

**Susan Tomkins –Curator**

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013, 10am, John Montague Building, Beaulieu.**

This interview will cover choice of content and how this is relevant to the initial conceptualisation of an interpretation project for the Abbey.

Questions concerning the interaction of the relationship with the designer(s) (with the TW project and others), and how this affects the interpretation project will be asked.

A discussion regarding the curator's interaction with visitors, the methods used to measure the success of interpretation at the Abbey and how important this is for future interpretation projects will be planned.

**Background information:**

1. I would like to start by asking you about your position at Beaulieu with respect to the Abbey? (position)
2. What led you to this position? (education / work)
3. Do you have a special personal interest in this type of work / the abbey? (influence)
4. What or who has influenced your involvement in design / curation?
5. Do you feel that there is sometimes a conflict between your different roles? (curator, archivist and educator)

**The Vision for the Abbey:**

1. The abbey is the foundation of Beaulieu, when visitors come to Beaulieu, the focus generally appears to be the motor museum and / or palace house. From our previous meetings regarding The Talking Walls application, you mentioned you would like to see the abbey engage more visitors with its heritage - footfall. Would you mind explaining this a little more for the interview?
2. What would be your vision for the Abbey if there were no limiting factors? (such as technology / money / regulations)
3. And with limiting factors?
4. There is a re-design of the interpretation in the Domus planned. Would you tell me what is being planned to achieve visitor engagement and interaction with the Abbey and why the chosen interpretation (i.e. Is this in response to visitor feedback or 'Estate' led, i.e. to update existing)?
5. Has this been influenced by visitor research / feedback / focus groups, interpretation design research, other site examples?

**Process for interpretations:**

1. What is the normal sequence of events for creating new interpretations of/for the Abbey (do you start with a story / object / anniversary event)?
2. From your experience, can you describe what influences the final concept? ( i.e. stakeholders input, budget considerations)

3. In your experience from previous interpretations, does the finished interpretation follow the original concept / reason for the interpretation?
4. If not, why do you think this is the case (budget, time)?
5. If yes, do you feel this could be achieved in a better way / differently for a more successful / engaging interpretation?

#### **Content and Choice:**

1. Could you describe the focus in past interpretations of the Abbey? i.e. has there been a specific item / area / story?
2. How successful has this been in engaging the visitor? (or – do you feel this has been successful in engaging the visitor?)
3. In the case of Beaulieu, what do you think is the most important aspect of the abbey to portray in an interpretation (building/space, story, people, lifestyle, community or combination of all)?
4. What do you think about the depth of content / type of content that is available to the visitor – should there be multiple choices (and at different levels)?
5. How long do you feel visitors should interact with content / information?
6. As a curator / archivist, would this determine (help to determine) the depth of content / choice?
7. In your experience, how long do visitors in general, interact with content / information?
8. How do they normally interact with the interpretation (listen, read, watch, view)?

#### **The Talking Walls Beaulieu Abbey kiosk interpretation:**

1. I pitched the idea for the TW interpretation to Beaulieu and in the event of gaining funding, we were able to take this forward. Was there a plan for a similar interpretation at the time?
2. And was it from this that we were invited to pitch? i.e. was there a requirement at the time for a multimedia / 3D application?
3. Do you feel the process of me as a designer, working with you, worked well from your aspect (as archivist/curator)?
4. Were there aspects you would have liked to change in this process?
5. I remember having difficulties with technology, rendering times, and required skillsets to achieve the planned outcome and therefore needing to adapt. Do you remember any influences (external / internal) that may also have changed the initial concept to the final application from the Beaulieu end? i.e. audio tour, stakeholders, budget?
6. Would you mind describing your experience of the final interpretation? i.e. was it an engaging experience?
7. From feedback, discussion and experience, would you consider the interpretation process in this instance, a successful collaboration process between Beaulieu, curator and designer?
8. From feedback and visitor measurements, would you consider the interpretation successful in engaging visitors?

### **Visitor Research and Measuring the Visitor Experience:**

1. Can you explain the types of visitors that mostly visit the Beaulieu complex? (i.e. different demographic groups)
2. Can you tell me how you find out what the visitors 'like' when they visit the Beaulieu complex? (visitor research / feedback, interpretation design research, other site examples)
3. Do you track where they visit the most and why they visit?
4. What has been the most successful in attracting and engaging the visitor to the Abbey (living history / film / audio tour / quiet space)?
5. How do you measure and analyse the visitor experience?
6. Do you feel this could be achieved in a better way / differently for an even more successful / engaging visitor experience?

Thank you.