



Researching as a collaborative group: “That’s how you get things done”

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Doing research



We can do research given the right project and partners/collaborators who know how to do research..

What skills? We are the history, we don't need skills, but we didn't get skills, they're already there" (Mins 210311).

"Just as in other research groups, each member had different talents and their own unique combination of knowledge, skills and experience" (Bigby, Frawley, Ramcharan under review)



❖ We need to **learn research skills???**

The main things we have done

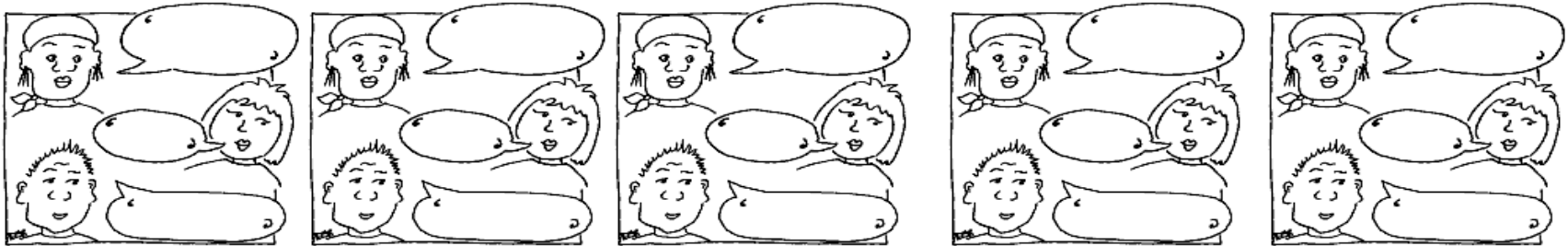
- Planning – 44 meetings
- Organising files, other documents, photos and videos - 291 items
- Interviews – 27 self advocates & supporters
- Making sense of what we were finding out
- Presenting what we have found out – 11 conference & forum presentations



When you have a research idea you could do what we did.....



- Talk about it for a long time but not get anywhere with it



- Talk about it more with researchers who can help you do it
- Keep talking about it at meetings and decide what you want to get out of it
- Do it as a group with people who will stick with it



Getting started with the research

- ✓ Reinforce wanted to do their history – to remember everything we had done
- ✓ The university researchers wanted to understand more about self advocacy
- ✓ Between 2007 and 2008 we had 16 meetings to talk about the research
- ✓ By November 2008 we had organised a reunion and a self advocacy stream at the ASID conference to talk about research
- ✓ By 2009 we had funding from the ARC






The self advocacy reunion November 2008



The Reunion: *recruitment, presenting and sharing*

- Got people from the past back together
- Collected names of people to interview
- Took photos and a video
- Did a presentation called 'key moments'
- Had guest speakers – Dorothy Atkinson & Mabel Cooper from the UK
- Self advocates and supporters spoke about their memories

Planning

Different parts of the work	What	Timeline	Who	Jobs	Notes
Working together 	Form the history group	Been meeting regularly since 2007	Research group formed 2009: Janice, Amanda, David, Luke, Chris, Patsie & Paul	Meet regularly to keep project going. Decide what needs to be done Do the research jobs eg interviews, talk about interviews, talk about what we are finding in the files and in the research work that everyone is doing	Patsie will help the history group to be involved in the research – she will keep notes on this so we can write about ‘researching together’
Research 	Interviews  Interview 25 self advocates Do stories of 6 of these people Interview people who have supported and been involved in working with self advocacy over the years	All done by the start of 2011	The self advocacy history research group	Deciding who to interview Interviewing them in pairs or in threes Writing up the interviews (called transcribing) Talking about what the main ideas (themes) were in the interviews	Everyone who goes to the interview gets to ask questions The interviews are recorded A person from outside the history group will write up the interview (called transcribing) Chris, Paul and Patsie will read the whole interview

Interviewing – *group interviews, interview book*

- We worked through our photos and memories and developed the ‘interview book’
- We developed the book to help us remember what to talk about – but we did not need it
- The book was sent to everyone we interviewed – they used it to help them remember when they were around and what they did

1982 Campaigning and networking

Reinforce join with others in the Drummond St squat August 29 to September 5 to raise awareness about homelessness of people with a disability. Declaration written



At the Federal level the first Disability Advisory Council was developed.

Self advocacy was growing in other States with NSW holding the "It's time for a change" conference

Members of Reinforce attended this conference in Sydney and another one in Adelaide

In Victoria, St Nicholas was closed and Errol Cocks became the Head of the Mental Retardation Division



Doing the interviews

- Group interview – all together with person we were interviewing
- Asked about memories – some people brought old photos and notes
- We worked out things like dates and the names of people who had been involved
- People shared memories
- Interviews were “off the cuff”

Amanda: It's in relation to what you can remember, from by looking at this book, and this is just an ideas book or something to jog the cat-ears up and all that, and all. **Interviewee:** Yes. **Amanda:** And interviewerer to the intervieweeee. **Interviewee.** So, do you want me to talk a little bit about my, when I first got to know Reinforce, so is that why you're...? **Norrie:** Yes. **Amanda:** Yes, yes, yes, go, and you've got the floor. (IP interview)

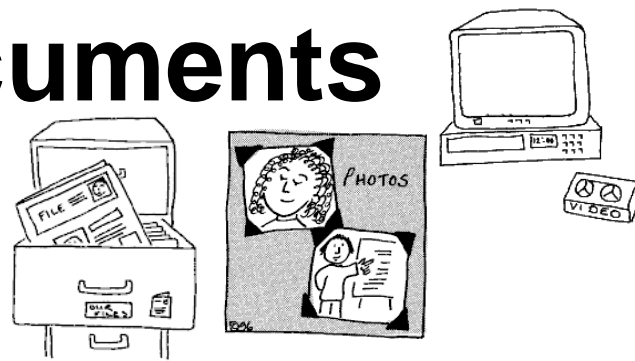
What the interviews were like..

Interviewee. Well I think it was by being so vocal, everywhere, so wherever you went...

David B: So radical. **Amanda:** Yes!

Interviewee: Yes, so radical, and, whenever you went to a conference, Reinforce were there, usually at the front, you know, speaking up. Reinforce were now more and more getting a position as speakers, at things..”

Files and documents



- Reinforce has 30 + years of material in the office – committee meeting minutes, project files, photos, videos, reports
- They are part of the story of Reinforce so we had to look at them
- Patsie, Chris and Paul sorted through them and got them all listed we have 291 items
- Patsie & Paul wrote the “working story of Reinforce” from looking at all of this

Making sense of the research

- Chris, Patsie and Paul read all of the interviews and put information about them on their computers
 - We had meetings where we talked about what was in them;
– we recorded these
 - We tried another way of working with the information but we did not understand it: Paul read through an interview and brought questions back to the group
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Idea from Interview :Replacement of institutions

[Interviewee] remembers that when the institutions started to close the MRD started to set up day centres and nursing homes Like Oakleigh. He said it was pretty insulting since many people did not require nursing home care and it was just like being in St. Nick's again.

Paul(CAN PEOPLE REMEMBER THE DAY CENTRES? WHAT HAPPENED THERE? WERE THEY AS GOOD AS MIDDLE PARK? WHY OR WHY NOT? WERE THERE ANY OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES? WHAT WERE THESE? DID THEY HELP?)



Life Stories - Amanda



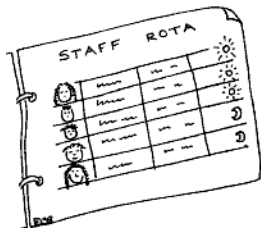
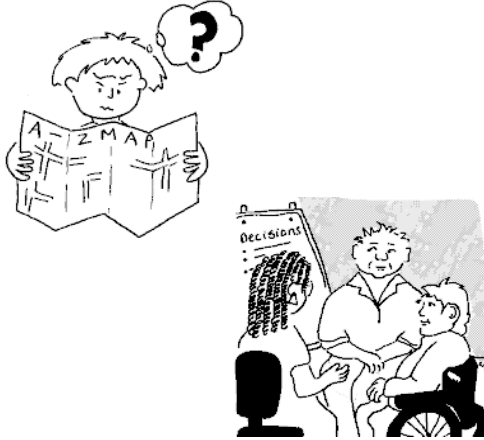
Presenting research



What next?

- Developing a coffee table book
- Writing papers (Chris, Patsie & Paul)
- Finishing our life stories and getting them published and printed
- More presentations
- Maybe a book about the whole project for students and academics

What we have liked and what we have found hard



It is hard work:

- Working out who to interview
- Getting everything done
- Keeping everyone up to date with the research – over a long time
- Finding regular times to meet and getting commitment from a core group

We have liked

- Seeing people at the reunion
- Doing the interviews
- Working on a project together
- Presenting



Tips for getting involved in research



- Self advocates with research ideas should talk to researchers from Universities who can help put the ideas down, help get research money and work with you to do the research



- Talk about your ideas for research with each other and with researchers



- It is hard work and takes awhile to get there but worth it– just stick with it



- It is good because when you do work as research you get to tell lots of people what you found out and it gets written about so people can learn from it

In memory of David Banfield

