

Watershed Case Study: Electric December 2005

Arts, Community, Education and Industry

Electric December: Learning, Producing & Publishing through Collaboration

Full archive of content, participants & resources available at <http://www.electricdecember.org>

Electric December introduces local community and education groups to professional media companies and artists. It facilitates partnerships to produce new creative work for the web. These partnerships ensure that skills are pooled and shared and the world of creativity on the internet is revealed, explored and discussed. The success of Electric December's principle of matching media professionals with skills to potential contributors with ideas and imagination has been proved time and again as can be seen in the archives. It projects local talent to the world with visitors from over 100 countries and generates enormous profile for our creative sector:

"Electric December... Brilliant ...collaboration between creative communities and local schools and businesses...each page is achingly stylish." The Sunday Times

Watershed's unique role as creative hub on and off line enables it to build effective relationships which cross cultural and physical boundaries to match ideas and aspirations with skills and resource. Young participants sense of achievement and increased self-esteem are reinforced by seeing the results of their work on the web, and realising that it will be viewed world-wide. Professionals working with young people report that the process is not one way. They unexpectedly learn some new technical skills, but more often learn new ways of interacting with this age group and develop different approaches to their working practices and teaching methods. New talent finds the profile and contacts useful in developing their careers.

Electric December launched in 1999 seeking to:

- raise public awareness of the web as a creative medium
- promote local creativity through presenting a snapshot of media/arts activity
- develop knowledge of the web among local creative communities
- foster networks to share and develop new media skills
- further develop young peoples' skills in ICT

Seven years on these aims still hold true. While awareness of the web is now far more extensive, the fact that it is such a ubiquitous, and increasingly accessible medium, invites, or even demands, a continuing dialogue to explore and develop its potential. The web has created a platform where previously understood boundaries between subjects are dissolved, yet developing technologies and evolving intellects allow new practices and associations. Acquiring the skills of web literacy (technically and culturally), is essential to establishing an effective presence in this future world.

"It offers the potential for creating artwork in the way that people who do it for a living actually go about it. That adds an extra dimension to an ordinary art lesson. As an experience its one of the highlights of the year. It is certainly a big plus in terms of the profile of the school. Quite often schools do not sing their own praises, and this is very public praise-singing." Rob Townley of Withywood Community School

"If you have someone who doesn't have that many skills, then learning computer skills through a project like this can give them the confidence to go on to learn other subjects. And it boosts their confidence in a more general way too. They can have an idea, be taken seriously, make it into something really cool, and then people all over the country can go and look at what they've done." Yvonne Davies of the Meriton Centre