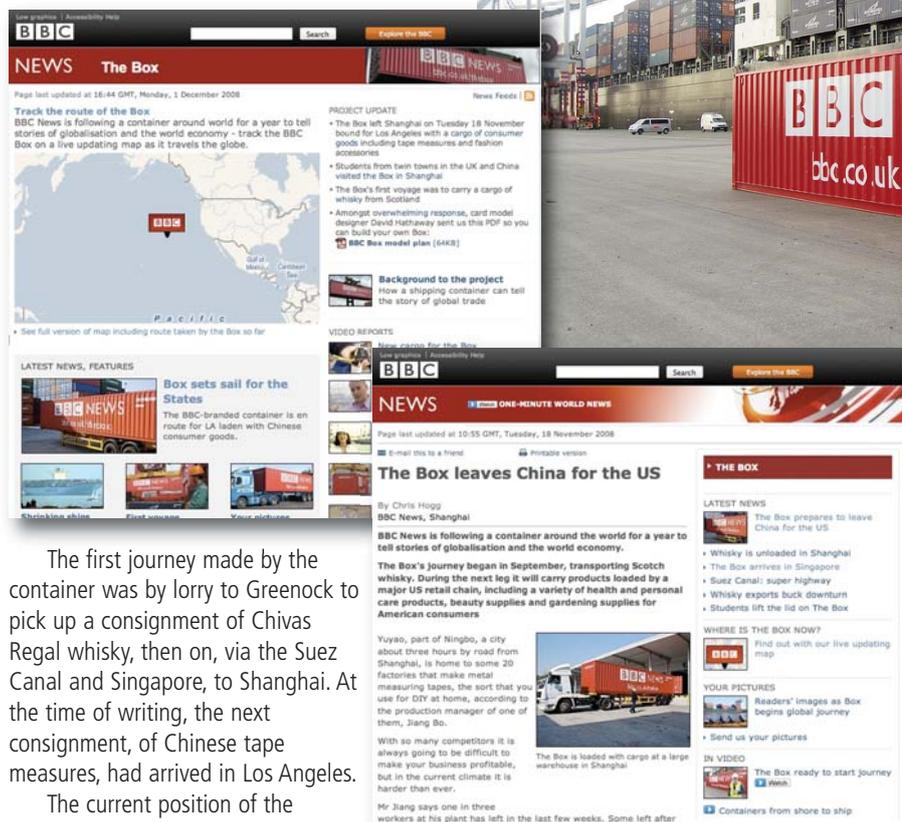


Thinking inside the box

In September 2008 the BBC took a basic shipping container owned by the Japanese NYK shipping line and branded it with the BBC logo and corporate colours. It was fitted with a GPS tracking device and placed on the quayside at Southampton. The box will be followed for a year to explore the connected nature of the global economy.



Photo: Joanna Hall



The first journey made by the container was by lorry to Greenock to pick up a consignment of Chivas Regal whisky, then on, via the Suez Canal and Singapore, to Shanghai. At the time of writing, the next consignment, of Chinese tape measures, had arrived in Los Angeles.

The current position of the container can be viewed on an interactive map on the project website (www.bbc.co.uk/thebox). The map shows the route the container has taken, the ports it has visited, complete with the relevant dates and links to articles on the BBC website.

This makes for a creative resource which will build up over the course of a year to explore the connections between the UK and the rest of the world. What products will the box contain and how will these products connect the places that the box visits?

Surprisingly perhaps, the BBC were not prepared for the interest shown by teachers and students in the project, and quickly produced additional resources for those who want to follow the box. Here are some more suggested student activities for engaging with the project:

1. Track the route of the box during the next nine months using www.bbc.co.uk/thebox. Map on a world map/Google map/Google Earth file.
2. Join the Facebook group 'I'm following the BBC Box' and make use of the images

in the gallery to create a starter movie (perhaps using Animoto (www.animoto.com) which offers free accounts to educators). Alternatively, you could use the viewer photos at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_pictures/7620233.stm. Why not 'Photoshop' yourself into an image and amaze your students...

3. Print off the template at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/16_09_08_bbc_box_d_hathaway.pdf, and let students create their own boxes. Think of creative ways of using them.
4. Where has the box been? Where will the box go next? Who will be the first to find out in your group?
5. Ask students to predict the latitude and longitude of the box in two months' time. Who guessed the closest to its actual location?
6. Which ports will the box visit most often on its journeys? Keep a tally of the stop-overs. Compare this to a list of the busiest container ports in the world (available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_busiest_container_ports)¹. How close is the correlation?

7. Who can come up with the most imaginative (and geographical) uses for an empty shipping container? (Watch the video at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7598633.stm> for some ideas).
8. Watch the animation on the Ships and Boxes website (www.shipsandboxes.com/eng/) which follows three different products.
9. Explore and map the connections between the UK and China. Record a short piece using Vocaroo (<http://vocaroo.org>) to add an extra dimension to the work.
10. Read about the rubber ducks who escaped from a shipping container in 1992 at <http://strangemaps.wordpress.com/2008/05/20/275-the-friendly-floatees-world-tour/> or about the incredible journeys of the things we eat at www.moveablefeasts.org/
11. The Solent has a live ship tracker, which could be used to explore smaller-scale ship movements. See www.ais-live.co.uk/AIS%20Live/aissolent.html

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Note

¹ Traffic is measured in TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units), each of which represents one 20-foot shipping container. The BBC Box is a 40-foot container and is worth two TEUs.