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## Introduction

Welcome to the Spring newsletter from Sheffield Community Network. This edition features a report from the launch of Sharrow Community Forum back in February. There is an update on the exciting plans for Sheffield Local TV. We feature a profile of new local start-up, Pibow, that recently launched with the assistance of Access Space. And we have a report from the opening of the SOAR Works Digital Media Centre and details of the amazing facilities there.

We also feature an update on the Virtual Community Network – a high-definition, state-of-the-art video conferencing service on offer to the Sheffield Community Network. There is the news from the launch of the Norton Digital Media Centre that is home to Norton Creative Apprentices. And lastly, if that was not enough, we have an update on the changing face of manufacturing from James Wallbank at Access Space.

# Sharrow Digital Media Centre launch 01/02/13



The Sharrow Digital Media Centre (DMC) held its launch event on Friday 1st February at the U-Mix Centre on Asline Road. A great buffet lunch was provided by one of the companies supported by the DMC - The Three Bears Kitchen cafe, which is open Wed-Fri, 8-3pm at The Old Junior School on Vincent Road.

The Sharrow Digital Media Centre is made up of 3 organisations: Sharrow Community Forum, Learn for Life Enterprise and FURD (Football Unites, Racism Divides, based at the U-Mix Centre).

Nathan Gordon, the DMC co-ordinator, gave a summary of the activities at Sharrow Digital Media Centre, with videos from some of the supported start-up businesses.

Hayley Nelson, who runs Learn for Life Enterprise, explained that she has opened new premises next door to Learn for Life which will provide the Sharrow Digital Media Centre with a highly visible public face on London Road. This will help more people to see the opportunities available for digitally-supported enterprises across the three centres.



She introduced videos produced by Learn for Life including one celebrating diversity and equality at Learn for Life, and another

showing the Creative Edge Guitar and Song writing group performing at Christmas in the city centre. Creative Edge is a project run in partnership with Sheffield Cathedral, Cathedral Archer Project, Learn for Life Enterprise and Stories from the Street.

Simon Hyacinth introduced the U-Mix centre, which provides youth-focused music and dance facilities, as well as high-spec Apple Macs to support enterprises.

Ahmed Saricicek then spoke about his Action in Motion (AIM) business, which offers workshops in Parkour (or Free Running), showing a video that was featured on BBC Look North. AIM is part of the Sheffield Parkour Movement, a non-profit organisation,



based in Endcliffe Park. It needs an indoor venue to run the workshops and it was suggested that Abbeydale Cinema might be a possibility. Please email [Ahmedsaricicek@gmail.com](mailto:Ahmedsaricicek@gmail.com) if you can help.

Other budding businesses at the launch included Artists in the Making (offering photography workshops for kids) and Isaac Hall's Graphic Design business.

Sharrow Digital Media Centre uses volunteers from Sheffield Hallam University's Venture Matrix as well as students from Norton College to provide support with digital technology.

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## Sheffield Local TV wins!



In late 2012 [Sheffield Local Television](#) was awarded the licence to operate Sheffield's first digital local television channel. The decision, taken by communications regulator [Ofcom](#), followed 20 months of campaigning by the local consortium. The SLTV partners, including the [CIQ Agency](#), [CM Solutions](#) and [Sheffield Live!](#), have ensured that the vision and strategy proposed for the channel are closely linked to objectives of the ERDF funded [Sheffield Community Network](#) project and the foundations that it is establishing.

Recognising that the digital economy brings new opportunities for job creation and enterprise, Sheffield Community Network is a programme to ensure that new digital opportunities extend into disadvantaged communities through social enterprise and the creation of facilities for digital access and participation. The opportunities offered by the SLTV development will add considerable value, presence and potential for sustainability to that approach.

[SLTV](#) offers a variety of social and economic opportunity. Its goal is to establish a sustainable local television channel that serves the public interest in local news and information and that offers a platform for local talent and expression, providing:

- a ladder of opportunity for independent producers of film, video, animation and digital media
- a lever for enterprise and entrepreneurship building on local models of business development
- a platform for community-based content engaging volunteer producers and contributors and including services for minority communities
- a new and accessible pathway into the media industry linked to journalism, film, photography and animation
- a showcase platform that amplifies local talent, local businesses, local festivals and events

Sheffield Community Network is also focused on developing community capacity and growing digital media enterprises aligned with exactly such a model. However, it's not just that SCN and SLTV share the same vision; they also provide complementary opportunities and development ladders for communities and businesses.

SCN has established [12 Digital Media Centres](#) to facilitate the development of talent and aspiration into business opportunity; it has provided grant support for

equipment; and it has established potential for citywide online collaboration and online publication through its [Virtual Community Network](#) and central Creative Content Hub based on the [Digital Region](#) network.

In so doing it has created the conditions by which individuals and groups in the community can gain skills and confidence, test digital content ideas (such as local news or interest group programming) and develop associated business options that can move up to the next level with the launch of SLTV in late 2013. With the support and mentoring available through SCN, this will enable:

- Content development using digital media talent to greater effect
- Amplification of social enterprises through TV and online media exposure
- A mutual support ecosystem joining together content skills, local business and social partners



The timing of the Sheffield Local Television service could not be better for providing the opportunity to build on Sheffield Community Network foundations and its local successes.

Note – the SLTV platform will provide local television centred on Sheffield and reaching the Sheffield City Region, with a potential audience of around 1.5 million adults. At least 250,000 adults will be able to receive the service via the Freeview digital terrestrial television platform, with further coverage via Virgin cable, Internet and IPTV. Its integrated digital media strategy aims to harness the

power of television whilst embedding interactive opportunities from broadcast to web.

For further information,

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# Pibow goes from strength to strength



The **Pibow** is a colourful, lightweight and durable case for the **Raspberry Pi micro-computer**.



It costs just £12.95 + shipping and was developed last year in Sheffield by Paul Beech with help from **Access Space**:

“It’s fair to say that **Access Space** was the difference between the **Pibow** happening or not happening. They provided the laser cutter that the prototypes were developed on, and had the people who shared their knowledge with us to help us make a better product. Their space was vital to encouraging experimentation and discovery.”

The case is made out of seven layers with a transparent top and base. Each layer is laser cut from colourful high-quality cast acrylic and once stacked they securely contain a Raspberry Pi while leaving the primary connection ports

accessible (for USB, HDMI, network, audio, SD card, etc). Weighing only 92 grams the case is lightweight and ideal for mounting to any surface. Held together by nylon bolts, no tools are required for assembly.

Paul’s company, **Pimoroni**, now employs three full-time members of staff, more casual workers and is looking to expand further. It has now bought five of the largest-size, highest power laser cutters available and has just started developing a whole new product line.



Pibow is an inspiring example of what can be achieved by a new business using the digital technology available through the **Sheffield Community Network**.

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# SOAR Works Digital Media Centre



Main DMC room

Since the grand opening in October 2012, the [SOAR Works Digital Media Centre](#) has seen a variety of users through its doors, including local artists, gaming experts, wrestlers, photography students, training providers and people wanting to make their business sustainable and bring a business idea to life.



Grand opening October 2012

We currently have a steady flow of regular and new users of the DMC who all have a different need from hiring the digital camera to using the Adobe CS6 software to create a website. We have just had confirmed a regular day booking which will bring in 10 students working towards a qualification in recycling and environmental issues. We have also had some interest from a professional wrestling group who are keen to use the camcorders to create a promo video and also learn and improve their skills in using Photoshop.

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# The Virtual Community Network



**The Virtual Community Network (VCN)** is a high-definition, state-of-the-art web streaming, recording and video conferencing service offered by the Sheffield Community Network.

The VCN's primary role is to support enterprise and social inclusion by digital means, allowing access to technology that can help you develop and promote you and your business to a global web audience in stunning HD quality.

The VCN now has 10 centres and 1 mobile unit (VCN-M1) to maximise accessibility for new local businesses in all parts of the city:

- Forge Valley (Lecture Theatre)
- Notre Dame High School (Environmental Learning Centre)
- Red Tape Central
- Sheffield City College (Boardroom)
- Sheffield Hallam University (Robert Winston Building:F521)
- Sheffield North CLC
- Sheffield South CLC
- Sheaf Training (Think Tank)
- The Engineering Centre
- University of Sheffield Enterprise
- VCN-M1

The VCN offers a very high level of multimedia functionality at little or no charge, enabling new businesses and social enterprises to:



- Transmit a conference, presentation or performance by live web-cast. North and South Sheffield City Learning Centres, for example, have quoted a joint saving of £396 per 2 hour meeting by using video conferencing. Communicate globally – hold “face-to-face” meetings, share presentations and collaborate world-wide.
- Reduce carbon emissions by providing a travel-free meeting option.
- Broadcast live HD internet video.
- Securely host ‘on demand’ video content on dedicated, high speed servers.
- Record, playback and archive video footage – download, edit and re-upload videos.
- Give your content identity with your own, custom-named channel that features a static URL for easy linking.

### **Widening Participation**

A standard modern laptop or PC can integrate with the VCN and provide HD video conferencing at a cost of around £120. This works well on a standard domestic internet connection (ADSL, download 2Mbps upload 750Kbps – 1Mbps).

Training sessions can be arranged on demand. A short video summary can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/2czwD68ML7g>

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# Norton Digital Media Centre takes off



Norton Digital Media Centre officially launched on November 28th 2012 to provide free access to all the latest graphic design and video editing software, high speed Internet connectivity and business and creative mentoring to the residents of Lowedges, Batemoor and Jordanthorpe.

The centre was opened by Rob Walker from Sheffield Community Network and Heather Macdonald, Chief Executive of [The Sheffield College](#). The Norton Creative Apprentices were on hand to demonstrate the facilities to the array of distinguished guests and Sheffield's digital movers and shakers at the launch event.

Since opening the doors there has been a steady flow of customers ranging from a local author with aspirations to set up his own publishing business, but needs help designing book covers in Photoshop; to a 63 year old lady who wants to learn Wordpress so that she can design a website for her son's death metal band and also set up a new business selling water-colour paintings.

It is still early days, but so far the centre has been overwhelmed by the scope and potential created by the DMC network. It has the ability not only to work with the local community within Norton's specialist areas of graphic design, video production and digital content creation; but also the

opportunity to link up with, collaborate and share resources with the other DMCs to work on both a micro and a city wide level. Furthermore the DMC's connection with Norton Centre for Creative Industries means that it can offer on-site technical guidance and support. It is also fortunate to have The Sheffield College as one of its key partners. As one of the country's leading colleges for enterprise, it can provide industry experts and specialist expertise for any start-up businesses looking for support.



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# The changing face of manufacturing

There are important developments in technology happening right now which are likely to change the nature of many digitally enabled enterprises, making manufacture available to much smaller businesses.

## **Disruptive Technology: Innovation in Manufacturing**

Back in the 90s the web was something new. A lot of people thought it wouldn't amount to much, but others predicted it would tear up the rulebook, changing the boundaries for business, industry, government and the community. And it did.

Online shopping went from "speculative" to "new" to "everyday" to "your granny's doing it". Just about every business got themselves a website and government services went "digital by default". Businesses went bankrupt and others sprung up. Fortunes were lost and made. Remember Virgin Megastore? Remember Zavvi? Remember local newspapers?

The web was disruptive technology. Disruptive technology seems to come out of nowhere and very quickly turns everything upside down. Some people ignore it. Some people get angry, or scared, or greedy. Some businesses benefit; some have to change out of all recognition.

This sort of technology is worrying if you're safely in work, labouring away with a limited skill set and limited options. But if you've got a taste for adventure, or if you're outside the charmed circle of secure employment and regular income, then that disruption could give you a chance. It's not just about individuals. Sheffield has been in a tough economic corner for a couple of decades now, and the city needs a game changer.

When [Access Space](#) opened in 2000, we were able to say to people, "Why don't you

come and learn about web design? Grab a couple of books, read up on HTML, and in a few months you can build yourself a



professional level career with virtually no capital investment." The web's disruptive potential made that proposition a possibility. Some people grabbed the opportunity with both hands, created their own jobs and went on to new futures.

The trouble is that it's not really true anymore. It's not the web skills that'll make the difference – it's the other skills and talents that you sell via the web that'll really count. On its own the web doesn't offer the wild card opportunity it once did, because it has become the norm. Business, industry and government know how it works now. The digital frontier has been stitched up. The same thing is happening with YouTube as we watch. I'm not saying you can't make a million from digital opportunities, but your chances are slimmer, and your potential wins aren't so open-ended, the way they used to be.

Getting everyone familiar with the digital basics, while a worthwhile objective, just isn't enough anymore. Now the opportunities for established technologies like the web and e-commerce are becoming more predictable, more under control. We need to look at emerging disruptive technologies for the sorts of opportunities that may have unpredictable, open-ended results.

At Access Space we're looking at physical computing and advanced manufacturing;

a digital fabrication laboratory, or 'fablab', where people can get involved with digital manufacturing, electronics, robotics, remote control systems, sensors, embedded intelligence and more. We believe that it's this area – where the digital and physical worlds meet – that will bring about the next wave of disruptive innovation.

We're thinking about laser cutters. You draw a shape on the computer and it cuts that shape out of plywood or perspex super accurately. We're looking into computer numerically controlled (CNC) machines like



mills and cutters. You define a 3D shape and it grinds it out of a small block of plastic or aluminium. We've just ordered a CNC router, big enough to cut thick sheets of wood, so we can make furniture-sized objects. We've built an electronics workbench, acquired a whole bunch of tools, and started looking into even more radical technologies, like 3D printers.

Isn't this a million miles away from our initial idea of a trash technology lab? Not at all. The costs of these technologies have plummeted in the last few years. Now we're able to build a fablab that Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) estimates costs around £100,000 for a fifth of that, and the prices are still coming down. Our laser cutter cost a third of the price of MIT's US-made laser. It's bigger, more powerful, and (of course) made in Yorkshire.

You can buy a programmable mini-robot brain ([Arduino](#)) for 12 quid, or a barebones multimedia computer the size of a playing card ([Raspberry Pi](#)) for 35 quid. Computer-controlled manufacturing machines like laser

cutters and CNC machines that used to cost £20,000 now cost a few thousand pounds. What we're setting up is the 21st century equivalent of a community print shop – a suite of computer-controlled tools that can make just about anything.

MIT invented the idea of the media lab back in the mid 90s. They said the future of information technology was going to be around multimedia – video, audio, images and websites. While the rest of the world

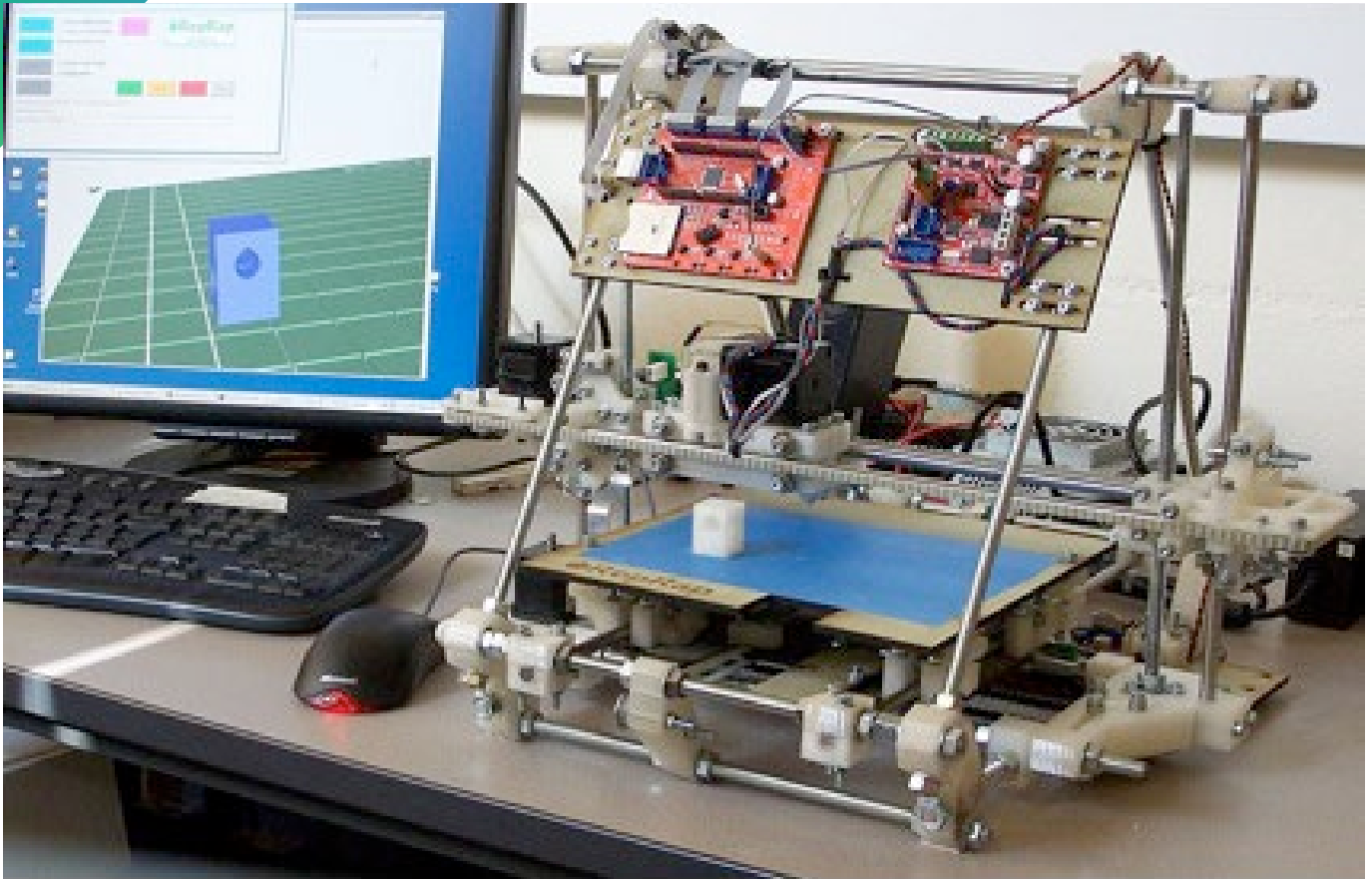


was getting excited about email, spreadsheets and word processing, they predicted the YouTube revolution, so we reckon their predictions are worth listening to.

Think what happened to the office. Thirty years ago, "office" meant a big building in town, where people shuffled paperwork. Now it means a function on your laptop, on your phone, or "in the cloud". Office work hasn't gone away, but it has changed profoundly. It has fragmented, disintegrated and permeated everyday life. Now everyone is their own secretary.

In the same way, 'fablab' technologies are going to fragment and disintegrate manufacturing. Ten years from now you might buy a shirt or a washing machine made in your neighbourhood, not in China, and 30 years from now you could be downloading the designs and making these things in your own home.

If you had a whole suite of machines that could make just about anything, what would be the best thing to make? How about a whole suite of machines that could make just about anything? That'll be when manufacturing capability goes truly viral.



And it's happening already. [RepRap](#) (Replicating Rapid-prototyper) is a desktop 3D printer. It's like a computer-controlled hot glue gun. You define a 3D object on the computer, and it prints it layer by layer as a 3D object in thermoplastic. It can make around 65% of its own components, so once you've got one, your next one is cheaper. The thermoplastic is made from potato starch, so in the end you may be able to grow your own feedstock.

This is not science fiction; it's real, and you can buy a kit to build one for less than £400. It can't make all of itself, but each improved version is increasing the machine's reproducibility. A whole suite of machines, operating on different materials and at different scales, from the microscopic to the architectural, is getting close to being able to reproduce itself.

These opportunities should be available to everyone, so we've taken the bull by the horns and set up [Refab Space](#), a community 'fablab' at [Access Space](#). With a network of partners, we're using it to support start-up enterprises across the city. But unlike the

usual enterprise advisors, we don't talk about cashflow projections, speculative share issues and fictional business plans. Instead we're helping enterprising people to design and make prototypes so they can make and sell real products.

The requirement to learn is one of the things we really like about the DIY approach to technology. It gives opportunities to people who are at a loose end, and it's one of Access Space's watchwords: pay with money, end up poorer – pay with time, end up smarter. Doesn't that sound like an "IT investment strategy" that makes sense for the city?

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# How can I get involved?

The best starting point for more details of the project, including a copy of the prospectus, is our website at <http://sheffieldcommunity.net>

For further details or to discuss your ideas please contact:

Social Enterprises:

Please call CM Solutions on 0114 220 1426

Community Centres:

Please call the CIQ Agency on 0114 275 2620

Email: [enquiries@sheffieldcommunity.net](mailto:enquiries@sheffieldcommunity.net)

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