people giving a more long-term commitment to supporting organisations.

To celebrate the rise of micro-volunteering in the UK here is our shout-out to micro-volunteering champions we are working with and who are connecting with and experiencing a real value exchange with their volunteers.

Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums

run nine galleries and museums across the North East. In the first few weeks of setting up their Volunteer Makers platform this network of museums saw their volunteers grow rapidly into the hundreds. We particularly like these inspired micro-volunteering challenges:

ACTIVITY: Fact of the day

WHATS INVOLVED: Help their History team by contributing to a crowdsourced collection of interesting historical facts about the North East which they will use to create new and distinct content for their social media channels.

ACTIVITY: Log a wildlife sighting

WHATS INVOLVED: Record and submit local wildlife sightings while out and about.

ACTIVITY: Donate your junk!

WHATS INVOLVED: A call out for your recyclables and old, useless tech!

Get involved: twmuseums.volunteermakers.org

Corinium Museum

is located at the heart of Cirencester, the 'Capital of the Cotswolds'. Their principal collection consists of the highly significant finds from the Roman town of Corinium. Growing their community of volunteers is at the heart of the museum's vision and here is how they are doing it, on their recently launched Volunteer Makers platform.

ACTIVITY: Research a Mystery Object

WHATS INVOLVED: The museum is looking for researchers to help identify mystery objects in their collection. Your research will help spread new light on the collections, create a better understanding of the material the museum holds and give you an opportunity to practise your research skills

ACTIVITY: Be a garden volunteer

WHATS INVOLVED: What's involved: The museums is looking for a volunteer to help maintain and develop our Roman Garden.

ACTIVITY: Trial a Trail

WHATS INVOLVED: The challenge is to help the museum trial a new gallery trail at the design stage for museum families and schools.

Get involved: corinium.volunteermakers.org



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Wardown House Museum and Art Gallery

has been pioneering micro-volunteering for many years. After setting up their Museum Makers platform over 5 years ago, in the first two years the museum grew from having 40 occasional volunteers to having more than 120 active volunteers that work on direct museum projects involving the collections, events, talks and tours. Added to that they built up a community of 1500 online Museum Makers who support and advocate the museum through mainly microvolunteering activities. Having a successful community-driven museum has helped this museum secure £3.5m capital funding and refurbished the museum.

ACTIVITY: Create a Pinterest board for all your ideas for the museum

WHATS INVOLVED: What would you put in your ideal exhibition? Hats? Toys? Luton life? Build your dream museum exhibition on Pinterest and then share it with Museum Makers Pinterest account.

ACTIVITY: Bookplate Illustration

WHATS INVOLVED: A bookplate is a small print or decorative label pasted into the inside cover of a book, to indicate its owner. The museum is looking for a bookplate design that will go on open display in the Library.

ACTIVITY: Sign up as a School Museum Maker

WHATS INVOLVED: Schools can become Museum Makers to, so sign up today. There are lots of ways to get involved as a Museum Maker:

- Visiting the museum as a class or whole school
- Inform the shape of our schools offer to keep it relevant and fresh
- Supporting the development of new sessions by being a pilot school
- Taking part in educational sessions at the museum
- Attending our Schools Museum Maker forum
- Fundraising

Get involved: www.museummakers.co.uk

BE PART OF THE VOLUNTEER REVOLUTION

A volunteer revolution is making the extraordinary happen - and Volunteer Makers can help put your museum at the heart of it.

Volunteer Makers helps you harness the vast potential of your wider community to put public participation at the heart of your volunteer activity and create a diverse and sustainable museum.

Volunteer Makers is a new model of volunteer engagement that addresses fundamental shifts in demographics, diversity, funding models and digital comms to meet the challenges and opportunities of this exciting new era of volunteering.

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