

# meet, teach, learn

.....  
If, in each hour, a man could learn a single fragment of some branch of knowledge, a single rule of some mechanical art, a single pleasing story or proverb (the acquisition of which would require no effort), what a vast stock of learning he might lay by

**John Amos Comenius**  
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**I  
RAGGED**

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"Tis profitable for  
us both, that I  
should labour with  
you today, and  
that you should  
aid me tomorrow"

David Hume

# The Organisation

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Ragged began its activities in March of 2010 after proposals for social capital projects were invited to present to the 'World is Your Oyster' Festival in Hackney, London. Since its inception it has received wide support and three independent groups of skilled core volunteers have come together to develop the project. The project has been started in three separate historical cities which helped pioneer the Ragged Schools and free education in Britain. The central organisation of the Ragged University will be broadly modelled on the Wikimedia Foundation for their simplicity and efficiency in achieving their given task. Roughly speaking, there will be four core personnel brought together in each city to constitute a team which co-ordinates for a city/ area.

To keep the Ragged University as a running concern a mixture of, personally finding and approaching people, with a pass- it- on type approach will be used to maintain volunteering levels. Those who have done a talk will be encouraged to find new speakers to either join them or to take their place in the next events. As an organisation run on common sense, part of the job of core personnel will be to be realistic about the time and energies they can bring to the project. By being realistic and pragmatic, key personnel will be asked to seek out replacements for their position should they not be able to fulfil what is required of these key roles; i.e. that of co-ordinating, administrating and marketing the events.

This has been brought together by a core team people distributed over London, Manchester and Glasgow. A further team is planned to manifest the project in Edinburgh. The long term plan is to franchise the project out pragmatically adapting to demands and available infrastructures. There has been much support from so many areas, and we are now working to coordinate those who are keen to lend their experience in this, the inception period of the Ragged University as a Registered Charity and not-for-profit organisation.

People remote from the London, Manchester and Glasgow locations are being asked to help populate the website by collecting and documenting knowledge resources and biographies. There are certain tasks also which always benefit from having skilled involvement such as finance, marketing, copy editing, graphic design, and administration; so should they have any specialised skill sets and want to volunteer in specific tasks it is welcomed. If you are happy to contribute to the pool of people all working together to reraise this project, it will be greatly appreciated.

# The Conception and Birth of Ragged

Ragged is a free education project which aims to set up events where people can share their knowledge and passion for a subject with others in a friendly and informal environment. Through taking onboard the work of the educational theorist Ivan Illich, the project seeks to address some of the problems of institutionalisation in a dynamic way.

The format of the core events is simple. Someone who is passionate about a subject introduces a talk they are keen to share using excerpts of free accredited lectures from universities around the world. All this happens in a cafe pub or any innately social space. They then take questions and produce a handout on their talk for the audience. The handout is there to provide information on the talk, hyperlinks to the referenced materials plus a catalogue of free learning resources available over the internet.

Stemming from the events debates are set up in conjunction with [debatewise.org](http://debatewise.org), an organisation set up to champion debate and discussion of various topics. The website will function to provide a virtual hub where people can engage over the internet

and find all the resources they need to develop their field of study. The internet presence will act to centralise resources so that anyone anywhere can develop themselves educationally.

Ragged will seek to develop links with industry to foster wider skilled participation and mentorship within the community. The intention is to develop a network of independently owned businesses within an area to host events and to promote these venues as a geographic locality of the project within each given city. A venue need only be an independently owned business with the technology to stream from the internet to be involved.

Ragged seeks to position itself as an annex to culture, community, education and economy and not as an alternative. It seeks to make available unused forms of capital for the provision of individual and community in the form of a social capital project.

This project has been partly informed by the great vision of The Open University which was founded on the belief that communications technology could bring high quality degree level learning to people who had not had the

opportunity to attend traditional campus universities. It also underpins desirable societal aims such as economic generation and regeneration, Ragged aims to act as a conduit and annex to educational establishments through social networking.

This simple idea by its very nature is an investment in society. The benefits of education are almost unanimously agreed upon. Knowledge empowers people to do things. People like being productive and skills are cultivated through self-developing interest. As expressed in Gestalt psychology; the outcome of Ragged is more than a sum of all its parts.

A photograph of Mike McInnes, an older man with white hair and glasses, wearing a dark sweater. He is standing at a podium, holding a microphone in his right hand and gesturing with his left hand. Behind him is a whiteboard with handwritten text, including "LOCATION", "THE HE", and "E=CM". The image has a purple tint.

This simple idea by  
its very nature is an  
investment in society

Mike McInnes at the  
Edinburgh launch  
event with his talk  
'Sleep and the Exercise  
Theory of Relativity'



# Aims

The aim of Ragged is to stage events in independently owned venues where people can present and share knowledge amongst a friendly community of interested individuals. The task at hand is to successfully engage educated enthusiasts, professionals and academics in an entertainment based learning environment.

From the outset the idea has been structured as a modular scheme; which, connects to worldwide web resources, commonly available technology and latent intellectual and social capital. It will be a labour intensive not a capital intensive process. The end point is to have a monthly advertised event with two or more lectures staged in each of the three city involved.

## **To achieve our aims we will endeavour to:**

- Encourage people to share their passion of a subject at events.
- Invite Independent businesses to form a network for the Ragged Organisation in different parts of the country.
- Create a website in order to generate resources references and comments from individuals.

Extended supplements have been created to provide a foundation of historical and up- to- date ,social, economic, political and educational theory that is packaged in such a way as to easily provide depth of thought and instruction on how to set up Ragged first of all in Britain and then overseas.

The aim to reveal and cultivate social capital represents the most important element of Ragged's development. Once firmly established, Ragged will be in a position to cultivate this by franchising out through a Unicef inspired 'School-in-a-box' type scheme; "University in a Book". As the organisation develops it will seek to provide appropriate mentoring for inspired individuals to facilitate their development through the provision of learning resources and connections to industry.

Developing social capital means, in this case, to utilise and create links between different generations to emphasize the social import of connecting the experience of the elder community with the energy and enthusiasm of the young. And to actively seek solutions to obstacles within community and learning when and where they are encountered; providing a truly multicultural crucible to ensure healthy relationships and happy lives.



# Objectives

The Ragged Organisations objective is to expand its offerings year on year. Our primary focus is on creating enjoyable public events where people share their enjoyment and knowledge in a 'pub documentary' style. We will tailor our events to the demand and time of day, producing events in a variety of places. Cafes, cinemas, and other available infrastructure will be utilized as the awareness, following and participation increase. Self-educators, students, entrepreneurs, teachers and those casually interested represent the wide spread of demographic which will stand to gain something from the project.

## Inception Period

- Formalisation as a Registered Charity.
- Events established.
- Website established.
- Core personnel brought together in teams.
- A pool of voluntary workers is built and networked.
- Ragged Publishing is formed.
- The Ragged Shop is established.

## Year One

- Establish regular events where free talks are given in individual cities.
- Network independently owned businesses interested in hosting events.
- Market the events as popular inclusive entertainment features of each area.
- Collection and publishing of free information resources.
- Population of the website with biographies of famous teachers and autodidacts.
- Work is collected and published through Ragged Publishing.
- Links with industry and academia are cemented and realised.

## Year Two

- Further expand and tailor events to suit the demand of the market.
- Ragged Publishing promotes flagship volumes created from the project.
- Website is developed as a directory of free online learning resources and a university in itself.
- Online debates are run parallel to Real Life events.
- A collection of theses and dead intellectual capital is created and realised.

## Year Three

- An annual is published showcasing progress in Ragged and its participants
- The launch of a franchise in 'University in a Book' D.I.Y kit.
- Affiliations with parallel organisations are made to further facilitate autodidacticism.
- Facilitation of hosting venues to promote engagement with technology.
- Establish conduits for developing enthusiastic individuals looking to formalise their learning.
- All goals will be brought forward as and when needed. Elasticity of this overall schedule is envisaged as success is achieved on each task. The most important aspect of the planning is that over-expansion without the relevant support or demand is avoided.





# The Inspiration behind the Ragged Organisation

During the eighteenth century philanthropists and entrepreneurs started the free Ragged Schools to help the disadvantaged move towards a better life. In the beginning, schools were formed by merchants and churches and were staffed by volunteers. These ideas proved extremely popular, growing to such a size where it soon became necessary to have paid members of staff. Many petitions to parliament for grants were made to foster this movement.

During the 19th century more people began to worry about the neglected, causing more schools to open. In 1844, the Ragged School Union was formed with Lord Shaftesbury as its chairman and Angela Burdett Coutts as a driving force. At its start there were 16 schools connected to the Union, by 1861 this number rose to 176 schools. Initially the Union comprised of about 200 teachers. By 1851, the number of educators grew to around 1,600. A growing mass believed that by gaining an education people would be enabled to lead a better life in the future. They would be able to find work and engage in commerce averting the need to resort to stealing in order to live.

Mr William Locke, the honorary but active Secretary of the Ragged School Union, detailed all the things achieved by the Ragged Schools and the difference it had made to the children who attended. He said the schools had been able to find employment for many of the children whilst also teaching them to be careful with their money.


The Monitorial System (also known as "Mutual Instruction" or "Bell-Lancaster Method") was an education method that became globally popular during the 19th century. The method was based on the more able pupils being used as helpers to a teacher, passing on the information they had learned to other students. This System proved to be a cheap way of making primary education more inclusive, thus making it possible to increase the average class size. The methodology was adopted by the National Schools System and is not entirely unlike the way professors, assistants and tutors work together in university education today.

Andrew Bell's "Madras System" was named because he originated it at the

Military Male Orphan Asylum, Egmore, near Madras. In 1789 he was appointed superintendent of an orphan asylum for illegitimate or orphaned sons of officers. After observing some local children teaching others the alphabet by drawing in the sand, Bell decided to extend and elaborate this system. Bell declared, "There is a faculty, inherent in the mind, of conveying and receiving mutual instruction," The National Society was formed to propagate Bell's system.

The Ragged University aims to revive and continue this legacy by promoting what we call 'peer-to-peer learning,' similar in concept to peer-to-peer file sharing. Through an established and dynamic model the Ragged University will help students, teachers and enthusiasts to connect with the subject matter they seek to master. Through individual and peer led teaching processes alongside engagement with accessible technology, people will develop the tools they need for ongoing success in their fields of study.





There is a faculty,  
inherent in the mind,  
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receiving mutual  
instruction



# Nine steps to creating events

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## ① Location

Identify a geographic area which has a cluster of independently owned businesses capable of screening a lecture from the internet.

## ② Investigation

Canvas venues in the area to create a list of interested venues.

## ③ Selection

Decide on an enthusiastic, well-equipped starting venue willing to stage the first event.

## ④ Subject

Find people keen to give a talk on the Subject that they are passionate about.

## ⑤ Speakers

Identify three people who are keen to give a talk on their subject, to be billed speakers on a specific date. As a rolling event, people will need to be ready for follow-up events. Over a certain size of response, more dates/ venues can be opened out to suit everyone involved.

## ⑥ Resource

Approach billed speakers to choose an online lecture or resource which fits with their selected topic. From this they will present an excerpt to introduce their talk.

## ⑦ Structure

Ask billed speakers to create bullet points and talk through their presentation. A handout on the talk will be produced and put on the website archive and in the annual publication.

## ⑧ Brochure

With a venue, date and speakers decided and planned, a brochure is to be devised as a flyer-catalogue of information, resources, promoters or independent venues and posters.

## ⑨ Marketing

Brochures are to be printed and distributed in the venues. Target marketing will be focused upon students, teachers, educationalists and enthusiasts



# Hosting venues

By utilising public spaces familiar with learning and information exchange such as independently owned public and free houses, cafes, cinemas and museums it will connect like-minded people. The talks presented within these spaces will encourage the sharing of knowledge.

Businesses will be promoted as the hosting venues in an egalitarian way to ensure Ragged avoids the possibility of becoming a branding exercise for large business. Also it is more efficient organisationally to be able to deal with the owner face-to-face in a responsive business environment.

The key stage is to establish what is realistically available and its infrastructure and then to identify a cluster area of applicable venues and create a geographic district to market the events.

So much of the history of the Ragged Schools and free education is attributable to merchants and entrepreneurs. The project aims to revive these historic links between business and education provision. The overriding principle is that these individuals host and give talks to enrich their own community.

Ragged as a charity will try to act within a 'laissez faire' philosophy of annex, rather than one of alternative. This will serve to bring about an inclusiveness to foster equilateral benefits. David Hume in writing his economic theory believed it to be beneficial to have prosperous neighbours.



# Technology engagement

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Through capitalising on the expertise of academic institutions and what learning resources they have made available free through Creative Commons Licensing, a 'Ragged University' can be set up in any independently owned business or social space. The project seeks to facilitate the innate exchange of knowledge which people manifest in communities.

You need only two people and a desire to share. In this digital age the possibilities of the Ragged Schools are exponentially enlarged by using the internet to centralise resources, market free real time events, manifest peoples work and involve people who cannot attend these events in person.

The modern emphasis on technology engagement is pivotal as computers play a central role in society affecting individual happiness and cultural success.

Raceonline 2012 estimates that there are ten million adults in the UK who have never used the internet: more than a fifth of the population. Four million of those are among the most disadvantaged: 39% are over sixty five, 38% are unemployed and 19% are families with children.

The UK has forty million internet users, with thirty million people using the web every day. Seven million people have sold an item on eBay. Half of all leisure travel is now booked online and seven million job adverts were placed online last year. If the one point six million children who live in families without the internet got online at home, it could boost their total lifetime earnings by over £10bn.

The Ragged Organisation aims to facilitate this connection of people with computer technology in such ways which will enrich the lives of individuals thus strengthening communities.

Ideas in development are the production of a digital version of University-in-a-Book and the use of peer-to-peer file-sharing technology, to facilitate distribution of information resources and the development of a Youtube channel.



# Website

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The internet presence will be the most important component of the organisation due to its availability to people all over the world and to those individuals who cannot attend a real time event. The website will provide in a single space the learning resources and information necessary for individuals to develop their interest in a field of study.

This will include free lectures from accredited teaching institutions, sources of free journals, papers and textbooks; as well as links to archives and libraries which provide open access collections. The website will provide information about the realtime events and market them. The intention is for this resource filled website to function as a university in its own right.

Each city and 'The Ragged Organisation' will have their own section of the main website which they can tailor to represent their geographical and historical links to the Ragged Schools Movement as well as advertise activities and events. The Library will become a main focus of the site where an archive of every Ragged Talk given will be available. The Ragged Organisation is being developed in the major social networks to raise awareness.

**[www.ragged-online.co.uk](http://www.ragged-online.co.uk)**



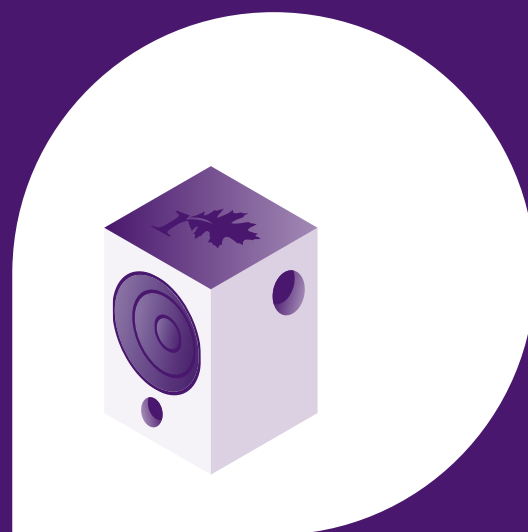
# Virtual Strategies

Once established the Ragged University will partner with related schemes and franchise out overseas with the University-in-a-book scheme. A website will be developed to provide several strategic functions:

- ❶ To centralise resources so that Ragged events can be franchised out.
- ❷ To serve as an information resource and knowledge utility to the independent learner, student and teacher.
- ❸ To unite people internationally in debates relevant to individual interests and passions.
- ❹ To manifest as an open access repository of knowledge created by the public.
- ❺ To embody the work of people passionate about their subject, whatever that may be, and to make that work available through various media.
- ❻ To act as an annex to academia and economy by connecting people to industry through means of a self motivated platform.
- ❼ To make high quality education free and accessible to people across the world.







# Ragged Music

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The Ragged Project has inspired a group of skilled musicians and technicians to create Ragged Music, a project that follows the Ragged ethos and philosophy and applies them to the music industry with the aim of involving the musical arts in social capital.

The primary goal of Ragged Music is to provide a platform for musicians to freely express themselves whilst benefiting and enriching all aspects of the Music Industry.

By utilizing available resources such as supportive venues, high quality recording equipment and a network of artists eager to collaborate and perform, Ragged Music seeks to generate inclusive forms of bonding, bridging and linking social capital in the economy of the Music Industry.

When this project materialized, the very first question we asked artists was 'What is your ideal world within the Music Industry?' The most popular answers were very modest:

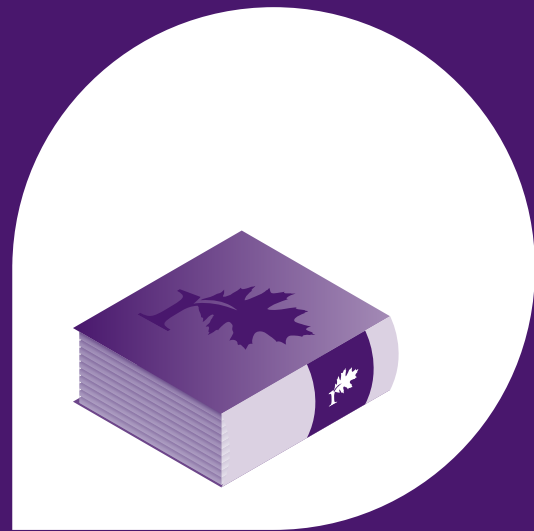
- A place to record.
- A venue to perform at.
- An audience to perform to.
- The opportunity to learn.

This led us to look at using our available resources to meet these simple desires. Networking with like-minded musical enthusiasts, we formed a creative unit with an easily achievable collective goal at its heart – To assist self development.

We believe that the talent and potential of unsigned artists can enhance the music industry directly and provide a richer musical landscape for the consumers of industry as well as the artists which belong to it.

A photograph of a male musician with long hair and a beard, wearing a t-shirt, playing an acoustic guitar and singing into a microphone. The image is overlaid with a purple tint. The text is centered over the lower half of the image.

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# Ragged Publishing

To compliment the activities of Ragged, Ragged Publishing will be formed. This will act in a charitable capacity to publish the works manifested by the individuals who constitute Ragged. Educational theorists suggest this as a very powerful mode of teaching, through the embodiment of a product. As a flagship, the Annual Hour's Anthology will make available all the handouts produced over the year along with a catalogue of the learning resources. People will be able to support the Ragged University and facilitate their own studies through buying and owning copies. The 'University in a Book' will be developed as a modern to franchise the project out across the country and beyond it's

shores. This product represents a 'simple all-in-one set-up kit inspired by Unicef's 'School-in-a-Box' scheme. Through this modern Ragged will seek to bring free education to the world by partnering up with relevant projects like Unicef and One-Laptop-Per-Child. By using the modern Print-On-Demand academic press model, Ragged Publishing will be able to have an extensive catalogue available with minimal finance. As a charitable concern, Ragged Publishing will act to produce various volumes (both factual and fictional in nature) which will promote individual authors, artists and serve to connect with industry.



Ragged Publishing  
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with industry



# Merchandising

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To create a self- sustaining project and avoid the necessity of relying on good-will donations, merchandise will be created. This will function, maintain and expand the whole project through tasteful merchandising of various goods.

By selecting objects which have inherent value in their utility, Ragged will be able to raise the profile of itself whilst simultaneously financially securing its enduring success through providing people with the chance to buy useful premium items to support the project.

Branded pens, pads, t- shirts and other items will be sold to generate funds. These funds will be used to set up more events and facilities; for both individual and community learning. The sale of these items will be coordinated by the online shop available on the Ragged website.

The Ragged Shop aims to provide an online shop selling a range of items of which the profits will be directly used to help sustain Ragged. These products will help to promote a brand image and encourage brand identity.

Ragged will gain exposure through its branding; which, the Ragged shop aims to encourage. The branded items will also be available to staff and volunteers of Ragged to raise brand visibility.

In the first stage of the Ragged Shop we intend have a core number of functional items. The stock holding for these items therefore will not tie up a large amount of funds.

As Ragged begins to grow, and in turn the orders for merchandise, we will increase the range and be better able to place larger stock orders.



# Keys to Success

## **Knowledge as a Communicative Process**

People passionate about their subject often want to share an insight into that world with others who hold the same interests.

## **Use of Available Infrastructure**

The project utilizes available societal infrastructure and is simple to implement. All that is needed to stage these events is the technology to screen content from the internet. Many public houses and cafes have the facilities to do this.

## **Use of Available Technology**

The internet is one of the most powerful information tools ever created and serves to provide all the knowledge resources required to facilitate a world class learning environment and data source. Open source software and commonly available computing equipment represent the physical resources.

## **Strengthening Local Business**

To stage events, local pubs, cafes and independent businesses will be networked and promoted to create allied links making use of comparative advantage to foster positive interrelationships.

## **Knowledge as Leisure**

The wide demographic of general society which enjoys a cup of tea, can of beer, or glass of wine and watching documentaries with friends will be used. This is a demonstration of the universal entertainment of knowledge already embodied in culture.

## **Teaching as Natural Behaviour**

The project taps into the fundamental interpersonal relationship which exists between individuals. Learning through teaching is a natural mode of human behaviour and is a part of the public space environment where statement is followed by discussion.

## **Socially Desirable Outcomes**

The equilateral benefits of developing social capital are demonstrated in social, economic and political research most famously brought into focus in modern times by Robert Putnam. There is a fundamental human need and desire for this sort of community in all peoples and cultures.

## **Well Documented Historical Models**

The success of the historical models inspires the project. The wealth of information available about the provision of free education through Ragged Schools informs the project acutely of good practice, strengths and weaknesses.

## **Strong Word-of-Mouth Qualities**

Due to the community nature of the project, the attendance and participation of individuals is easily reached through word-of-mouth means and social networking mediums.





# The Charity

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As the organisation develops, it will aim to link with and facilitate any organisation which holds mutual goals which accord with the theme of economic regeneration and improving peoples lives through education. As a charity, the Ragged University will have as objectives:

To stage events that are both educating and entertaining at independently-owned social venues. There individuals can present and share their knowledge within a friendly community of interested people.

To successfully engage enthusiasts, professionals and academics alike in an entertainment- based learning environment; making use of available infrastructure and making available latent human resources through the creation and development of entertaining social capital.

To form a network of local businesses and to increase community cohesion.

To create a website that is a valuable educational resource in its own right.

To make connections with formal educational establishments and to develop those relationships to encourage people to take up Further Education.

To reveal intellectual and social capital, but more importantly, to then cultivate it.

To create a 'University in a Box': an easy-to-roll-out and easy-to-implement product, allowing anyone to practice the objectives presented here.

Ultimately, to freely provide the educational tools, guidance and encouragement required to help people learn.







meet,  
teach,  
learn

"The most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the hear. Or, in other words, to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as well render it independent. In fact, it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of it's own reason"

Mary Wollstonecraft

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