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GEM champions
excellence in
heritage learning
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Case Studies

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What is GEM?

Editorial

GEM champions excellence in heritage learning to improve the education, health and wellbeing of the general public.

GEM believes that involvement with our rich and diverse heritage is an enriching and transformational experience that provides distinctive opportunities for learning. We aim to make that learning accessible, relevant and enjoyable for all. GEM works with its members and collaboratively with other learning organisations across the UK and internationally to:

- champion excellence in heritage learning and participation enabling people to be inspired by, value and enjoy their and other's heritage;
- advocate the power of heritage learning in transforming people's lives to sector organisations, national agencies, funders and government;
- influence sector organisations to deliver excellent learning and participation for their visitors;
- promote and explain the benefits of learning through heritage which is inclusive, sustainable and respectful of communities;
- develop creative partnerships with other organisations to share effective practice in heritage learning and participation;
- research and pioneer innovation in heritage learning and participation;
- inspire and support the work of heritage learning practitioners;
- provide opportunities for practitioners to develop their practice through networking, mentoring and learning together.

In this Case Studies you will read of educators like our contributor Charlotte Hawkes asking, "Could we successfully interpret the site for the varying needs of each individual?" This personal care for audiences is one of the reasons I admire the GEM community. Educators are great at looking out for the individual, especially when working with young people. Cultural engagement is valuable at all ages, but for children and teenagers it crucially builds empathy, skills and passion to give them the best possible start. I truly believe GEM members have a lifelong impact on the young people with whom they engage.

Another major theme of this issue is, as said by our Museum of London contributors, "Partnership working is powerful and enjoyable!" You will find several examples of educators consulting with schools, co-producing with communities, and linking up with universities and other sectors. They illustrate the importance of breaking out of our bubbles and working together across sectors and audiences.

I hope that GEM's sharing of great projects will motivate you to strengthen your networks and find new partnerships. Pooling our resources to make our work more effective, sustainable and satisfying is at the heart of GEM's *Learning and Sharing Centre* (LSC), our current Arts Council England-funded project.

The LSC has enabled us to develop new training courses at a variety of

levels. Our courses are constructed around discussion, networking and addressing individual experiences to better embed learning and create opportunities. Each course has been developed with the input of our partners and collaborators – so we can vouch for how useful working together is!

The LSC is also funding a redeveloped GEM website. It will make the case for heritage learning, signpost training, suppliers and resources, and share news and good practice; an invaluable online space for all those passionate about learning through heritage. If you prefer in-person opportunities, look out for our area sharing events in the new year and save the date for our LSC celebration conference on Thursday 29 March 2018 at the National Army Museum.

GEM supports your learning and sharing at all stages of your career. But for now, sit back and be inspired by another edition of Case Studies!

Holly Bee

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Becoming a cultural "phone a friend"
Kate Fellows
Leeds Museums and Galleries



Becoming a cultural "phone a friend"

Summary

Can I tell you a story?
Let's begin...

There is an expectation of what will follow ... a story set out, told to an expectant audience. But what if the storyteller said, "I haven't written the story yet, would you like to help me?" Would that be exciting, or unnerving?

Being an Artsmark pilot programme was like that: an expectation altered and a shared journey. It has helped us develop deeper, meaningful relationships with local schools, strengthen our general schools offer, and build capacity (and income) through teacher continuing professional development (CPD).

Background

Leeds Museums and Galleries is an Arts Council England (ACE) major partner museum. We were one of the organisations tasked with experimenting with the idea of an Artsmark Partner. Partner organisations will support schools on their Artsmark journey.

Challenge

We sought to answer:

- How can we use Artsmark to have meaningful conversations with schools?
- How can we make any developments sustainable?
- How can we repackage existing programmes towards Artsmark?
- How can Artsmark improve our offer to all schools?

Approach

Steerage from ACE and initial consultation with schools indicated trying a levelled approach:

- Level 1: accessing existing workshops.
- Level 2: accessing 6–12 week programmes.
- Level 3: accessing staff expertise for long-term joint planning.

This is easily marketable and tradeable. However, deeper conversations with ten schools (primary, secondary, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), Artsmark and non-Artsmark) revealed that, whilst this would work, schools want a sounding board: an arts organisation they could use as a "phone a friend" to connect with the sector in their local area.





Intended outcomes

Experimentation to share learning.

Obstacles and issues

Meeting with the arts leads and heads/deputies it was clear they wanted help engaging with arts and culture. They were bamboozled by marketing from organisations and wanted a “better than Google” option to be a cultural “phone a friend” to help signpost them.

They wanted to:

- Increase the amount of creativity in the curriculum (rather than use it to solve literacy issues), but were unclear on what they meant by “creativity”, and had limited definitions around “arts and culture” (visual art being “painting, drawing and sculpture”).
- Upskill the staff through teacher CPD, but focusing on skills development, rather than increasing confidence to experiment and use artistic processes for cross-curricular activity.

They stressed there was a lack of financial resources to support arts and culture, but always managed to find funding when it was needed, because they value the impact it has on pupils. However, for attainment-focused institutions, they needed support in

developing mechanisms for measuring long-term impacts on softer, non-academic skills.

Actual outcomes

The Artsmark conversations have forged strong partnerships between the schools, Leeds Museums and Galleries and the wider arts and cultural sector. There is recognition that the school or cluster will become more independent and “arts savvy”, needing less input over time.

By helping the schools to write their Artsmark statements of commitment, we gained access to their planning documents, which have helped us shape our wider schools programmes.

Actual outputs

We have developed a new income generating, cluster-based model for artist-led teacher CPD. It runs over an academic year, with twilight workshops every half-term designed to provide the skills the teachers feel they want, but also increase confidence in using

artistic processes. We set challenges to experiment with the practices between workshops and allow planning time in the workshops to foster use in the classroom.

Lessons learned

- Artsmark is a good way of opening the door to strategic discussions with targeted, “arts savvy” schools. Better stronger partnership work will probably lead to more engagements with the arts and cultural sector within the school, and the arts organisations having a better understanding of how formal education settings operate.

- A levelled approach to promoting and supporting Artsmark will work, but the most meaningful engagements will happen with the conversations at the higher levels. This is where we should be aiming with all our local schools.

- It is bigger than us as a service. As part of Artsmark, we are cross-promoting all artforms and organisations across

the city. It strengthens the sector as a whole and makes far more sense if you are a teacher.

Next steps

We are working with our Artsmark schools to develop the place-based Leeds Curriculum, and with other local arts organisations to build more comprehensive, cross-artform teacher CPD.

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Photographic credit:
Sarah Jane Mason, Artist.

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Improving access through *Make & Explore*

Summary

Make & Explore is a two-year programme of participatory art workshops at Williamson Art Gallery & Museum for pre-school children under-five and their parents/carers funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Background

The gallery is situated in Birkenhead, Wirral on the border of two very diverse communities. On one side is affluent Oxton and on the other side are Birkenhead and Tranmere, which together form an area rated as one of the most deprived in the UK.

Challenge

While many local families visit the gallery, the project aims to improve access for those who are facing disadvantage or inequality.

Approach

The project runs through two parallel strands: an introductory programme for invited groups and an open access programme. Working in partnership with local organisations, the introductory programme offers taster sessions in community settings and exclusive workshops at the gallery, tailored to each group's individual needs.

The weekly open access drop-in sessions are supported by Birkenhead children's centres, providing families from our invited groups a first point of contact or a route to continued participation at the gallery. Participants are also recruited via the children's centres' "what's on" guide and door to door leafleting.



Intended outcomes

The project aims to build confidence amongst parents and carers facing disadvantage, helping to raise participants' aspirations and improve access to the collections.

Intended outputs

The project will deliver a two-year programme of participatory workshops, a new children's area in the gallery and two printed celebration documents.

Obstacles and issues

The weekly workshops take place in a purpose-designed corner of the gallery's café with low seating for up to eight children, a carpet area and room dividers, which are used for storage and displaying artwork. Many parents and carers have commented that the space is too small, particularly if they look after



three or more children. A booking system for a limited number of places was trialled but was unsuccessful because some families were reluctant to plan ahead or booked places and didn't attend.

Initially the programme delivered two consecutive workshops; a structured session including a gallery tour for invited families followed by a less structured, open access session. To make the workshops more accessible, the two groups were combined into a free drop-in session over two hours. This works well with families coming and going at different times, although it is sometimes more difficult to incorporate group activities like gallery tours, stories and songs.

Actual outcomes

In 2016, the *Make & Explore* programme

engaged 127 families (176 children), 44% of which live in an area rated within the 10% most deprived in the United Kingdom. Many of these families had never been to the gallery previously but have become regular visitors.

Parents and carers have enjoyed being able to take part in the activities, gain new creative ideas and socialise while their children have fun and get messy. They also commented that the workshops have helped their children develop communication, social and fine motor skills and have helped them to become more confident with new people.

Actual outputs

In addition to the workshops and the new children's area, mobile "discovery boxes" encourage

interactive exploration of the exhibitions, *The Silver Knight* story book introduces the gallery's collections in a fun way and a free *Get Crafty at Home* booklet inspires creative play beyond the workshops.

Lessons learned

- Recruitment of our target families has been most successful through working in partnership with local organisations that support families in need.
- Families appreciate the flexibility of drop-in workshops.
- Many families have been inspired to participate in creative activities at home following the workshops and a *Get Crafty at Home* booklet has given parents and carers the confidence to experiment with new ideas.
- When a workshop gets very busy, it is useful to have alternative activities available such as mobile discovery boxes and trails around the gallery to keep late arrivals engaged while they wait for space to become available and to draw children away from the activities when needed.

Next steps

The gallery will continue working in partnership with local organisations and seeking new partnerships to extend the reach of the project and will be trialling a monthly workshop for childminders in a larger space to ease participant numbers for the open access sessions.

Additional ideas for development include making more use of the gallery's outdoor space when work is completed on the Quad courtyard and designing mobile creative play tables to provide children with further opportunities for interacting with the collections.

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Explore Inspire Engage

A multisensory adventure

Summary

The Strawberry Hill House (SHH) Explore Inspire Engage project (EIE) interpreted the historic house and gardens for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties using site-specific resources, supporting learning through discovery.

Background

Strawberry Hill House and Garden, run as a charitable trust, is a restored eighteenth-century Gothic Revival castle in Twickenham, Greater London. The eccentric interiors are inherently sensory and the rooms predominantly empty. Prior to this project, the learning department did not run specific visits for special schools, but did engage with people with disabilities through outreach projects and as part of mainstream school visits.

EIE worked in partnership with a local state-maintained special school, with participants aged 11 to 18 with a learning age of between 6 months and 4 years. The project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and developed and delivered by SHH education team.

Challenge

There is demand from special schools for bespoke, tailored visits to

stimulating heritage environments. How could we support teachers and pupils (especially those on the autism spectrum) to feel confident to access this new environment? Could we successfully interpret the house for the varying needs of each individual?

Approach

Close and collaborative partnership working with the pilot school. Pupils

had the unique opportunity of exclusive access to a historic property. The experience was centred on a tour of the property in the form of a multi-sensory story. Teachers then selected additional activities from a menu e.g. dressing up in period costume and sewing "magic" beans in the garden – making the sessions a truly immersive experience.



Intended outcomes

- Utilise the unique setting to inspire and stimulate pupils' imaginations.
- Increase range and accessibility of heritage education at SHH.
- Develop a blueprint that could be adapted for use with other special schools/units.

Intended outputs

- Extending the Learning Outside the Classroom experience (LOtC) to young people with severe/complex learning difficulties across all secondary classes at partner school.
- The development, in house, of a multi-sensory story with an A3 image of each room, line of a story, and accompanying Makaton and associated sensory experience. Also, additional supporting resources, such as communication aids.
- Basic Makaton training.

Obstacles and issues

- Conservation issues arose as a result of a multi-million pound restoration, which includes delicate wall coverings, lead paint and fragile stair decorations.
- Some young people were very dynamic and had potential to experience sensory overload which was carefully managed in the interior environment and counterbalanced by the use of the exterior as a breakout space.
- The house had to be closed to the public.
- Engaging volunteers to work on this special project was also challenging and we needed a high ratio of regular support and commitment throughout.

Actual outcomes

- "The unique project we undertook with Strawberry Hill House was so beneficial for the pupils due to its very personalised nature. I have worked in the special needs field since 1998 and have never previously experienced a time when our pupils have been given the opportunity to explore such a historic venue in a way that motivates

and meets their individual needs. Teachers returned from each session giving such enthusiastic feedback, pupils continued to talk about the sessions for weeks after the event." (head of secondary)

- SHH staff and volunteers reported that being involved in the project was hugely rewarding.
- Staff and children expressed enthusiasm to return.
- Staff gained expertise in the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) field which could be adapted to other schools and settings.
- Individual positive outcomes, for example, one student with very complex needs and 2:1 support was the most engaged school staff had ever seen her.

Actual outputs

- 85 children (all nine secondary classes) from the partner school visited and engaged with LOtC at SHH.
- Duplicate sensory story at school was useful for pre-trip preparation.
- Expertise and resources available to enhance the visit of SEND visitors within the mainstream school offering.
- All staff and volunteers involved attended Makaton training.

Lessons learned

- Detailed liaison with teachers prior to each workshop is imperative and flexibility on the day is key, particularly due to pupils demonstrating unpredictable behaviour.
- High staff/volunteer ratio for delivery, small class group size and exclusive access to the house mean that per pupil costs would be restrictive, therefore the programme must continue to be funded or heavily subsidised to be financially viable.
- Quantitative data for evaluation is challenging to collect from participants with communication



difficulties. Longer term assessment is required over repeated visits.

- It was possible to develop one core offer that could be successfully adapted to suit all learners of hugely varying abilities and needs: "It really was a carefully thought out and expertly tailored experience that met the needs of our kids bang on!" (class teacher)

Next steps

The partner school is keen to return and the impact of repetition on learning and confidence for their pupils is key. "We need more and more experiences like this as their relationship with the environment is so important." (head of secondary). The workshops are also already in demand from another local special school. SHH aspires to become a centre of best practice for pioneering work with special schools and is currently seeking funding to continue the legacy of this project.

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Amazing Accrington

Summary

The aim was to embed Accrington town centre's heritage into local schools' curriculum through the creation of a film and augmented reality teaching resource (Aura), with Peel Park Primary School as a pilot.

Historic research provided new digital material and clear links to further sources to broaden topics and encourage families to explore their town centre further.



Background

Commissioned by Hyndburn Borough Council (HBC) as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) to enhance the public realm and townscape and engage the community with their local heritage. Peel Park School is walking distance from the centre of Accrington. Seventeen per cent of its 600 pupils have a first language other than English.

Challenge

The lack of awareness of the local town centre's rich heritage and the potential for schools to draw upon teaching

material from further afield, rather than on their doorstep. The challenge was to nurture an enthusiasm for their local heritage by engaging staff and pupils in the resource development and creation throughout.

Approach

The THI officer approached Peel Park Primary's governing body and headteacher. Once commitment to the project was assured, the class teacher was chosen as the school representative. The school representative was closely involved through the development of the project brief, the freelance consultant's appointment, selection of curriculum research topics and film production.

- Once appointed, the consultant, school representative and external filming company met to discuss film content and format.
- Historic and location research.
- Day's filming.
- Post production, script development, voiceover, writing session plans.
- Film, Aura and session plans delivered. Final versions ready for use in the school's curriculum from January 2017.



Intended outcomes

- Develop children's knowledge of, and pride in, the history of their town and school.
- Engage local families in the Townscape Heritage Scheme through their children's involvement in the project *Amazing Accrington*.

Intended outputs

- Ten-minute teaching film with supporting lesson plans for history for 5 to 7-year-olds and science for 7 to 11-year-olds.
- *Amazing Accrington Aura* for class use on iPads and tablets, supported by suggestions for use in the geography curriculum.
- Step by step instructions for children to create further Auras.

Obstacles and issues

School technology (iPads and internet connection) proved problematic initially. The class teacher spent a lot of time on this aspect. The term in which the project fell was short, resulting in limited time to teach all sessions or disseminate them to all teaching staff. However, this will be resolved in future years as staff become more familiar with the range of teaching material.

Actual outcomes

All original outcomes were achieved. The teacher reported that children had become passionate about Accrington following their involvement in the project.

Actual outputs

The video was uploaded to the class blog and shared with families at home. Cross curricular links were made with art, geography and information technology (IT). Children created a 3D junk model town and some used Digimaps to position the roads in the town centre. The children also used Digimaps to map out their route of the AcornTrail on return from the walk. They created additional auras relating to other aspects of Accrington. Children created an *Amazing Accrington* scrapbook, which they filled with facts, pictures, opinions, stories, etcetera. The teacher created a homework questionnaire to see if adults worked in Accrington or other nearby towns. They also looked at transport links within Accrington.

Lessons learned

The project would have benefited from additional face to face time between the teacher and consultant to overcome IT difficulties.

Next steps

The film was presented to other local schools with a view to recreating the first part to focus on their individual history. To date, two other schools have signed up for this.

Trizia Wells

Freelance heritage consultant

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Schools support learning volunteer programme

Summary

The Natural History Museum's (NHM) main entrance and Hintze Hall, where thousands of schoolchildren with teachers are used to accessing the building, were closed for refurbishment making way-finding more difficult. We established a schools support learning volunteer (SSLV) role addressing these issues and enhancing their learning.

Background

NHM is a leading school visit site for engaging with science and the natural world. The schools support role was created in late 2016 so volunteers can assist school groups, getting them to where they need to go and inspiring them with specimens to begin their on-site learning.

Challenge

- Anticipating the impacts that the main entrance and Hintze Hall closure would have on school groups in order to develop the role and provide appropriate training.
- Understanding the challenges of bringing schools to the museum and addressing some of them.
- Assisting school visit leaders to get promptly and easily to where they need to be.
- Effectively supporting volunteers in a fast-paced and demanding role.

Approach

Many schools have lengthy or difficult journeys to NHM. We did not want to compound this with worry about logistics of getting around a museum where orientation has changed. Training encouraged volunteers to find ways of helping groups either to engage with specimens or to move in haste to their next location.



Intended outcomes

- School visits are not hampered by changes to museum layout.
- Enriching school-group visits.
- Return visits from schools and children bringing families.

Intended outputs

- Helpfulness, expertise and use of objects reach young people effectively.
- Relationships with schools are built and strengthened.

Obstacles and issues

Reflecting on the first training sessions and role descriptions, it was challenging to design them because we did not know what life would be like post-Hintze Hall and main entrance closure until they actually closed.



Schools support volunteers fed back that they needed more orientation training themselves. Some found that the role description was accurate and volunteering in this role was what they expected while others did not. This will be revised for future recruits.

The extension of the role to existing learning volunteers who wanted to take part also helped as they could share their way-finding experience. Making the role enjoyable for volunteers in the quiet moments was also an issue. This was addressed by giving them portable museum specimens so that they could have learning interactions in quiet moments when they were not needed to help schools get from A to B.

Actual outcomes

The outcomes we wished to explore were met, based on observable evidence teacher feedback and volunteers' own role evaluation:

- The bespoke approach provided by volunteers has been very much appreciated by teachers, students and museum staff.
- The role has expanded the reach of the learning volunteer programme still further.

- Relationships with the school groups across the span of their visit have been consolidated.
- It has transpired that micro-opportunities have arisen for learning en route from entry to the museum to the workshops.

"It's rewarding ... teachers appreciate someone to take them."

Actual outputs

Teachers (and staff) have all voiced how helpful and knowledgeable the SSLVs are and are really appreciative of them taking the time to engage them with museum specimens while they are waiting in queues or for their workshops.

"When I get the school to where they're going I get them to do a big dinosaur roar ... they love it!"

"Great fun overall. I love coming in."

Lessons learned

- When you are planning for something which has never happened before on such a scale (closure of entrance and hall) you're never going to be able to predict everything, so training and encouraging volunteers to discuss issues and problem-solve is invaluable.



- Ensure that volunteers have meaningful and rewarding tasks which they can take up in quiet moments but can quickly abandon should the rush begin again.
- Managing the huge number of children and adults on and around the galleries presents huge logistical challenges from an operational, health & safety and facilitative stance. Continued support from a dedicated operational manager to support each day is essential.
- Familiarising volunteers with key members of staff aids things to run smoothly.

Next steps

Now that Hintze Hall and the main entrance have been re-opened, we will be looking to evaluate the whole six months and potentially change and enhance the role, perhaps concentrating even more on learning interactions relating to the activities that the schools are about to undertake or have just done.

Oomar Dhuru and Leonie Biggenden
Learning volunteer engagement managers, Natural History Museum

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Increasing secondary school visits

at Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery

Summary

Maintaining and increasing school visits from 11 to 16-year-old students has become increasingly difficult over the last few years. Schools dislike students and teachers missing other lessons for a day, the cost of transport and covering staff, the paperwork ... the list is endless! Nevertheless, my role is to maintain and increase the number of school visits to our museum.

Background

In 2012-13 we had hosted a total of 24 secondary schools (1,626 students), but more and more schools were cancelling bookings or no longer rebooking.

In September 2013 we offered two events for 14 to 16-year-olds to support the history curriculum, "Medicine Through Time" and "Crime and Punishment" (Norwich Castle has been a gaol/prison for most of its history). These events brought in 9 school visits (506 students) to the castle.

We also offered four events for ages 11 to 14; "Storming the Castle" (a maths and medieval history event), a Norman conquest event (the castle was built by the Normans during the

conquest), a geography event, and a history of slavery day. These events brought in 15 schools (1,120 students).

Challenge

As a former history school teacher, I knew we would need to offer events closely-knit to the national curriculum and exam board specifications, in order to increase bookings of activities delivered outside the classroom and that would impact positively on students' attainment.

Approach

A new history GCSE was announced for September 2016. I started researching the new specifications from exam boards, looking out for any topics that fitted our buildings and collections. I discovered that "medicine" and "crime and punishment" were still being offered as thematic studies but also Anglo-Saxon and Norman England was being offered as one of the new British depth studies – bingo!



Intended outcomes

I therefore made notes from all relevant specifications and textbooks for those studies, looking for content that applied to all the main exam boards before planning and resourcing events that we could then offer to all schools regardless of what exam board they were with.

Intended outputs

To increase the number of secondary school visits to the castle.

Obstacles and issues

We could offer the castle as a site for a new historic environment study, unfortunately, only one out of three exam boards allowed schools to choose their own sites (provided they fulfilled 14 criteria points and offered additional historical sources to help

study the site). At a conference on the new GCSE I met with OCR exam board history subject advisor, Mike Goddard, who recommended outlining how the castle could fulfil these criteria points.

Once I started my research, I realised that I could put together a resource pack for teachers. During this time, I worked with the head of history from two local schools who were interested in the castle as their site study, this was to ensure our offer would work for them. The resource pack, complete with links to additional historical sources, was then placed on our website for teachers to download. I also sent it to the OCR exam board and met with another advisor, Grant Robertson, who used the pack as an exemplar. I then planned and resourced an event for schools to accompany their studies.

Actual outcomes

By summer 2016 we had in place four events for ages 14 to 16, which offered two updated and two new curriculum based events. We publicised these in a new *Secondary Schools'* programme along with our updated events for 11 to 14-year-olds. The programme was sent to all heads of history in; Norfolk, Suffolk, north Essex, west Cambridgeshire and south east Lincolnshire.

Actual outputs

In 2016-17 the number of secondary school visits to our site increased

dramatically compared to four years ago. In total 39 schools (2,636 students) visited, that is 15 schools (1,010 students) more than four years ago. Breaking the figures down, we had 20 school visits from 1,608 students aged 11 to 14, an increase of 5 schools (488 students). We had 19 school visits from 1,028 students aged 14 to 16, an increase of 10 schools (522 students). The real winner was historic environment, which had an increase of 7 schools (436 students) on its own.

Lessons learned

- Research the national curriculum and exam board specifications for topics linked to your museum.
- Plan and resource activities that can't be delivered by teachers in classrooms, such as: costumed tours of your buildings or collections, weapons workshops, object handling, and drama-led activities.
- Liaise with subject advisors and teachers to ensure your events are accurate and wanted.
- Publicise far and wide, your museum or event may be the only one of its type in your area.

Next steps

Our next steps are to improve our events using evaluations made by teachers and students from this first year, and also to offer events for 16 to 18-year-olds!

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National curriculum: www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum

OCR: www.ocr.org.uk

Edexcel: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/>

AQA: www.aqa.org.uk





Run by students for families

Science festivals at the Museum of London

Summary

A family science festival created by students.

Background

Museum of London tells the story of London from the first settlers to modern times. The science communication unit at Imperial College London offers Master of Science (MSc) degree programmes which combine academic perspectives with practical training in communications disciplines (including museums).

Challenge

Museum of London runs a series of family learning festivals and was interested in developing one with a science theme, not a subject typically explored at the museum, to coincide with British Science Week. The team wanted expertise to help families explore science in an imaginative way.

Approach

Members of the learning department pitched an opportunity to the MSc students: develop family learning activities exploring science in the museum's collection. Students could work individually or in groups and together their activities would create the *Family Learning Festival*.

Interested students were supported with workshops run by the museum about the museum's collections,

spaces and family audiences. Students pitched ideas and, supported by the learning department, developed and delivered their activities. Students were paid expenses and allocated a small materials budget.

The project has run for two consecutive years. In the first, the students' brief looked at science in general. In the second they were asked to link activities to the Great Fire of London, to tie in with a temporary exhibition.



Intended outcomes

For families:

- be exposed to young science experts (male and female) – inspiring children to consider science as a possible career;
- enjoy and be inspired by STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) activities;
- have a memorable day out doing things together as a family.

For MSc students:

- experience creating age-appropriate family learning experiences;
- see first-hand how the activities are received and enjoyed.

Intended outputs

A two-day *Family Learning Festival* that attracts new audiences to the museum because of its scientific theme.

Obstacles and issues

Finding a date – British Science Week could not be moved, but we had to select a weekend within it that was least difficult for students' deadlines. More students could have been recruited if we had run the event at a different time of year.

Actual outcomes

Asked what they would remember about the day in evaluation of the second year, visitors cited all seven of the students' activities, suggesting they were all uniquely memorable.



They also said they'd remember "Spending time together and learning new things" and the "lovely first introduction to science".

Asked about how it made them feel about science, comments included: "Fun, approachable" and "Lots of science experiments can be simply done at home, similar to experiments we did together".

Asked about the museum, comments included: "caught their imagination", "I thought it would be interesting but it was actually awesome" and "More family friendly than I remembered it".

Students across both years reflected on what they had learned. Comments included: "... you have to be really adaptable and intuitive in the way that you interact with every person that comes to the stall – a skill that I've really enjoyed developing" and "... some activities are more age specific than others..."

Students also commented on unplanned, but valuable, learning outcomes – for example one student noted that they now understood the roles available in museums more clearly.

Actual outputs

Students designed and delivered stalls that connected science to the museum's collection for families to explore. In the second year for example, there were stalls on surface

area and volume using geometry nets, sensory ecology and how different animals react when there's a fire, non-Newtonian fluids (aka custard!), engineering the perfect fire engine with a specially designed app, material properties during a fire, and lab experiments about the three key ingredients of fire.

Over 3,000 family visitors attended the activities.

54% of the visitors came to the museum for the first time. 57% had come specifically for the event (a significantly higher percentage than normal festivals).

Lessons learned

The most significant lesson we learned was about the power of giving the students creative freedom. They came up with ideas that were beyond what we would have achieved individually, and the quality and variation in their ideas meant that there was a real diversity of experience on offer to families.

The tighter brief given to students in the second year proved even more inspiring, and made the second festival distinct from the first.

The biggest challenge was about understanding students' needs for support. We supported idea development and gave training in basic child protection practice, but

on reflection, we could have done more to enhance their confidence on working with family audiences. For example, one student had a family who were challenging to work with and going over "worst case scenarios" and how museum staff would work in those scenarios would have helped the student in question to feel in control of the situation.

Importantly, museum staff got to work with university students in a different way; really capitalising on their interest and skills in communicating science. The enthusiasm for the project, and of the students during the festival was infectious; inspiring museum staff and families alike.

Partnership working is powerful and enjoyable!

Next steps

Go for coffee and plan another event!

Sarah Castle

Learning partnerships manager, RAF Museum (formerly, programme manager, Museum of London)

Felicity Crimes

New museum project co-ordinator, Museum of London

Simone Few

Families learning programme manager, Museum of London (formerly higher education programme co-ordinator)

Alexandra Fitzsimmons

Lecturer in museum studies, Imperial College London

Photographic credit: Museum of London

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Curious Curators

Summary

In July 2016, four Oxford University Museums secured funding from the University Partnership's Innovation Fund for a project working with primary schools in economically and socially deprived areas. *Curious Curators* was the result of the collaboration between education officers at the Pitt Rivers, Oxford Museum of Natural History, Museum of History of Science and the Ashmolean.

Background

The sessions had their origins in a six-week project designed by Carly Smith-Huggins. A shorter version was later trialled by Clare Coleman at the Ashmolean, which formed the basis of the new sessions. Schools took part in

two workshops. In the first, children learnt about the functions of a museum and the different jobs people have. They were then introduced to different ways of engaging with museum objects. They were given objects to research back in school and returned to give a presentation on their findings.

Challenge

Education officers were concerned that some schools, particularly those in areas of high socio-economic deprivation, were under increasing financial pressure, resulting in fewer visits. Charging for primary workshops was introduced in April 2016.

Approach

We aimed to create new school partnerships and strengthen existing ones through free, high quality, curriculum-based sessions. Collaboration would allow us to share ideas, contacts and good practice.



Intended outcomes

- Strengthen links to schools in areas of high socio-economic deprivation in Oxford and the county.
- Use objects and paintings to build enquiry, research and presentation skills.
- Develop pupils' understanding of how museums work and the different roles people have.
- Develop pupils' confidence in learning from objects.

Intended outputs

- 32 sessions across 8 schools to 480 pupils from 8 to 10 years old.
- Reusable workshop resources.

Obstacles and issues

Whilst we were able to successfully target a number of schools in areas of high socio-economic deprivation within Oxford, it proved difficult to recruit schools from outside the city. Transport costs seemed to be a key factor.



We realised that we had an incomplete picture of the schools that each museum had previously worked with.

Funding for the project was secured late in the summer term; we had a limited time to plan the project together. This meant some aspects of the planning, for example, evaluation felt rather hurried.

Actual outcomes

- We were able to share contacts between the museums. This enabled institutions to work with schools that were new to them.
- Links with existing partnership schools were strengthened; particularly important in schools with high staff turnover.
- Our post-session surveys showed that most children felt confident about finding out about objects in museums and wanted to bring friends and family to the museums.
- The quality of presentations was high with school refusers sticking with the project.
- All teachers who responded to our questionnaire felt that the project gave children the opportunity to develop their presentation, research and enquiry skills.

Actual outputs

- 28 sessions were delivered across 7 schools to 420 pupils from 8 to 10 years old.



• We commissioned photography, across all four museums, from a professional photographer. This bank of photographs is vital for reporting to funders but also useful for future marketing.

• We were able to fund the development of new school workshop resources, including costumes, props and handling objects.

• New workshops have been established at the Museum of History of Science and the Pitt Rivers, based on *Curious Curators*.

• Social media coverage via posts from schools.

Lessons learned

We need to factor transport costs into future projects if we want to target schools from outside the city.

Evaluation: although we had a good response rate from pupils and teachers (62% of children and 71% of adults), we should have planned for qualitative and quantitative data from the outset.

Teachers want sessions closely linked to the curriculum, so we need to be specific about these links to justify visits.

Collaboration works! Our sessions were better and we were more successful in reaching our objectives as a result of sharing ideas, information and best practice.

The teachers and children really appreciated having an opportunity to come away from the classroom environment to deliver the

presentations; each museum provided a unique and distinctive performance space for children.

Next steps

Two of the museums have developed new school workshops based on the *Curious Curators* workshops.

The primary education officers from the four museums now share and update information about schools we have worked with on a regular basis.

We are also very keen to continue working together on future projects.

Helen Pooley
Primary education officer,
Museum History of Science

Clare Coleman
Primary education officer,
Ashmolean

Chris Jarvis
Primary education officer, Oxford
Museum of Natural History

Rebecca Mcvean
Primary education officer,
Pitt Rivers Museum

Photographic credit:
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rebecca.mcvean@prm.ox.ac.uk

Blogs (MHS, Pitt Rivers)

<http://blogs.mhs.ox.ac.uk/insidemhs/>

<http://pitrivers-education.blogspot.co.uk/2017/03/city-primary-schools-get-to-be-curious.html>

Curious Curators Report

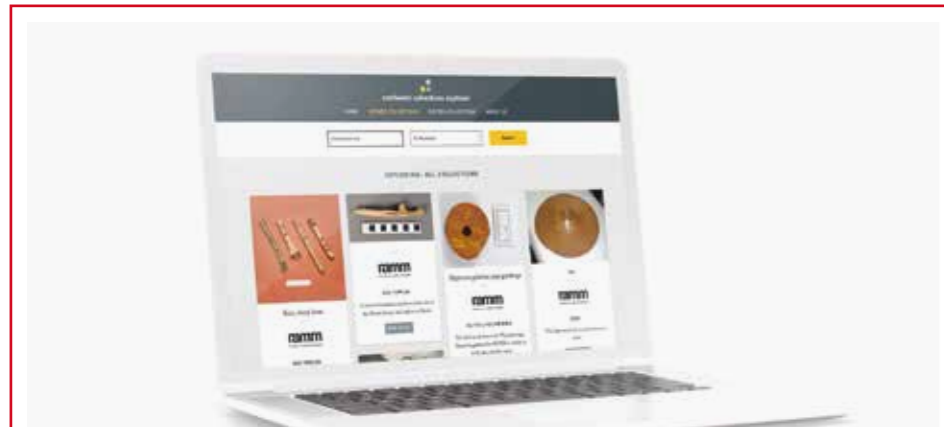
www.mhs.ox.ac.uk/education/special-projects/curious-curators-2016-2017/

www.ashmolean.org/education/specialprojects/



South West Collections Explorer

Creating a regional collections resource



Summary

The Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery (RAMM) led on the creation of *South West Collections Explorer* (SWCE) an interactive regional museum collections website. It is a one-stop shop for museum collections in the south west.

Background

As an Arts Council England major partner museum alongside Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, RAMM had ambitions to improve digital access to its collections and to others in the south west.

Challenge

- Collections weren't easily accessible online making it difficult for educators, community groups, researchers and

members of the public to find out what was available, or share or enthuse about museum collections online or on social media.

- You couldn't search multiple museum collections in the south west to find out about objects related to a specific theme or interest.

- Researchers didn't have a way of capturing information about collections in one place.

Approach

- SWCE acts as an aggregator for participating museums.

- It meets the Collections Trust Spectrum standard.

- Content is presented using a WordPress website that can be navigated using any browser to make it as intuitive as possible.

Intended outcomes

- Enhance visitor experience by providing extra interpretation and curated content.
- Improve access to collections for visitors and researchers.
- Provide a regional platform for other museums to put their collections online.
- Inspire people and enhance learning opportunities using collections.

Intended outputs

- A simple search which works for users who are used to Google, and doesn't require pre-knowledge of the collection.
- Europeana and other aggregators to be able to incorporate content using an API.
- Scope for commenting and tagging by users.

Obstacles and issues

- The SWCE website was moved to WordPress because the previous platform's provider was changing its business model. This was unexpected and RAMM worked with Thirty8 Digital to produce a new website.
- A core part of SWCE is being able to import from a collections management system. Not all such systems provide an export feature and some are in a non-standard format.



- Museums in the south west have a range of digital skills, therefore additional support with uploading content has been needed.

Actual outcomes

- SWCE has been updated with 13,000 objects, some of which have extra interpretation including videos. This has enhanced the experience of visitors to the museum.
- We have learnt more about the collections and unearthed great stories from the researchers using the site.
- The SWCE is currently being used by "Daisi", an arts inspired learning organisation in Devon working on a project called "Museum Machina", which aims to engage young people and artists with new digital art techniques, and has been exploring how museum collections (both on and offline) can be used as inspiration for this creative process.

- Community groups have worked with staff to use themed groups of objects.

Actual outputs

- The website enables staff and visitors to group objects by themes. This enables the provision of selected web content for use on kiosks in exhibitions or digital resources for events such as dementia workshops that use object images and information.
- A limited number of fields are used for each object to make the search result look more user friendly for the non-specialist.
- Records and images to have their own URI.
- The API links content to other RAMM websites and includes features such as "Object of the Day".
- Income generation opportunities arose from the licenced and print images.

Lessons learned

- Open source software meant no licence costs year on year.
- We kept testing usability throughout and after development to ensure the website helps staff and visitors.
- Not all collections management systems provide an easy export feature.
- Having flexible fields helped income generation opportunities.
- Set aside some budget for promotion to raise awareness of the product.

"I haven't been to any of the museums before, except one in London, I didn't even know they had an online collection" Young person participating in the Museum Machina project.

"South West Collections Explorer has proved to be a valuable platform for providing digital access to our collections. We have used it to showcase a selection of star items from across our holdings. It has helped us to reach audiences who do not engage with museum objects in more traditional ways." Amal Kreisheh, assistant curator, Somerset County Council.

Next steps

- RAMM is raising awareness of the SWCE amongst visitors to the museum.
- Content will be carried across to Europeana using the API. This work is enabled by the Collections Trust.

Rick Lawrence
Digital media officer, Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery

Further information

Contact:

RAMM is keen to welcome other museums to add their collections to the website. Please contact rick.lawrence@exeter.gov.uk for more information.

<http://swcollectionsexplorer.org.uk>



Who's in the room?

Co-production as a leadership model

Summary

An investigation into best practice and the role of leaders within co-production; addressing how we lead whilst genuinely sharing responsibility, decision-making and ownership with project stakeholders.

Background

Co-production with communities and audiences is very much in vogue in the arts and heritage sector and beyond. As part of a research project for Engage's Extend leadership course, we undertook research into best practice in the sector.

Challenge

We sought to explore what is best practice in co-production. How can we define co-production? What are the central tenets? What are the benefits for audiences and organisations? What are the challenges? What kind of leadership is required to do co-production well?

Approach

Project participants (cultural learning professionals from museums, dance organisations and theatre) undertook interviews with identified leaders in the field of co-production.

Geographically dispersed, we committed to meeting face to face to share learning from our interviews.

Intended outcomes

The outcome was to understand more about our own leadership practice through working together and interviewing leaders in the field.

Intended outputs

- Completion of Belbin Team Role assessment for each of the five participants (this included a self-assessment and observations from colleagues).
- Presentation at Workforce Development Conference in Brighton (November 2016).
- #MuseumHour discussion on co-production.

Obstacles and issues

Being geographically widely dispersed made regular face to face meetings difficult.

Undertaking interviews did not suit the natural team roles of all participants.

A focus on best practice in co-production at times obscured the bigger question of leadership styles within the co-production model.

Balancing the workload of the project alongside full-time jobs and parental responsibilities proved difficult.

Actual outcomes

Final report summarising our findings on co-production and leadership styles within this model.

Actual outputs

- Completion of Belbin Team Role assessment for each of the five participants (this included a self-assessment and observations from colleagues).

- Presentation at Workforce Development Conference in Brighton (November 2016).
- Delivered a session for Museums Association's curating and visual studies students from University of Richmond to share expertise.

Lessons learned

- Co-production goes by many names and can be difficult to define.
- True co-production often requires a radical rethink of the way an organisation operates.
- Within any project, it is important to respect different individuals' roles and personalities.
- Giving a project space to evolve naturally is important, having the freedom to continuously refine and adapt throughout the project ensures that all participants' voices continue to be heard throughout the process.

Next steps

- Session proposal submitted to Museums Association conference 1 March.
- Siobhan Davies dance co-production workshop.

Katherine McAlpine

Further information

Storify: <https://storify.com/museumgirlldn/workforce-development-conference>

A full report will be made available on the Engage Extend website: <http://engage.org/page.aspx?p=1249>



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- *Fundraising and Income Generation*

"The workshop that I attended really helped me give a structure to ideas, thoughts, knowledge and networking for partnerships"

Advanced workshop:

The Learning Curve – How leading a learning museum can transform your business is for those in leadership positions, such as managers, directors and trustees.

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