



Hyphen-21(supporting Community)

Registered Company No. 2925831:

Registered Charity 1040077

Director's Report 2011/2012

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Introduction

This annual report gives an account of the charity's activities during the financial year 2011/2012. Along with the accounts, the report must be sent into Companies House and the Charity Commissioners by a certain date, both organisations in a sense acting on behalf of the public at large, as monitor and check. Bearing that principle in mind, I see these reports as a useful opportunity for *anyone* interested in the values and activities of this small organisation, to review its achievements and direction on a regular basis. To maximise the report's relevance to these readers, I shall again cover more than the required period April 1st 2011 - March 31st 2012 and will refer to developments through to the end of 2012, the time of the writing of this report.

The report will be divided into three sections. The first describes the charity's websites, the second its involvement in social care policy and practice, mostly within the mental health specialisation. The third section covers the charity's management of the project "Poems for..."

In recent years, the report's early sections have included statements of background principle and surrounding context. By definition, these change very little from year to year, but my reason for repeating them in this report was that, any year, the latest report might be read by people new to the charity and its purposes. I wanted to make sure that they read of our principles too. Our decision in 2012 to put the reports onto the Hyphen website, has made the repetition unnecessary. The charity's principles will now be set out permanently and separately as the first item in the website's Annual Report Section. They will also be available in the Background section of the site.

The report's writer is also the charity's director and most of the activities described in this report are initiated and conducted by him. Accordingly, the *nomnitive* case is resorted to quite frequently in the text that follows.

Hyphen-21 web-sites

The charity's own site www.hyphen-21 remains the focus of this charity's work and identity. It is in effect our soap-box, a pamphlet collection on display, a setting out of our stall. It is also, one can say, a running Director's Report. It records campaigns conducted, pieces of work we wish to promote as good practice, and values and skills we wish to highlight.

The site is not funded. Maintaining it is done on a voluntary basis. I must always give due credit to my son Joseph for offering over ten years of site support free of charge. The year being reported on here has been a hard one for both us, more than one close family member having died this Spring, following long illnesses in each case. The Hyphen site is overdue for an update.

In addition to the first site, there is now a cluster of associated sites, all of them designed and maintained by Joe. The site most extensively viewed is www.poemsfor.org launched by Andrew Motion in 2008. That too has been quieter than usual this year, with few new ventures to report on, caused by the project's present lack of funding. However, each month the site records a significant number of new registrations and poem downloads, still coming mostly from school teachers, many of these working outside of the UK. The project has remained firmly established as an international resource.

I also continued running my own blog www.roganwolf.com which has proved a useful test-bed for ideas. The blog is the most currently active of the sites being described here. Material uploaded there has no need of previous Trustee ratification but is often related to and informed by the pre-occupations and priorities that led to the launch of Hyphen-21.

A set of “Fables and Reflection” is going up on the blog, one by one. It has already been agreed by Hyphen-21 Trustees that the complete collection of the “Fables and Reflections” should also eventually go on the Hyphen-21 site, as they accord with Hyphen-21 aims and objectives and are not just a personal expression.

A fourth site has a more localised application, but is very much a brainchild and exemplar of the “Hyphen” position : www.go4mentalhealth.com This site is a Directory of local services and community resources for people with mental health problems who live in Westminster. I believe it is a model of its kind and could be replicated across the country. The site is kept regularly up to date by volunteers, who remain in touch with the services and resources the Directory covers.

Two more sites have been constructed during the year and are due to start operating soon. Both are relevant to mental health, and will focus mostly on Westminster for their content. At the end of the present financial year, I am due to retire from my part-time work as user support worker in Westminster, for people with mental health problems. One of the sites will act as a kind of archive and repository of projects initiated and principles learned during my time in the field of involvement and consultation. It will include interviews with people who have worked with me on some of the projects. The other site will be called “Mental Health Witness.” Tumultuous change and huge reductions are taking place in mental health services across the country. At the same time, people with long-standing mental health problems form a very significant proportion of the population most dependant on long-term welfare benefits, recently labelled by this nation’s present Chancellor as “skivers.” Their right to receive State Benefits are currently being reviewed by a company called Atos. This company has a reputation which in itself is cause for concern. The new site will record the effects of these changes and processes upon the Westminster people most affected, who are willing to be interviewed.

Social Care Projects

A Strategy for Staff Support in Care Services.

The Welfare State is more in question now than it has ever been. People working for State services are being laid off in great numbers, not just in a single cull, but in successive waves. I have heard of a recent local example in which new NHS staff appointments are restricted to periods of one year only, making it not so much a job as a brief placement in a continuous storm. Good work in the care services relies to a large extent on good staff morale and helping to maintain good staff morale is an important management skill. Of course, to maintain either the morale or the skill in present circumstances requires something superhuman of all concerned. The Hyphen-21 website site promotes a paper setting out a strategy for maintaining staff morale in care organisations in normal circumstances. All we can do is keep holding it up to view and open for inspection, as an alternative way of treating people, a standard of conduct which perhaps in some places once was followed, and may yet be again.

Consulting/involving clients of healthcare services

For years, I have argued that there needs to be a code of professional conduct and methodology with regards to the legal obligation upon all healthcare services to consult and involve the people for whom their services exist, in terms both of practice and of policy. That obligation, in my view, must include the absolute necessity, not just to consult and involve people, but to do so with due care and high skill. This must be especially true of service for people with mental health problems.

During 2012, the services have continued maintaining the outwards forms of user involvement, while pushing through policies at frantic rate, which make absolute nonsense of the principles upon which the whole concept of consultation is based.

The idea of a code still seems pertinent, however, as a compass by which to steer, and as a quality standard to which to aspire and by which to be assessed. Some drafting has been done during the year. A more finished version will be included in the new user site mentioned in section one.

Here below are some of the projects and initiatives that have been developed under the consultation heading, with 2012 updates where relevant. More detail is available elsewhere on the Hyphen-21 site (see "Hyphen projects") and this material too will soon be collated, updated and uploaded onto the new specialist site now constructed.

User involvement in staff recruitment

The model supported on the Hyphen-21 website involves a separate service user recruitment panel, carefully trained and chaired. It interviews candidates such as Consultant Psychiatrists, hospital ward staff, and senior NHS managers, specifically on their "people skills" - ie their Warmth, Genuineness and Accurate Empathy (terms associated with Rogerian psychotherapy). I see the separate panel, firmly and skillfully chaired, as a model of good practice and the best way of assessing candidates' interpersonal skills in the here and now. In other words, this is not just a way of "involving users" ; it is simply a better way of interviewing for staff, per se.

Code of Professional Conduct for Ward Rounds and similar meetings

This too is a focus for ensuring that busy healthcare professionals remember the plain human experience of their patients. Ward rounds are just meetings. But too many remain merely intimidating and even humiliating for the patient at its centre.

The code supported by Hyphen-21 applies to mental health and has been made policy by various NHS Trusts, including CNWL NHS Foundation Trust which operates in Westminster and across much of north west London. Its purpose is to make these meetings less intimidating for, more empathic to, the person at the heart of them.

The code was made CNWL policy in 2000. This represented a major success and took years to achieve. Following that achievement we have found over the years that implementation of the code throughout the Trust has been patchy at best, and non-existent in most wards.

Thus, producing a code was just the start of a story over ten years long and still unfinished. Slowly though, the ward round itself is being phased out as a method of assessment and inter-disciplinary consultation in mental health in-patient units. It has been mooted that in the next few months there should be a review of progress in this regard, undertaken with some of the service users who began campaigning for change so courageously over a decade ago.

Training London police in mental health

About a year ago, in Westminster and perhaps beyond, funds for police training were withdrawn.

This in turn curtailed user involvement in training police cadets how best to deal with people in mental health emergencies. The training was seen as highly successful and always received enthusiastic feed-back from the cadets who received it. In case the funding reappears, a description of how the training worked will be recorded in the new site.

Poetry Workshops for in-patients in the Park Royal Psychiatric Hospital, Brent, West London

For years I have been running a monthly poetry workshop in the Park Royal Psychiatric Hospital in Brent. This is part of my more general free-lancing role and is paid for. However, I mention it in this report because it too is work in accord with the principles underlying Hyphen-21 – the primacy of and

urgent need for skilled I-Thou relating which can open and break down frontiers which otherwise separate and exclude. The Poems for... project managed by Hyphen-21 supplies material for the workshops, most of this material being bilingual poems. The patients who attend the workshops come from all over the world and often find their own mother-tongue among the poems. The workshops have continued throughout 2012 and look set to continue into 2013, despite the cuts and the staff reductions.

Poems for...

The Poems for... project is the charity's only source of income and reason for expenditure.

At first sight, it seems to stand out from the rest of the charity's activities, not just for the financial aspects just mentioned, but because it has to do with the arts. Certainly, by and large, it is less of a grind, less hard graft, more easily digested and more commonly supported, than the other projects with which the charity is engaged.

But the principles behind it are also Hyphen principles. These poems displayed in public settings offer and describe vivid human connection across a divide. In a sense, the project's poems, when they are able to act on people, function in the same way as those conversations between police cadets and ex-psychiatric patients mentioned above, or that code to make psychiatric ward rounds more respectful. They cross a frontier. They enhance community.

During 2012, the Poems for... project has merely ticked over as far as distribution of the poem-posters is concerned. But there have been significant developments nevertheless, due to come to fruition in the early months of 2013.

Funding

In recent months, £12,000 of funding have been banked in the charity's account to help keep "Poems for..." on the road. £7,000 of this has been awarded by a local Primary Care Trust, about to be disbanded as part of the NHS changes being pursued by the present government. The remaining £5,000 is a bequest from my sister who died this year.

The new funding will be used to add a new dimension to the meaning the charity has so far given to the word "diversity." Until fairly recently, its "One world" collection has concentrated on language difference. Fifty languages are represented there, creating a major statement in warm-bloodied commonality across national and ethnic difference. But in 2010's addition to the collection, a new element was added, in the form of various pairs of poems from minority groups. For example, two poems were by people with mental health problems, two by someone with a physical disability, two about someone with learning difficulties. Each pair represents a whole area of human experience often feared or stigmatised by the majority, and lived by people who therefore have to become familiar with the sense of being outsiders often debarred from aspects of life which the majority can take for granted.

Each of the pairs in the "One World" collection was effectively a flyer for the possibility of becoming a full collection of poems in its own right. The strategy has been successful to the extent that the new funding has been designated to the expansion of two of the earlier pairs of poems into two complete new poem-poster collections, for display online and on public walls. They will then be available as part of an information/anti-stigma campaign. The £7,000 will fund a collection of poems on mental health. The £5,000 will fund a collection on learning difficulty.

The poems will of course go online on the Poems for... site. Further, everyone on the project's mailing list, a number now approaching 2,000, most of them schoolteachers, many working outside UK, all these people will be emailed, notifying them of the new development. Also, relevant mental health organisations will be notified, as will some friendly journalists ; and finally, the new poems

will be distributed initially among Westminster's GP surgeries and health centres, for display in their waiting rooms, later perhaps among health centres across north west London.

At the time of writing, poems for both new collections have begun to be selected and formatted.

Other Developments in 2012

Through 2012, a small new collection of bilingual poems has been chosen and readied for upload. This new collection originates with the project's quite longstanding relationship with the FCO. The relationship began in 2004 with a collection of ten bilingual poems put together to celebrate the EU Enlargement of that year, when ten countries joined. Each country's language was represented and celebrated in the collection. The poet Fiona Sampson helped select them. Denis MacShane, Minister for Europe at the time, was responsible for the FCO helping to fund the venture.

This year's development comes from years of email contact with staff of the Rangoon embassy since that earlier time, in a bid to locate Burmese poets and poems. The Burmese language belongs among all the world's languages, honoured and spoken freely everywhere and anywhere, above all the Burmese themselves. As a tiny part of the process of achieving that goal, now so much further advanced than it was in 2004, I am about to upload some Burmese poems in the Poems for... collection, for global distribution among schools and libraries.

This small collection has come about as a result of help from embassy staff, including an ex-ambassador and her Burmese artist husband, and follows the publication in 2012 of a book called "Bones will Crow" edited by James Byrne and ko ko thett and published by Arc Publications. The poems consist of selections from the latter anthology, a poem by an important figure in the Burmese political scene, and also some words by an artist/poet known to an embassy staff member.

Another collection about to be published is actually less a compilation of new material than a new way of presenting and making available material we have already produced. A selection from the poems we have put together over the decade of the project's existence has been re-formatted as a pamphlet. All being well, the poems will be accompanied in the pamphlet by drawings by the well-known illustrator Quentin Blake. The pamphlet will be made available free of charge in the waiting rooms run by CNWL NHS Foundation Trust, a catchment area which extends across North West London, from the banks of the Thames as far north as Harrow and Hillingdon. The collection represents a partnership venture between "Poems for..." and CNWL. All being well, other forms of presentation will include poems-posters in hard copy, enlarged to A3, and slide-shows of some of the poems, presented on display screens in CNWL reception and waiting areas. Once achieved, this venture will bring "Poems for..." back to where it began in 1998, piloted at the Poetry Society with help from Director Chris Meade, and called then "Poems for the Waiting Room."

A look ahead to 2013.

The future plans set out this time last year still hold good, applying next year no less than this, but all relying on funding opportunities

With funding, we would wish to pursue the following aims :

- compile a larger collection of bilingual poems aimed at a primary school age-group.
- add to the number of African poems and languages represented in the One World collection.
- Add other languages to the On World collection.
- Continue to widen the "One World" concept beyond the consideration just of ethnic and language difference.

The first step in 2013 will be to pick up further on the last of these aims, by applying to the Baring Foundation for funding to put together a collection of poem-posters on old age and Alzheimer's. The project will be undertaken with the poet John Killick and will include work which he has compiled over the years.

The death of Mary Young

I shall finish this report with a few words on Mary Young, the charity's longest-standing Trustee. She died in the early Summer of 2012 at the Whittington Hospital, Archway, London, aged 85. Mary was perhaps my closest friend, a single woman and only child, but lonely only so long as her childhood lasted. In her adulthood, the family she gathered round herself was huge, the vast majority not of her blood. I called this family her "parish." Though endlessly sociable and benign, she also treasured solitude and used it expertly. She was far-seeing and, while full of laughter and high wit, was, at a deeper level, fiercely and urgently serious. Erudite and talented, she was an enormous and vital support to me and many others. In early life she was a novelist and in a middle age a psychotherapist. Also in middle age, she made herself into a historian worthy of note, but achieved that notice only at the very end of her life. Her biography of Augustin Robespierre, hidden away in her desk as an unpublished manuscript, was only discovered by chance, while friends were helping her to move into residential care for her last years. Several of the Trustees of Hyphen-21 helped to secure the publication of this beautiful little book, launching it just months before Mary died. It remains the best study available on this obscure yet fascinating historical figure. Augustin Robespierre played a significant part in the French Revolution, while living always in the shadow of his better-known brother, Maximilien. When the soldiers came to arrest Maximilien, Augustin insisted on being arrested with him, and was guillotined on the same day. Mary's book is not just scholarly in the best and highest tradition ; it is a good story, shrewd and witty, showing a traveller's eye and feel for place and time and a sharp psychologist's eye for human nature. Her book could have been a passport to academia, a life she might have enjoyed. But Mary being Mary, having missed academia, she turned herself into a university, its library her favourite place in the world. And Augustin being her dragon's horde, she was bound to reveal him to us just in time, a bit like a conjurer's trick, so she could enjoy our amazement as finally she left us.

Mary Young's book "Augustin The Younger Robespierre" can be read at this address : fass.kingston.ac.uk/research/historical-record/publications/ Her book is also now on the list of references at the bottom of the short entry on Augustin Robespierre which can be found on Wikipedia.

signed



*J.R. Wolf
Director Hyphen-21
as at 31st December 2012*

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