ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Non-Technical Summary
A 1000 word (maximum) summary of the main research results, in non-technical language, should be provided below. The summary might be used by ESRC to publicise the research. It should cover the aims and objectives of the project, main research results and significant academic achievements, dissemination activities and potential or actual impacts on policy and practice.

Project aims and objectives
We explored the methodological implications of preparing multi-media qualitative datasets for archiving, distributing and re-use. Using a pre-existing dataset, we placed particular emphasis on investigating how to utilise multimedia digital technologies in qualitative data sharing. The project aims were:

- To enhance the transfer of new practices for the storage, analysis and representation of multi-media qualitative data, through: (1) the production of an interactive guide to assist in the preparation of qualitative data for archiving and reuse (2) a consideration of the importance of context in relation to sharing qualitative data (3) a workshop on the preparation of multimodal and digital qualitative data for sharing.

- To produce guidelines, supporting information and exemplars to assist researchers in making qualitative data, designs and methodological decisions available for re-use, through: an online, interactive Guide to assist qualitative researchers in archiving and sharing research design, data and methodology.

- To produce an interactive working model of an existing project, dataset and analysis, through: a hypermedia Methodological Trail giving examples of how future users can track its research design, methodological choices, decisions and contexts.

- To examine the potential of XML schema for displaying and sharing qualitative data records through: research into the potential of current protocols as reported in Briefing Paper 1.

Main research results and recommendations
The project has identified the following ways of facilitating effective archiving, sharing and re-use of qualitative datasets:

- Deposited datasets should embrace methodological data, narrative and context at a number of levels; depositors should take care to communicate these effectively: Methodological information needs to be overlaid onto relevant empirical records, if re-users are to understand how and where the production and co-creation of data and analysis have shaped data-sets. This includes screen-design issues exemplified in our interactive outputs.

- A standard framework for communicating context can be identified, though individual projects must provide bespoke content: We have identified certain dimensions of non-standardisable contextual information of benefit to re-
users, whilst remaining sensitive to the relative complexity and uniqueness of individual qualitative datasets. We demonstrate methodological contextual information (such as research relations, field contingencies, theoretical assumptions and concepts, field instruments, analytical frameworks); substantive contextual information (i.e. cultural, socio-economic, political and institutional relations plus their instantiation in fieldwork interactions) and media-related context (information about the use and affordances of specific media a) in the field; b) in recording technologies; c) in analysis.

- **The hyperlink can function as a key contextualising and communicative tool:** Data, context and analysis cannot meaningfully be separated in qualitative research. Clickable links can be used to demonstrate their integration, whilst preserving the distinction between data-record itself and contextual information/authored analysis. We demonstrate how data-records can be linked into e.g. identifying and descriptive information, contextualising records and narrative, ethical consent detail, interpretative texts (and vice versa).

- **Further research into XML suitability for qualitative and multimedia data is required:** XML schema under development elsewhere will enable standardised searching at a level appropriate for qualitative datasets. However, our investigations of multi-level and multimedia contextualisation suggest the ongoing need for narrative, complex, bespoke information accompanying datasets. Since this nevertheless must be effectively integrated into datasets, we propose the hyperlink as an alternative means of bringing data, context and analysis into meaningful dialogue.

- **Multimedia data generate particular problems for archiving and reuse:** Multimedia data-records are especially open to misinterpretation. Our work demonstrates how archiving for re-use can and should provide reflexive contextual information on the production of images and sound, and the choice of recording media. We also identify technical and presentational issues in the integration, hyperlinking and re-usability of multimedia records.

- **Data archiving and reuse need to be factored into research design:** Certain categories of methodological information of considerable value to re-users need to be documented during data-generation; they cannot easily be added in afterwards. These include detail on researcher-participant relationships, project epistemological, ontological and political frameworks, and processes of analysis/interpretation. Mindful of resource implications, we are cautious of recommending our 'gold-standard' of digital datasets hyperlinked to analysis and contextual information, but even adopting a minimal solution of providing supplementary contextual/ methodological information requires originators to expend time and resources. There are also considerable ethical and legal issues attached to the re-use of data, not least those in multimedia form, as discussed in some of our outputs (see below).

**Activities and outputs**
The research team has participated in diverse activities over the award period. Highlights include; ‘Sharing, reusing and representing qualitative digital data: An interactive training workshop’ (Cardiff 2006), presentations and workshops at the ESRC Methods festival (Oxford 2006), various presentations at ESRC Research Methods Programme and Qualitative Data Archiving and Sharing Scheme workshops (2005 and 2006) and conference papers at the Virtual Knowledge Studio and the International Festival of Ethnographic Film. The project is affiliated to the Qualiti, the...
Cardiff node of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods. Outputs thus far include:

- an Online Guide to assist qualitative researchers in the preparation of qualitative datasets, contextual information and methodological decision-making for archiving and sharing
- An interactive working model (Methodological Trail), illustrating how methodological contexts and decision making can be integrated into the preparation of qualitative data for archiving and potential re-use
- Project website, contextualizing the project and providing supporting information
- Project briefing papers: Possibilities of multi-media qualitative data archiving using eXtensible Mark-up Language (XML); Qualitative data archiving and reuse: mapping the ethical terrain

**Impacts**

As part of the Demonstrator Scheme, the project has contributed to the development of strategies and practical techniques in relation to the preparation and communication of contextualized qualitative datasets for reuse. Our emphasis on multimodal qualitative data and hyperlinking digital technologies has identified particular methodological issues needing consideration. We are hopeful that the guidance and exemplars developed as part of this project will form part of future investments and programmes in capacity-building for data re-use.