



**Hyphen-21(supporting Community)**

*Registered Company No. 2925831:*

*Registered Charity 1040077*

## Annual Report 2008/2009

### **Introduction**

This report is required by both Companies House and the Charity Commission. No later than ten months after the end of each financial year, companies as well as charities (and Hyphen-21 is both) must deliver to those two bodies a public report of their activities, alongside a statement of accounts. As a requirement, this is correct and necessary. But for those with a special interest, it is also a useful opportunity to review and assess the state of play. To maximise the report's relevance to the reader, I shall cover more than the required period April 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 - March 31<sup>st</sup> 2009 and will refer to developments through to the end of 2009.

The report will be divided into three unequal sections : the first describing the charity's websites, the second its involvement in social care policy and practice, the third the project "Poems for..."

### **The Hyphen-21 web-site [www.hyphen-21.org](http://www.hyphen-21.org)**

The site remains the focus of this charity's work and identity. It is not just a shop window. If we existed a few decades ago, we would no doubt have been seeking to promote the charity's ideas and positions through publishing pamphlets and speaking from soap-boxes. The site is in effect our soap-box, a pamphlet collection on display, a little library.

The site is not funded. Maintaining it is done on a voluntary basis. It is kept more or less up to date, time allowing. It is "content-managed" ie I can access it and am able to fiddle about and up-date text from time to time. But I must always give due credit to my son Joe for offering over ten years of site support free of charge. Still when I'm confronted with anything which needs real computer literacy (and design flair), I call on him.

During 2008, the hyphen-21 site ceased to be our sole station in cyber space. During the Spring of that year it was joined by a separate site for the project "Poems for..." - [www.poemsfor.org](http://www.poemsfor.org)  
The new site was launched at the Nehru Centre in London by Andrew Motion, still then the Poet Laureate. More details on that later in this report.

In 2009 yet another site joined the cluster. The latest site is actually just a "blog" and allows the Director to sound off in a personal capacity. Nevertheless, and inevitably, some of the subjects covered there occupy the same ground as that which hyphen-21 seeks to occupy. The difference, of course, is that the latter has an agreed mission statement and set of aims and remits, with a circle of Trustees whose task it is to ensure that everything the charity says and does accords with those aims. The blog, in contrast, can be just a personal rant. Its address is [www.roganwolf.com](http://www.roganwolf.com)

We shall see as the next year unfolds how the various sites inter-relate.

## Social Care Projects

The charity Hyphen-21 is founded on the proposition that community not merely exists and matters, but a healthy and inclusive community is essential to each individual's welfare, meaning and survival. By definition, community means relationship and connection. Therefore, if community is to survive, the skills of creating and maintaining relationship and connection have to be of central interest and in confident and widespread operation. The charity's very title refers to the hyphen which connects I to Thou (from the theologian Martin Buber's book "I and Thou." The book contrasts two polarities of relating to Otherness - the mode "I-It" and the mode "I-Thou"). Maybe, in a rushing world, the only solid ground that remains to us is the precarious slash that joins Me to Thee. This is where we have to build.

Even naming the skills of connection is hard, but practising them is harder still. For now, let us just say that they start from the principle that *You* are no less the centre of the universe than *I* am. The Universe speaks through *you* as crucially and as miraculously as it speaks through *me*. Therefore we need to attend to each other with some care, if not awe. The future of at least this part of the Universe may depend on how well and truthfully we make connection.

Hyphen-21 and the position it takes seems not to sweep people along, or attract people in hordes. There is no sense of being part of a movement here. But if we think in terms of fraught frontiers and what a massive temptation it is to build walls along them, and strike at worrying aliens from "over there", in case they strike first, then any insights we can offer on how to build bridges across the divide, how to break down barriers between Us and Them, how to ride the hyphen that creates real connection, those insights may be of use, however small the scale or isolated the instance. And we do keep hearing from individuals who contact from time to time that this or that initiative described on the Hyphen-21 site has influenced practice and behaviour elsewhere.

On the other hand we sometimes just have to carry on, whether or not there is feedback. In January 2009, I had an article published in "OpenMind" the official magazine of the national magazine "MIND". It was ages in the making and relied finally on extensive support from some Hyphen-21 Trustees. It set out some thoughts on the principles and drives behind some mental health policy and practice in this country and argued for a code of conduct in the area of service user consultation. A longer version of the article was published on the Hyphen-21 site, along with another paper on recent developments in the mental health field. It felt an important step. And I sat back and waited for the response, perhaps even for the sky to fall on my head. And there was no response whatsoever ! Not a whisper ! So on we go. At least poets in a totalitarian state get visits from the secret police. Poets in a democracy just talk to themselves !

Hyphen-21 works along just a few frontiers and we promote and focus on just a few initiatives. Several are in the area of the mental health services, positioned as they are at a fundamental fault-line, one of the most fraught frontiers of all, running through all Societies and in a sense through every individual. We all fear "losing it." That and the fear of death are perhaps the two greatest fears of all.

The initiatives we emphasise do not grow much in number and several established ones do not necessarily advance very far. But that does not mean they are neglected. Several, once on the map, need constant tending, constant defending, so that reporting on them annually can sometimes feel difficult. Sometimes one cannot record an obvious amount of progress. One can only refer to the struggle of keeping a thing alive. But in some cases that has taken more energy, and represents more of an achievement, than some easy advance might have done.

Here below are some examples of bridges and connections which I have witnessed over the last eighteen months, the first three in relation to initiatives directly promoted by Hyphen-21, the last two a naming of and reporting on developments which seem in tune with what this charity stands for.

#### A Strategy for Staff Support in Care Services.

The hyphen-21 website site promotes a paper setting out a strategy for maintaining staff morale in care organisations. It is arguably our best achievement and most important contribution. At the same time I believe it is the least read of all the "Hyphen Projects" described on the site. For the past several years the topic of staff morale has not been high on care services' agenda. In the constant scuffle among all services to achieve and mark up "customer satisfaction," the welfare of the "shop assistant" cannot feature high on the manager's list of priorities. It can even seem a self-indulgence.

However, 2009 saw one of the few times the paper has been downloaded and distributed - among a set of mental health workers who these days are receiving supervision approximately twice a year (the paper recommends that supervision for this kind of work should take place at least fortnightly).

At another extreme, I recently visited the manager of a small mental health service in the voluntary sector, which has received national awards for excellence. She said without hesitation that it is the careful nurturing her staff team receives, which makes it possible for them in turn to nurture, day in day out, the people in disarray who attend her service and rate it so high. Might it be here that we can start trying to frame the words for what constitutes the "Skills of Love"? In stating its philosophy of practice, the service's publicity material quotes words that belong firmly in the tradition of Rogerian psychotherapy - "Warmth, Respect, Genuineness, Accurate Empathy." Words easy to like, but not easy to practice under constant and extreme pressure at a fraught frontier. The relationship differentials and materialist measures of the grocer's shop do not apply here.

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 (see above). In one geographical area where this model is followed, the model continued to prove its worth and value during the year, but also needed quite fierce defending - to make sure it was remembered and kept on the map and the principle of testing candidates on core relationship skills continued to be followed.

Code of Professional Conduct for Ward Rounds and similar meetings. Here is another focus for ensuring that busy healthcare professionals remember the plain human experience of their patients. Ward rounds are just meetings. But they can be so intimidating and even humiliating for the patient at its centre. In hindsight they can become part of the whole trauma of being ill and in need. A code can help remind staff of the difference between their own roles as detached practitioners or observers, and that of the patient - someone at the centre of a personal crisis. The code supported by Hyphen-21 applies to mental health and has been made policy by various NHS Trusts. Its purpose is to make these meetings less intimidating for, more empathic to, the person at the heart of them. During the past eighteen months, a few small advances have been made locally in seeking the code's consistent implementation - through making links with local Advocates, with people in the Modern Matron role (a fairly recent and good NHS development) and with the Clinical Governance division of the local NHS Trust.

Two further projects have struck me over the previous year as exemplifying the principles the charity seeks to follow - this notion of making linkage across a fraught frontier, achieving real exchange across difference and difficulty, breaking through barriers which - left standing - lessen humanity. Neither of the initiatives yet fall within the Hyphen-21 remit. But I believe they belong there, and hope we can officially include them soon.

### Training police in mental health

Every month in Westminster, a few users of mental health services meet police cadets undertaking a short training in mental health issues before they begin work as fully-fledged police officers. I am there in support of the service users concerned. There has just been a tea-break. Immediately beforehand, a video has been shown to the cadets, describing, for instance, what it's like to hear voices. The cadets now have the chance to ask questions of the individuals sitting in front of them, people who own to psychiatric diagnoses and are willing to talk about their experiences. What follows can be deeply moving, with both questioners and trainers taking risks and going into areas of truthfulness and interchange not often entered between close friends, let alone strangers. From feedback we receive I think it is safe to say that these sessions make a lasting and positive impression on the great majority of the cadets who take part.

### Arts Project in the community

Finally in this section on social care, I would like to name a community arts project called Sage. It functions in Ealing and I believe it represents work of excellence. It brings together art, a psychotherapeutic theoretical base (though it is not art therapy) and mental health. It is another instance of psychotherapeutic models, thinking, skills and disciplines informing practical valued activity in the community. So, deep care and thought is applied at all times, as structures are developed which leave people feeling contained, safe and respected while at the same time released to grow.

### Poems for...

The Poems for... project is the charity's only source of income and only reason for expenditure. It is still being conducted on a budget that allows the project worker an average input of 1.5 days a week.

The project continues to flourish and extend its range.

The separate website mentioned above was launched by Andrew Motion in the Spring of 2008. Already by then, as recorded in my report last year, it had become clear that the decision to concentrate on bilingual poems had given "Poems for..." a new base. The vast majority of the demand for the poem-posters was now coming from school-teachers, planning to use the poems in class, primarily as a powerful tool for teaching diversity and citizenship. Doctors had previously told us that the patient populations of NHS surgeries in some parts of the UK were not just multi-cultural but largely non-English in origin, and sometimes prevalingly one or another non-English culture - such as Turkish, or Bengali. Now teachers were saying that this is even truer in class-rooms all over the UK, where many children of first generation immigrants can feel cut off from their roots and isolated.

The launch of the site has further emphasised and reinforced this shift in demand. The site allows those who register to download all the 145 poems so far put together for this collection.

In the eighteen months since the launch, there have been nearly 800 registrations, the vast majority from school-teachers from all over the world, planning to use the poems as part of their work. Nearly five hundred registrations took place during the first year.

Since the launch, a chat room/Forum has been added to the site which also now has the capacity to show videos. The first video can be seen in the "Download Poems" section once you have registered or logged in.

Following the launch of the new site, demand for the hard-copy versions of the poem-posters has dried up almost completely. With one or two exceptions, (see below) people are downloading the poems direct, rather than having them delivered.

### Work with the Royal Brompton Hospital

Towards the end of 2008, we ran a reading event at the Royal Brompton Hospital in Chelsea, followed later in the evening by the charity's AGM, which took place in the hospital's staff canteen (otherwise empty at that late hour).

The evening was also the official launch of a commissioned mural, composed entirely of the words of some of the project's poems, which takes up a whole wall of the hospital's Bronch Suite. This is a small ward where patients recover from major operation on chest or throat.

But the main action of the evening was a bilingual poetry reading which took place in the hospital's reception area and included good live music.

The reading followed the usual pattern we've adopted for this kind of event – poets, who've contributed their non-English work to the project, read their short poem. Each is followed immediately by a hospital staff member who reads out the English version. The unrehearsed sequence of pairs, and the succession of different languages builds up its own power and is memorable. On this occasion some children from the hospital school also contributed their work, facilitated by the "Fire Poet" Philip Wells who runs workshops with them at the hospital. The evening was exciting.

### Work on the New Collection

Work on the new collection has continued to progress slowly. At the time of writing around 30 poems have been chosen and formatted

Much of the work is being done with the poet Stephen Watts, benefiting from access to his extraordinary library and range of knowledge of contemporary developments in world literature.

The languages include Latvian, Danish, Arabic, Hebrew, Chinese, Japanese, German, French, Spanish, Latin, Welsh, Shetlandic, Lithuanian, Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil.

Real attempts have been made to add poems in African languages. There has been considerable frustration here and doors which often seemed about to open then failed to. Nevertheless, we so far have one poem in Ewe, one in Igbo and one in Tigrina. The Ewe poem was written especially for this project by a Ghanaian school-teacher living in London. The Igbo poem is by a Nigerian priest living and working in Dagenham.

No attempt will be made to have this new collection printed in hard copy (unless we are given the opportunity to print a few of the poems to a large size suitable for a big space, possibly an outside space). Instead, it will appear in groups of about ten on the Poems for... site over the next few months, the first being due out in February 2010. The process of registering on the site involves recording an email address, to allow us to contact the people concerned. When the collections start being uploaded, we shall notify the 800 (approx) people, most of them teachers, who have previously downloaded poems from the site.

### Schools Event "In Praise of Diversity."

The most ambitious event yet to be organised in the name of this project took place in Rochester in July 2009. It followed on from the contact made earlier with the Adviser for Minority Ethnic Achievement, based in Medway. Several local schools took part and about 200 children, parents and staff attended. The day involved various displays and performances of different cultures and ethnic traditions. But the main focus was on poetry. It included the usual reading by a "Poems for..." team of

poets, but also featured a poetry competition for the children, and workshops on the day which resulted in the creation of yet further written work. Some of the latter and also the competition winners are now up on the "Poemsfor..." site and can be downloaded. A short video (made by local school pupils) taken of the day can also be viewed alongside the new collection.

There is every indication that this day will become an annual feature in Rochester. There is no reason why it - or something like it - might not be adopted as a template for schools in other regions.

#### Where to place the remaining Hard Copy Poem posters ?

1/ During 2009 I was contacted by someone working in a New York Hospital as poet in residence. She had found the project through browsing the Internet. Since then the hospital has taken delivery of over 20 full packs for display in its oncology units. In this case the poems are displayed as items patients can take away with them if they want. There has been heavy demand for them, which is why I've been asked to send so many packs.

2/ The Director of the teacher-training department at Roehampton University is a poetry enthusiast. She has been granted long-term loan of some enlarged laminated copies of the poems I use for this or that event - and displays them on the main staircase of the building where the courses take place. We have agreed that I shall supply her with one pack per student-teacher, approx 250 packs in all. The students can then take the packs away with them to their new places of work. The 250 packs will be delivered around the end of January 2010.

#### "These are the Hands" poem by Michael Rosen celebrating the NHS.

This poem by Michael Rosen was commissioned by the NHS to celebrate its 60th birthday. Michael Rosen agreed that "Poems for..." could "adopt" and distribute it as part of our collection and also that we could translate it into different languages. I have chosen to restrict these to languages of people in dispute - either by tradition or presently. Languages that have emerged so far are Punjabi (in two different scripts), Turkish, Greek and Somali. Two still to be worked on are Hebrew and Arabic.

The idea is obvious : people speaking all these languages have to share the same NHS waiting rooms, sitting quietly together, perhaps in shared trepidation. Some NHS reception areas might be persuaded to display the "These are the hands" poem in a succession of different languages, on their display screens.

#### Park Royal Psychiatric Hospital and Occupational Therapy

This short section concerns the "Poems for..." project only indirectly. But it belongs in the picture. As a free-lance mental health worker, I am commissioned by Park Royal NHS Mental Health Unit in Brent to run poetry workshops for in-patients once a month. I use the bilingual poem-posters from this project at the beginning of each occasion, as a lead-in to the writing that follows.

Towards the end of 2009 the workshop was presented to a large conference for mental health Occupational Therapists functioning in Inner London. The presentation took the form of a replica of the monthly workshops, and again the posters were deployed as a lead-in.

There is no end to the creative possibilities of these small bilingual posters.

#### Plans for the immediate future

##### *Fundraising*

Three years' worth of funding is approaching its end. A further application is due to be made to ACE, this time for a year's funding. In the light of the high interest shown in the project by schools, the year will be used to explore ways for making the project financially self-sufficient for its core-

funding, by drawing up contracts with educational departments, by which we would supply poem-posters and regular events, in return for a realistic financial re-imbusement.

With the project funding levels still set at 1.5 days a week for a single worker, the ultimate aim must be to secure income that will allow for a greater time-commitment, so that *Poems for...* can sustain its day to day management capacity and keeps up with its own development.

*A collection of bilingual poems aimed at a younger age-group*

The project's adoption by schools in such numbers, requires us to review the poem selection criteria. With the exception of 10 poems in the King's Fund collection chosen specifically for young children, the poem selection has been pursued unfailingly with adults in mind. Additional considerations have been the need for brevity and appropriateness for a public healthcare setting. But not age.

"Adult" poems belong as comfortably in secondary schools as anywhere else. But many of the schools now linked to the project are primary schools.

A slight shift of emphasis and style would seem to be owed this younger age-group. Several people have already offered guidance on where to look and what to look for.

*Mental Health Promotion*

A series of good poems on a mental health theme, published on the website, linked to by schools and mental health organisations all over the country, remains an obvious possibility, easily achievable when time and funding allow.

*Diversity events in schools*

The Medway event described above, and now featured on the Poems for.. site, is an obvious model for other schools and regions to follow. A programme of such events remains a possible funding bid in time for Olympics year

Rogan Wolf  
Secretary Hyphen-21  
as at 31st January 2009

Hyphen-21 Chairs

Debjani Chatterjee MBE  
Chris Meade

Hyphen-21 Trustees 2008-2009

Mary Young  
Jane Thorp  
Graham Thorp  
Pat Pegg-Jones  
Caite Doyle  
David Morris  
Mevlut Ceylan