

The BBC 'Voices' project

The BBC was another national institution that increased its recognition of the language in the new millennium, in the form of the 'Voices' project. This was a week-long celebration in August 2005 of the accents, dialects, and languages of the UK, with all local radio stations participating, along with two BBC television documentaries. Its aim was to present a snapshot of the ways people spoke around the country, building a database of over a thousand recorded voices and some 600,000 dialect words and phrases. A website provided examples of speech from all over the kingdom, dialect wordmaps, surveys of accent attitudes, lesson ideas for schools, and a range of news items, as well as giving listeners the opportunity to submit contributions about language use in their own locality. While regional variation was a major focus, special attention was also paid to social – and especially ethnic – diversity. The project is now archived online, and the audio database can be accessed at the British Library.