2. Supporting communities with our expertise

The main purpose of public engagement activities which fall under this second category are those activities which seek to provide support to particular communities (e.g. geographical communities, communities with a shared interest, those who share a similar economic or social background, or practitioner communities). This interpretation of public engagement builds upon the previous category of informing public groups of university research and teaching, to consider how that information and knowledge is then used. The two examples below (Example 4 and 5) are of public engagement projects which were developed in response to particular community needs.

The projects that are briefly introduced in Examples 4 and 5 address clear needs from the communities that they are intended to serve, be that on the future of digital resources or planning strategies. The public groups involved have a role as ‘users’ of the knowledge, support and expertise that is provided by the UCL staff and students participating in these projects.

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**Example 4**
Our History in Our Hands: Towards Digital Sustainability for Minority Cultural Archives, June 2009, Department of Information Studies

‘Our History in Our Hands’ was a half-day event, which took place on 5 June 2009 at the Museum of London, Docklands. Thirty-eight people attended the workshop event, which brought together speakers from major national institutions (e.g. the British Library) and independent community heritage activists, primarily from culturally diverse communities.

The idea for the event emerged following informal discussions between staff at UCL and Untold London, which identified the sustainability of digital resources as a key issue for independent minority cultural heritage groups. There was an agreement that such organisations would benefit from an opportunity to share experiences and knowledge in this area. The project aims were as follows:

- Create a broader public debate about the role of heritage in a diverse society, shaped by a practitioner and/or activist perspective;
- Provide an opportunity for organisations to learn from the experiences of other groups who have faced similar challenges around sustainability in the past;
- Organisations to go away with new ideas about addressing certain problems, such as how to ensure the future of digital resources, or how to develop new income streams.

The event brought together individuals from other higher education organisations (e.g. UEL) with heritage professionals and community activists, around an agenda of sharing skills and experience. This event was useful to reinforce loose and informal relationships between UCL and community heritage practitioners invited to the event. The event also contributes to UCL’s Department of Information Studies being seen as somewhere that is responsive to independent community-based voices.
### Example 5
Building community engagement in the London plan, September 2009-ongoing, Bartlett School of Planning

This project started with a small group of staff and students (15) from the Bartlett School of Planning working together with representatives of community sector organisations (24) in the preparation of comments to the Mayor's Draft Replacement London Plan. This initiative builds on the Just Space Network which was formed by London non governmental organisations (NGOs) and local groups to coordinate actions for the previous version of the Plan in 2007.

The result of the collaboration was the submission of comments on the London Plan by the various community and voluntary groups, which have drawn on the UCL work and on discussions designed to improve the integration of the submissions. The submissions themselves, which represent the views of the groups, were submitted to the Mayor in January 2010. These submissions are collected at [http://justspace.wordpress.com](http://justspace.wordpress.com).

This engagement project supported groups (some deprived or disadvantaged, other scattered) to represent their needs at the level where crucial decisions are increasingly being taken (on housing, transport, economic development, environment, open space and so on).

These groups range from local residents' and tenants' action groups in various parts of London through to established non governmental organisations like the Council for Voluntary Service and Friends of the Earth and some London-wide organisations representative of diverse ethnic groups and of other ‘equalities’ categories which tend to be marginalised in planning decisions.