

Case Studies

Young People

Vol.28 2022



Editorial

Welcome to the 28th edition of the GEM Case Studies, on the theme of young people in museums, heritage sites and cultural organisations. We are so pleased to share such an eclectic range of case studies showcasing best practice from around the UK and beyond, with contributions from museums, galleries, heritage sites and more. We're especially delighted that some of the articles included in this edition have been written by young participants themselves.

Thank you to Kids in Museums for their guest editorial on this publication, and their ongoing commitment to developing a sector that is welcoming to children, teenagers and families.

GEM hopes that this publication offers inspiration, motivation, and important lessons for any individual or organisation seeking to expand their engagement with young people.

Jessica England

GEM Communications Manager

This edition of GEM Case Studies focuses on how museums worked with young people during the pandemic and how they can now build on this to engage them in a post-pandemic world.

In Spring 2021, the Children's Commissioner for England received over half a million responses from children and young people aged 4–17 to a survey about their post-pandemic future. In many respects, the picture painted is unsurprising. Children and young people said they wanted happy families, better support for mental health, access to good education and training, and paths into fulfilling careers.

However, what's more striking is how outwardly focused the young people were. They were keen to see strong local communities with great facilities and activities. Moreover, they wanted to work together to create a greener, fairer more equal world for themselves and future generations.

Looking at these case studies, it's clear museums are starting to address these priorities, particularly around training and careers. Through paid opportunities, work experience and co-creation, organisations such as Norfolk Museums Service and Oxford University Museum of Natural History are offering young people training and support to develop valuable skills for employment, not just for careers in museums, but in any field.

Although there is a necessary focus on diversifying the museum workforce, broader skills development for employability for all young people is currently essential. While youth unemployment rates have recently started to drop, young people – especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those who are autistic or have a learning disability – still need more support to find and stay in good quality jobs.



According to Young Minds, 80% of young people say their mental health became worse during the pandemic. While museums cannot be expected to fill gaps in NHS services, they can play a valuable role as part of a range of community support.

Programmes like Living Museums at Perth and Kinross Museum can reduce isolation and give young people space to reflect creatively on their experiences, and more of this type of work is needed.

What's clear from these case studies is that museums are spending more time listening to young people. This is leading to approaches that engage them in popular and familiar formats such as the Escape Room at Headstone Manor, which change young people's perceptions of museums.

These conversations also offer a shared space where young people and museum staff can come together and develop goals for positive change, giving young people the outward focus and stake in the future they want. They also address one of the key barriers to encouraging more young people to visit museums – relevance. According to 2020 research into DCMS sponsored museums in London, only 12% of 16–24 year olds felt they told stories that were relevant to them.

As an increasing number of museums collaborate with young people, Kids in Museums hopes to see more of them perceiving museums as important and accessible community organisations. We also hope to see more museums working alongside young people to address challenges such as the climate emergency and social and racial justice, moving closer to being the relevant organisations young people want and need.

Alison Bowyer,
Kids in Museums

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Working With Young People as a School Holiday Provision

Summary

Bolton Museum provided a four week Holiday Club with arts and culture based activities for 20 young people, with assistance from the Holiday Activity Fund Offer. The purpose was to enhance cultural provision for young people aged 11–16 in an area of relatively high deprivation.

Background

Bolton Museum has a strong learning and programmes offer. However, the Holiday Activity Fund, provided us with an opportunity to work with young people in a targeted and different way.

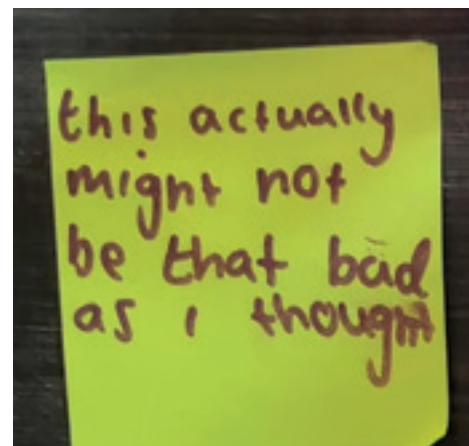
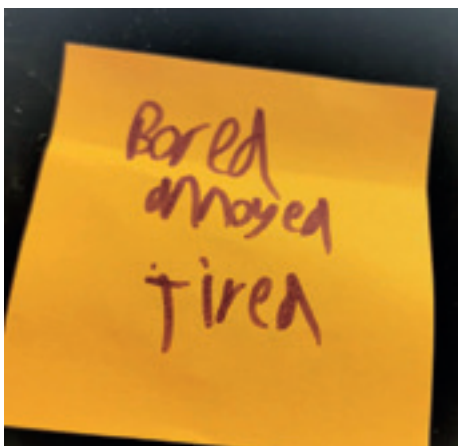
We recruited 60% young people on Free School Meals (FSM), the other places were filled by other young people who their school felt would benefit from a place including young people with physical and learning disabilities and children in care.

We were supported in our offer by Bolton Council Youth and Play Services and Curious Minds NW.

Challenge

How would we find young people on FSM and persuade them to join?

How could we ensure young people enjoyed the project enough to return each week and how could we change their perceptions of our service?



Approach

We designed an exciting, culturally engaging programme which had a direct link to our buildings, galleries and collections.

We linked with some exciting partners and sought to provide engaging and fun activities each day. The activities were designed with the age group in mind and we started with an attention grabbing week – creating a Horror Film in an, allegedly, haunted Historic Hall.

Intended outcomes

- Better engagement enabling us to discover exactly what young people enjoy.
- Organising sessions that young people would continue to come back for.
- Strengthening our ability to work with and engage with young people.
- Finding new members for our Youth Forum.

Intended outputs

Continued engagement and take up of the offer, and an improved attitude towards the service from local young people following participation in the activities.

Obstacles and issues

Reaching young people on FSM is difficult. We targeted all the Secondary Schools in the area but only engaged with 3.

We had 6 weeks to plan, devise, and recruit. We achieved it but with difficulty.

One of our buildings is in a remote location. This caused transport problems for a number of families so taxis had to be provided.

We started with an exciting but difficult week of activity. In hindsight starting with simpler activities and getting to know everyone first would have been beneficial.

Support from schools is essential to finding and recruiting your cohort



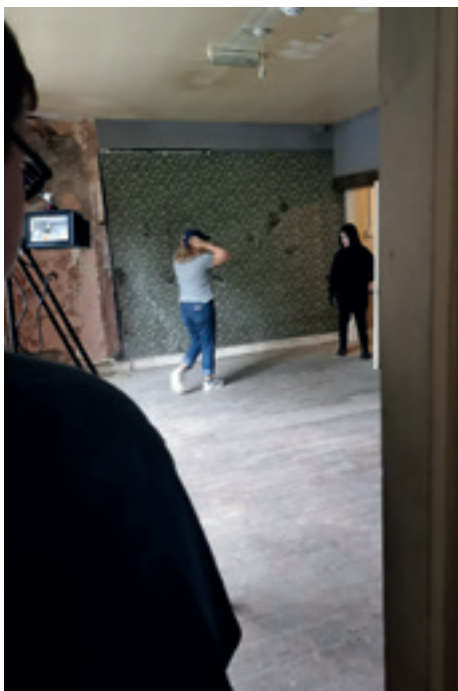
Staff were challenged by participant behaviour, which was sometimes unpredictable, but this was dealt with effectively.

Actual outcomes

Evaluation revealed that perceptions could be changed quickly – on the first morning one participant wrote that they were “bored, annoyed and tired” by the afternoon this had changed to “this might not be as bad as I thought”.

One parent shared about their son’s experience “He has surprised himself... as he is the first to admit art and creativity do not come easy to him... The sessions have helped him become more independent and sociable as he tends to be a little shy”.

When asked how they were feeling now Summer School had come to an end one participant said “sad, but happy because of the memories”.



Some initially reluctant participants have signed up to attend a second time, and one participant was seen visiting again independently, bringing their family.

In addition, our own staff learnt a lot about working intensively with young people and the challenges and positives it brings and has ignited a new confidence.

Actual outputs

All participants engaged and attended regularly – drop out was very low.

Lessons learned

- Preparation is key – time is needed to plan, devise and deliver such a huge project. Although we managed to get it done, it was a lot of work and very stressful.
- Support from schools is essential to finding and recruiting your cohort, without the support from the schools we would have struggled to recruit.
- Partnerships are incredibly important. Our links with some incredible partners enabled us to devise an amazing programme. However, going forward, we would engage with Youth Services more and will, in future, have a Youth Worker as part of the project.



Next steps

The Project will continue for another 4 days at Christmas 2021. Beyond this, we intend to use the lessons learned and the most popular aspects of the activities to feed into our other youth projects including the development of the Youth Forum.

Find out more

Anne.burns3@bolton.gov.uk

Film made by Young People during their first week of summer school – Create Your Own Horror Movie:

<https://youtu.be/AYpQvBXE2oo>

Film made by Young People during final week – Create Your Own Superhero Alter Ego:

<https://vimeo.com/592900149/69b2617004>

Short film detailing the first week of the project:

https://youtu.be/S_iO_0uT4b8

Living Museums

Summary

The aim of the project was to work in collaboration with Children in Scotland and YMCA to see how museums can appeal to and engage with young people aged between 14 and 21.

Background

Historically, museums have struggled to engage with young people outside formal settings such as schools and further education institutions. 14–21 year olds make up a small percentage of our overall visitor numbers. Throughout the project, we wanted to explore how to make our museum more relevant to local young people in Perth.

Working with Children in Scotland and based on the experience of delivering the Heritage Hunters project, Culture Perth and Kinross looked to find new routes for engaging young people in our museums based on their experiences.

Challenge

Young people felt that the museum didn't offer anything for them, and therefore weren't engaging.

Approach

Through co-design, we sought to engage with local young people creatively and practically to explore museums and heritage. We delivered fortnightly online sessions that ran from February 2021 to August 2021. These sessions allowed the young people to explore what museums and their experiences of them mean.

The project has been young person led and the group chose the topics that they wished to focus on, exploring the issues that are most important to them. The group have also been able to engage directly with the collections held at Perth Museum and Art Gallery, sharing their thoughts and views on how museums could be more engaging.

The aim of this is to support the museum to learn what is important to young people and respond to this, rather than to offer experiences based on what the museum already does.

Intended outcomes

- Increase museum engagement with young people aged 14 – 21
- Create a process for young people to be more involved public programming within the museum
- Help young people to develop positive relationships with, and attitudes to, the museum
- Improve the wellbeing of local young people

Intended outputs

- Creation of a museum exhibition by the group
- Participant led creative outputs to engage other young people with the museum collection

Obstacles and issues

The project was delayed initially due to groups being unable to meet in person. As a result, there was a call out for young people to participate digitally in the first instance. This was successful in engaging some young people, however, this brought young people from across Scotland to participate, rather than local Perth based young people. This allowed the project to develop a set of themes created by the young people to be taken forward.



Digital engagement brought challenges, including connectivity issues, and young people not feeling confident to engage. In addition to this, a number of the group activities we had planned were harder to deliver digitally, making it difficult to support the young people to work on the project remotely.

Having YMCA Tayside involved supported us in overcoming these challenges, as they have an ongoing relationship with many of the young people. We were able to work with them to check in and see what adaptations we needed to make.

Finally, restrictions also meant that we spent the majority of the project unable to meet in person. This limited the engagement with the museum and the collections.

Actual outcome

- Young people had a positive experience engaging with the museum, and developed their knowledge and skills.
- Increased the number of young people regularly engaging with the museum
- The group of young people who participated in the project are now known to the museum, and will have the opportunity to be involved in future planning related to young people and engagement.

Actual outputs

- A successful digital takeover of the museum's social media
- The creation of a temporary exhibition by the young people in the museum
- Continued group of young people to feed into future programming and engagement with the museum

Lessons learned

- In person sessions don't present nearly as many difficulties as those delivered online.
- Young people found it difficult to engage digitally at the start and this slowed down the progress of work
- Structured sessions with agendas work well for digital engagement

“These sessions allowed the young people to explore what museums and their experiences of them mean.



Next steps

The young people will continue to work with the museum to increase accessibility, looking at exhibitions, text, layout, and spaces and how these need to be changed to support greater access for people with sensory and neurological issues. In addition to this the group will be working with the museum to create a space to support individuals and families to occupy when they experience sensory overload in the museum.

Find out more

More information on the project:

<https://childreninscotland.org.uk/living-museums/>

For further information please contact:

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alyxs@ymcatayside.com

England's New Lenses:

Youth perspectives on England's heritage



Summary

England's New Lenses commissioned four young photographers to explore heritage and to tell the stories that get left out of history books. The photographers brought fresh perspectives to English Heritage's aim of helping visitors to "step into England's story".

Background

In January 2020, English Heritage partnered with Photoworks for England's New Lenses (ENL). ENL was funded through Shout Out Loud, English Heritage's national youth engagement programme, as part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Kick the Dust investment, and the DCMS Youth Accelerator Fund. English Heritage stewards

the National Heritage Collection of over 400 historic places including Stonehenge, castles, and country houses. Photoworks is a national arts charity championing photography, with a long record connecting extraordinary artists with young people from diverse backgrounds.

Challenges

Prior to the project, young people told us they feel heritage has little relevance to their lives, and that they are alienated by traditional heritage interpretation, which often emphasises elite groups and omits stories they find relatable. Young people told us they want their voices to be heard, that they want us to promote and share young people's visions of England's heritage.

Approach

England's New Lenses was developed in consultation with young people, who told us photography is at the heart of how they see their world. Through an 'open call' process, we commissioned four young photographers aged 18–25 to create work for youth and general audiences, inspired by the historic places that English Heritage looks after.

Intended outcomes

We wanted ENL to:

- Provide a platform for outstanding young artists with fresh artistic voices
- Showcase youth perspectives on heritage
- Support youth engagement with heritage and with English Heritage
- Encourage a greater diversity of young people to be involved in heritage
- Enhance professional experience for the commissioned photographers

Intended outputs

ENL was expected to produce:

- a body of work from the commissioned photographers
- social media takeovers
- an online exhibition showcasing the work



“Centring the young artists at the heart of the programme helped to bridge the priorities of all partners.

Obstacles and issues

Supporting the commissioned photographers was challenging given continued Covid-19 restrictions in the first half of 2021. The photographers selected geographically dispersed sites, creating logistical challenges around travel, communication, and the reopening and staffing of sites after Covid-19 closures.

Photoworks and the artists' mentors worked hard to support the artists as early-career photographers in navigating challenges. These included the scale and high profile of the commission, and adapting their artistic vision to the project parameters and practical constraints.

The outstanding quality of the work led us to develop additional outputs, including an on-site exhibition held outdoors to minimise Covid-19 impact. A key challenge in the exhibition was to produce a design which was youthful, fresh and coherent, while centring the artists' vision.

The fantastic photography reached a wider audience than anticipated, and was covered in the national press. Although visitor feedback was overwhelmingly positive, the exhibition was vandalised soon after it was put up, and racist graffiti scrawled over



some of the artwork. We were able to reprint the exhibition rapidly, but the vandalism was extremely distressing to the artists and to all the project team.

Actual outcomes

ENL achieved and exceeded its intended outcomes. The project produced outstanding work presenting genuinely free perspectives on heritage, reached new audiences for both partner organisations, generated strong youth engagement (especially on social media), and provided the commissioned artists with significant professional development opportunities. The on-site exhibition was popular and enhanced the offer to visitors.

Actual outputs

All the planned outputs, plus:

- major outdoor exhibition at Wrest Park, Bedfordshire
- set of four artist films sharing how the work was made
- public programme including digital and live events, artist talks and professional practice-sharing

Lessons learned

- Centring the young artists at the heart of the programme helped to bridge the priorities of all partners.
- Pooling experience and sharing capacity while respecting each

other's expertise enabled the partners to work differently and in new contexts, i.e. an outdoor photography exhibition at a historic site.

- Being open, flexible and responsive helped in supporting emerging artists to engage with the diverse commitments of a large commission (artworks, social media, press etc.), allowing for the differing experience and confidence of each artist.
- In working with young artists on a project with high-profile public outputs, we need to be prepared to support them appropriately throughout the process.

Next steps

- Pursuing additional legacies for the bodies of work including on-site displays, online content, digital engagement, and potential future exhibitions.
- Developing new opportunities together to inspire young people to explore heritage.
- Photoworks is supporting the artists with their next steps, helping them capitalise on this opportunity.
- Future projects will aim to showcase the work of young and emerging artists at English Heritage sites

Top left: Caption: Kemka Ajoku, *Gestural Greetings*, from the series *Finding Common Ground*, 2021.

Top right: Mia Parker-Tang, *There Lies The World*, from the series *There Lies The World*, 2021.

Left: *England's New Lenses* exhibition at Wrest Park. Image credit: Piotr Sell

Find out more

Photoworks:

<https://photoworks.org.uk/englands-new-lenses-2/>

English Heritage:

www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/wrest-park/englands-new-lenses

The Artists: Mia Parker-Tang, Kemka Ajoku, Megan Mechelle Dalton and Abena Appiah

Collaborative Working:

Bringing together museums, archives and secondary schools



“It pushed me out of my comfort zone.”

A student with social anxiety

Summary

During the Summer and Autumn terms of 2021, GCSE History students from Cardinal Hume Catholic School in Gateshead have been learning about the history of medicine in collaboration with Newcastle University and the Great North Museum: Hancock.

Background

The Great North Museum: Hancock is a natural history and archaeology museum in Newcastle Upon Tyne. It is managed by Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums on behalf of Newcastle University.

Newcastle University's Archives Alive programme aims to bring the past to life for school and college students through free online resources, workshops and project-based learning inspired by their unique and distinctive archive and rare book collections.

Challenge

Secondary school engagement with Museums and Archives tends to be low.

From our evaluation 29% of participating students had visited our museum, whilst 19% were aware of what an archive was. 8% of students were aware of what primary sources were.

Our school was also located in an area with high deprivation indices and low progression into university.

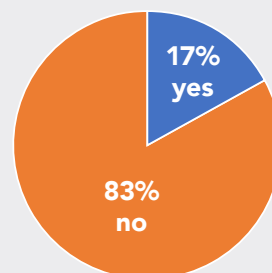
Our aim was to tackle these areas with a collaboratively planned project with a Secondary school, using a blended and project-based approach linking to the GCSE curriculum.

Approach

Our approach to the challenge included:

- Regular team meetings to embed the program in school.
- Engage using objects and archive material, an area identified by the school.
- To end the project with a co-produced exhibition.

Do you know what a primary source is?



Intended outcomes

The aims of the project were:

- Engage with 270 students
- Work with university researchers.
- To put value and purpose on the work of the students by incorporating this into a public exhibition alongside academics and real artefacts.
- Raising student awareness of a local university, their research and opportunities.

Intended outputs

- Production of a high-quality collection-based handling kit.
- Produce a website with resources and current research.
- Work experience opportunities for two students with low cultural engagement.
- To co-produce a public exhibition on the History of Medicine with student produced content.

Obstacles and issues

- Pandemic issues delayed the study of the topic in school, with more time dedicated to exam preparation and catching up.
- Virtual sessions involved isolating home learners, providing us with an additional consideration.

- In September deadlines were set to produce interpretation, however there were delays due to school priorities, ICT complications and mock Ofsted.
- The final exhibition has been delayed by a number of months due to a combination of the above. It will still be school and student led, providing the school and organisations more preparation time. It will also sit during a period of exam revision, potentially providing engagement opportunities.

Actual outcomes

- 270 students participated in elements of the project, depending on their grouping and learner levels.
- Two students with little access to cultural engagement took part in work experience, working with a range of colleagues in the museum and university. One student with social anxiety felt positive about the experience stating it "It pushed me out of my comfort zone".

Actual outputs

- A handling kit, using replica collection objects created by local craftspeople linking to the history of medicine, such as an Ancient Greek feeding cup and copies of local Cholera posters.

- A website with object information, resources and videos including Newcastle University researchers discussing current practice and archaeological evidence.
- The beginnings of interpretation panels and object information, produced by school and work experience students.

Lessons learned

The project started through teacher and team discussions, ensuring that from the start plans and content were tailored to the needs of the school. Regular meetings helped embed the project into the school program.

The obstacles faced within the project have highlighted that for future projects we may choose to consider these and provide alternate options from the start to avoid later problems.

Next steps

The project was designed as a one off but will form the basis of new forms of engagement using the same methods.

The handling kit will become available for groups to loan as part of a blended offer and the exhibition, although delayed, will take place in February, with content produced and chosen by the students. It is hoped that a celebration event will take place to conclude the work.

Creating a website has provided a permanent home for the research and resources and a possible virtual version of the exhibition will be included. We hope that other groups will take advantage of the website as part of their school History of Medicine studies and revision.

Find out more

Dr Collette Brownlee,
Great North Museum: Hancock:
<https://greatnorthmuseum.org.uk>

Project website:
<https://speccollstories.ncl.ac.uk/educationoutreach-history-of-medicine-/index.html>

Schools, Education and Outreach at Newcastle University Library
www.ncl.ac.uk/library/in-the-community/education-outreach



Escape the Museum!

Summary

Obviously as heritage learning professionals we'd never want to escape from a museum, but that doesn't mean our places of work aren't perfect as Escape Rooms! Creating these types of events are a great way of engaging young people and creating content for your institution.

Background

An Escape Room is a series of challenges and puzzles that need to be solved before the visitor/victim can move on, and hopefully escape from the space. Museums, with their rooms full of objects and interpretation are a perfect space for this activity. Headstone Manor in Harrow, a Grade One Listed, moated medieval building with scheduled ancient monument designation has always been a good place to explore quirky ideas and mysteries, so it lent itself well to this challenge.

Challenge

Working with young people is important to us, and each summer holiday we run our Young Creators (YC) group for 16–21 year olds. We had no prior experience of creating an escape room so we were starting on the same level as the young people.

Approach

Engaging young people can be a challenge but we soon saw that the group were relishing the opportunity



to do something different and to meet new people their own age after such a challenging year.

Creating an Escape Room was an open-ended task, where the group were in complete control of the creative decisions made, and the only restrictions were health & safety and security of the collections.

Intended outcomes

The Escape Room storyline, props, characters all needed to be developed and then trialled, culminating with an event for family and friends.

Intended outputs

Once created, an Escape Room becomes an asset for the Museum, something that can be used again for events or team building days.

Obstacles and issues

Group dynamics were more difficult in the larger group, which consisted of two groups of four friends. This led us to channel some of the YC's towards prop making whilst others concentrated on storyline. Escape Rooms lend themselves to individuals setting each puzzle, so everyone gets to input.

Being a large house with many objects on display (that can't be touched or moved), it was a challenge knowing where to start. Our groups came up with a basic story and then decided what puzzles to include (John Sear's website helped with this) before figuring which rooms they would work best in.

“ Friendships really blossomed in the groups too, with one group standing outside the Museum for chatting at the end of the session – for two hours!



Actual outcomes

Over a period of 10 days, 13 young people created two separate Escape Rooms – 'The Locked Room' and 'Trapped!', both based on past inhabitants of Headstone Manor with a spooky twist. These take about 45 minutes to an hour to solve and involve using the whole of the museum space including non-public accessible rooms such as the attic.

Puzzles included finding hidden words in our permanent panels, solving riddles to find objects and looking for numbers on our online catalogue to answer codes.

Relationships between YC's and Museum staff developed well, with two of the group going on to paid roles in our Front of House team.



Friendships really blossomed in the groups too, with one group standing outside the Museum for chatting at the end of the session – for two hours!

Actual outputs

We ran our Escape Room event early September, just as school started but before several of the YC's went to University.

The YC's invited parents and friends, and a very fun time was had by all, except for the people that didn't escape and are doomed to be locked in Headstone Manor for all eternity. In total 28 number of people attended, going around the event in small groups.

Lessons learned

- Prep a variety of museum resources in advance for young people to use for research. Have these available to be seen on their own devices and in their own time on platform such as Google Drive.
- Plan for extra time for the young people and also for yourself.
- Go to an Escape Room yourself – or try one online.
- Trial the Escape Rooms on different groups of people. They are the type of event people find easier the more they do. Some groups will need more clues.
- Don't forget the Museum ground rules. Colleagues may be concerned that Escape Rooms will mean people running around the space, doors locked and disruption to displays. Our Escape Rooms are very minimal but still effective whilst complying with the museum risk assessment!
- You don't need a big budget. We tried to do it for free, but there were certain things that needed to be brought such as padlocks, boxes and the all-important snacks. In total we probably spent £50.

Next steps

The Escape Rooms are ready to be run as a paying event for the public or as a free inclusion event for next Heritage Open Days.



Find out more

John Sear's excellent website full of tips and resources including a free online Escape Room:

www.johnsear.com

Thanks to our Museum Buddy Maidstone Museum for walking us through their digital Escape Room

New Perspectives:

'Outside in': collaboration and curation during Covid-19

Summary

The L-INK project involves ten young people between the ages of 16 and 24 based in the North-East. Throughout 2021 L-INK met both in-person and, as the pandemic necessitated, online to curate a physical exhibition entitled 'New Perspectives: Outside in' for the Laing Art Gallery which opened in July, running until May 2022.

Background

L-INK runs in partnership with the Hatton and Laing Art Gallery. The objective of this group is to engage young people in collaboration, curation, and event planning within a gallery. Subsequently, they have worked with current artists, curators, and gallery staff. The project was funded by Arts Council England and supported by TATE: ARTIST ROOMS.

Challenge

The project aimed to examine the role and responsibilities of galleries, collections, artists and curators in the cultural landscape. It was inspired by recent causes, such as Black Lives Matter, which have led to questions about how we understand our own personal, cultural and national identities.

Approach

The project focused on three recently acquired works by artist Mike Silva as a catalyst and lens to explore identity within the Laing collection.



“Everyone felt like their voices were heard and represented in the exhibition.”

Intended outcomes

Our aims of the project were to:

- Encourage young people to collaborate
- Build confidence around working in a gallery
- Examine different roles within galleries
- Explore and examine gallery collections
- Understand the relationship between artist and curator
- Learn how to install artwork

Intended outputs

To curate and display a physical exhibition, centring our thoughts around the Mike Silva acquisitions. Accordingly, we planned to explore our personal identities and experiences in lockdown.

Obstacles and issues

Most of the project took place during lockdown, meaning initially we had to overcome the difficulties in collaborating and communicating solely online. At times, it was difficult to work as a team over Zoom, something new to all of us where



social etiquette is harder to navigate. Additionally, there was sometimes a conflict of interest, where the group took a long time to come to a consensus and found it difficult to discuss personal topics such as sexuality. However, the gallery staff involved were great at facilitating decisions and helped overcome this.

As restrictions eased, a hybrid approach was taken to accommodate people both in the gallery and digitally via Zoom. Some participants were unable to attend physically due to Covid-19 uncertainty, or restrictions on room capacity. This meant it was hard to communicate concurrently via both mediums. At times, connection issues were problematic, meaning those who attended physically had the greatest say. Not everyone attended all meetings due to conflicting schedules which meant decisions were made without them. Therefore, the process was not as collaborative as intended.

Actual outcomes

Everyone worked collaboratively by contributing at least once, despite not always meeting physically

- The exhibition was launched
- The project sparked interest in curating for participants
- Everyone felt like their voices were heard and represented in the exhibition/gallery space

- Participants learned professional skills related to curating and delivering exhibitions, as well as more transferrable skills relating to digital collaboration, respecting others lived experiences, and building confidence.

Actual outputs

- Successful delivery and curation of a physical exhibition
- An accompanying guide in the format of a zine was created

Lessons learned

- Establishing a goal and having a member of staff present to introduce the session helped participants manage the online zoom calls more efficiently
- We learned that having a monthly review session allowed participants and staff to keep up to date with the project. This meant we had good time management and a space where everyone had an opportunity for contribution.
- We learned that it was useful for participants to have their own form of communication via another social platform. This was helpful for participants to build deeper connections with each other, as well as to document and discuss new ideas that they had outside of the scheduled sessions.

- It is important to remember that collaborating digitally is not restrictive but requires a new way of working.

Next steps

L-INK 2021/2022 will be inspired by the Lindisfarne Gospels. We will focus on the idea of spirituality and what that means to us today. As a group, we plan to work alongside artist Ruth Ewan through collaborative discussion and making. A display will be curated using the Laing Art Gallery collection, to accompany the exhibition in September 2022. This project will reflect upon how rituals, spirituality and prescribed meanings are shown and used in everyday objects, space, and architecture and will allow us to address current issues within art museums and galleries today.

Find out more

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The Care Creatives

Moving forward with our lives in a post Covid-19 world

Summary

The Youth Engagement informal learning programme at Leeds Art Gallery offers a selection of bespoke workshops, one to one sessions and events to meet the needs of young adults aged 14-24 years. Together, Leeds Art Gallery and Leeds Employment and Skills service decided to collaborate to offer an exciting opportunity for Care Leavers in the city.

Challenges

Leeds Employment and Skills (LES) service is part of Leeds City Council local authority. The core of the work supports local communities, including Leeds's most deprived areas to access education, employment and training.

There are 1336 children looked after and 451 young people currently designated as care leavers in Leeds. Nevertheless, there was no existing link to assist young adults leaving care to access cultural heritage within the LES service, therefore both services decided to set up this unique partnership.

Intended outcomes

- Develop the group's self-confidence accessing the arts and engaging with the gallery collections on display, exhibitions, and installations.
- Reduce social isolation by connecting and working on a meaningful project.
- Valuing each other's opinions and differences.

Intended outputs

- Creating and co-producing two youth engagement workshops for looked after young people and care leavers during the summer holidays.
- Producing content for our Leeds Art Gallery Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts including a digital campaign for Kids in Museums National 'Teen Take Over'.
- Helping young people to develop valuable transferable skills for employment such as communication and teamwork skills, decision making, project leadership and becoming advocates for change within the gallery setting.



“ I came out of this project with experience, self-confidence, and pride. It was such a great experience for me to work with the group, I never thought that it would bring me so much.

Lea



“To tell my story of my Ghanaian heritage and talk to the group about my journey has been amazing.

Portia



Actual outcomes and outputs

- The group attended ten weekly workshops and there was a real appetite for additional learning. All group members have since attended extra youth engagement events and workshops.
- The group regularly contributed to our Leeds Art Gallery digital media content.
- The young people were introduced to artist Harold Offeh and as a result participated in his Reading the Realness film work which will be accessioned into the Leeds Museum and Galleries collection in 2022.
- Developing workshops and discussing our Leeds Museums and Galleries Kente Textiles and Manga collections.
- Inspired by artist Zadie Xa's exhibition, Moon Poetics 4 Courageous Earth Critters and Dangerous Day Dreamers to produce a nature inspired mural.
- Creating social media content to coincide with International Youth Day.

Obstacles and issues

An understanding of where the young adults are at this point in their lives. We were conscious the young adults were volunteering their time to meet with us; therefore, it was vitally important to co-produce workshops with the youth members to develop their interests and enhance creativity.

Adopting a flexible approach to empower them to develop their voice takes time. As the sessions progressed and connections developed, discussions about their experiences of living within the care system naturally progressed. As a result, some of the young adults disclosed personal experiences. Enabling a place of trust, a safe space, and making sure there was a quiet area within the gallery which they could access if they needed time to talk was really important. Disclosures involving historical abuse, dealing with debt, exploitation, eviction and trafficking were shared during our time together.

Accessing support and referring onto the appropriate services to make sure the young adults have support is essential. Knowing which services to refer to your local area is vital.

Lessons learned

Setting up and managing a project like this, takes time. Building confidence and trust enabled the group to have more personal discussions. Working with the artwork helped to make sense of their individual journeys to this point, and this was a powerful and a wonderfully rich experience for everyone.

We possibly put the participants under too much pressure to devise two workshops for our summer programme and they spent a lot of time researching.

Next steps

After good feedback from the participants we have decided to run this programme again. Some of the young adults from this pilot are going to become mentors for the second round of workshops.

The group wish to be more creative during the workshops so in the autumn we are planning some workshops using collage, pastels, paints, clay, photography and visits to other galleries.

We plan to integrate Arts Award into the programme and display their art works at the gallery.

Left Converting digital artwork into the 'Blossom' mural on display in Leeds Art Gallery Art Space.

Top left Introducing the Care Creatives pictured with the Nicky second from the left and Angie front row centre.

Top centre This year for the national campaign of Teen Takeover Day organised by Kids in Museums showcased Ria's digital interpretation of Zadie Xa's exhibition – Moon Poetics 4 Courageous Art Critters and Dangerous Day Dreamers 2021.

Find out more

For more information about the Care Creatives visit

<https://museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/events/leeds-art-gallery/care-creatives>

Industrial Revolutions

Summary

Since 2018, the National Coal Mining Museum (NCMME) have been working with a consortium of museums and youth organisations in Yorkshire to ignite a revolution in the way industrial heritage is viewed, understood, appreciated, and engaged with by young people and their communities.

The project is called "Ignite Yorkshire" and is led by IVE and funded through NLHF's Kick the Dust fund

This case study has been written jointly by NCMME's learning manager and one of our young volunteers.

Background

The museum's audiences have traditionally been families and adults from former coalmining communities. This project aimed to welcome new audiences to the museum and to increase the skills of staff and volunteers in working with them. The project focused on young people aged 14–19 (and up to 25 with SEND), particularly those who do not usually engage with heritage.

Challenge

When the consortium first met, we found that many youth organisations were unaware of the heritage of their local area. Likewise, heritage organisations struggled to connect with "gatekeepers" and lacked experience in working with teenagers.

Approach

Using a Theory of Change model, the project has been flexible and responsive to the young people. As a consortium, we supported each other to reflect on our practice.

Intended outcomes

- Better relationships between young people and heritage organisations
- Young participants feel ownership of their heritage
- Young people have the opportunity to influence how heritage is interpreted

Intended outputs

- Processes put in place for young people to help guide the direction of the museum.
- Career development opportunities such as work experience and apprenticeships.

Obstacles and issues

The age group recruited often had other commitments such as school, hobbies, and other interests, so could not attend every session. This sometimes resulted in young people feeling out of the loop and not wanting to return.



Access has often been an obstacle as some young people may not be able to easily travel to the museum due to lack of public transport, family members being unable to take them, and living a long way from the museum.

Covid-19 has prevented activities from going ahead. Risk assessment requirements and young people's preferences around social contact have presented challenges.

Actual outcomes

- Youth participation has become more integrated into the core programming of the museum.
- Some participants gained employment, training and development opportunities through the project.
- Exit surveys suggested that all young people taking part in the project have felt welcomed at the museum, as Chris explains:

"As a young person I've personally felt that I've been made to feel welcomed by the staff members of the museum. Times I've felt welcomed have been being invited to staff social events e.g. birthdays, Christmas dinners, staff wanting to talk to me and wanting my input e.g. being at school holiday debrief meetings."

Actual outputs

A number of events have been delivered at NCMME, one of the highlights being the Youth Arts Festival. This was curated by our young volunteers and featured over 100 young performers including dance, drama and circus performers.

Workshops have been developed with SEND groups and our staff have developed skills in working with young people with a range of disabilities.

We have trained staff and young people coming through the project, a great output related to this has been that Chris, who started as a young volunteer, was successful in gaining a paid role in the learning team.



“You can tailor your approach to organisational priorities to ensure buy-in at all levels.”

Lessons learned

Young people can explore parts of history which may have been missed, and learn in new and interactive ways.

- Youth projects are a great stepping-stone for future job prospects.
- It is important to make it clear that young people are welcome at your museum.
- To increase access for pupils who struggle to attend sessions, you must develop a relationship with local schools and youth organisations.
- You can tailor your approach to organisational priorities to ensure buy-in at all levels.
- It is important to consider sustainability from the start.
- Keeping in touch with youth networks helps keep the project alive during difficult times.

Next steps

Partnerships are key to the future of Ignite Yorkshire. The consortium aims to continue working together in some form and will continue building relationships with youth organisations and creative professionals.

Chris, our young volunteer, says “I would like to see the museum make use of young people in an advisory role at the museum or as ambassadors helping with recruitment of young people. Making use of video conferencing software will help young people attend sessions and collaborate with each other outside of workshop/session days.”

Find out more

www.ncm.org.uk

<https://igniteyorks.org.uk>

<https://igniteyorks.org.uk/our-first-think-papers-have-launched/>

Video about the Youth Arts Festival produced by young people: <https://youtu.be/6imMPexqsRY>

More information about Theory of Change models: <https://changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/2018/11/08/understanding-theory-of-change/>

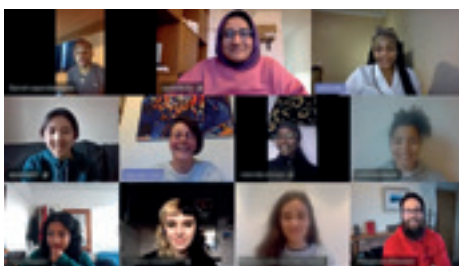
Youth YAPpin at the Natural History Museum

Summary

The Natural History Museum's first ever Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) was set up to be a two-way sharing of knowledge and experience supporting young people, whilst also informing the museum about how to better engage a youth demographic.

Background

During the heart of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Urban Nature Project (UNP) at the Natural History Museum (NHM) was keen to keep progressing plans to create mutually beneficial and meaningful engagement with an audience that is currently underserved at the museum – young people. Specifically, those from marginalised backgrounds who typically experience inequalities in accessing nature.



Challenge

The challenge we faced was to:

1. Create an inclusive and comfortable space where young people felt safe to explore and share personal experiences...
2. ...online...
3. ...with strangers, and,
4. ...for the first time ever at the NHM!

Approach

Running from September 2020 to April 2021, the NHM hosted fortnightly online meetings with 12 young people aged 18 to 25. Recruited through partnerships, all the young people were from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds, drawing on lived experience to explore the inequalities of access to nature and quality green spaces.

The young people were given £25 online shopping vouchers for their time per 2-hour meeting. Creating a safe online space was crucial to build the relationships needed for the young people to share sensitive and emotive experiences and opinions. The young people received presentations from, and opportunities to talk with, internal NHM staff and senior management as well as expert external guests.

The discussions on how they saw the topic informed the panellists choice of an outcome project for which they were given a budget to manage themselves.



“ I am not a lover of nature. But this has made me see the genuineness of nature and the importance of nature out there.



Intended outcomes

We hoped that the young people would benefit by gaining employability skills and a new appreciation for the benefits of spending time in nature.

The museum hoped to benefit from improved understanding of the matters surrounding inequality of access to nature.

Museum staff hoped to gain a better understanding of how best to engage with young people from diverse backgrounds and learn how to effectively organise and run advisory panels.

Intended outputs

The young people were given free rein to work on a final project based upon the unique opportunities and restraints of their group, the museum and the resources available to them.

Obstacles and issues

We found it difficult to fairly remunerate the young people for their time and efforts.

Communications with young people between meetings was challenging.

Enabling the young people to observe the impact of their work, due to the vastness and complexities within the museum and the UNP.

Actual outcomes

The young people have used their experience on the YAP to further their career aspirations: "I have already put it on my CV... not many people can say they have worked with the NHM at any level – so definitely useful so far."

The young people developed their own personal relationships with the natural world: "I am not a lover of nature. But this has made me see the genuineness of nature and the importance of nature out there...this has been fantastic to be honest."

Actual outputs

The young people decided to use the NHM's platform and connections to present their experiences and thoughts, to government officials. Highly successful meetings were held with Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea councillors and the London Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy.

Numerous departments across the museum have worked further with the YAP to inform and co-develop of NHM engagement and programming. Highlights include live online shows, presentations to NHM staff and the Executive Board, as well as appearances on BBC Countryfile and BBC London Radio.

Despite having never met in person, when the YAP met for the first time under Hope the Blue Whale, it was like meeting old friends. It was inspiring to see the relationships that were formed virtually, come together in reality. Not only significant relationships with each other, but with the NHM and with the natural world.

Lessons learned

The NHM has learnt that a panel is a great way to build trusting relationships with young people. This takes time, but it leads far greater mutual benefits.

Next steps

The NHM, through the UNP is running two more youth advisory panels over the next two years. The next one exploring digital storytelling and online engagement.

The NHM is looking to take lessons learnt from the YAP to broaden its' youth engagement, giving young people a greater voice at numerous levels of the museum.

Find out more

Please email **Theo Blossom** at t.blossom@nhm.ac.uk or **Harriet Fink** at h.fink@nhm.ac.uk for further information or a chat!

Norfolk Museums Service

Helping young people secure employment through its work experience programme

Summary

Norfolk Museums Service's digital response to engage vulnerable young people, including those with special educational needs, aged 11–25 years, during the pandemic, ensured that these individuals continued to access work experience and gain a qualification.

Background

Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) is a joint service of Norfolk county and district councils comprising 10 museums and two study centres. As part of its National Lottery funded 'Kick the Dust' project, young people undertake work experience to support the development of transferable skills as well as personal career development.

The team comprises a Project Coordinator, 3 project workers and an embedded youth engagement post within YMCA, one of our key delivery partners.

Challenge

- Engaging vulnerable young people during a pandemic when sites are closed. Digital poverty is a barrier and limited support from other professionals was a real challenge.
- Covid-19 created additional problems for those in SEND provision. As museums closed, action was needed to support these young people and develop an alternative programme.

Approach

Working with a specialist SEND teacher we developed an appropriate 13-week online work experience programme, supported by staff from across the service and the Museum Arts Award programme.

At the same time, University students were able to complete the work placement element of their studies which provided insight into how museums engage with visitors.

Intended outcomes

- To provide quality work experience to disadvantaged young people with different needs to provide insight into how museums work and the range of job roles available.
- To raise aspiration and self-confidence among local young people

Intended outputs

- To help students to gain a Museum Arts Award
- Young people are able to develop skills and confidence to progress into further education, training, or employment.
- Increased numbers of young people engaging with NMS.

Obstacles and issues

Rural isolation and digital poverty are barriers to engagement in West Norfolk and accessing some locations is difficult for young people.

Having a digital offer that could be delivered from any site enabled young people to gain an in depth understanding of how museums work, through speaking to professionals inside the organisation and working on 'real' projects that feed into the service.

“I can honestly say I don't think I would have got the job if it wasn't for working with Kick the Dust.

Young person on Arts Award



Actual outcomes

Lockdown forced us to develop a blended offer to ensure all young people could access the programme at a level that met their needs with priority for face-to-face engagement allocated to groups who were struggling with digital engagement.

A diverse range of young people have participated, bringing a fresh approach to exhibitions and events. Our work experience programme provided an insight into the way NMS works: 12 cohorts with an average of 5 young people per cohort, 6 young people from Churchill Park Academy take part each week, and 10 young people have undertaken the Museum Arts Award.

Actual outputs

Before taking part in the work experience programme, 74% of young people across our Kick the Dust programme said they had little knowledge of the job roles in the heritage sector. This was reversed following their engagement with 95% of young people stating they were aware of the opportunities open to them. 86% stated they were more likely to volunteer; 88% said that leading on their individual projects for their Arts Award had helped them see heritage differently.

9 young people have progressed into employment including 4 onto a traineeship programme, two are at University, and two are volunteering in a heritage setting.

Lessons learned

- Being flexible and having different times and length of programme to meet the needs of individuals and schools engages more young people.
- Including staff from across the organisation reduces the burden on individuals, allowing for professional development and increasing the breadth of the programme.
- Offering parallel sessions allows staff to speak to two groups simultaneously without adding to their workload.



- When looking at an age cut off, don't underestimate the learning that mixed ages bring to each other. Feedback from those who had been working with younger people commented on how this was a positive aspect, enabling them to reflect on their own way of thinking about heritage. Age was not a factor, the passion for heritage is what brought the diverse groups together.
- By adding in an interview preparation session, you can support those looking to progress into employment, resulting in increased confidence and greater success at interview.

Next steps

The work experience programme is being rolled out across the county.

The digital Museum Arts Award programme will be expanded so those wishing to take advantage can do so without location as a barrier to engagement.

Development of a support and guidance programme for those looking to progress into the heritage sector.



Find out more

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NMS: www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/join-and-support/kick-the-dust

Individual projects:

https://artsandculture.google.com/story/HQXR_1UrpDbKKw

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Castle Curators:

Youth led co-design at Norwich Castle

Summary

A group of young people have been working with Norwich Castle to design a display case narrative to be exhibited as part of Norwich Castle's redevelopment project and creation of a new gallery space.

Background

The group were formed as part of two heritage lottery funded projects; Kick the Dust, which helps young people get actively involved in heritage and Royal Palace Reborn, a project to transform Norwich Castle's Norman Keep.

We recruited 8 young people from local Secondary Schools. The timing meant that the project was primarily conducted online over lockdown.

Challenge

- Working online meant shifting our priorities from bringing young people into museum spaces to supporting young people working through a period of isolation.
- We were keen to increase the variety of voices and communities presented within the interpretation in the gallery.

Approach

We set up weekly Zoom meetings covering research and practical topics. We split the sessions into discussion, challenges and presentations and invited different members of staff to join each week.

Intended outcomes

- To give members an awareness of the job roles available within museums and develop transferable skills.
- To embed institutional change by encouraging museum staff to collaborate with young people.
- Creating an environment where members felt connected through lockdown.
- To provide opportunities for voices less frequently featured to develop the narratives of a display

Intended outputs

- To create a plan for a Community Case that cast a new perspective on medieval life.
- To develop an object list, exhibition text and an accessible and engaging case design.

Obstacles and issues

Working online meant only collaborating with young people with online access. Zoom fatigue was a factor and some weeks young people would struggle working online after a day of virtual school. We therefore





deliberately kept sessions short and allowed for other ways of contributing if they were too tired to join Zoom.

Working outside of museum spaces with images rather than real objects meant some details were lost, with aspects like scale were hard to judge and often resulted in the selection of lots of tiny objects.

Actual outcomes

Although the project was available only to young people with online access, it also opened the potential audiences to those based in more rural areas across the county who would never have been able to join an after-school project run at the museum.

The slower pace of weekly, online meetings allowed us to cover a wider range of topics with more discussion space. Quieter members had more ways to contribute, through chats, emails, or raising a virtual hand, they were able to gradually build their confidence in sharing ideas.

The virtual setting made it easier for staff to drop in and familiarise themselves with who the group were and how they shared ideas before beginning to collaborate on their plans.

Since the lifting of lockdown, the group have been able to meet in person, finalise their designs with their actual objects and take part in a hard hat tour of the construction work in the keep and future gallery space.

“Youth engagement does not always need to be about getting young people into museums.”

Actual outputs

A design for a display case exploring the everyday life of a medieval person. The group chose objects they felt visitors could recognise from their own life, such as belt buckles and gaming pieces.

Text and research for an additional pop-up display to go on tour to different sites around Norfolk.

Lessons learned

- One of the most heartening responses from our first term was ‘this has been a really great social experience for me’. This came from a quiet young person who had their camera off. Don’t assume someone is disengaged and allow time for them to contribute in ways they feel comfortable.
- Youth engagement does not always need to be about getting young people into museums. Understanding that there is value in working both online and in different spaces engages a wider audience.
- Most staff are excited about working with young people but

worry about the time commitment or lack of experience. Providing easy points of access, lists of questions from group or 30min discussion windows, can help the prospect feel less daunting, and leaves the door open for future collaboration.

Next steps

The group are working with the British Museum to select objects from their collection to go on display at the Castle. They will continue to meet both online and in person to choose their loan items and develop supporting digital resources.

Find out more

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Kick the Dust

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Virtual Human Library:

Supporting the learning experience of post-secondary students during the Covid-19 pandemic



Summary

During the first Covid-19 wave, the Learning Team of the Royal Alberta Museum (RAM) piloted a virtual program called the *Virtual Human Library for Post-Secondary Students*.

In this program museum subject matter experts act as “human books”. Our main goal was to bring together museum professionals and post-secondary students from local universities and colleges, and provide quality engagement for this audience, whose learning experience has been significantly disrupted by the pandemic.

Background

Among its diverse audiences, the RAM has always nurtured connections with multiple academic communities. Before the pandemic, the museum served post-secondary students through programs that included curatorial lectures, talks, back of the house visits, and gallery tours. However, as soon as pandemic health measures were implemented, these in-person programs came to a stop.

Challenge

To enhance the post-secondary students’ learning experience during the pandemic and support

instructors dealing with emergency remote teaching by providing virtual alternatives to in-person programs and engagement opportunities.

Approach

Ten experts from different curatorial teams and three guest speakers – an Indigenous Elder, a field archaeologist, and a former RAM curator – participated in the programme.

We maintained a flexible approach to make sure the program was relevant and responsive to the target audience’s specific needs.

As a result of this process, the topics covered in the sessions varied greatly from one another, spanning from preparing specimens for natural history collections, to working with Indigenous communities.

Program elements included virtual presentations, tours, workshops, group discussions, live Q&A.

Academic instructors selected a topic and a combination of 2–3 components beforehand; each session was between 60 and 90 minutes long.

At the end of the session, instructors and students were invited to provide their feedback through a survey. Being a pilot, the program was offered free of charge to the participants.

Intended Outcomes

- Create meaningful connections between museum subject matter experts and post-secondary students

“When it comes to post-secondary students, acknowledge that there isn’t a one size fit all format.”

- Enable students to access museum collections and exhibits virtually
- Help students deal with isolation, encourage peer learning, and restore the “classroom experience”, which the pandemic took away from them
- Strengthen relationships with academic stakeholders

Intended outputs

- Live virtual sessions co-led by learning staff and subject matter experts (via Zoom)
- Creation of group-specific, original resources, such as presentations and multimedia content (e.g., video tours, online resources)
- Transformation of the Virtual Human Library pilot into a regular program

Obstacles and issues

The highly tailored experience we were able to provide is what made the program successful. However, this level of personalisation can also be challenging, as it required intense back-and-forth communication with the instructors to negotiate program topics and components and maintain realistic expectations. While the final result was worth it, this process proved to be particularly time-consuming, and at times difficult, since some instructors were overwhelmed by the emergency remote teaching situation they were facing and could not always maintain effective communication with the museum staff.

Actual Outcomes

The majority of the intended outcomes were achieved. Feedback from instructors and students has been encouraging, with 80% and 75% respectively agreeing that



they were strongly satisfied with their experience and would recommend the program to others, and 90% and 76% respectively stating that they found the opportunity to connect with museum experts extremely valuable.

In particular, students stated that they “enjoyed hearing from a variety of experts on a topic, it gave a nice rounded learning experience hearing from multiple perspectives”.

Actual Outputs

We hosted a total of 12 pilot sessions and engaged with 275 post-secondary students from the University of Alberta, University of Lethbridge, University of Calgary, Athabasca University, and Lakeland College.

We produced three virtual tours of the Natural History Collection, Laboratory, and Freezer Room, as well as a video illustrating archaeology and paleontology fieldwork, and multimedia presentations.

Lesson Learned

- There is an interest and a demand for virtual programs catering to post-secondary students

- Creating opportunities for virtual access and learning can help build and/or strengthen our relationships with local higher education institutions
- When it comes to post-secondary students, acknowledge that there isn’t a one size fit all format. The program must be flexible, and each session unique in order to actually address the highly specialized needs of this audience

Next Steps

We plan to offer this program until it is safe to restore in-person group programs, building on the lessons we’ve learned. In this way, we hope to increase access, reach, and engagement for post-secondary students across the Province during the pandemic.

Find out more

RAM’s programs:

<https://royalalbertamuseum.ca/learning>

Eleonora Sermoneta

Adult Learning Programmer,
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Young Makers: Reimagining the Red Box

Summary and background

In May 2021 Sheffield Museums piloted a 10-week online work experience style programme called "Young Makers" funded through Ignite and the Youth Acceleration Fund. 16 young people (aged 14–25) were recruited and over the course of 10 weeks, they met with specialists in different areas of museology for 1 hour each week via Zoom to reimagine an aspect of Kelham Island Museum. This culminated in the creation of a proposal to reignite the red telephone box which they pitched to a panel of experts in the final week. But how do you reimagine something you've never physically visited? How do you co-produce with minimal communication platforms and no in person meetings?



“A 25 year old can work in harmony with and learn from a 14 year old and vice versa.”

Challenge

Last year, many young people missed out on key opportunities including work experience, access to cultural venues and career fairs with professionals. They also lost out on time meeting new like-minded people their own age and working with others to further develop their confidence and communication skills.

Approach

We wanted to give young people the opportunity to find out about the different jobs in museums and how we approach projects. Young Makers gave young people a space to meet, access experts in different fields of museology, further develop their knowledge and skills and take ownership of a project.

Intended outcomes

That the young people on the programme leave feeling:

- Skilled and equipped to earn and learn
- Safe and confident in their future
- Have positive health and wellbeing
- Active members of their communities
- Treated fairly and equally

Intended outputs

Short-term:

- To develop young people's skills, knowledge, and confidence
- To engage and expand our current cohort of Museum Youth
- To increase the number of young people visiting our sites

Long Term:

- To embed youth voice into the heart of the museum
- To provide a safe, positive, and creative environment for young people
- To develop and deliver a regular programme of exciting co-produced activities, events and exhibitions with young people

Obstacles and issues

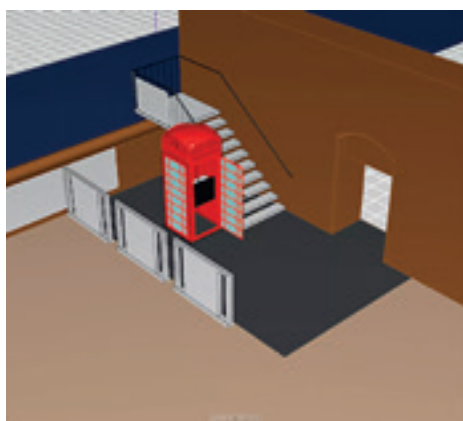
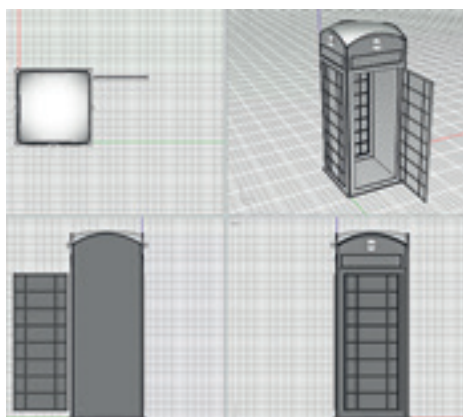
- Our biggest challenge was running a project online which revolved around sites and collections that the young people were unable to experience in person.
- When the museum reopened we invited the group to site for one day but only half were able to attend – those who could come were the eyes for the others.

- The wide age range of the group (14–25 year olds) created challenges, as the participants could not be encouraged to use social media platforms with minimum age restrictions of 16+. We set up other means of communication to overcome this, which kept young people's details private, including Padlet and JAMBoard.

Actual outcomes

We arranged a feedback session with the young people at the end of the 10 weeks. Young people stated they felt by being allowed to come up with their own ideas for the phone box and to make all the decisions for the proposal they have been treated equally as our project partners. Some also identified that they had grown in confidence by meeting strangers on Zoom and talking about themselves.

Several of the young people had stated at the start that they were hoping for careers in museums and the programme has demonstrated the breadth of jobs available and the amount of activities and events that they can get involved in.



Actual outputs

Young people stated the programme provided a means of gaining experience of working in museums virtually and, shortly after this process, two young people successfully applied for and completed paid summer internships with our partners at IVE, citing this project in their application and interview. They wrote articles about the project which were shared on the Ignite Yorkshire website and social media channels.

Another two have joined our regular, weekly Museum Youth group and are helping develop and deliver the first of a regular programme of exciting co-produced activities, events and exhibitions with young people.

Lessons learned

- Sessions were 1 hour per week and sometimes felt rushed, particularly in the last few weeks when the group were working on the proposal together. In the penultimate session participants happily agreed to an extra half an hour.
- Paying external facilitators to deliver sessions in specialist subjects e.g. exhibition design and oral history allowed young people to see how

we work with partners, understand freelance working with museums, supported independent experts during a challenging period and freed up staff time to focus on other areas.

- A 25 year old can work in harmony with and learn from a 14 year old and vice versa. The whole group had the upmost respect for one another and shared their knowledge, skills and experience throughout the programme.

Next steps

- We plan to repeat the programme with another cohort of young people aged 14–25 with longer sessions over 6 weeks
- Offer paid opportunities for young people at Sheffield Museums developing their skills, knowledge and confidence.
- Create a young people strategy with young people to be implemented over the next 5 years



Find out more

<https://igniteyorks.org.uk/an-interview-with-sheffield-young-makers>

<https://igniteyorks.org.uk/young-makers-reimagine-a-piece-of-kelham-island-museum>

For more information about Sheffield Museums work with young people and the Young Makers project email

museum.youth@sheffieldmuseums.org.uk

Jodie Edwards, Rachel Hamer, Beth Hull, Emma Howe, Posy Jowett,
Jennie Lambert, Suzanna Petot, SHARP

Firstsite Gallery, Colchester; Newlyn and the Exchange, Penzance;
Sunderland Culture, Sunderland; Arts Council Collection

Co-Design

Collaboration and Adaptation:

Towards building a national network

Summary

The National Partners Programme launched in 2016, creating a network of galleries and museums to curate exhibitions drawn from the Arts Council Collection. Sunderland Culture, Firstsite and Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange were selected as National Partner venues for the second round of the programme, running from 2019-2022. Each of the three partner venues have been working with young people from their local areas to co-curate exhibitions of Arts Council Collection works.

Background

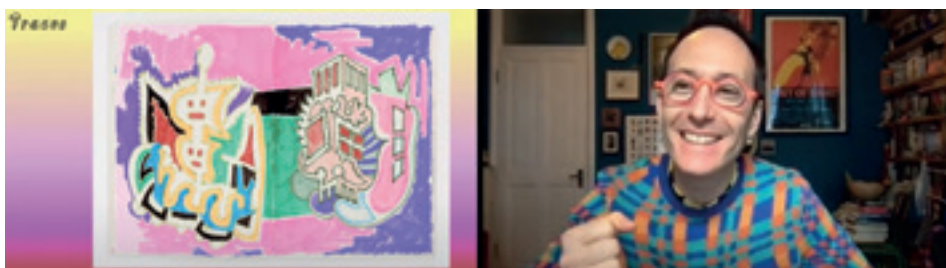
The National Partners Programme is a 3-year programme running from 2019-2022, supported by the National Lottery, which sees the Arts Council Collection working in partnership with 3 venues across the UK to develop a series of exhibitions, events and outreach drawn from the Collection.

Challenge

Young people have felt excluded from cultural venues because they don't see innovative exhibitions that are relevant to them.

Approach

We wanted to open up the Collection to young people across the country by inviting our local groups to collaborate with National Partner venues, and with each other, to curate new exhibitions that reflected their experiences, ideas and values.



“We discovered the need to find space in our planning and curatorial processes to shift power from the organisation to the young people.”

Intended outcomes

- Give creative control of our gallery spaces to our young people's groups.
- Uplift the voices of the young people we work within our region.
- Provide our groups with experience and opportunities to gain new skills.

Intended outputs

Collectively, we decided to dedicate resources to create 3 exhibitions curated by young people – one at each of the partner venues. We hoped that the young people would collaborate with one another, sharing ideas and insights, to create related exhibitions.

Obstacles and issues

- Recruiting and bringing together three groups of young people from across the country.

- Lockdown and furlough of staff resulted in venues having limited contact, or temporarily losing contact, with their groups.
- Group meetings which usually took place in person were moved online during lockdowns. Many young people joined these Zoom calls straight after school and carried with them the same 'school energy'. It took time to devise ways to help our young people engage in discussion and feel confident to share thoughts and ideas.
- For neurodivergent young people, or those with additional access needs, the transition to online working was too challenging, and group numbers dwindled across all three venues.

- Staff leading the projects were more invested in cross-country collaboration than the young people themselves. The young people needed trust to be built in smaller groups, especially during turbulent times.
- Momentum for the project had to be rebuilt following lockdown. We needed to amend our schedules and adapt to the changing priorities of our young people.

Actual outcomes

- All three venues found new ways to engage with young people online, creating a more comfortable, informal setting for them.
- The young people brought unique, creative perspectives to the project.
- The resulting exhibitions challenge perceptions of what is important to young people, particularly in light of the pandemic.

Actual outputs

- In February 2020, all three groups of young people came together for an online event, facilitated by youth-led organisation Rising Arts Agency.
- Three exhibitions were curated, interpreted and designed by young people, one at each of the partner venues.
- Each exhibition included interactive elements and digital initiatives developed in collaboration with the young people.

The exhibitions curated, designed and interpreted by young people were:

House Share @ Firstsite, Colchester:
25 June–06 September 2021

SEEN @ The Exchange, Penzance:
23 October 2021–08 January 2022

Where There's Space to Grow @
Sunderland Museum and Winter
Gardens: 15 January–13 March 2022

Lessons learned

- The need for a dynamic and flexible approach to be able to respond to our young people and their changing priorities.



- The need to find space in our planning and curatorial processes to shift power from the organisation to the young people.
- Development of creative ways to use Zoom. Moving sessions online allowed us to work with artists from around the country who we may not have otherwise had the resources to work with.
- Working online highlighted what we missed about being together in person! Sharing food, doing hands-on activities and having the opportunity to chat are now the most precious parts of our sessions.

Next steps

Arts Council Collection hopes to establish a dedicated programme of work with young people, allowing more young people around the country to shape the work of the Collection in the future.

The partnership is reflecting on how we ensure our programmes for young people are peer-led, and allow for opportunities to collaborate and build on skills already developed through the programme.

We hope that our young people, our audiences and each other will hold our organisations accountable so we all continue to bring new points of view into our future programming.



Above: 'House Share (2021) An Arts Council Collection National Partners Programme Exhibition. Installation view. Firstsite, Colchester. Photo by Anna Lukala.

Left: Screenshots from 'Kickstarter', a National Partners Programme online event for young people's groups in Sunderland, Penzance and Colchester. Kickstarter was facilitated by youth-led organisation, Rising, with artists John Walters and Flo Brooks.

Find out more

<https://artscouncilcollection.org.uk/national-partners-programme/round-2-2019-2022>

<https://firstsite.uk/online-studio/post/house-share>

<https://newlynartgallery.co.uk/activities/seen>

For more details please contact:
Posy Jowett

posy.jowett@sunderlandculture.org.uk

'Expanded Interiors: Restaged':

An alternative exhibition guide

Summary

A group of six young people met online with artists Catrin Huber and Rosie Morris, and then independently produced an alternative exhibition guide for the upcoming exhibition, Expanded Interiors: Restaged at the Hatton Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Background

The young people involved were recruited from, L-INK – a group aged 16-24 working with the Hatton Gallery and Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The Hatton Gallery is managed by Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums on behalf of Newcastle University. They work closely with students from Newcastle University and exhibit their work on an annual basis.

Challenge

Contemporary installation art can be intimidating. Conventional exhibition guides do not always appeal to younger people, nor do they reflect their specific interests. Partly, this is because gallery resources are often produced by a demographic distinct from the group it seeks to attract.

Could an alternative exhibition guide produced by a group of young people encourage engagement with and understanding of Expanded Interiors?

Approach

After a series of online discussions the group designed the guide based on their personal interpretations of the



exhibition. The guide was designed independently from the artists and gallery staff.

Intended outcomes

- Young people to have a voice in the Hatton exhibition resources and interpretations.
- A collaboration between the artists and young people to generate new understandings of the exhibition.
- Expanded Interiors was a paid project which offered a real-life experience for the group.

Intended outputs

- An alternative exhibition guide (available in an online and paper format) aimed at young people created by a group in the same demographic.

Obstacles and issues

The online nature of the project posed several challenges. First, it was sometimes difficult for the group to visualise how the installation-based exhibition would appear in situ. This obstacle was compounded by the fact that the exhibition comprised a digital element, which was especially confusing to conceptualise in relation to the whole exhibition.

As a remote team, it was also sometimes difficult for the group to work together in a completely integrated fashion and reflect on the artist-led talks. The way the group organised itself was that each member was assigned a different page to complete for the guide, meaning that some opportunities for collaboration were lost.



Actual outcomes

- The group asked the artists questions during the sessions. This developed the artists' understandings of their work and how it could be interpreted. Moreover, Catrin Huber found that texts from the L-INK guide "took on an active role in orchestrating the exhibition or becoming part of artworks themselves".
- The group worked mostly independently from the gallery staff to produce a guide that reflected their own interests and interpretation of the exhibition.
- The perspectives of young people were represented in a way that was unconventional compared to traditional exhibition guides.

Actual outputs

The group produced:

- An alternative exhibition guide printed on card and available online: the guide consists of designs (produced electronically and hand-drawn) and text.
- An accessible version of the exhibition guide.
- Some additional pieces of text for the website (a blog post and mini essay about the exhibition).

Lessons learned

Installation art can be difficult to conceptualise online given the integrity of space to its in-situ experience.

A group-led timeframe designed at the beginning of the project would create the opportunity for the group to plan additional discussion sessions both during and subsequent to the programme of artist-led talks. This will allow more time to reflect on the sessions whilst memories are recent and encourage integration throughout. Perhaps these reflections could be documented in the form of a group blog which would then inform the final guide.

For participants who feel uncomfortable contributing to discussions, there could be an anonymised function to ask questions/contribute thoughts.

Next steps

The alternative exhibition guide is available both as a pdf and in accessible plain-text form online.

The group are invited to contribute either a practical workshop or knowledge-sharing session to a public symposium pertaining to exhibition themes in November 2021.

“The perspectives of young people were represented in a way that was unconventional compared to traditional exhibition guides.”



Find out more

PDF of the alternative exhibition guide:

<https://cutt.ly/eTTb8fY>

Accessible version of the alternative exhibition guide:

<https://cutt.ly/uTTnpsz>

L-INK Group page on Expanded Interiors Re-Staged:

<https://cutt.ly/QTt5Ww>

Information about the L-INK Group:

<https://cutt.ly/uTTnwxL>

Expanded Interiors:

<https://cutt.ly/FTTnyYN>

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Laing Art Gallery Learning Team

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Piloting Programmes with Home Educators:

The BioMedia Book Arts project



Summary

The BioMedia Book Arts project was the Linnean Society of London's first virtual learning series for young people. Working with schools and home educating families, over 500 participants created a natural science sketchbook with guidance from instructional videos featuring guest experts, art demonstrations, and ideas for further study.

Background

Prior to 2020, the BioMedia Meltdown Project featured live art/science workshops in London KS3 classrooms, libraries, hospitals and community centres. These projects were supported by unique materials and techniques not commonly offered in traditional classroom settings.

Challenge

In Autumn 2020, most classrooms were unable to invite outside visitors into their schools due to the pandemic. I devised a remote learning project for schools, eventually extending the opportunity to home educators. Between November 2020 and May 2021, I created 9 fifteen-minute videos with the assistance of Linnean Fellows Ania Driscoll-Lind (Science and Outdoor Learning Specialist) and Michael Holland (Ecologist and Botany Expert).

Approach

The project was flexible enough to be done either in the classroom or at home, using topics and specimens that were easy to find in any UK setting. Working with my project partners,

we outlined seven plant and animal families and I created related art activities plus a worksheet for each including links to podcasts, videos, articles and web sites for further study. For schools, I provided materials for distribution by teachers. Home educating participants received a materials list to source themselves; those on limited income were able to request free kits.

Intended outcomes

The aim of all BioMedia activities is to incite young peoples' curiosity about natural history and life sciences, and to offer artistic methods of observing and understanding living things and natural systems. We also hope to encourage students to seek creative solutions for the challenges we face in protecting the natural world.

Intended outputs

By the end of the project, each participant would make a nature journal/artists' book containing visual and textual explorations of at least 7 of the 9 topics offered. Techniques included drawing and painting, 2D & 3D design, creative writing, photography, printing and dye-making from natural materials.

Obstacles and issues

By November I had sent out 420 materials kits to schools, and by the end of December I had launched 2 videos. However, participating schools were struggling with Covid-19 closures and catch-up, and I was determined



to maximise the project's impact by extending our offer to home educators. I reached out to a small group of parents I had worked with in the past, who put the word out to others. By the end of February I had registered 60 home educating families from all over the UK.

Actual outcomes

Home educating families were responsive to the project from the start, and provided me with immediate feedback as well as questions and examples of student work. I had regular communication with parents who extended the project to their whole families, often with younger children participating. I was able to share student work with all participants, and this incited more activity from schools. Participation expanded from both school and home educating groups during summer term, with classroom teachers reporting high levels of engagement. Elective Home Educators (EHE) were equally enthusiastic, reporting that there was a lack of such interdisciplinary programmes available in this vein.

Actual outputs

We received over 100 beautiful, hard-bound artists' books for the competition, made by pupils aged 8-15. Books were judged by an expert panel of scientists, artists, publishing

“The aim of all BioMedia activities is to incite young peoples' curiosity about natural history and life sciences.

and conservation experts, who chose the top entries for Artistic Merit, Scientific Merit, Creative Writing and Presentation/Graphic Design. In July we held an online celebration event and prizegiving, awarding winners prizes tailored to their regions and interests, including local wildlife foundation memberships, outdoor equipment, field guides, books and art supplies. Teachers expressed gratitude for creative cross-curricular content, reflecting that it provided relief from the pressurized, post-lockdown academic calendar. Home educators reflected that it reinvigorated the joy in learning and natural discovery students needed in this time of crisis.

Lessons learned

- Home educators are an excellent resource for pilot projects, being vocal about students' needs and responses, and often willing to share their work and discoveries.



- A serial project, working with more limited number of participants over a longer period of time, can develop higher quality 'engagements' than more performative one-off workshops.
- We need to consider how we measure engagements to account for meaningful impact over time.
- One by-product of the pandemic is EHE is on the rise. Organisations concerned with targeting at risk or excluded young people might consider the benefits of working with EHE families, and take their needs into consideration when developing programmes and advisory boards.

Next steps

Videos from the BioMedia Book Arts project are being archived for future use; the BioMedia Meltdown programme is undergoing evaluation and developing strategy for the coming years. Should the project receive funding, we will be looking at how to use hybrid approaches working with both in-person and remote delivery, with schools and EHE as well as existing stakeholder groups.

Find out more

To learn more about this project please email daryl@linnean.org

Ania Driscoll-Lind

Project Partner
ania@kulanaia.org

Michael Holland

hello@growingunderstandings.co.uk

Young People Engaging Young People:

The VOiCE team (Volunteers in Collections Engagement) at the University of Edinburgh

Summary

The VOiCE (Volunteers in Collections Engagement) team was created in October 2020, and is composed of current students or recent graduates who help increase youth engagement with our collections, museums and services.

Background

The Centre for Research Collections (CRC) is responsible for looking after, and providing access to, the University of Edinburgh's heritage collections and museum spaces. As part of the University one of our key aims is to engage students and young people with our collections.

Challenge

The CRC is situated on the top floor of the University of Edinburgh's main library which results in a lack of visibility to students as they don't often venture to the top floor. During the pandemic, it was more difficult for us to engage with students due to the campus being closed and we wanted to find another way to reach them. Another focus of our work is to offer volunteer placements to as many students as possible as demand always exceeds what we can offer. We looked for ways to do this remotely while the campus was closed.

Approach

We put a call out to students looking for volunteer opportunities to ask if they wanted to work with our



Community Outreach Officer on youth engagement initiatives. We received many more applications than we could take on. Seven young people joined the team, a mix of current students and graduates, studying a range of subjects. We initially proposed creating a monthly newsletter to send out to followers with articles written by the team on subjects of their interest. The team themselves decided to create a podcast, social media accounts and a monthly 'Meet the...' event series as these were ideas that they thought would work

well engaging young people and additionally were areas in which they wanted to gain experience.

Intended outcomes

- To give young people valuable work experience in the heritage sector
- To use their expertise and understanding of what young people want to create content that is more attractive to young people
- By so doing, engage more young people with our collections and services+

“**Important to accept that the young people’s perspective on our collections may differ from our own (and to see that as a good thing!).**

Intended outputs

A monthly newsletter created by the VOiCE team

Obstacles and issues

- When the Team was first created, there was some uncertainty around the different responsibilities for each member. This resolved itself after a while, following the pattern of the form, storm, norm, perform model.
- At first, we had thought that the team may post their content using our official social media channels. However, we realised that by having the team set up their own branding, identity, and accounts this gave them much more freedom to express themselves which is what we wanted them to be able to do

Actual outcomes

- Three members of the team completed the Edinburgh Award, an employment initiative for University students which encourages them to reflect on the skills they develop through voluntary work
- Members of staff also learnt new skills from the team that can be used in future

Actual outputs

- A monthly newsletter created by the VOiCE team
- A podcast (We’ve Got History Between Us)
- A VOiCE blog site and social media accounts
- A monthly ‘Meet the ...’ events series, interviewing members of staff from ourselves and other institutions



Lessons learned

- Flexibility and a willingness to accept the ideas brought to the table by the young people themselves are key in making them feel invested in the team
- At the beginning, it's important to spend time one-on-one with each of the young people to make sure they're getting what they want from the opportunity. Had we spent more time doing this, the team may have 'formed' more quickly.
- Important to accept that the young people’s perspective on our collections may differ from our own (and to see that as a good thing!)
- In our first cohort, we were lucky to have a couple of members who were natural leaders and really took ownership over the team. It would be good to have at least one or two who are interested in developing their leadership skills in each cohort.



Next steps

We plan to continue the VOiCE team and have recently recruited new members for the 21-22 academic year. We look forward to them bringing their own interests, passions and skills to the table. Until now, most of the VOiCE team’s activity has occurred online so we are now looking into the feasibility of allowing them to organise physical/hybrid events and the possibility of getting funding to support this and being able to provide the team with their own budget.

Find out more

You can find links to the VOiCE Team’s blog site, newsletter, podcast and social media channels here:

<https://linktr.ee/voiced>

More on the Form, Storm, Norm, Reform model: <https://blog.trello.com/form-storm-norm-perform-stages-of-team-productivity>

Virtual Classrooms:

Translating formal learning from physical to digital

Summary

In response to Covid-19, The History of Science Museum's (HSM) and Bodleian Libraries' (Library) Learning Teams designed and delivered a virtual classrooms initiative to develop new ways of engaging young people remotely with world-class collections and the capability to respond flexibly to new audiences through online engagement.

Background

HSM and The Library offer schools and colleges a range of facilitated in-person workshops and study days linked to the National Curriculum.

Challenge

The project addressed the need to support schools during the pandemic and develop the digital skills needed to create a more flexible learning offer encompassing both virtual and physical engagement.

Approach

With initial training from Jewish Museum London, the teams experimented with real-time interactive formats including workshops, seminars and guided tours, creating a virtual environment for learning and engagement with the collections.

Audience engagement:

- Support schools in Covid-19 recovery by adapting existing curriculum resources to online delivery targeting local priority



“teachers will recognise the added value of your expertise and privileged access to objects.”

schools in areas of socio-economic disadvantage.

- Maintain engagement and develop a flexible blended model for the future.
- Increase accessibility of the learning programmes to audiences unable to visit due to distance or access requirements. Skills and capacity:
- Develop the skills, resources and infrastructure needed to open-up collections and reach new and existing audiences online.
- Build capacity for income generation through online programming.

Intended outputs

HSM:

- Develop 3 primary and 4 secondary workshops (KS1-4)
- Multi-workshop project for local SEND school including Arts Award qualification

Library:

- Workshops and digital resources for secondary schools
- Joint Study Day (KS4/5) with HSM

Both:

- Deliver 60 online workshops to schools

Obstacles and issues

The biggest issue was lack of experience and familiarity with virtual platforms along with technical challenges – connectivity, classroom set-ups, audio etc. We were also challenged with finding effective ways to feature the collections, maintain variety and pace, and establish relationships within the constraints of limited interaction with students in the classroom.

Limited access to collections during remote working and limited take-up during lockdowns presented challenges too.



Actual outcomes

- Developed a range of online sessions and digital resources to extend the learning offer and adaptability.
- Learning teams developed skills and confidence in methods of online delivery becoming a more resilient workforce.
- Enabled the Library and HSM to sustain relationships with local schools and teachers who acted as advocates and critical friends supporting open and honest conversations and collaboration.
- Developed new relationships with schools and teachers through The River Learning (academy) Trust.
- Revived an old partnership with The Langley Academy overcoming the logistical challenges of geographical separation, engaging whole year groups, and addressing diversity in the science curriculum with new virtual Science and Islam KS3 workshop.
- Sustained ongoing partnership with Iffley Academy for students with special education needs and disabilities; tested a hybrid model delivering tangible benefits to vulnerable young people at a critical time and extending the Museum's recent Maths in the Museum project.

Actual outputs

At HSM:

- 4 primary and 5 secondary workshops developed for KS1-4.
- 36 sessions delivered reaching over 1,000 students.
- Delivered an 8-session project to a group of SEND students from The Iffley Academy with an Arts Award qualification.
- Staff CPD for Iffley Academy.
- Virtual seminar for KS4, 'Big Questions in Astronomy' with researchers from Physics Department.
- Digital resources; PDF's, PowerPoints, 12 short object films.



At The Library:

- Suite of 6 EPQ Study Skills sessions developed; Chaucer's World blended event (video content and live Q&A).
- 16 sessions delivered reaching 186 students.
- Downloadable resources including Moments in Medicine series; Chaucer; Frankenstein; English Civil War; Women's Suffrage.

Lessons learned

A key lesson we learned was that it is possible to establish relationships with classrooms virtually and deliver enduring learning opportunities; teachers will recognise the added value of your expertise and privileged access to objects/museum.

However, consultation with teachers is essential in developing sessions as is teamwork in delivery. This is particularly true with SEND students where a hybrid of in-person and virtual encounters helps build relationships and trust.

Planning for interactivity is also important in maintaining engagement; well-designed printable worksheets, object-related Q&A, storytelling and use of characters support variety and pace.

We learned a lot about different platforms – they all have pros and cons but you need to offer more than one.

Pre-session tech checks and feeling confident in your platform also helps to ease delivery.

As well as increasing accessibility, online learning can complement a physical offer with digital resources and pre- and post- visits online. The Library's digital resources had 8,986 views and 355 downloads during the 10-month project. You don't need expensive equipment; you can make an engaging film on a mobile phone.

Next steps

- Marketing a chargeable programme and monitoring uptake
- Further testing of flexible models blending physical with virtual
- Additional digital learning resources to support curriculum enrichment and online learning for a variety of audiences
- Piloting virtual CPD for teachers

Find out more

<https://hsm.ox.ac.uk/learning-and-participation>

Email: learning@hsm.ox.ac.uk

<https://visit.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/learning>

Iffley Academy:

miranda.millward@glam.ox.ac.uk

Youth, Nature, Science and Heritage

Summary

The Natural Science and Heritage Scheme is a paid opportunity for young people in Oxfordshire from disadvantaged backgrounds. During the four week programme four participants worked alongside the museum's public engagement team to devise and deliver summer holiday family activities.

Background

Oxford University Museum of Natural History aims to broaden the range of people who engage with natural science at every level. We run a popular family and youth programme and during the Covid-19 crisis many of these opportunities moved to a virtual platform. This summer we were looking forward to engaging with

visitors in the museum again. Rather than going back to 'business as usual' we wanted to take this opportunity to try a new approach that would engage with a greater diversity of participants.

Challenge

Our existing youth programme provides many exciting opportunities for young people to explore their interest in nature, science and museums. The programme is popular and well supported. Participants are recruited from local state schools and the museum advertises the programme to schools in the most deprived parts of the county. However, the majority of participants come from fairly well off families and don't represent the diversity of the local population.

“We didn't want to direct the group too closely and stifle their creativity.”



Approach

The Natural Science and Heritage Scheme was devised with a different cohort in mind and advertised to teacher contacts from target schools. We gave more explicit information about the aims of the scheme and the people we were hoping to engage with. We didn't want regular museum visitors with high science capital. We were looking for the confident personable teenagers who were embedded in their local communities. We wanted to learn from people who didn't visit the museum and understand their needs and expectations and those of their friends and families better.



Intended outcomes

Through this approach we hoped that

- We would gain a better understanding of the young people and families we aspire to engage with.

Intended outputs

- We would be able to work with the participants to develop a more inclusive family programme.
- Participants own families and friends would visit the museum.

Obstacles and issues

- Devising a four week programme was challenging, as it required planning a lot of content without knowing how the participants would respond.
- We wanted participants to feel supported by an experienced and expert team but there was a balance to be achieved. We didn't want to direct the group too closely and stifle their creativity. We wanted the programme to include time for their own ideas to come to the fore and be developed in something we could share.

Actual outcomes

The aims of the programme were communicated effectively to local teachers and all applicants met the criteria linked to socio-economic status. Although ethnicity wasn't mentioned in the selection criteria, the group were very diverse in

terms of their ethnicity and heritage. However, all applicants were female. All participants were also all very aware of enrichment opportunities in Oxfordshire and were able to give a long list of schemes and programmes with similar selection criteria to ours.

Actual outputs

The idea of devising new family activities from scratch was ambitious. In reality the group took a fresh look at activities we'd used in the past and modified those they liked best.

For example, when choosing objects for a handling table in the museum, they chose the objects that got them talking the most. When deciding which craft activities to set out they chose things they enjoyed making themselves. The museum team was then able to mould the array of activities chosen and modified by the group into a coherent family programme of events. The participants ran the programme at outreach events and on site, with community groups and museum visitors. Their own friends and families also came to see them 'in action' and take part.

Lessons learned

- The Covid-19 crisis actually created an opportunity to try something new. Without a pause in regular programming and time to reflect on our practice, we may have continued with the tried, tested and popular formats.

- The programme we delivered wasn't radically different but it was delivered by diverse and enthusiastic young people. This changed the way the programme was received.
- Through the Natural Science and Heritage Scheme we were able to try a more intensive and sustained programme with a small group. This enabled us to establish stronger relationships with the participants. They shared their interests. We understand their motivations better. We appreciate the challenges they face in their day to day lives. This knowledge and understanding and their inclusion in our team has enabled our practice to be more inclusive.

Next steps

The museum plans to run a programme for six participants next summer, running for three weeks instead of four.

Find out more

For more information about the Natural Science and Heritage Scheme contact

sarah.lloyd@oum.ox.ac.uk

Piloting a Young V&A Collective in a Pandemic

Summary

Partnership between the museum and UCL's Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis (CASA) funded by UCL Engagement. For 6 months during national lockdown, we worked with 10 young people aged 11–14 to develop a web-based app to enable co-creation relating to new galleries planned for Young V&A: Play, Imagine and Design.

Background

Formerly known as The Museum of Childhood, Young V&A (YV&A) will be a museum of design and creativity for children aged 0–14. In March 2020 when all cultural institutions in the UK had to shut, our plans for a large-scale festival celebrating the museum's transformation before closing for building work dramatically pivoted. We decided to focus on a very targeted audience enabling us to position Young V&A as a museum which would attract and serve teenagers visiting outside of school. As this audience had never been major visitors to the museum, it was an opportunity to explore and create with them while working as a museum without walls.

Challenge

Co-creation in the context of lockdown and social isolation affecting children and young people's access to creativity and each other.

Approach

A series of online workshops enabling connection through creative collaboration while physically socially



isolated. Sessions were led by creative professionals across 3D design, sound design, and performance. Each session involved learning a new creative skill.

Intended outcomes

- To deepen our understanding of 11–14 year olds as a target audience through testing co-creation processes via a digital platform and providing opportunities for collaboration with artists, designers, and museum professionals.
- An understanding of issues that may arise when developing content for the new museum and its learning programmes digitally.
- New connections forged with partnerships that have knowledge of/ access to this harder-to-reach new audience.

Intended outputs

1. A pilot web-based platform offering an interactive experience to enable 11–14 year olds to continue to engage with YV&A, incorporating commissions from our network of external designers and artists through interactive digital resources.
2. Development of a series of co-created projects with young people through this new digital platform.
3. A series of workshops giving young people an opportunity to collaborate with creatives.

Obstacles and issues

A significant challenge was around sustaining participation for the duration of the project, particularly amidst the uncertainty of the

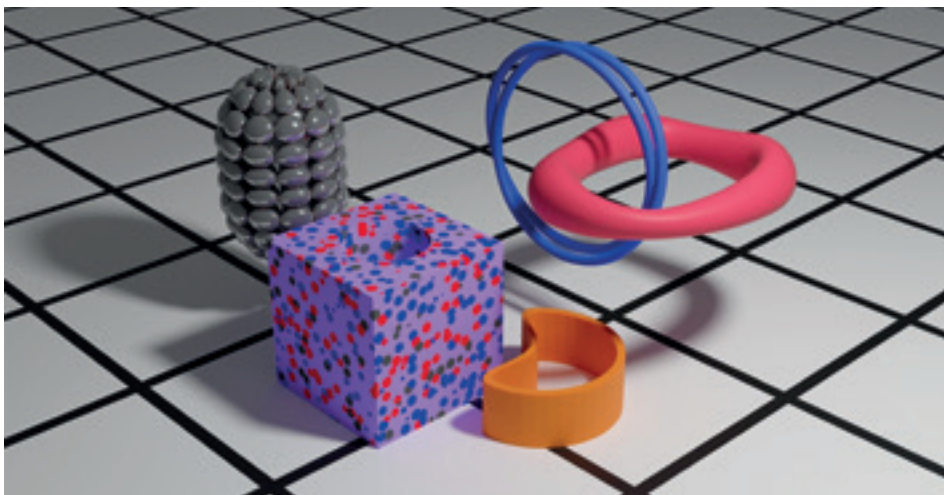
“We’ve got this head start on every other festival that cancelled, in terms of finding a way to do the new digital version. Like the blue-print of how these things can work- and how we can apply our skills and share them differently online. It’s the beginning.

Marawa, Artist (Movement)

pandemic. Maintaining the momentum of the project required us to be flexible in how we imagined and invited participation.

There are safeguarding issues that arise from Zoom as a digital portal into participants’ homes, specifically around respecting the participants’ right to privacy. In Spring 2020, we were new to these methods of engagement, so we worked collaboratively with our youth partners to agree digital safeguarding measures.

A typical behaviour we noted early on was for participants to keep their cameras and microphones switched off. However, participants being present without being visible or heard can close off visually codified means of communication, and limit access to arts-based practical sessions. The blank screens also posed a difficulty to facilitators who were used to ‘reading the room’ during a process in assessing whether and how their ideas are landing, and participants are engaging. Creating a respectful environment and using chat to check in did help the group to build relationships and collaborate over time. The youth workers were key to this process, as the hosts and safeguarding leads.



Actual outcomes

1. A community of young people and youth workers to test how a Young Collective could inform and learn from our transformation into the Young V&A.
2. Ideas about how to move forward with a Young Collective.
3. Working relationships and developing practice with creatives engaging with the themes of the new galleries.

Actual outputs

1. A pilot web-based platform that offered an interactive experience enabling 11–14 year olds to continue to engage with the Young V&A. Through interactive digital resources, users could collaborate with artists and designers.
2. Working relationship with Spotlight, now partner in delivering the ongoing Young V&A Collective.

Lessons learned

- The importance of the Youth Worker supporting attendance and engagement.
- Making a digital output feel tangible for this audience – We planned to celebrate and exhibit the work in person, but the 2nd lockdown prohibited this.
- The value of partnership working: combining creative practitioners, youth workers, academic and museum professionals has shaped our future strategy for nurturing the ‘stretch audience’.

- The technical opportunities of working with CASA with their skill set and research areas brought new capacity to YV&A.

Next steps

The Digital Pilot informed our work with Spotlight on a Collective. Spotlight are now hosting the first in-person cohort.

We are learning from challenges around recruitment in the context of a post-pandemic autumn term: an initial drop-in model is most accessible. and creative skills are more accessible when experienced in person and haptically.

Left: Picture Plane © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Above: Still from Design Studio in the platform co-created with the Young Collective, YV&A, UCL and artist Kristi Minchin © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Find out more

V&A Blog:

www.vam.ac.uk/blog/museum-life/re-invent-digital-a-pilot

UCL Blog:

www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-east/news/2020/oct/blog-re-invent-digital-pilot-co-creating-young-people

Society for Social Studies of Science Blog:

www.4sonline.org/re-invent-digital-pilot

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About GEM

GEM, the Group for Education in Museums, has been helping anyone who delivers learning in museums to connect and learn together for over 70 years. We support sector colleagues in a variety of ways, including training courses, mentoring, publications like the GEM Case Studies, and other professional development opportunities.

GEM's **VISION** is of a connected and equipped community of people enabling learning across museum, heritage and cultural settings, creating inspiring experiences, relevant for everyone; that promote equality –transform and enrich lives.

Our **MISSION** is to support and empower our community of colleagues to connect and develop their knowledge and skills to deliver learning.

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