



# THE **BRISTOL** **STORY**

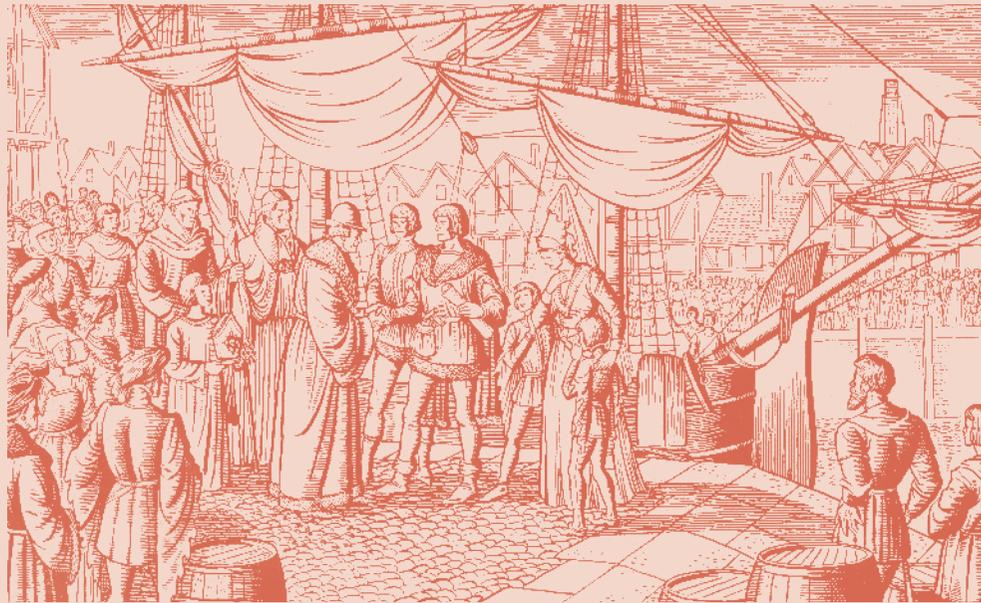
THE GREAT READING ADVENTURE 2008  
EVALUATION REPORT

BCDP culture | ideas | arts and sciences

An initiative of Bristol Cultural Development Partnership



[WWW.BRISTOLREADS.COM](http://WWW.BRISTOLREADS.COM)



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## INTRODUCTION

Bristol's sixth Great Reading Adventure ran from 24 January to 31 March 2008. The chosen book was a specially commissioned graphic-style history of the city by writer Eugene Byrne and illustrator Simon Gurr aimed at a reading age of 11 and upwards. *The Bristol Story* was an entertaining, informative and sometimes challenging read of battles, killer diseases, daring (or mad) explorers, pirates, riots, sewage and brain-improving educational bits. Copies were distributed free of charge to libraries, schools, local businesses, community groups, scout and guide troops, bookshops, hospitals, heritage sites, and individual members of the public, and participants were encouraged to find out more about the city by also reading the accompanying support material and visiting the project website.



Since its launch in 2003 with *Treasure Island*, the Great Reading Adventure has promoted literacy, encouraged new creativity inspired by a shared reading experience, and provided an accessible means of learning about and appreciating the past. Each year everyone in Bristol is encouraged to join in and read a book that is either set in Bristol, is by a Bristol author or is about issues that are of interest to people in Bristol. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, which is partly set in Bristol, was followed in 2004 by John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* – a focus for debates on GM technology and the environment – and in 2005 by Helen Dunmore's *The Siege*, a moving account of civilian suffering in wartime. In 2006 the project extended across the whole of the South West as a contribution to the region's Brunel 200 celebrations with a mass-reading of Jules Verne's nineteenth-century classic *Around the World in Eighty Days*. For the reading of Andrea Levy's *Small Island* in 2007 it not only included Bristol and the South West but also Liverpool, Hull, Glasgow and much of the North East, forming part of the Abolition 200 commemorations.

Because of its subject matter, the Great Reading Adventure 2008 was run for the city of Bristol only but more books were given away than ever before. This was the first time the project had been based upon a book that had not been previously published, one that was in a graphic-format and one that was suitable for a young readership (normally supplementary titles are provided for children). Eugene and Simon had previously collaborated on *St Vincent's Rock*, a graphic novel produced during the bid by Bristol to be European Capital of Culture 2008, and a graphic biography of Isambard Kingdom Brunel published for the Brunel 200 celebrations.

The Great Reading Adventure was initiated and continues to be led by Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP: Arts Council England South West, Bristol City Council and Business West). Andrew Kelly, director of BCDP said of the 2008 project:



Simon Gurr (front left) and Eugene Byrne (front right) with young participants in the Great Reading Adventure 2008. Adrian Tinniswood of the Heritage Lottery Fund is standing at the rear (Martin Chainey).



*Readers in Arnolfini Bookshop, one of the public distribution points for The Bristol Story (Vicky Washington).*

*What a fantastic project this has proved to be. We always promised that we would do a major project on Bristol in 2008 for the capital of culture year – and this is another example of how Bristol has tried to deliver as much of the 2008 promise as possible. There is so much to learn and debate about this great city, and The Bristol Story was perfect for promoting this. Over 100,000 people have read The Bristol Story – a quarter of the population. Countless thousands more will have read the guide and the children's book. This is an amazing result – the perfect way to learn about a city and promote its future development.*

The Great Reading Adventure 2008 was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in a joint initiative linked to Portrait of a Nation, a showcase for the young people of Britain that will form a finale to the European Capital of Culture programme in Liverpool in December. Announcing the launch of both projects, Adrian Tinniswood, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund's South West committee said:

*I am particularly excited by the potential that The Bristol Story has to get people talking about the city's past, as that is the core of Portrait of a Nation – stimulating debate through creative exploration, around roots, identity and culture: Where do we come from? How did we get here? Who are we now? Where are we going? Who do we want to be?*

The Great Reading Adventure 2008 was also supported by Airbus UK, Arts and Business, Beachcroft, Rolls-Royce plc, South West Regional Development Agency, University of Bristol, University of the West of England, Venue and Westmark.

This report summarises the findings from the evaluation of the project. It combines statistical data with qualitative feedback. Additional images, comment and examples of work created during the course of the project can be found on the Great Reading Adventure website at [www.bristolreads.com](http://www.bristolreads.com).

## KEY STATISTICS AND FINDINGS

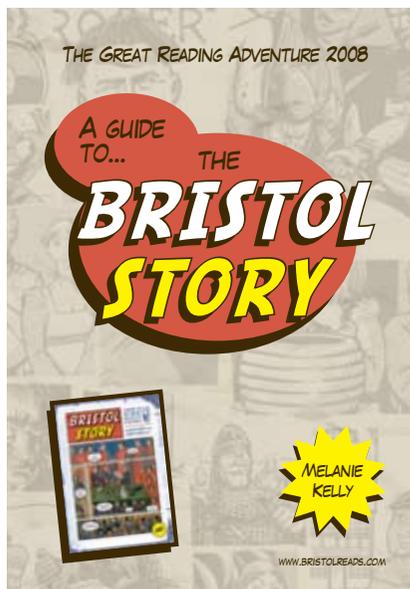
- 85,000 copies of *The Bristol Story* provided free of charge across the city for distribution through libraries, schools, businesses, community centres and other sites.
- 25,000 copies of a free illustrated readers' guide giving additional historical information about the city provided.
- 10,000 copies of an adaptation of *The Bristol Story – The Bristol Comic* – distributed for free for the use of younger/less confident readers.
- Most ages and all socio-economic groups participated in the project.
- The project website had a total of 16,025 visits from its launch in November 2007 to the end of March 2008.
- Nearly 72 per cent of those who expressed an opinion said joining the project had enhanced their reading experience.
- Nearly 95 per cent of those who expressed an opinion said they had learned something about Bristol's past by joining the project.
- Nearly 92 per cent of those who expressed an opinion said they would be interested in joining in future mass-reading initiatives.



Readers at St George's Primary on launch day  
(Martin Chainey).



## DISTRIBUTING THE BOOKS



BCDP printed 85,000 copies of *The Bristol Story* along with 25,000 copies of an illustrated readers' guide to the book and 10,000 of an adaptation for younger/less confident readers entitled *The Bristol Comic*. The printing and distribution was managed by Dave Higgitt at *Venue*.

Table 1 gives details of where the bulk of the material was delivered.

**Table 1: Book distribution**

	<i>Bristol Story</i>	<i>Bristol Comic</i>	<i>Guide</i>
Airbus	4,000	0	4,000
Arnolfini Bookshop	1,000	0	1,000
Arts Council, Exeter	50	0	0
Avon & Wilts Mental Health	500	0	500
Avon Scouts (Bristol South)	1,025	50	1,000
Avon Scouts (Brunel)	1,200	1,200	1,200
BCDP	1,275	200	450
Beachcroft	400	200	0
Blackwell Park Street	1,400	0	1,000
Blaise Castle House Museum	1,700	0	0
Bristol City Council	18,500	0	0
Bristol Evening Post	500	0	0
Bristol International Airport	900	0	900
Bristol Libraries	5,300	700	2,300
Bristol Record Office	400	0	400
British Emp & Com Museum	50	0	50
Business West	1,000	0	1,000
City Museum & Art Gallery	3,000	0	0
Children Looked After Service	0	300	0
Clifton Suspension Bridge	575	0	0
Comic Expo	550	0	500



	<i>Bristol Story</i>	<i>Bristol Comic</i>	<i>Guide</i>
Crime Festival	300	0	300
Destination Bristol	6,000	0	6,000
Girl Guiding (Bristol and S Glos)	250	0	0
North Bristol Woodcraft Folk	50	0	0
Osborne Clarke	450	0	450
Pieran Centre	200	0	200
Rolls Royce Plc.	4,300	0	0
Schools and colleges	9,405	7,350	450
ss <i>Great Britain</i>	1,920	0	0
St George's	850	0	1,000
SWRDA	100	0	100
Tobacco Factory	350	0	0
University of Bristol	900	0	700
UWE	2,150	0	0
<i>Venue</i>	12,000	0	0
Watershed Media Centre	1,000	0	1,000
Waterstones Galleries	1,400	0	500
Westmark	50	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>85,000</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>25,000</b>

Source: BCDP

The 12,000 copies that were allocated specifically to *Venue* were distributed free with issue 302 of the listings magazine. The main collection points where individual members of the public could pick up a copy of the book without paying an entrance fee or being an employee were branches of Bristol Libraries, Arnolfini Bookshop, Blackwell, Clifton Suspension Bridge Visitor Centre, Waterstone's, Watershed Media Centre and sites belonging to Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives. Some locations were more popular than others – the libraries and Waterstone's did particularly well – and slow moving stock was redistributed during the course of the project. Joe Melia, the local books buyer at Waterstone's said:

*From our point of view The Bristol Story was a great success. Our customers were really excited about it and it seemed to appeal to all age groups which is a difficult thing to pull off. The publicity, obviously, was really effective as we kept running out really quickly. It gave us an opportunity to enhance our local profile and local interest section too. One thing that was very evident was that customers were really delighted that it was free! We displayed the book and the guide to it on a separate stand at the busy front of the shop next to the local interest section and this worked very well. We are very keen to get involved with local projects like this and really support local publishers and writers.*

Although the Great Reading Adventure 2008 has now officially ended, the book will continue to be of value and of interest to local people and there is likely to still be demand for it, particularly at the city's heritage sites where some stock has been retained for future use. A special hard-back print run of 700 numbered and signed copies of *The Bristol Story* was also produced to be given away as gifts.



Opposite page: Covers of *The Bristol Story* and the guide.

Above: *The Bristol Comic*.

## PUBLICISING THE PROJECT



Having established itself as a popular annual event in the city's cultural calendar, the Great Reading Adventure has developed a core body of followers, eager to find out what 'this year's book' will be. The initial announcement about *The Bristol Story* was made with a press release circulated in November 2007 linked to a call for suggestions of people who might feature in an updated version of Ernest Board's *Some Who Have Made Bristol Famous*, a large painting from the 1930s on prominent display in the foyer of the City Museum and Art Gallery. A holding page for the project website went live to coincide with this publicity where people could download sample pages of *The Bristol Story* and register to be added to the mailing list. The release was picked up by the *Evening Post*, *Venue* and the BBC, among others. Schools and colleges had already been alerted to the choice of book as they were sent invitations to join in the project in early October, but this was the first time the book's title and subject was made public. There were over 5,400 visits to the holding page in November and December.



Before Christmas, 1,000 A3 posters were printed featuring the Bristol giants – the narrators of the book – to use in advance publicity for the project. These were distributed to libraries, Bristol International Airport, the University of Bristol, cultural organisations and members of Business West. The poster, which was designed by Qube Design Associates Ltd along with the rest of the publicity and support material, gave the launch date of the project (two weeks later than usual to coincide with the launch of *Portrait of a Nation*) and listed some of the sites where copies could be collected. Posters were also later included in the packs sent to participating schools.

On the day before the launch, eight promotional banners were erected in Bristol city centre, four featuring characters from *The Bristol Story*, the others based on collages created by local schools as part of *Portrait of a Nation*. Pupils from the schools came to see their work on display and to be photographed for the website. A press release was circulated announcing this photo opportunity along with details of the launch day.

The launch itself was held for an invited audience of around 180 people at Bristol's City Museum and Art Gallery. Guests included staff from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the artists leading the *Portrait of a Nation* workshops, teachers, Bristol City Council officers and other project partners. The hour-long programme featured speeches from funders, readings from *The Bristol Story* by a group of actors, a presentation on the creation of New Oak Primary's banner and a performance of Fair Furlong Primary's class story about the legend of Bristol's unicorns. It was followed by a buffet lunch. All guests received a pack containing a welcome letter, *The Bristol Story*, the readers' guide, *The Bristol Comic*, a press release, and information about the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Overall *The Bristol Story* received less media coverage than previous Great Reading Adventures, probably because having become an established event it has lost much of its news value. The press releases were sent by email as well as by hard copy to nearly 200 local and national contacts. The launch release was designed in what was hoped was an eye-catching comic-book format and 85 of the most important contacts were also sent a copy of *The Bristol Story*. It was particularly disappointing that the Bristol *Evening Post* did not manage a sustained campaign of coverage as they had with *Treasure Island*, *The Day of the Triffids*, *The Siege* and, to a lesser extent, *Around the World in Eighty Days* as the local community relevance was so explicit in this instance. Preliminary discussions were held with the newspaper's management about the range of stories that the project might generate but were not followed through by the reporting staff. However, when a spokesperson from HLF was asked about what might be done to generate more media interest, he said:

*Although the Bristol Evening Post lack of involvement was a disappointment, you have done as much you could conceivably do in terms of getting coverage for the project. I can honestly offer no suggestions for making improvements.*

At one stage there was the promise/threat that Julie Burchill was going to write a piece on the book for the *Guardian Review* but this offer was later withdrawn. It would have meant much-needed national coverage but as Burchill has less than fond memories of her Bristol childhood it was unlikely to have been a ringing endorsement for the city. *The Shire* coverage resulted in requests for the book from expatriates in Australia and South Africa who subscribed to this publication.

Table 2 provides a list of all the media coverage received.

**Table 2: Media coverage for Great Reading Adventure**

Press	Websites	Other
<b>Local press</b>	Arnolfini	BBC Radio Bristol
<i>The Bristol Magazine</i>	BBC	Bristol City Council Foster Carers Newsletter
<i>Bristol Review of Books</i>	Bristol City Council	
<i>The Community Voice</i>	GWE Business West	Bristol Governor Newsletter
<i>Epigram</i>	Epigram	
<i>Evening Post</i> (five items)	Gurr Illustration	City of Bristol LRC Link (intranet)
<i>The Regional Historian</i>	James Barlow (blog)	
<i>The Shire</i>	John Toon (blog)	Colourful Radio
Venue (two items including cover story)	Kerry McCarthy MP	Community Radio
	Literature South West	Original Radio
	Read a Million Words	Star Radio
<b>National press</b>	Stephen Williams MP	
<i>Arts Industry</i>	This is Bristol	
<i>The Bookseller</i>	Visit Bristol	
<i>New Books</i>		
<i>Public Library Journal</i>		

Source: BCDP

Of those who completed the online survey, the majority (just over 30 per cent) first found out about the project by word of mouth, mainly through their place of work. Around 16 per cent found out about the project from their school or college and nine per cent from their local library. Just over 12 per cent had been made aware of it by the local media (ten per cent from the press) and about two per cent each from an internet search or the banners and posters. Of those who selected the category 'Other' (just over 27 per cent), most were Bristol City Council employees who had received a copy of the book through the post. There were a few complaints about this unsolicited mailing as some assumed the books had been sent by BCDP and were annoyed that their personal details had been used without their consent. It is surprising that the council did not make more of this free gift to their staff and publicise that the book was from them.



Opposite page: Publicity banners in Bristol city centre (Martin Chainey).

Left: Launch event at Bristol's City Museum and Art Gallery (Martin Chainey).

## SUPPORT MATERIAL FOR READERS OF THE BRISTOL STORY



Top: Members of the Brunel Scout District with their guides and books (Roy Harvey).

Bottom: Callington Road Hospital staff with books and guides (Martin Chainey).

To accompany *The Bristol Story*, an illustrated guide was produced which contained an interview with Eugene Byrne and Simon Gurr, a timeline, a list of resources, and sections on mapping the city, women in Bristol's history, science in Bristol, Bristol products and Bristol education. Most of the research, writing and illustration-gathering was completed by mid-August. Although it was an attractive publication and contained a wealth of new material, the proofing process seemed rushed and there were a few minor – but irritating – slips that went through to print. It has to be said that only a handful of people spotted these but it did take some of the shine off the achievement for its author.

Of those who completed the online survey about the project, around 39 per cent had read the guide and nearly 90 per cent of those who expressed an opinion thought the information it contained had been interesting. In previous surveys, readers were asked if the guide had been useful, but this led to some confusion as to what was meant by the term. 'Interesting' seemed less ambiguous.

Comments regarding the guide included:

*Haven't quite finished reading it, but I liked having larger views of the old maps and also interesting to learn a bit more about Bristol's interesting female figures.*

*The guide was excellent too, and a great addition to the book. I was glad to see it didn't re-hash the same information. The city maps were particularly interesting and provided a nice visual break from all the facts.*

*Well presented, good mix of text and graphics, good tone.*

*It is always good to get more background information, and find out things at a more complex level.*

*Really important to have included information about how the book was researched and where readers can go to find out more. Also*

*interesting to read about certain aspects in more detail.*

*Really enjoyed it. Still reading it. Possibly preferred it to the graphic-style one.*

One respondent was disappointed that the text and images were not aimed at a young audience, unlike *The Bristol Story*. However, this was never the intention; the guide was primarily seen as an opportunity to engage older people looking for a more traditional approach to the subject who might initially have been resistant to the comic-book format. The downloadable activity packs for *The Bristol Story* and *The Bristol Comic* that were available from the project website in PDF and Microsoft Word formats were designed for younger participants.

The guide was also available as a download on the project website in both formats. The Word version and the website pages themselves were compatible with the Royal National Institute for the Blind's JAWS speech output system and the whole site was compliant with the W3C accessibility guidelines. In addition, the website included an extended version of the interview with Eugene and Simon and further historical information about Bristol as well as news of events taking place in schools as part of Portrait of a Nation.

It was hoped that the My Bristol section of the site would inspire people to submit their own comments and stories about living in the city, but few were received. This might have worked better if the *Evening Post* had got behind the initiative and encouraged input from its readers, but this 'interactive' element of the Great Reading Adventure websites has always struggled to get contributions. In theory, it seems like a good idea to offer this kind of participatory element but it has not really worked so far. Similarly the blogging facility on the Heritage Lottery Fund's networking website for Portrait of a Nation has not as yet engaged the interest of the young Bristol people involved in the project. Neither has it provided the expected national showcase for the Bristol creative work that was hoped for.

Table 3 provides details of the visits to the Great Reading Adventure, with comparisons made to previous projects.

**Table 3: Website visits**

	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
January	3,105	6,366	7,438	6,355	4,564	N/A
February	4,243	6,488	4,475	6,387	3,797	N/A
March	3,240	7,482	3,468	5,298	2,338	3,012
TOTAL	10,588	20,336	15,381	18,040	10,699	3,012

Source: Media Temple/E3

The Great Reading Adventure 2008 was therefore comparable in terms of website use to *The Day of the Triffids*, a previous city-only project, and stood up well against the much more widespread projects of 2006 and 2007. The most successful Bristol-only project to date in terms of website use has been the city-wide reading of *The Siege* in 2005, which benefited from the nostalgia value of its subject, the relevancy to the school curriculum and the daily coverage in the *Evening Post* for its three-month duration.

Of those who completed a survey, 44 per cent had visited the website and of those who expressed an opinion, nearly 90 per cent thought the information it contained had been interesting.

Comments on the website included:

*It improves accessibility and opens up the experience to a larger audience, including those who want to know more.*

*Quite easy to navigate. Lots to look at and capture the imagination*

*Good to see pictures showing the variety of activities involved.*

*I found the information good and I liked the activities.*

*It was really interesting to explore and find out new information.*

The support material for *The Bristol Story* was designed to add another dimension to the reading experience by providing contextual information linked to some of the events and people referred to in the book in as attractive and comprehensive a way as possible. The material contributed to the sense in which the project was about more than 'just' reading the book. Of those who expressed an opinion via the survey, nearly 72 per cent said that joining the project had enhanced their experience of reading *The Bristol Story* and nearly 95 per cent thought they had learnt something about the past as a result of taking part. The figures for 2007 were 90 and 88 per cent respectively. The fall with regard to the enhanced reading experience is partly due to the fact that a number of the respondents only knew about the project because they had received a book in the post and had not read the guide or used the website other than to fill in their survey. Also as the 2007 project was linked to the wider commemoration of the abolition of slavery, in which other events were taking place, there was possibly more of a sense of the reading being surrounded by a range of activity that enhanced understanding. Perhaps, more pertinently, as *The Bristol Story* was already so comprehensive in its content, the support material did not need to fill in major gaps in the knowledge already provided.



*Ernest Board's Some Who Have Made Bristol Famous (1930) was featured in The Bristol Story, the guide and the website (Bristol's Museums, Galleries and Archives).*

## PARTICIPANT RESPONSE AND PROFILE



Staff in Watershed Media Centre (Vicky Washington).



Fiona Hamilton reading from The Bristol Story with Andrew Kelly at the launch (Martin Chaaney).

1 There is a separate report in which all the comments received via the survey are compiled and this can be downloaded from the website. Some hard copies of the survey were distributed for completion by hand and then logged online by BCDP.

Feedback on the project and demographic information about some of its participants has been collated from:

- 175 responses to the online survey, which included questions on postcode, gender, age and ethnicity.<sup>1</sup>
- Additional individual comments received by email, by phone and in person.
- Bristol City Council's records for 18,832 of its employees, covering postcode, gender, age and ethnicity.
- Rolls-Royce's records for 3,353 of its Filton/Patchway employees, covering their postcode, gender, age and ethnicity.
- Airbus UK's records for 4,528 of its Filton employees, covering their gender, age and ethnicity.
- 300 registration forms collected at distribution sites which included postcode and gender.
- 3,825 postcodes collected by Bristol Libraries.
- Venue's 2005 Readership Survey covering ACORN classification, gender and age.

There were a few complaints, mainly by older respondents and teachers of students with learning disabilities, about the small size of the print used in the publication, but the vast majority of comments received were favourable. They included the following:

*Brilliant! Very entertaining – it kept my interest from start to finish and the illustrations are excellent. I'm so pleased I managed to pick up a copy by chance on my two-day visit to Bristol. Thoroughly enjoyable!*

*Fantastic! Great read, loads of stuff I didn't know. Found it really interesting and will be forcing friends to read it.*

*Very funny, witty, informative and accessible for all ages! Brilliant!*

*Every bit as good as the Brunel book and that was excellent. Easy to read, entertaining and very informative.*

*Loved it. Read it in one sitting and, despite a prior interest in local history, found much in it that I didn't already know. I especially liked the tone – a very engaging mix of fun and fact.*

*Loved the style and presentation. Great humour. But the underlying stories are really well researched – they made a serious attempt not to recycle some of the less accurate populist histories. I imagine it would be a great tool for involving people who wouldn't normally pick up history books.*

*Excellent format, an amazing amount of information. Fantastic mix of myths and facts. Something I will go back to over and over again and know I will find something new each time. Marvellous graphics.*

*I thought it was absolutely superb. And I have lived in Bristol all my life and The Bristol Story told me so many new things! There should be one for every city in the world! It was superbly written, and could reach people of all types and abilities! Superb! Well done! More!*

*The whole book from start to finish was inspired! It had me hooked! So visual and so informative! It will be great to use as a teaching resource! Well done!!*

*Hugely entertaining, the illustrations were wonderful and the amount of history contained within was highly surprising, considering the lightness in tone of the book and the simple and easy read it proved to be. Even for an old geezer in his mid forties!*

*It was definitely aimed at a younger age-group than my own. I found some of the jokes a bit of a put-off, but got into the narrative style quite easily. I get bored with books very easily and I think this was a good introduction to Bristol's history.*

The Bristol Story is an excellent combination of education and entertainment, cleverly designed to appeal to all ages. Its serious and accurate historical information is enlivened with delightfully expressive drawings and leavened with an endearing sense of humour. With a thoroughly engaging attitude to history, it provides simple and concise explanations of complex issues, clarifying the logic of how and why the city and its people developed as they did.

I thought it was a nice way to portray a complicated narrative to people who might otherwise think it 'boring' or not their thing.

Although it is harder to read a graphic-style book, I found The Bristol Story both amusing and educational – extremely well written, beautifully illustrated and almost impossible to put down.

Around 62 per cent had previously read a book in a graphic-style format.

Using the ACORN classification system, it has been possible to ascertain the socio-economic backgrounds of many of those who participated. The analysis uses postcodes to identify particular household types. Table 4 provides details of the analysis.



Table 4: ACORN postcode analysis of Bristol participants where known

Category of household	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
1: Wealthy Achievers – wealthy executives, affluent greys, flourishing families	15.1	20.9	23.4	20.5	20.7
2: Urban Prosperity – prosperous professionals, educated urbanites, aspiring singles	16.6	24.8	23.0	13.4	13.0
3: Comfortably Off – starting out, secure families, settled suburbia, prudent pensioners	32.6	33.5	29.1	30.6	33.9
4: Moderate Means – Asian communities, post industrial families, blue collar roots	19.6	12.1	15.0	21.5	20.5
5: Hard Pressed – struggling families, burdened singles, high rise hardship, inner city adversity	16.1	8.6	9.5	13.9	11.6
Unclassified					0.3

Source: amh/BCDP. This data is based on 23,745 actual Bristol postcodes. Data for 2003 is not included here as the ACORN categories were different at that time so a direct comparison cannot be made.



Young reader at St George's Primary (Martin Chaaney).



Staff in Blackwell bookshop on Park Street (Vicky Washington).



Staff at Callington Road Hospital in Brislington were among the first people in the city to start reading *The Bristol Story* (Martin Chainey).

On the basis of the 2005 *Venue* Readership Survey, it is estimated that ACORN analysis of those who received a free copy of the book with the magazine is likely to be: Wealthy Achievers (10 per cent), Urban Prosperity (48 per cent), Comfortably Off (21 per cent), Moderate Means (nine per cent) and Hard Pressed (four per cent). The current profile for Bristol as a whole is: Wealthy Achievers (6.4), Urban Prosperity (24.1), Comfortably Off (25.2), Moderate Means (20.5) and Hard Pressed (23.8). The Great Reading Adventure normally has an over-representation of Wealthy Achievers and an under-representation of the Hard Pressed, where such data is known, but it is difficult to give a precise picture because the postcode information is not available for the majority of participants.

The gender balance of recipients of the book was around 56 female to 44 male. This is based on 27,188 instances where gender was shown combined with the likely *Venue* profile based on the 2005 readership survey. The Great Reading Adventure usually has a gender balance of around 70 female to 30 male. As with the ACORN analysis above, a much bigger sample was used in 2008 than before because of the inclusion of information from Bristol City Council about its thousands of employees, so direct comparisons with previous years are not possible.

For the earlier projects, information on the ethnic origin of participants has only been available from the few hundred completed surveys. This has shown that on average around 95 per cent would describe themselves as White. For the 2008 project, based on 21,886 participants where data was known, just under 94 per cent described themselves as White. The breakdown for the other ethnic categories was: Asian (1.5), Black (three), Chinese (0.3), Mixed (0.9) and Other (0.3).

All adult groups were represented in the age analysis of 38,649 participants, where information was known (this includes the likely age profile of the *Venue* readership). Table 5 provides details.

**Table 5: Age of participants**

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2003</i>
Under 10	0.0	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.9	2.2
10-14	0.0	0.0	3.3	1.3	10.0	2.2
15-18	1.9	0.5	0.8	0.0	2.8	1.4
19-25	10.5	2.9	3.3	0.9	4.0	0.7
26-35	25.7	8.6	13.9	4.8	13.5	9.3
36-45	25.5	15.5	25.5	13.2	11.5	13.7
46-55	22.6	23.3	19.7	15.1	19.5	23.0
56-65	12.8	27.3	15.6	20.0	16.0	19.4
66-75	1.0	17.1	9.0	27.0	14.0	28.1
Over 75	0.0	4.8	6.5	17.7	7.8	0.0

*Source: BCDP. In 2003 the highest age group was Over 65.*

This information only includes a handful of the thousands of young people who took part through their schools, colleges and youth groups, as it is mainly based on employee details and the online surveys.

## LIBRARIES AND SCHOOLS

Bristol Libraries is a crucial partner in the planning and delivery of the Great Reading Adventure. It is the enthusiasm and creativity of library staff that helps to engage many of the participants in the project. Staff arrange eye-catching displays, encourage browsers to read the book, get informal feedback from readers, arrange multiple copies to be available for groups, use the book in engagement and outreach initiatives, and organise special events. Normally the libraries purchase audio and large-print editions of the chosen book to supplement the main version, and, where possible, also buy editions in community and foreign languages. This was, of course, not possible in 2008.

This year was also unusual in that most of the library service's books were given away for free, with only ten per cent retained as loan copies. As most people with an immediate interest in the project were able to obtain their own copy, borrowings have been relatively few so far (84 in total) and a comparison with previous years' loans would be inappropriate. However, it is anticipated that there will be steady demand for the book as a loan item in the future.

The type of book was also not particularly suitable for the dozens of reading groups who normally play a significant part in each year's project. As an alternative, library staff promoted a list of Bristol-set novels which were publicised under the heading *Close to Home* and displayed in branches alongside *The Bristol Story*. They were:

Lillian Bouzane *In the Hands of the Living God*

Fanny Burney *Evelina*

Philippa Gregory *A Respectable Trade*

Robert Lewis *The Last Llanelli Train*

Daniel Mayhew *Life and How To Live It*

Colleen McCullough *Morgan's Run*

Deborah Moggach *You Must Be Sisters*

David Nicholls *Starter for Ten*

Lesley Pearse *Till We Meet Again*

Kate Sedley *Three Kings of Cologne*

E V Thompson *Lewin's Mead*

E V Thompson *Becky*

Matt Thorne *Eight Minutes Idle*

James Wilson *Bastard Boy*

Additional Bristol authors and books were recommended in the guide and website. An author event with Karen Maitland, held by Bristol Libraries at the Council House, was linked to *The Bristol Story* as her medieval thriller, *Company of Liars*, is set during the plague, one of the major events in Bristol's history. At one time it was hoped that Bristol Libraries' annual Local History Festival would tie in with *The Bristol Story* but as the library service underwent a period of restructuring earlier this year, the festival did not take place. This link will be developed for future projects.

Although the main book chosen for each year's reading project is usually aimed at adult readers, books for children are also included and this year's book was thought suitable for a reading age of 11 and upwards (and, in the event, proved accessible to even younger readers). There was also *The Bristol Comic*, aimed at a reading age of around six to ten, which took sections from *The Bristol Story* and simplified the text. Children could participate in the project through their school, their local library (some of which had stock reserved for the use of after-school and homework clubs), the council's looked after children programme, Bristol's hospital education service and, in a new initiative for this year, scouting, guiding and Woodcraft Folk groups. Of these, the schools are the most significant in number.



Staff at Bristol Central Library reading the book (Vicky Washington).





*Pupils from New Oak Primary with the Lord Mayor of Bristol on launch day (Martin Chainey).*



*Maureen Waller from the Brunel Scout District with the Lord Mayor of Bristol on launch day (Roy Harvey).*

All schools who participated in *Small Island Read 2007* received advance notice, as part of their feedback forms, of the selected book for 2008. Over 150 schools were then sent a personalised letter in early October with details of the project and an order form for those wishing to receive books. Reminders of the deadline for returning the forms were sent via the Bristol Education Service's intranet system in early November (the first time this service has been offered to BCDP) and by individual email, on the closing date, giving a week's extension to those who had not yet responded. Schools could also register via the project website. Despite these measures, some teachers still contacted BCDP in January saying they would like to take part and had only just found out about the project. It is not sure how this communication could be improved.

In total, 69 schools and colleges received books in Bristol with a few schools from South Gloucestershire and other neighbouring counties given permission to collect boxes of books from some of the public distribution sites once the project was underway. As, despite numerous requests, few teachers completed their survey form, either online or using the hard copy sent to them, it is difficult to assess what impact the project has had on them, other than providing a supply of free books for their students.

Comments that were received about what the students liked and disliked about the two books included the following:

***What they liked***

*Entertaining and informative. Lots of information. Witty.*

*They found out some interesting things about local history which they could relate to.*

*The illustrations, funny story.*

*Reading and enjoying it with their friends and with the teacher.*

*The graphic style appealed to the whole KS, particularly the boys.*

*They were fascinated with Bristol's history, there seems to be a part of the history which appeal to all of the children. They have been very keen to visit parts of Bristol that they have then been able to read about.*

***What they disliked***

*Writing was a bit small.*

*Print too dense – students with moderate learning difficulties need clearer layout.*

*Lots of writing.*

*My set found it hard to read on their own.*

*The 'map' pages were not quite so teacher friendly.*

*Nothing.*

All said in general the students had enjoyed taking part in the project.

Because of the workload and costs involved with dealing individually with schools and the lack of feedback received, in the future it may be a more effective use of resources to concentrate on the scouts, guides and other out-of-school groups, and perhaps also work with the schools library service in distributing books rather than distributing material direct.

## PORTRAIT OF A NATION

For 2008 the Great Reading Adventure was linked to Portrait of a Nation. This initiative is being run by the Liverpool Culture Company, member cities of the Cultural Cities Network and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). It began in 2007 and will develop into a high profile strand of the European Capital of Culture 2008 celebrations in Liverpool this year. Portrait of a Nation works with young people across the UK to showcase their own local, regional and national identities through a series of events that will feed into a December showcase that will close the Liverpool celebrations.

In Bristol a programme of free workshops was provided to selected Bristol schools and colleges between November 2007 and March 2008. The young participants created collages/banners, comic books, written work and drama pieces on the themes of identity, roots, heritage and culture, focussing in particular on the city neighbourhoods in which they are based. They represented a wide age range, and a geographically and socially diverse spread of locations. They were chosen from the schools and colleges who had been particularly responsive to previous Great Reading Adventures. The first batch of invitations was sent out in early September but as some of those on the original 'wishlist' either did not respond or said they were unable to take part because of the difficulty of scheduling the workshops within the school timetable, the actual list of participants was not finalised until mid-February.

The following provides details of those who took part (note: each did all four workshop types, unless otherwise stated):

*Avon Primary School:* 25 Year 3 pupils, aged seven to eight did the collage, comic and drama workshops; 29 Year 4 pupils did the writing.

*City of Bristol College, Lawrence Weston:* 8 students aged 16+ did the collage and comic workshops; five students aged 16+ did drama.

*City of Bristol College, Soundwell:* seven students aged 16+ made a collage; 15 students aged 16+ did the comic-book workshops; 11 students aged 16+ did writing.

*Clifton High Lower School:* 28 Year 4 children, aged eight and nine years.

*Colston's Girls' School:* 17 girls in Year 9, aged 13 to 14.

*Elmfield School for Deaf Children:* 13 pupils, aged 11 to 15, made a collage and comic-book.

*Fair Furlong Primary School:* 30 pupils in Year 3, aged seven to eight.

*Hannah More Primary School:* 28 pupils.

*Hillfields Primary School:* 23 pupils from Year 3/4, ranging from seven to nine years old.

*Kingsweston School:* 13 pupils in their early teens.

*Little Mead Primary School:* 19 pupils.

*New Oak Primary School:* 31 Year 6 pupils, aged ten to 11, took part in the banner-making, writing and comic strips. The drama workshops involved Year 4 and Year 5 children (25 children each).

*St George CE VC Primary School:* 19 children aged between nine and 11.

*St Mary Redcliffe and Temple Secondary School:* two groups totalling 54 pupils aged 11 to 12 did comic-book, writing and drama workshops.

*Teyfant Community School:* 26 pupils.

*Weston Park Primary:* 33 children, aged seven to nine, did collage and comic-book workshops.



*Pupils from Hannah More Primary with their collage (Martin Chainey).*





Pupils from Colston's Girls' School with their collage (Martin Chainey).

With the exception of St Mary Redcliffe, all the sites produced a large-scale collage in workshops led by artist Gloria Ojulari Sule. The collages were then photographed and the image transferred onto a durable material to create a banner suitable for outdoor display. Four of these banners were hung in the city centre in January as part of the joint publicity for the Great Reading Adventure and Portrait of a Nation, and all will have been on public display in Bristol prior to being transported to Liverpool for the December showcase.

The following provides details of the inspiration behind some of the artwork created:

*Our banner was based on Our Community. It had a central focus of Hillfields School, with roads based on our local area (we made curricular links with Geography). We went on a local walk of our surrounding area and the children drew local landmarks and roads which were then put into our collage. In the foreground, each of the children created themselves and we thought about all the different languages and faiths that are celebrated in our school. The background is made up of poetry from our butterfly poems about identity and our butterflies show that we are all the same, ie human, however we all have our own personalities and differences. The buildings in the banner represent local landmarks. They were drawn and put into our collage: Cossham Hospital, the local Gurdwara, The Mosque, a local Church, local shops and our homes on the Hillfields estate.*

*We made the banner by sticking on small strips of tissue paper and then covering it with glue. Then the whole class split into three groups and each one planned a different part of Bristol. One group planned the harbour, one the city and the other group our locality, Brandon Hill. We chose important landmarks that we all knew well and felt were an important part of our city. We looked on the internet for pictures of these and then sketched them. We hope that this banner will encourage people to visit Bristol. We also hope that*



*it will help people to understand how we feel about our city and the special things in it.*

*Gloria helped us to think about our local area and what is important to us in our part of Bristol. We divided the banner into sections – our local community, the amenities, the people, the buildings; our memories of growing up in the area; the activities we take part in; we also included aspects of Bristol that are significant to us for example the building of Concorde, the Balloon Fiesta, visiting the Zoo. Gloria helped us to bring our ideas to life. Showing us how to use vibrant colours and how to get the perspective right, she also helped us to show the figures as moving characters not just static. Our School logo is at the centre of our banner as this is one of the most influential places in our lives. So we also included our school building as well as children playing together. Gloria was very keen that everyone took part and that we all felt that we had contributed to the making of the banner. We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who made it possible for Gloria to work with us, and an extra thank you to Gloria for enabling us to produce a banner that we feel shows that the community of New Oak Primary School in Hengrove is a worthy part of the wider community of Bristol.*

Comments from teachers on the workshops collected from the project's evaluation forms included:<sup>2</sup>

*Excellent workshops – very inclusive and creative. Work fitted in really well with our geography for term 2 – our local area. Project really made the children look closely at their local area and what is special about it. We have a wonderful, lasting record of our work with Gloria.*

*As well as the kudos of their work being displayed, the students also learnt a great deal about planning and working effectively as part of a team, and the whole process has been recorded and will be an integral part of their accreditation.*

*Gloria was superb; she inspired and enthused the children and instilled in them a genuine pride in their work. She also taught them new skills and techniques.*

*Every single child, from EBO to SEN, were able to benefit from the team building skills and were delighted with their final banner. The children also had a positive dual heritage role model! So important for many! The parents were thrilled to bits.*

*To have produced a published piece of art work that is to be displayed in their own city is marvellous. It allowed those children who have more creative talents to extend themselves further.*

Comments from the young participants included:

*I really liked the banner – I enjoyed working on this. I thank Gloria for helping us work on it.*

*I enjoyed the banner-making. I like it because it looks good, colourful and bright.*

*I made a hand-tree because the tree links to our school elm. Hand means we use sign language. I like the idea of the banner, it is really eye-catching. I hope the whole school will come to see it and feel proud.*

*There are lots of bits of our school culture in this banner.*

*It was amazing to see the blank white piece of card turn into a brilliant banner.*

*I feel really proud to think people in Bristol are going to see my work.*

*I liked creating myself in tissue paper.*

Photographs of all the collages are on the Great Reading Adventure website at [www.bristolreads.com](http://www.bristolreads.com) spread over four sections: Portrait of a Nation, Education, Education: Banners, and News and Press.



*Pupils from Little Mead Primary with their collage (Martin Chainey).*

<sup>2</sup> There is a separate report that contains all the feedback comments from the workshop programme.



Pupils from Elmfield School for Deaf Children visit their banner in the city centre (Martin Chainey).

The comic book workshops were led by illustrator Simon Gurr, thereby making a direct link to *The Bristol Story* (one teacher commented: 'Having met the person involved with [*The Bristol Story*] art work really brought the book to life for them.'). In two half-day sessions, pupils learnt the principles of comic strip design and made their own individual strips which were then combined into a printed school comic-book, with each participant given their own copy.

Comments on the comic strip workshops from teachers included:

*This has been an excellent experience and well worth repeating for future reading projects. There were the two extremes – at one stage you could have heard a pin drop they were all so focussed, and on other occasions, they were all animated and excited.*

*Children had to focus on various themes such as; story beginnings, middles and ends, characterisation and dialogue – all of which feed in well to the Y3 curriculum. The children's concentration was excellent as they had to work carefully in order to produce their individual comic strips. Most of all, it was great fun and they all have school comic to treasure. The workshop was great 'professional development' for me and I look forward to using Simon's comic strip format when I work on Myths and Legends with my class next term. The children loved looking at each others' work.*

*This particular workshop worked very well with our students as they liked the idea about finding out about Bristol's history. The students involved were able to think about their ideas and put them into logical order which incorporated the literacy aspect. They were all engaged in the process and really liked the idea of seeing their work in print.*

*The combination of presenting hard non-fiction information in cartoon form really caught pupils' imagination, and they loved the idea of presenting their own histories/autobiographies in cartoon form. Simon was great with the kids. And has become a real role-model for our budding young cartoonists.*

All the comic books can be viewed on the Great Reading Adventure website at [www.bristolreads.com](http://www.bristolreads.com) as PDF downloads in the Education: Comics section.

Some additional comic strip workshops for young people were held in libraries during half term as part of the project. Each child produced a comic to take home. Janet Randall, Children and Young People's Advisor for Bristol Libraries, said:

*We limited the workshops to 12 children at each to give them a real quality event. Feedback from both children and parents was very good.*

The writing workshops were led by Claire Williamson and Fiona Hamilton and resulted in a collection of poems and short pieces inspired by life in Bristol and by city landmarks, and – linking with *The Bristol Story* and its retelling of the legend of the Bristol giants – myths about the creation of the city.

The following myth about the Bristol unicorns was devised by pupils from Fair Furlong Primary who performed it at the launch event at the City Museum and Art Gallery.

*Back in the days of the days of the distance, up on the hills of Hartcliffe lived the last two remaining unicorns, with diamond-tipped, twirly, shiny horns. One was called Dash, because she could run like the wind and one was called Bristley, because he had a rough black fur. All the other unicorns had been eaten by the nasty fish Swamp-Spiker who lived in the slimy marsh down below the hills of Hartcliffe.*

*Up on the hill there were fields of colourful flowers and the sun always shone. But down in the swamp it was wet, rainy and soggy. No one would want to live there. It was sticky, smelly, gooey and muddy.*

*The unicorns know that after they have died it was to be the time of the natives. They could feel the new age coming in the tingle of their glittery hooves. They knew that they have to get rid of the bad fish Swamp-Spiker before the natives would come.*

*The unicorns trotted down to the edge of the swamp. They could feel the menace of Swamp-Spiker through their hooves, which shook as they got closer.*

*Swamp-Spiker could smell a unicorn at a thousand paces, so he was waiting in the seaweedy grasses of the marsh. His bony, spiky back looked like a rock in the water. His enormous tail lurked in the gooey, squishy mush.*

*As the unicorns approached, with their fiery breaths and their stabbing horns, Swamp-Spiker jumped high out of the marsh and swiped with his huge tail and blew a jet of water from his angry mouth and his blow hole making a fountain of poisoned water.*

*The unicorns knew this was their last moments, so they decided that they would channel the sunshine from the hills of Hartcliffe down into the swamp to dry up the evil, slimy sea and kill off Swamp-Spiker. So they raised their horns and caught the bright sun beams in their horn diamonds to dry the land. They knew they would be burnt up in the sun's heat, but it felt the right thing to do as their last act.*

*The swamp mostly dried, apart from a river and the unicorns were mostly burnt, but Dash and Bristle weren't burnt, but encrusted in golden sunbeams and were taken by the natives as their symbol, who named the town Bristol, after Bristle. Swamp Spiker was trapped under the hot, dry ground where the native Bristolians made their city. Sometimes you can still see the water from his blow hole burst up like a fountain in the city centre. And you can see the golden encrusted Dash and Bristle on top of the council house on College Green.*



Moira Hunt with pupils at St Mary Redcliffe and Temple (Vicky Washington).





Claire Williamson working with pupils in a writing workshop at Fair Furlong Primary (Vicky Washington).



Fiona Hamilton leading a drama workshop at Avon Primary (Martin Chainey).

These poems and short pieces from Hillfields Primary School describe what the pupils experienced and saw when they walked through a door into a place in their imagination, their dreams or their real lives.

*When I opened the door I saw the playground and the bushes. I saw the sun, the rain and together they made a rainbow! I heard the sounds of a school: shouting, laughing, singing, chattering, screeching, moaning in the playground. I could feel the ground beneath my feet that was hard and grey. I could see the building walls and a mural. I could see children dressed in a green uniform playing games and kicking footballs. I could see my dream of a field for our school with soft blades of glistening, shining grass for the future.*

*When I open the door I see people praying. They are kneeling on mats on the floor. I see rows of long pews. Large stained glass windows throw colours all around the Church. Mosaic tiles are dotted over the floor. When I look up I see the roof full of wooden beams. The Church smells beautiful; fresh flowers, polish and varnish mixed together. In the front of the Church Jesus stands fixed to a gold, shiny cross.*

*When I open the door to the Mosque I see lots of people praying to Allah. I smell a kind of perfume that you only get in Saudi Arabia. I can hear people reciting the prayer! I can see lots of patterns on the carpet. The prayer room has lots of prayer mats with compasses and magnificent decoration. Sometimes when I smell, I can smell spices. When I hear, I can hear famous Qur'an recites and the Arabic sounds so beautiful!*

*When I open the door to my Dad's Indian restaurant I see lots of people eating dinner. I smell delicious food and ice cream. I can hear a girl asking; "Who's the cook? I just love the food!" I can taste curry, rice, chapatti, dhal and chicken. I say to my Dad;*

*"Can I have some more?" I feel very, very excited, nervous and great. I even feel the food as well in my tummy!*

*When I opened the door I saw a fantastically beautiful colourful rainbow arched over the River Avon. Don't you wish that you could see the same as me? High up in the sky I could see a red, blue, green and pink air balloon floating gently over the Suspension Bridge. The sound of the hot air going into a balloon echoes in between the cliffs.*

*When I open the door I see my bed – comfy and warm, my Bratz cover makes me feel happy. There are High School Musical posters on my wall and they cheer me up if I am sad. The smell of mum cooking tea wafts up the stairs and through the door. I see my clothes on their hangers and my party dress waiting for my birthday.*

Comments on the writing workshops from teachers included:

*Whole class enjoyed the joint poetry writing as all the children got some input. They produced some fabulous work from it which I have displayed.*

*The children have little opportunity to work with poetry so this was an excellent experience for the children. Being able to see that people make a living out of writing heightens the value of writing for the children.*

*Claire's workshop is a really excellent starting point for the project as lots of ideas about identity and heritage issues were raised. Thank you so much for this opportunity.*

*Fiona had an excellent rapport with the children and brought the history alive for them. They were swiftly put at ease and all inhibitions were forgotten.*

*The workshops were so inspirational! The children produced such a high standard of work and Claire really was so enthusiastic.*



Collage workshop with Gloria Ojulari Sule at New Oak Primary (Vicky Washington).



Pupils from Fair Furlong Primary performing their unicorn story at the launch (Martin Chainey).



All the written work received from the schools can be viewed on the Great Reading Adventure website at [www.bristolreads.com](http://www.bristolreads.com) as downloads in the Education: Writing section.

The drama workshops were led by Moira Hunt and Fiona Hamilton. Because of the nature of the pieces that were created, there is little written documentation available for these sessions, but they elicited the following positive comments from teachers:

*Very well thought out workshop – children were encouraged to think more deeply about their local area. Sentences that came from children’s ideas on day one had been woven into scripts to accompany statues that the children performed. Good for children to work in a large group – they find this difficult. Children had to focus on listening and co-operation skills and work as a team.*

*Fiona is an excellent drama coach with experience and a very engaging manner with the children. These sessions were excellent – well planned and delivered. All children were fully involved throughout and enthusiastic about the activities. The resulting performance was very good and we may well use it in a future Year Group Assembly.*

*Children were all engaged with varied activities. These activities will be able to be used again and built on in other sessions. All except one child – special needs – enjoyed and worked well in groups. They co-operated in different situations.*

*The workshop enabled the children to explore many themes of Portrait of a Nation. Because it was well structured it brought out the best in many children who ordinarily find drama difficult.*

*Children that I least expected to feel confident in this type of lesson surprised me. Briony, aged 8, said afterwards: ‘We learnt a lot and overcame being shy.’*

In previous Great Reading Adventures, around 40 schools have been provided with individual workshops. It was thought for 2008 that having a concentrated programme for a smaller group of schools with a national showcase for the work produced would be of more benefit to the participants. They would have time to develop their ideas and create something of more lasting value. Hence the decision to link the Great Reading Adventure to Portrait of a Nation. The collages were created in three to four half day sessions; the comic strips, written work and dramas in one to two half days. One teacher, who had enjoyed a single collage workshop with Gloria in 2007, felt it was even better this year. He wrote:

*It was great to have a series of four. It really provided an opportunity for the pupils to plan the work then have the experience of seeing the work progress and develop, as opposed to the one-off session last time.*

Most groups had sessions in all four creative mediums, but a few opted out of some, either from lack of time in the school timetable (for example, St Mary Redcliffe’s banners) or the unsuitability of the students (for example, the improvised drama was not appropriate for the group of college students with learning difficulties at Lawrence Weston who made the collage). Commenting on the overall programme of workshops, one teacher said: ‘keep them coming! Very beneficial to us all.’



## BUDGET

The quality of the workshops provided was praised and all teachers said their pupils had benefited from the experience. From the artists' point of view the workshops worked best when they were supported by an enthusiastic teacher who had, as requested, undertaken preliminary research with his/her students. They were less successful where the schools tried to use the artists as supply teachers, abdicating their responsibility for the students for the course of the workshop, or where they were disorganised and had done no preparation prior to the artists' arrival. In future, contracts with the schools will need to be much firmer with regard to the contribution teaching staff are expected to make to the workshop programme.

When planning the programme it was thought that dealing with a small number of schools would be less administratively demanding than a large group. This has not necessarily been the case and it was occasionally frustrating trying to finalise the schedule of sessions, particularly towards the end of the funding period. The logistics of managing such a demanding programme with a small team, all of whom have other commitments, needs further review before such a service is offered again. However, the increasing use of personalised email by teachers has improved communication to some extent. Hillfields Primary has been selected to represent Bristol at the December event and it should prove easier working with just this one school in the coming months – when HLF will expect the young people's interest in the initiative to be sustained – than a group of schools (most of the other cities contributing to Portrait of a Nation have yet to start their projects).

Table 6 provides details of the expenditure and income of the Great Reading Adventure 2008 (some of these costs represent in-kind support by BCDP and its partners rather than cash payments).

**Table 6: The Great Reading Adventure 2008 budget**

<i>Expenditure</i>	
Management and evaluation	2,000
Design and publicity material	3,700
Launch event	10,000
Website	5,000
Books and readers' guides	42,500
Portrait of a Nation workshops	69,000
Postage and telephone	4,000
Travel	1,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE AND INCOME</b>	<b>£137,200</b>

*Source: BCDP*



*Simon Gurr with young cartoonists at Cheltenham Road Library (Vicky Washington).*

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Bristol City College students at the launch (Martin Chainey).



Pupils from Fair Furlong sitting by the stage at the launch; Gloria Ojulari Sule and Adrian Tinniswood are in the row behind (Martin Chainey).

Of those who completed a survey nearly 97 per cent agreed that mass-reading projects were a good idea and 92 said they would be interested in joining in future initiatives.

Comments included:

*It gives our modern day society something real to talk about rather than meaningless bumph that we are hoarded with by the media.*

*To know that so many other people are all reading the same book at the same time as oneself engenders a great sense of community. To be reading about one's community only serves to deepen that feeling. Being able to share one's views and experience of the read with a wide variety of people creates a great feeling of belonging. To know that so many others value and share a love of books increases your own self worth. A wonderful example to children of the enjoyment of reading. This book has been particularly accessible to a wide range of people from all reading abilities and interest standpoints.*

*I like the shared experience aspect. I help run a group for people with mental health needs, and we explore historical places like the cathedral and the church of St John off Victoria Street, Castle Park and we enjoy the museum. We all went to pick up a copy of the book and they were really enthused about it, so that was great. I feel 'closer' to Bristol now, like my affection for it as a place has grown.*

*I've really enjoyed this year's book and wish I'd participated before. I'm going to encourage as many people to read the book because it's important!*

*The reading project seems to not only inspire people to actually pick up a book rather than flicking on the telly, it also seems to provide people with the same discussion topics than a dose of the weeks soap operas.*

*I haven't read a proper book for ages, and although this wasn't really a proper book, it's got me interested in reading more.*

*Essential, especially for young people in a city such as Bristol with poor standards of literacy.*

*Remote working, multiple tv channels, narrow-casting and the like are contributing to the erosion of sociability. Once upon time, humans had many more opportunities to share experiences – be it trading stories around the campfire or all tuning in to the same tv 'soap'. Mass reading projects are a great way to bring people back together and allow them to unite around the same topic. It's about much more than simply reading a text; it's about finding common ground and causes for conversations.*

*Have enjoyed all of the Bristol reading adventures over the years. They get me reading books that normally I wouldn't touch with a bargepole!*



Maureen Waller and Roy Harvey from Brunel Scout District in the audience at the launch (Martin Chainey).

The Great Reading Adventure received most of its funding and support in kind from Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England, Bristol City Council, Business West, Airbus UK, Arts and Business, Beachcroft, South West Regional Development Agency, Rolls-Royce plc, University of Bristol, University of the West of England and Westmark. In the following comments, spokespeople from some of these organisations provide their reactions to the project:

*This has been another fantastic project which will have helped over 100,000 people learn about this magnificent city.*

**Louis Sherwood, Chair, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership**

*The Bristol Great Reading Adventure goes from strength to strength. Last year's national project on slavery and diversity was one of the best of the 2007 projects. This year's Bristol Story has had the same level of impact – this time in one city. I'm especially delighted that a new book was commissioned – one that has excellence in art and writing at its heart.*

**Nick Capaldi, Director, Arts Council England South West**

*The city council has always been a strong supporter of the Great Reading Adventure. We live and work in an amazing city with an incredible history and this year's book taught us all about Bristol. I'm delighted that so many schools and businesses participated.*

**Helen Holland, Leader, Bristol City Council**

*The Bristol reading adventure is brilliant. Reading and learning are essential for business prosperity and a better life for all in the city. I'm delighted that Business West has participated fully and that the whole of Airbus and Rolls-Royce, among others, joined in.*

**John Savage, Executive Chairman, Business West**

*The project worked really well indeed and the great advantage this year was that the book could be tailored specifically to the city. This made it much more meaningful as an expression of local neighbourhood values and heritage, and enabled people to make a personal connection to it. The comic format would have attracted and engaged younger readers who wouldn't normally want to get involved. It means that you would inevitably have excluded some older readers looking for a more traditional approach, but it's a trade-off: it is not possible to satisfy everyone. The Great Reading Adventure support material – the guide and the website – is extremely high standard stuff, better than brilliant. The Heritage Lottery Fund and The Bristol Story has been a perfect match of objectives and aspirations, as the book is clearly heritage-rooted. It is a tremendous thing to enable people to celebrate and learn about their heritage and to understand what heritage is.*

**Adrian Tinniswood, Heritage Lottery Fund's South West Committee**

*The Great Reading Adventure was a big success as far as the University of Bristol is concerned. Copies of the book were snapped up like there was no tomorrow. Most of our students come from outside South West England, or from overseas. And while some of our staff are local, many come from the rest of the UK or from other parts of the world. One of the things that binds us all together is, of course, Bristol. A project that helped many of us understand and appreciate the city was valuable to the institution. The University may be an international body with research interests and other links that span the world, but it's proud to be part of Bristol and to have supported this excellent project.*

**Barry Taylor, University of Bristol**



## THE GREAT READING ADVENTURE 2008 AIMS



The Lord Mayor, Cllr Royston Griffey, and Cllr Helen Holland, Council Leader (to his left), among the invited guests at the launch (Martin Chainey).

The aims of the Great Reading Adventure were:

- *To develop standards of literacy through the promotion of reading.* Although it is impossible to assess the extent to which standards of literacy have been developed by the project, it is hoped that the continuing promotion of reading as an activity that all can enjoy and derive benefit from will have contributed to the long-term achievement of this aim. The graphic-style format of this year's project is likely to have been particularly effective in engaging young male adults who are normally reluctant to read.
- *To stimulate new forms of creativity inspired by the reading experience.* New creativity inspired by the reading experience during the project was based around the Portrait of a Nation workshop initiative. In addition, in commissioning a new publication in the form of *The Bristol Story*, the project was responsible for the creation of a major piece of work of lasting value that combined high quality content – both written and visual – with accessibility.
- *To use reading to facilitate learning about the past.* The reading of the book, backed by the information contained in the support material, has expanded knowledge of the history of Bristol, as the feedback shows. The workshop programme for Portrait of a Nation contributed to the specific objective of sharing knowledge about the heritage and culture of the city neighbourhoods, in addition to exploring themes of Bristol identity and roots.
- *To bring diverse communities together through the act of reading and thereby foster a sense of shared identity.* Analysis of some of the participants in the project has demonstrated that a broad range of people have joined together in the act of reading and the surveys included a number of comments regarding the value of feeling part of a collective experience, sharing common ground.

In 2009 BCDP aims to lead a mass-reading project encompassing the whole of the South West, Shrewsbury, Cambridge, London, Edinburgh and Glasgow based upon Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* as part of the Darwin 200 celebrations marking the bicentenary of the birth of Charles Darwin. For 2010 it is intended that a sub-regional project with an aviation theme covering the West of England will contribute to the BAC 100 programme, a celebration of aerospace and advanced engineering linked to the centenary of the founding of the Bristol Aeroplane Company.

The key learning points and recommendations gained this year for future Great Reading Adventures are:

- If funding allows, having free copies of the book available for participants increases accessibility.
- It is well worth maintaining the high standard of support material provided as it gives a positive message about the project and BCDP.
- Although there are resource implications to consider when running public events during the course of the project, they do help sustain interest and generate a sense of occasion (other than the author talk arranged by Bristol Libraries, there were no events for the public during this Great Reading Adventure).
- Related to the above, further consideration needs to be given to what type of stories the project might generate to obtain media interest throughout its duration.
- The logistics of working with schools needs to be reviewed: there may be more effective ways of engaging young people in the project.
- For future workshop programmes, a more strongly worded and specific contract is required for schools to sign, getting their agreement to undertake preparatory work and supervise their students properly.

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