ICOM
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MUSEES

University Museums and Collections Journal

Volume 2 · 2009

UMAC
University Museums and Collections

ICOM
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MUSÉES

University Museums and Collections Journal

Volume 2 – 2009

The University Museums and Collections Journal (UMACJ) is a peer-reviewed, on-line journal for the proceedings of the International Committee for University Museums and Collections (UMAC), a Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM).
The journal appears at least once a year at: http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/umacj

Editors
Sally MacDonald
University College London Museums and Collections
UCL, Gower Street
London WC1E 6BT
United Kingdom

Nathalie Nyst
Réseau des Musées de l'ULB
Université Libre de Bruxelles – CP 175
Avenue F.D. Roosevelt, 50
1050 Brussels
Belgium

Cornelia Weber
Humboldt University of Berlin
Hermann von Helmholtz-Zentrum für Kulturtechnik
Unter den Linden 6
10099 Berlin
Germany

Copyright
© International ICOM Committee for University Museums and Collections
http://umac.icom.museum

ISSN 2071-7229

University Museums and Collections Journal 2/2009

University Museums and the Community

Proceedings of the 8th Conference of the International Committee of ICOM for University Museums and Collections (UMAC)

Manchester, 16th–20th September 2008

Table of Contents

Introduction

Evoking humanity: Reflections on the importance of university museums and collections 1
ALAN D. GILBERT

University museums and the community 5
SALLY MACDONALD

Keynotes

Experiments in the boundary zone: Science Gallery at Trinity College Dublin 7
MICHAEL JOHN GORMAN

Ivory tower or welcoming neighbor? Engaging our local communities 15
JANE PICKERING

Panel sessions

University museums as beacons of public engagement

What opportunities can university museums offer for academic-public interaction? Some lessons from London's Beacon for Public Engagement 23
STEVE CROSS

University museums and outreach: the Newcastle upon Tyne case study 27
LINDSAY ALLASON-JONES

University museums and the internet community

Web communication. A content analysis of German university collections and museums websites 33
CORNELIA WEBER

Chasing the online audience 37
MARK CARNALL

The effect of digitalized museum information on learning 41
DAMON MONZAVI

The internal audience as leisure users

Beyond teaching: Out of hours at the Grant Museum 43
JACK ASHBY

Internal audience: A key to success 47
MIRNA HERUC

Site-based tours and discussions

Multiple voices in the university museum

Courting controversy – the Lindow Man exhibition at the Manchester Museum 51
BRYAN SITCH

Roundtable workshop discussion on the role of university museums in formal and informal teaching

On the road again: Reaching out to isolated school communities 55
KARL VAN DYKE

A purpose-driven university museum 61
JULIETTE BIANCO

Building creative communities: How does a university museum work with family learning in a challenging community context? 65
CELINE WEST

Family matters: The role of university museums in intergenerational learning 69
REBEKAH MORAN

Secondary school program at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History 75
SARAH LLOYD

The community service of the Ghent University Zoology Museum 77
DOMINICK VERSCHELDE

Workshops

University museums and their relationship to the city

The role of the university museum in community development 81
DAVID ELLIS

University museums in a university town: University of Tartu Museums in the service of the local community 85
REET MÄGI

University museums and hard-to-reach audiences

Ways of seeing: A model for community partnership working 91
GILL HART

Strategic realignment to reach specific communities

Accessibility to university museums: A strategical objective 95
EDMON CASTELL

Evoking humanity: Reflections on the importance of university museums and collections

ALAN D. GILBERT

Abstract

In this paper, Professor Alan Gilbert, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Manchester, welcomes UMAC delegates and explains why he feels that museums in general - and university museums in particular - are singularly important.

It seems rather pointless for me to welcome you all to this 8th Conference of the International Committee for University Museums and Collections, because you have already been in session all day.

But I can welcome you warmly to The University of Manchester. That's what University Presidents do on these occasions. According to the conventional script, they use the pretext of welcoming visitors to the university to indulge in a little institutional boasting about their university. Indeed, an address of welcome by a University President, on the one hand, and institutional hubris, on the other, go readily together – rather like gin-and-tonic. Properly done, both have considerable feel-good effects, albeit without adding much genuine or long-term value.

Before abandoning my script, I should therefore tell you that Manchester is the largest University in the UK, whether you count pounds sterling or people; that it is a significant research institution, investing around £400 million per annum into its research activities; and that it is in the process of completing the largest capital programme in UK higher education history, driven by a commitment to make the entire campus thoroughly fit for 21st century purposes by 2015.

There! I've paid sufficient lip service to the conventional formula.

Feeling a little more ambitious this evening, let me now try to express something rather more complex, and try to explain why museums – and university museums and collections in particular – are singularly important.

In doing so, I'm afraid that I have more questions than answers; and I embark on my task with considerable trepidation. All attempts to probe matters of deep human significance, whether in art, music, literature, formal speeches or informal observations, confront what Aldus Huxley once called "the limits of the expressible". We wish to communicate something that we find deeply meaningful, something, perhaps, that probes the most fundamental of human values, beliefs, assumptions or prejudices – something that goes to the very heart of our shared human consciousness, or that moves us profoundly – and language itself becomes a barrier. We can't find the words to plumb the depths of consciousness that we wish to explore.

So instead (and this is too common an expedient when confronted with things that matter deeply), we retreat onto the safer ground of second-order considerations.

Thus, for example, there are many mundane, straightforward, perfectly respectable reasons to champion the cause of museums and collections, and to advocate their location within universities. For one thing, such institutions have important adjunct value to lend to education at all levels. We can confidently count visits by school children and family groups and members of the general public as indices of the success of a museum or gallery, without feeling any pressing need to explain why such visits are beneficial. We can note that researchers often find museums and galleries useful, and

sometimes indispensable. We can value museums and collections as tourist attractions and places where people of all ages are at once entertained and informed.

All these observations are valid, and together they constitute a telling case for investing in museums and collections and hosting them in universities.

But they leave a whole lot unsaid, and difficult to capture in words and sentences.

For in the evident need of ***Homo sapiens*** – our species – to create museums and galleries and other records of the past – there is, I think, much more than a sophisticated passing interest in other people and earlier ages. One of the main truths about human consciousness is that it is bounded by mystery. Ever the wisest and most informed among us can only give limited and partial answers to the fundamental questions that confront our self-conscious species: Who are we? What are we doing here? What shall become of us? It is to a significant extent the search for answers to such questions that moves us to look into the minds of other people and earlier ages. Knowing more about where we have come from, and how our forebears coped with their own fears and aspirations, promises to give us some kind of reference point from which to understand the directions open to our own generation.

Many of us who live in Western cultures are no longer religious in any traditional sense. We are not often blessed with genuine experiences of the numinous. Yet even for us, for whom the empirical so readily trumps the spiritual, there are occasions and experiences that transcend the mundane, limited rationality of modern life.

Why, I am curious to know, can some tenuous, even fragmentary link to people and cultures far removed from us in time and space sometimes evoke in us the deepest and truest intellectual and emotional experiences: awe at the very fact of our own existence; profound curiosity about who we are and why we are here; a deep longing to know what great story we seem to be part of?

We feel like that, I think, because we are to so great an extent – individually and culturally - what our past has made us. Not entirely, of course. We are also what our genetic inheritance has gifted us; just as we are shaped by visions and hopes and fears of the future, near and far away.

But the past is singularly potent in fashioning human consciousness and identity. We can forget this for long periods, although being oblivious to our heritage does not free us from its influence. Then, in particular times and places, suddenly and with arresting force, an almost palpable sense of our association with events long past and people long dead confronts us with deep truths or deeply formative questions about our own humanity.

I recall, for example, visiting the archives of the Hoover Institute at Stanford University some years ago, and being handed a single sheet of paper. It was a *pro forma* of the kind produced in the days before photocopying by typists cutting a reproducible stencil onto waxed paper. This particular stencilled *pro forma* had been run off by the US Armed Forces during the Second World War. Aged over almost half a century and nondescript in appearance, it had been filled in the summer of 1945 by someone who must have had the very highest of wartime security clearances.

What the archivist was allowing me to handle was the actual piece of paper first handed to Colonel Paul Tibbets, the commanding officer of *Enola Gay*, a B-29 Superfortress of the US Army's 393 Bombardment Squadron, when he and his crew were entrusted with a very special mission on 6 August 1945. Together with a range of mundane details about when to take-off, what the initial flight plan would be and how the final destination would be relayed to the crew en route, a single, haunting word had been typed in to let the crew know what kind of weapon they would deploy. This weapon, I read, as Colonel Tibbets himself had read before me, was "special", so special that when en route he

was told that the target was the Japanese city of Hiroshima, he was also given instructions about how quickly *Enola Gay* would have to exit the target area.

That word “special”, typed innocuously on a fading stencil, was one of the great understatements of history. The first atomic bomb ever to be used as a weapon changed the meaning of life on earth. What John F. Kennedy was to say at his Inauguration fifteen and a half years later - that humankind now held in mortal hands the power to destroy all forms of human life - had *not* been demonstrably true before 6 August 1945. But once that “special” weapon had exploded over Hiroshima the spectre of self-inflicted annihilation would henceforth stalk humankind, probably inescapably.

So there I was, in an archive in a great university, holding in my hands a single sheet of paper that linked me, palpably, with one of the great denouements in human history. As every museum curator knows, intrinsically ephemeral artifacts can be like that, if they can transport us back to intrinsically important human decisions, events or associations. So I felt awe in that Hoover Institute archive, and something akin to dread: a fleeting, powerful, existential awareness not only of the tenuousness of human life on earth, but of how much more frightening the world had become now that *Homo sapiens* had succumbed finally to the temptation, as old as Adam, to be godlike.

Dread, fortunately, is not the only emotion to be evoked in places where, as in this Manchester Museum, we come face to face with the human past. Some of these places are outdoor museums.

Join me at the mouth of a great cave in southern France, where prehistoric women and men once stood, warmed by their fires and comforted by the security that fire and solid rock and social solidarity together provided, and be deeply moved. Walk with me among the weathered sandstone of Uberi Rock in the Kakadu region of Northern Australia, where the sandstone ledges of great natural shelters have been polished like glass by the sheer length of time that humankind have walked and sat and reclined there. View there rich cave art in wonderful natural galleries curated with care continuously for more than 40,000 years, and feel the powerful sense of the numinous that a great Cathedral evokes: the sense of being kindred in some profoundly important, inexpressible way, with countless generations of men and women.

More precisely, learn something about our common humanity by reflecting on the lives and consciousness of those countless generations:

- feeling at once kindred to them and altogether unlike them;
- admiring their resilience in a hostile world bereft of all the promethean skills and technology that *Homo sapiens* would later accumulate;
- wondering what, if anything, they expected of the future, and whether they shared the greatest regret of our self-conscious, mortal species – the lost chance to know the rest of the tantalising human story;
- admiring their determination to convey their thoughts across the generations in those paintings on the cave walls;
- asking whether they did this only for contemporary purposes, while nevertheless believing (as an article of faith) that they were also reaching out to later generations – and to our generation – enriching our consciousness with some limited, fragmentary sharing of who they were and what they valued and how they dreamed; and
- wishing, wistfully, childishly even, that it were possible to travel back and let them know how their story has unfolded so far.

Those, I think, are the sentiments that a great museum stimulates; those some of the questions a great museum evokes.

For it is given to humankind, being mortal, to live at the moving hinge of history, shaped by what has gone before, shaping (if only to a limited extent) what is to come, and conscious of being only part of a saga whose end remains unknowable.

If (and this is what I have been trying to suggest) it is in such realities that the deepest human values are anchored, then we demean and impoverish that humanity in the absence of the kind of profound respect for the past that inspires and shapes the collections and exhibitions of great museums and galleries.

It follows that museums and galleries are essential, not secondary, manifestations of what it means to be human.

And because that is true, an authentic museum must itself operate at the hinge of history, being as preoccupied with the present and the future as it is with the past; reminding us – again and again – that we are all actors in a story that transcends us, and that at every moment in time – as it was at every moment in human history – the future is open, threatening and beckoning with myriad possibilities and possibilities; reminding us also that for a little while, if we are knowledgeable enough and courageous enough and lucky enough, we can ourselves - for better or for worse – write a tiny part of the human story.

A great museum, in short, is an educational institution *par excellence*. The great bulk of human knowledge and creativity emerges, inductively and deductively, from what we already know, from the knowledge we have inherited and not forgotten. If you know nothing about the past you can neither make sense of the present nor learn anything new.

So a great university is, already, among other things, a museum, even if it does not always recognise the fact. It is enhanced by hosting its own museums and/or galleries because such institutions resonate powerfully with the very idea of a university.

So museums and universities fit together – better, even, than gin-and-tonic or University Presidents and hubris! An authentic university, like a great museum, is a humanist institution, at once respectful of earlier creativity and endlessly curious and questioning of received wisdom; standing on the shoulders of giants while determined to outstrip them; and, above all, committed to learning.

Contact

Professor Alan D. Gilbert, AO, MA, DPhil, FASSA
President and Vice-Chancellor
Address: The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M139PL, United Kingdom
E-mail: president(at)manchester.ac.uk
www.manchester.ac.uk

University museums and the community

SALLY MACDONALD

Abstract

This paper summarises the main themes of the UMAC 2008 conference, noting some of the challenges and opportunities facing university museums at the start of the 21st century.

The idea for this conference grew from a recognition of the increasingly important role that university museums now play in engaging with a wide range of communities. For much of their history, universities were elite learning environments, often deliberately exclusive to all but staff and students. Over the last fifty years or so, their focus has shifted somewhat and universities have been playing an increasingly important role in their local and regional communities. University strategies increasingly acknowledge their wider economic, social and cultural roles: most are major employers; many play a significant role in the economy through knowledge transfer or their contribution to tourism.

In addition, one of the major ways in which universities make a contribution to their communities is through their cultural provision. Many universities operate theatres, concert venues, parks, botanic gardens, observatories, museums and galleries. Increasingly, university museums and galleries have become a vital link between universities and their communities. They are important sources of learning outside the classroom for schools and colleges, as well as places of informal learning for visitors of all kinds; they are vehicles for public engagement with academic research; and increasingly they are becoming places where the university can listen to the community and its views on the issues studied by academics.

The conference therefore addressed one of the most pressing issues today for university museums; how they can best function as places of interaction between the many communities they now serve, both internally and externally. Internal communities will include staff and students at work and at leisure. External communities will vary for each museum but are likely to include teachers and schoolchildren, families, adult learners, communities of origin and 'virtual' communities online.

One major area of discussion throughout the conference concerned the difficulty of prioritizing audiences. Many universities have yet to formally identify their key target audiences, leaving university museums to define their own, at risk of operating both unstrategically and unsustainably. As audience research conducted at Yale (PICKERING) demonstrates, potential audiences for the museum may well be deterred by the physical and psychological barriers presented by the university as a whole: aligning audience development initiatives with wider university priorities is critical. Working this strategic thinking into day-to-day activity can also be a challenge; many university museums struggle to find a balance between time spent with ‘traditional’ academic communities supporting teaching and research, and time spent serving new external audiences. At Dartmouth College’s Hood Museum, all staff were involved in trying to establish what this balance would mean for them, and all are involved in ongoing evaluation of whether or not it is working (BIANCO).

When thinking about academic communities, most university museums – with their roots in subject specialisms – tend to work most closely with staff and students from their own disciplines. Yet as universities champion cross-disciplinary working, university museums can no longer assume that all academic users will be subject specialists; or that all will be using the museum for research and teaching. Informal activities to build internal audiences can be most effective in challenging disciplinary barriers and in generating whole-institution support (ASHBY, HERUC).

Many university museums are now looking outwards and working with a wide spectrum of external communities, as the papers here demonstrate. Some of these communities – such as schools – were widely felt to be natural audiences and the conference provided many examples of innovative engagement with schools and families both on and offsite (LLOYD, MORAN, VAN DYKE, VERSCHELDE). Other initiatives provoked considerable debate. Some delegates questioned whether it was appropriate for university museums to be working with 'difficult' audiences, such as the long-term unemployed, or those recovering from mental illness. There was heated discussion as to whether creationists were a community with which natural history museums should engage. Those working with excluded communities (Hart, West) argue that building relationships with such groups – often via community partners – is a vital means through which a university fulfils its wider social responsibilities, and justifies its public funding.

Across the world, university museums are playing an increasing role in civic and regional cultural and social strategies; the conference heard of examples in Bogota, Tartu and Sydney (CASTELL, MÄGI, ELLIS). In the UK, a number of universities have recently been designated as 'Beacons of Public Engagement' by the Higher Education Funding Council, giving them specific responsibilities for engaging with local and regional audiences. At the heart of this initiative lies the conviction that all universities have a duty to engage the public with what they do, and that such engagement should take the form of dialogue. Several of the papers here (ALLASON-JONES, CROSS, HAWKINS) address what such institutional commitment may mean for their university museums.

It is clear from these papers, and from the discussions around them, that university museums have immense potential to engage communities of all kinds. Their astonishingly rich collections attract lay and specialist visitors, open routes into school curricula, make trans-global connections. University museum spaces are often interesting liminal sites for academic-public interaction. And university museum staff not only possess collections expertise but are often far more skilled than their academic colleagues at setting up such interactions.

However, it has to be said that much of this potential is as yet unrealized. Despite our access to excellent IT support, cutting edge technology and computer science expertise, few university museums experiment with new technologies for interpretation; Tehran's Gemstone Museum being a notable exception (MONZAVI). Most university museum websites are static and uni-directional, failing to provide opportunities for dialogue and debate, or to take advantage of the semantic Web (CARNALL, WEBER). Few of our university museums are located in purpose-built spaces with good public access where they can genuinely provide an academic-public interface. The inspiring example provide by the Trinity College Dublin's Science Gallery (GORMAN), which truly illustrates the potential for an interdisciplinary public laboratory, is – it has to be said – unencumbered by collections; no university museum is yet running programs as dynamic and well attuned to current research and contemporary concerns. And as university museum staff we increasingly face new challenges, such as being asked to mediate contentious academic-public debates (SITCH). It may be that we need to review our collections, relocate our activities and re-develop our staff if our museums are to achieve their full potential for community engagement.

Contact

Sally MacDonald
Director UCL Museums, Collections and Public Engagement
Address: Vice-Provost's Office, UCL, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT, United Kingdom
E-mail: sally.macdonald(at)ucl.ac.uk
www.ucl.ac.uk/museums

Experiments in the boundary zone: Science Gallery at Trinity College Dublin

MICHAEL JOHN GORMAN

Abstract

Universities have an ever-increasing need to engage the public with different areas of research, to justify public funding, to extend their relationships with local communities and to attract potential students. Science Gallery, a new initiative of Trinity College Dublin, is an experiment in public engagement with science and technology, bringing science into dialogue with the arts through exhibitions, events and festivals and acting as a sociable environment for face-to-face interactions and encounters between the public and scientists. Key challenges that will be discussed include: engaging the research community with the public, creating a two-way conversation, engaging young adults with science and technology and balancing research priorities with public interest.

Prologue

It's 6pm on a cold and dark February evening in Dublin. Commuter traffic is clogging up Pearse Street, one of the busiest arteries in the capital. But there is something happening that provides a distraction from the traffic jam. A quadricycle driven by a strange group of alien-like figures wearing pulsating LED spheres on their heads is maneuvering into place outside a new glass-fronted building, and a crowd is making its way inside the building which is a transparent frontage of Trinity College Dublin onto the city (Fig. 1). Inside the building scientists, artists and designers are involved in animated conversations, and visitors are participating in LED graffiti workshops and experimenting with electroluminescent fibers and fabrics. It's the *Lightwave* festival and we are at Trinity College's new experimental space, the Science Gallery.

Fig. 1 - Bubbleheads by Eric Staller at the *Lightwave* festival at Science Gallery

Up the large open staircase, past a 3D visualization of solar flares by astrophysicist Peter Gallagher, is a queue of Dubliners waiting patiently. Evelina Domnitch, a Belarusian art-scientist with a swirling pattern shaved on her cranium, invites small groups of visitors into a mysterious dark chamber. They wait in silence for almost ten minutes for their eyes to grow accustomed to the darkness and then a rising tone begins to emanate from a liquid filled transparent sphere. When the sound reaches a certain pitch startling luminous streaks begin to penetrate the liquid forming changing three-dimensional patterns of light – displaying the phenomenon of sonoluminescence, sound becoming light as tiny bubbles formed in the liquid are made to implode and reach temperatures that according to some are as hot as the surface of the sun.

Stepping out of the darkness, a group of students, arty types and a couple of old Ringsend ladies are crammed into the point of the building where they are staring into a large cubical arena, in which live bumblebees navigate towards colored lights to find a sugar reward. An experiment is in progress on the color vision of bees and their ability to learn to associate particular shades with sugar. The bees flight-paths have been scanned in three dimensions and laser etched onto resin blocks which are stacked into glowing towers of blocks tracing the learning curve of the female bumblebee (Fig. 2). Neuroscientist Beau Lotto is explaining the principles of the experiment to the group when suddenly a bumblebee manages to escape from the arena and staff and students alike gleefully chase her around the building. In the meantime a DJ has started up downstairs and a dancer, wearing a fluorescent dress has her movements mirrored by a light tracing installation (Fig. 3).

Fig. 2 - Bee Matrix by Beau Lotto

Background to Science Gallery

Science Gallery, which opened its doors in February 2008, was created by Trinity College Dublin to develop a more porous interface between the university and the city, between research and the public. The gallery received support through the Irish government's Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation, to address the low numbers of bright young people choosing courses in the science and engineering disciplines, a problem that is shared by Ireland with many other developed economies. A major new research facility for nanotechnology (CRANN) was being developed with the support of Science Foundation Ireland, and the scientists leading the project, especially Professor Mike Coey, argued that a major new research facility for nanotechnology in Dublin's city centre should be accompanied by a radically new approach to engaging the public science and technology. Unlike the project also underway to develop a science centre for children and families in Dublin (the Exploration Station), Science Gallery would focus its efforts on adults, with specific emphasis on 15–25 year olds, beginning at Transition Year (a tremendous opportunity for project work in the Irish secondary

curriculum, currently under threat of abolition), and going through to include university students and professionals.

Fig. 3 - Light tracer, by Karl Willis

Trinity College has a particularly striking urban location – an oasis of learning with population of 15,000 at the centre of a city that has witnessed cataclysmic changes in its social and ethnic makeup in the past twenty years. In the past, Trinity has come under a certain amount of criticism from local community advocates for being 'inward facing', but Science Gallery is part of a sea-change in the university's perception of its relationship with its immediate urban location also emphasized by activities such as the Trinity Access Program which provides students from disadvantaged inner city schools with opportunities to experience the college.

A place where ideas meet

In developing the concept of Science Gallery, we considered it essential to establish it as a sociable, meeting place – a constantly changing space 'where ideas meet', rather than a museum space housing a permanent collection or an interactive science centre. From the beginning, it was about creating a place where new kinds of conversations could be sparked off, based on the idea that exciting things happen when you provide people with different backgrounds and beliefs with the opportunity to share ideas in a supportive environment. A visit to the Science Gallery would be as much about who you might meet as what you might see.

The central urban location of the gallery, at the intersection of cultural, business, social and commuter routes through the city centre, provided a good opportunity to be a meeting place and 'idea exchange' for different communities. Clearly the core location asset we had to work with was Trinity College itself, both in terms of being able to involve the student population in our programs, and being able to tap into the many research groups connected to Trinity. While we have a natural opportunity to work with Trinity College scientists and engineers, we also involve researchers from other universities around Ireland and the world in our activities.

Interdisciplinarity is at the core of the Science Gallery's mission to "ignite creativity and discovery where science and art collide". Many of our projects involve taking scientists outside of their comfort zone – what happens, for example, when a nanotechnologist talks to a fashion designer? How can new materials technologies transform clothing? Like Le Laboratoire, the new 'artscience' space in Paris created by David Edwards, or the Wellcome Collection (bringing biomedical science into dialogue with the arts) in London, we believe that exciting things happen when you stimulate new conversations across disciplinary boundaries. Our approach to interdisciplinary conversation is very simple. We select an extremely broad theme (for example 'light', 'fear' or 'infectious') and then develop an open call for ideas from scientists, designers, artists and engineers for projects exploring the theme. An interdisciplinary group of curators reviews the projects proposed and a selection are invited to develop their projects further for implementation in the gallery. The advantage of the open call process is that it attracts a very wide (and unpredictable) range of project ideas, and proposers of projects are usually very enthusiastic to be involved in an exhibition or festival, frequently giving their time to participate in workshops and events in addition to their specific installation or exhibit.

Science Gallery is not primarily intended for tourists or one-off visitors. Instead it is about stimulating a new, interdisciplinary creative community, and providing opportunities for increasing depth of engagement with science and technology (Fig. 4). For this reason it was important to us to develop a pyramid model of engagement in the Science Gallery. Visitors can choose to become Members of the Science Gallery (currently free of charge), providing them with a profile on our website, invitations to special member events and discounted prices on tickets, and purchases our café and shop, as well as free WiFi in the gallery. Members who get truly involved in Science Gallery, whether by exhibiting their work, by working as student mediators, by getting involved as artists or researchers or by running workshops can get invited to become Science Gallery Ambassadors. Exceptional participation can mean that an Ambassador can be promoted to the Leonardo group, a group of up to fifty thought leaders drawn from science, the arts, technology, business and the media who feed program ideas into the Science Gallery. In the next three years we aim to have an Ambassador in every Irish secondary school, with the idea that this person (perhaps a 16 year old student) will be a key point of contact between the school and the gallery. It is important to emphasize though that Ambassadors do not all come from schools. Some are school students, some come from our partner companies, some from research, some are artists, some are engineers, some are involved with kindred cultural organizations around the world.

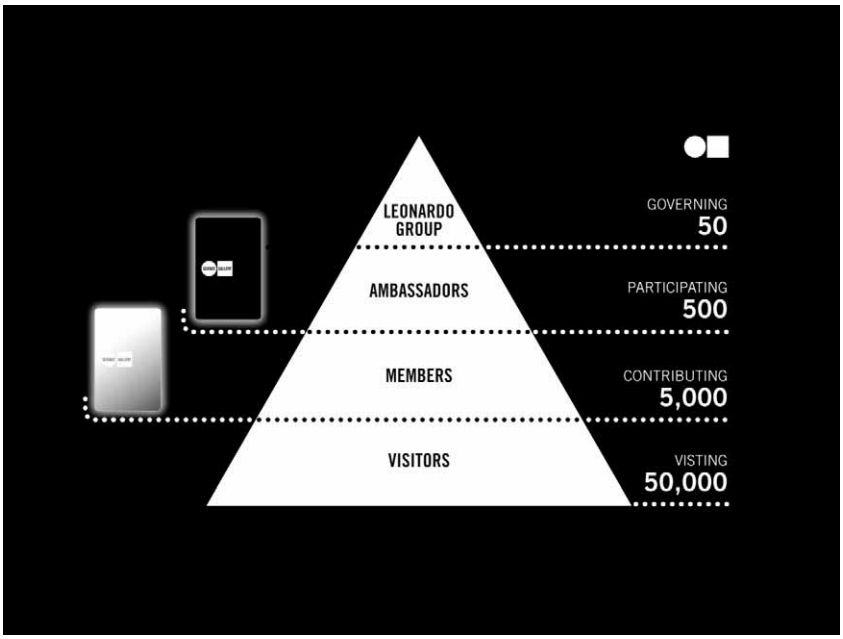

Fig. 4 - Pyramid of Aspiration

Lessons learned and future directions

The first year of activities has explored themes ranging from our relationship with prescription medication (*Pills*: Which ones have you taken?) to a mouse tissue culture being used to create 'victimless leather' (in *Technothreads*: the art and science of future fashion). In addition to offering a wide range of experiences and highs and lows, our first year has provided some rich lessons as our theoretical aspirations encountered hard realities and the feedback of our audiences.

First, not all scientists want to engage with the gallery. In fact some are downright suspicious of it and either would prefer a more didactic approach to science communication or have no time for such trifles. However the good news is that a core group of enthusiastic scientists and engineers (both in TCD and elsewhere) has emerged from the woodwork and is almost unstoppable in its passionate involvement in gallery programs. This is an exciting development as it means that the gallery staff can shift more into the role of facilitators and translators of ideas into the public realm. The media profile of the gallery and high footfall (over 120,000 people, having had a target of 50,000) in its opening year has been a factor in helping scientists to recognize the value of engagement with the gallery.

As an example of how this works in practice, Professor Ian Robertson and Professor Richard Reilly of the Trinity College Institute for Neuroscience approached the gallery team about doing an interactive neuroscience exhibition. The work of their research group focused on the theme of attention. At the time, we were developing an idea for a series called LAB IN THE GALLERY, involving taking a working science laboratory and shipping the whole thing into a public space. Two local points of inspiration for the project were the Francis Bacon studio, meticulously reconstructed in Dublin's Hugh Lane gallery in exactly the chaotic state in which it was left on Bacon's death, and a performance called One developed by PanPan theatre in which 'nurses' took individual members of the audience to meet one on one with individual actors and recline on a couch while the actors confessed their reasons for getting into the acting profession.

What, we wondered, would it be to do something similar for science? It had to be real, publishable research happening in a public space. But how would the act of observation affect the science observed? Some fascinating 'science live' experiments had been carried out by the Science Museum in London and other organizations. When Ian Robertson and Richard Reilly came to us with their ideas we thought this was an ideal opportunity to launch the Lab in the Gallery series. Their work, involving human experimentation with EEG, seemed like the perfect fit. Even better, we spoke to the Dublin Theatre Festival and they were excited about having Lab in the Gallery as part of the festival – this was great, science as theatre in every sense. Loughlin Deegan, the Theatre Festival Director suggested the name *Lab Rats* but the scientists didn't warm to it so we settled on the less controversial but literally accurate *Lab in the Gallery*.

Lynn Scarff of the Science Gallery worked closely with the scientists and their whole research group to develop a series of experiments that would be suitable for the gallery. The ethics of human subjects experimentation in a public setting turned out to be rather complex. Ironically we weren't allowed to advertise participation in the experiments – our advertisements could say "come and watch the experiments", but could not invite people to participate as human subjects.

While we began the project with romantic notions of ornate glassware, sparking voltage discharges and a scientific lab as gloriously messy as the Bacon studio, we had a design challenge when we realized that a modern neuroscience lab looks to all intents and purposes very much like an office. Even worse, many of the experiments seemed to require isolation of the subject and any distractions or noise could interfere with the quality of the data.

We were almost resigned to the failure of Lab in the Gallery, but, encouraged by the enthusiasm of the participating researchers, decided to go ahead and build it anyway. Then to our immense surprise, the public came in their droves and loved being human subjects. The value of the experience from the public's point of view seems to have lain in the opportunity to find out about one's own brain and to meet a neuroscientist in person. We leveraged this further by having *Meeting of Minds* sessions every lunchtime in our café, where you could book five minutes one-on-one time with one of the Principal Investigators in the project. The scientists were delighted – they performed over 2,500 human experiments. The public were engaged – visitor surveys reported one of the strongest positive responses to the experience, even though the exhibition just took up part of the ground floor of the gallery. This was a fascinating learning experience for us and showed how important it is to work with the right group of scientists, scientists who are willing to take risks.

Second, it is important to be able to work fast. The museum world is not necessarily associated with rapid production. The Science Gallery opened on what seemed like an impossible breakneck timeline. The positive aspect of this was that the whole team developed the ability to develop projects extremely rapidly. When the debate about anti-depressants was exploding in the media, we developed, in a hair-raising two-week timeframe, a major exhibition relating to prescription medicine. When the Large Hadron Collider was capturing the attention of the press, largely due to the idea that it might cause a black hole and trigger a doomsday scenario, we pulled together an event in less than two days bringing together the Irish scientists and engineers for an all-day marathon breakfast in the Science Gallery with a live feed from CERN. Although this event cost almost nothing, it became the national focus for Irish media covering the event, and all the young scientists and engineers involved were interviewed for television and national newspapers. On that day alone we had nearly 4,000 hits on our website. Quickly put together, cheap events that tap into people's current concerns can sometimes have more impact than the most carefully crafted big budget exhibitions.

Third, it is essential to offer the opportunity to 'be discovered'. It's not enough to tell people about other people's discoveries or even to allow them to make discoveries for themselves. To make a really strong connection with our elusive quarry of 15–25 year olds we need to go a step further and actually talent-spot our audience. We are still learning how to do this most effectively. You hear about Kate Moss being discovered as a model on Croydon High Street, a soccer-player being discovered kicking a ball on a beach in Brazil or a new band in a dingy pub, but where are the innovators of the future discovered? In every program or activity we develop we ask ourselves – how is this offering new talent an opportunity to emerge. If it isn't then we shouldn't be doing it. As an example we are currently developing a project with the goods lift in the Science Gallery. This happens to be quite a large lift, large enough to fit a desk and a few people. It takes the lift just under two minutes to reach the top of the building. The idea (entitled Elevator Pitch, naturally) is simple – 100 people (between the ages of 15 and 25) queue up on the street to get into the lift. As they get in they pitch their world-changing idea to the people in the lift. If the idea is hopeless, they end up back on the street with some words of advice. If the idea appears to have potential they are released on the first floor into the Science Gallery incubator where an interdisciplinary team is assembled around the idea. For example, if somebody were to suggest the idea of edible shelters for homeless people, they might be assigned a crack team consisting of a food scientist, an architect, a social worker and a patent lawyer to take it to the next stage. When a prototype is ready, they need to go back in the lift again, to compete for seed funding for the project. Talent-spotting our audience can also happen in less dramatic but equally significant ways, for example when a Google engineer is running a workshop for 15 year olds from inner city schools and the installations created are exhibited in the gallery.

Learning-theorist Stephen Heppell has suggested that whereas the twentieth century was mostly about the accumulation of 'stuff', the twenty-first century is (so far) more about being the glue that

binds people and stuff together. Perhaps the ultimate challenge for any space like the Science Gallery is whether it can really work as a social glue, or even a sort of fly-paper for young innovators, bringing them together in a sociable, creative and stimulating space and offering them transformational opportunities they would not receive elsewhere. This challenge is leading us to reconsider the baseline experience of the Science Gallery (between major exhibitions), offering a wider range of creative experience during 'downtimes' through the creation of an 'Ideas Lounge' which is a place both to share ideas and to be inspired through encounters with the ideas of others, whether scientists, artists, designers or students. What are the frameworks, prompts and supports we can put in place to trigger new kinds of conversations across traditional boundaries?

Seventeenth century coffee houses were not just places to drink coffee but also places for demonstrations of the latest technical wonders and for scientists, merchants and literati to share ideas and novelties. What can we learn from this in designing spaces for idea exchange? How can we leverage social network technologies and integrate online and offline experiences? How can places like Science Gallery transform the public face of a major research university and work as an interdisciplinary playground/incubator for artists and scientists? What simple models and formats for interaction between researchers, artists and the public could be portable to different environments where universities are found at the heart of major cities? These are some of the questions we are pondering as we embark on our second year of experimentation.

Contact

Michael John Gorman
Director, Science Gallery
Address: Trinity College Dublin, Pearse Street, Dublin 2, Ireland
E-mail: michaeljohn.gorman(at)sciencegallery.com
www.sciencegallery.com

Ivory tower or welcoming neighbor? Engaging our local communities

JANE PICKERING

Abstract

The Yale Peabody Museum is situated in the economically and ethnically diverse urban environment of New Haven. For over ten years the museum has run extremely popular cultural festivals that attract a diverse audience of thousands, but we discovered that attendees rarely came from the city itself. Clearly, having high-quality programming was not enough to attract our local community. To investigate this issue the museum launched a year-long research study to address the following questions: What is the perception that residents have of the museum and what are the barriers to their engagement with the museum? How can we serve visitors from our neighborhood? How does being part of Yale University affect people's relationship with the museum? Our results were comparable to other studies by urban institutions but there were some differences that are of particular interest to university museums. For example, we discovered that negative opinions about the university were a significant barrier. There was also confusion as to our target audience, and a perception that our programs would not be of interest to "regular" people. University museums need to make considerable efforts if they hope to attract and serve non traditional museum goers – particularly changes in how they communicate and partner with the community. New initiatives at the Peabody include programming for local teenagers, diversity training for frontline staff, new outreach programs, and targeted marketing plans.

> "Sustainable diversity entails mutuality between the institution's decision makers and community leaders; ongoing relationships with current and potential audience members … Sustainable diversity is not: relying solely on outreach work with underserved audiences and offering a heritage month event once a year …"
>
> Eric Jolly, Director, Science Museum of Minnesota, 2002

An urban museum

The Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History is situated in the economically and ethnically diverse urban environment of the small city of New Haven. Yale University is the major employer in the city with over 11,000 employees and is the city's largest real estate taxpayer. The Peabody, like many university museums, is one of the most visible (and visited) parts of Yale and serving audiences outside the university is a fundamental part of the Museum's mission. However visitor surveys have shown that our current audience is not representative of the local population and, in common with many other museums, the Peabody Museum has a significant challenge in engaging all of the New Haven community.

Research has consistently demonstrated that while all people are potential museum visitors the probability of visiting a museum either on a school trip or as a leisure-time activity varies greatly among different groups. Museum visitors are still more likely to be white, middle class and well educated. Significant variables that account for under-utilization of museums by certain segments of the population include socio-economic factors, such as education, income; institutional factors, such as real or perceived institutional bias; and cultural factors, such as the lack of a museum-going tradition in many communities (FALK 1993; JOHNSON & GREEN 1997; JOLLY 2002, AUST & VINE 2007). In particular, studies have found that the single best predictor of museum visiting behavior is education (MCCARTHY & JINNETT 2001). The Peabody visitor demographics are a typical illustration of these issues: 65% of our visitors have a college degree compared to 29% of the New Haven population;

16% and 8% of our visitors are African American and Hispanic respectively compared to 39% and 23% of the New Haven population.

In-depth studies of visitors and non-visitors give some clues as to how to reach new audiences. Researchers have found that a crucial factor in the enjoyment of a visit is feeling at ease and welcome in the surroundings (OSTROWER 2005). This finding is particularly important for visitors who do not regularly visit museums and has a significant effect on whether they would recommend a visit to their friends (JOLLY 2002; OSTROWER 2005). Perhaps surprisingly, going on school trips does not necessarily encourage museum visiting behavior later in life, while going with your family does (MCCARTHY & Jinnett 2001; SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION 2007). This makes initiatives to encourage communities without a strong tradition of museum-going tradition, through explicit and culturally appropriate means, even more critical to reaching future generations.

Over the last ten years or so there has been steady improvement in diversifying the Peabody's visitors. In 1990 94% of the museum's visitors were Caucasian/White whereas in 2004 it was 67%. The Peabody, like many museums, has developed a number of programs specifically targeted at diverse populations, which is the likely cause for this, as they have been highly successful. For example, the Museum's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Festival of Environmental Justice attracts around 5,000 people over two days, over half of whom are people of color. However, like many efforts to diversify museum audiences though adaptation or development of existing offerings, such as exhibition and public programs, there is only a temporary shift in audience composition (see SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION 2001). More recently such initiatives (for example, Black History month), although important in raising awareness, are increasingly considered tokenistic and even patronizing (JOLLY 2002). Another initiative the Peabody began many years ago was to give all New Haven students that visit with their schools free family passes so they can return to the Museum without paying admission. However take-up of that opportunity was extremely low – clearly free admission was not the answer as has been discovered by several practitioners (JOLLY 2002).

Engaging our communities

In 2004 the Museum began an audience research project *Engaging Our Communities* working with the evaluation firm Randi Korn & Associates. The goal of the project was to find out how to develop the Peabody's relationship with New Haven. We had a number of questions: What is the perception non museum goers have of the Museum and what are the barriers to their engagement with the Museum? How can we attract visitors from our local community and encourage repeat visits? And how does being part of Yale University affect people's relationship with the Museum?

The specific research objectives were:

- Understand New Haven community residents' perceptions & attitudes about the Museum.
- Determine New Haven community residents' emotional and cognitive barriers to visiting the Museum regularly.
- Determine New Haven community residents' leisure habits.
- Determine New Haven community residents' ideal museum experiences.

There were two primary research methods: 4 focus groups of 20 residents were held downtown in the public library and a project officer interviewed 25 community leaders. Participants in the groups either "never" visited museums (42%) or did so "infrequently" (40%). The evaluators specifically sought to include African American (68%) and Hispanic (24%) participants. Only 22 percent were college graduates.

Project results

Focus group participants were frank about what they saw as the major issues surrounding their engagement with the Peabody. First there were general factors that affected their views of visiting any museum, which included the amount of leisure time they had to spend, the likelihood that they would not feel welcome if they did, and the fact that they did not consider museum visiting as an option for their free time:

> "I wanted to say [one thing] about another reason why you don't see a lot of African Americans or Hispanics at museums – its because a lot of parents don't have the time. You don't have that extra time to go to a museum. You barely have time to properly cook dinner and get them ready for the school the next day … I remember doing a lot of sacrificing just so [my daughter] would be well rounded. But I had to know that my daughter was going to enjoy the place I was taking her and that she'd get a lot out of it. I had to know in advance that it was worth our time."

> "Maybe you haven't been to a museum before so you don't [have] the right manners. Since there are no guided tours or anything you are left [asking] 'What do I do? I don't know how to act, where do I go next? Is there anybody to show me'?"

> "First and foremost it has to be a place that I would feel comfortable taking … my grandchildren"

> "I feel like one of the reasons that African Americans don't go to museums [is] because of a lot of us haven't been exposed to it … If I hadn't gone with my school I don't think I would have [gone to a museum]. My parents, I don't think they've been to a museum either …"

Second, there were five specific issues that emerged about participants' views of the Peabody, and the likelihood that they would visit:

1. Participants believed the Museum had no real connection with the community, expressed negative feelings about the University and were skeptical about whether the Museum was really committed to being part of the community:

> "Yale needs to get up and come out here. Start knocking on doors, meeting the neighbors and shaking hands … They need to say 'Hey let's share this stuff – come to the Museum'."

> "All my children are grown now, [but] when they were young we used to go to the Peabody Museum but there wasn't a sense of consistency. They went because … of something to do with school. The teacher gave them a flyer … but after that was over there wasn't a consistent … connection to the Museum. The Museum is sitting there but it's set aside … from the community."

2. Participants felt the Museum's content did not connect with the community and that the dinosaurs and other animals (that were perceived as the main displays) did not connect with them personally:

> "These big bones [have] absolutely nothing to do with me … you need to show me how they connect with me. Why is it here? Why is it important?"

> "As a Hispanic, my kids have grown up here, they were born here, and they're very Americanized but I do want them to grow up knowing more about South America. They wouldn't have to do away with what they have - the dinosaurs. They just need to include people … like say this fossil came from South America, so you can make some sort of correlation between the two places – between people and bones."

3. Participants felt that the Museum did not adequately communicate with the community and were unaware of the Museum's local marketing efforts:

> "Every couple of months send out a flyer … regardless of whether it's African Drumming or whatever. Start inviting them to all the events. Then people will not feel [like] you just wanted them there for MLK day and that's it."
>
> "I think you need to advertise the Museum …"
>
> "[Advertise in] grocery stores, Spanish grocery stores, and mom and pop stores. Beauty salons. Churches. The places where regular people go."

4. Participants felt the Museum's target audience was not clear. The subject matter of the displays – such as dinosaurs – suggested it was for children but the lack of interactive displays indicated to them it was not.

> "I like the Peabody Museum. But you're not going to go there every Saturday ... I'm not sure the Peabody is really a place for kids. … [kids] need hands-on interactive stuff … they don't want to go there and just look."
>
> "It's a Museum that children can't touch … but when you are taking children that is not a good thing – they have to be welcomed."
>
> "You have to be very mature to understand the Peabody, you have to have background history to have any idea what the exhibits are about."

5. Participants felt the Museum experiences offered were uninteresting and static. Most often this was a recollection of a childhood visit that was remembered as a negative experience:

> "I know they're not going to get rid of that big fossil … but if they could liven it up with lights or something …"
>
> "My first experience going to the Peabody Museum was boring. I was little, but I didn't want to go back again. My suggestions would be entertainment … maybe even a little video for the kids … they should put fireworks in the parking lot next to the Museum … the Jazz festival on the green is really fun – the Museum should do something like that."

Project conclusions

The Peabody carries out visitor surveys on a regular basis. Almost all find that most visitors enjoy their experience and are very positive about the Museum. This finding is completely different to the comments of the focus group participants (non museum goers who had not visited the Museum or not visited for many decades). These differences seem to be primarily attributable to three reasons: museum visiting patterns; past experiences at the Peabody; and attitudes towards Yale itself. Non-visitors had specific expectations for their free time – many emphasized the importance of the entertainment, multi-sensory and social experiences that they thought the Museum would not provide. Non-visitors felt they had 'bad' experiences in the past, particularly on school field trips, and this affected their interest in visiting the Museum decades later. Finally, non-visitors had a negative attitude towards Yale University that added to the perception that the Museum was elitist, and acted as a barrier to visiting.

To address these issues the Museum needs to make significant changes in how it communicates and partners with the community and in how programs are delivered. Staff identified three ways to begin this process:

- Promote the Museum more effectively to New Haven by reaching out to the community.
- Modifying the setting in which people experience the Museum by being more welcoming to the community.
- Adapting Museum offerings to make them more attractive to the community.

Reaching out to the community

The Museum began *Peabody On the Road* to provide programs offsite in the greater New Haven area. This outreach program works within existing community events and networks, which demonstrates the Museum's commitment to those neighborhoods, adds authenticity to the Museum's programs, and promotes acceptability to non-traditional museum audiences. Volunteers take a group of objects to a variety of community events from large festivals (such as the church-run GospelFest) to school science fairs and local libraries, to provide hands-on demonstrations and activities. Since the summer of 2007 it has reached several thousand people. In addition to talking with attendees about the objects they also give out free admission passes. This enables passes to come with an explicit invitation rather than anonymously in a child's backpack, and has resulted in a much greater use of them.

A new after school program for New Haven teens, *Evolutions*, is developing ambassadors into the community. The students, who are in the Museum several times a week, are encouraged to bring family and friends to the Museum. Their enthusiasm for the program, and the Museum (many treat it like a second home) is a fantastic way to improve word-of-mouth about the Peabody. Finally, targeted marketing, for example advertising in local Spanish language publications, has been increased.

Welcoming the community

All visitors need to feel welcome in the Museum to have an enjoyable experience. However this is even more important for people who are not regular museum goers (JOLLY 2002; OSTROWER 2005). The Museum has increased support for the front-of-house staff, who are the only staff that most visitors see, with diversity and other customer service training. Employing members of the community, and increasing the number of docents and volunteers from New Haven is an ongoing priority.

Recently the Museum has extended its Evolutions program to provide a career ladder program[1] for older teens who often need to work to save for college. This program puts students on the floor with themed 'carts' in different galleries to talk with visitors when there are no special events taking place. The focus has been on those galleries with limited interactivity (for example, the diorama halls) and, so far, the feedback from visitors has been extremely positive.

Adapting museum offerings

To build an ongoing relationship with non traditional audiences a museum needs to permanently modify its offerings (within its overall mission) to meet the needs of these groups (SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION 2001; JOLLY 2002). The project offered a number of suggestions for how the Museum could do this: carefully consider exhibition strategies; increase interactivity of school tours; and craft educational programming that is entertaining, social and involves hands-on activities. For example, children and families want to visit museums that are highly interactive. While it is not appropriate for all galleries, there are a number of places where interactive displays can supplement existing permanent galleries (e.g. adding a computer kiosk that explains information about the iconic Zallinger mural in the dinosaur hall); be incorporated into a new permanent gallery; and be a focal point of temporary exhibitions. In addition, the Museum brings in hands-on interactive exhibits as part of its traveling exhibition program. When planning new exhibits the Museum also tries to answer the question "Why is this important to me?". For example, in the recently renovated Hall of Minerals, Earth and Space, there is a strong emphasis on Connecticut geology and the impact of minerals on society and human wellbeing. *Engaging Our Communities* also underlined the importance of a child's experience on a school field trip and the fact that their experience on such a trip profoundly affected their perception of

[1] Based on the long-running program at the New York Hall of Science.

the Museum for a very long time. The Museum has always carried out extensive content training for docents but has now added more information on engaging children in active learning, and using hands-on specimens in classes.

A challenge for university museums

University museums have a number of specific opportunities and challenges when reaching out to non traditional audiences, particularly (as is so often the case) when those audiences are part of the Museum's neighborhood. On the positive side universities usually have a diverse population with people who can speak for and relate to relevant communities. Secondly university-wide resources are available, such as staff training opportunities. The Museum can also collaborate with other departments and student groups, which also want to engage local communities, thereby gaining access to new resources and more 'bang for the buck'.

However there are some specific areas that are especially challenging for university museums seeking to broaden their audience. Perhaps the most difficult, and one that is a challenge for all museums, is that efforts to diversify audiences can create tensions with existing audiences (JOHNSON & GREEN 1997; SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION 2004). For example, making galleries more interactive can disturb visitors who come to a museum for a more contemplative experience. This is especially problematic for museums that also serve an academic audience where exhibitions are used regularly in classes that dictate the objects on display. Such content makes it difficult for a wider audience, and this can add to the common perception that university museums are not for people outside the university. Fortunately there are ways to address these potential conflicts, particularly through creative programs, that can help content be broadly accessible.

Perhaps the most difficult (and fundamental) question for all museums is how to attract a more diverse audience that is truly representative of the population. For universities the 'town-gown' relationship significantly adds to that challenge. While there are few riots like the ones that rocked 14th century Oxford, there are always tensions and expectations that need to be managed and can establish real (or perceived) barriers to engagement of the broader community. Reaching out to new audiences is a long-term process that requires a commitment from the top down and willingness to embrace fundamental organizational change. University museums need to make considerable efforts if they hope to attract and serve non traditional museum goers.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Nick Merriman and the other organizers of UMAC's 8th International Conference, 'University Museums and the Community', and the Jessie Ball duPont Foundation for supporting the *Engaging Our Communities* project. The report is available at: www.peabody.yale.edu/contact/pdfs/ypmEOCproject.pdf

Literature cited

AUST, R. & L. VINE. 2007. *Taking part: The national survey of culture, leisure and sport: Annual report 2005/2006*. Department of Culture, Media and Sport. research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/documents/Taking_Part_11721.pdf (accessed February 20, 2009).

FALK, J. H. 1993. *Leisure decisions influencing African American use of museums*. New York: American Association for Museums.

JOHNSON, K. & GREEN, T. 1997. *A new audience for a new century.* Minneapolis: Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

JOLLY, E. J. 2002. Confronting demographic denial: Retaining relevance in the new millennium. *ASTC Dimensions* January/February 2002: 3–7.

McCarthy, K. F. & K. Jinnett. 2001. A new framework for building participation in the arts. RAND. www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/2005/MR1323.pdf (accessed February 2, 2009).

Ostrower, F. 2005. Motivations matter: Findings and practical implications of a national survey of cultural participation. www.urban.org/publications/311238.html (accessed February 2, 2009).

Smithsonian Institution 2001. Increasing museum visitations by under represented audiences: an exploratory study of art museum practices. A report prepared for the international art museums devision. www.si.edu/opanda/Reports/SICUnderrepaudience.pdf (accessed December 14, 2009).

Smithsonian Institution 2004. Increasing and diversifying Smithsonian audiences. An overview of the 2004 meeting of the Smithsonian Institution Council. www.si.edu/opanda/Reports/Oct04SICmtg.pdf (accessed February 2, 2009).

Smithsonian Institution 2007. Museum visitation as a leisure time choice. A background report to the Smithsonian Board of Regents. www.si.edu/opanda/docs/Rpts2007/RegentsAudiences.final.pdf (accessed February 2, 2009).

Contact

Jane Pickering
Deputy Director
Address: Yale University, Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, 170 Whitney Ave, PO Box 208118, New Haven, Connecticut, 06520-8118, USA
E-mail: jane.pickering(at)yale.edu
www.peabody.yale.edu

What opportunities can university museums offer for academic-public interaction? Some lessons from London's Beacon for Public Engagement

STEVE CROSS

Abstract

UCL has recently been named one of the UK's Beacons for Public Engagement, a group of higher education institutions tasked with finding ways to change the culture of Higher Education to include the public better. UCL's new Public Engagement Unit has identified a number of barriers to university staff working with the public, and, alongside UCL Museums & Collections, is working to break these barriers down.

The Beacons for Public Engagement

The Beacons for Public Engagement (BPEs) are a network of UK Higher Education Institutions, and other partners, funded by the UK funding councils, Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust.

The central purpose of the Beacon scheme is to strive for culture change in UK Higher Education Institutions. One of our key roles is to identify the barriers that are keeping academics away from working with the public outside the university, and to develop strategies to dissolve these barriers. We are experimental programs, looking to learn lessons that can be used to change culture across the Higher Education (HE) sector.

Most of the network of BPEs include university museums in their formal partnerships. The UCL Public Engagement Unit, which co-ordinates all Beacon activities in London, sits within UCL Museums & Collections, and works closely with staff from all of UCL collections.

London

London's BPE is UCL, working to develop public engagement opportunities with six partner organizations:

- Birkbeck, University of London
- City & Islington College
- Southbank Centre
- Arts Catalyst
- British Museum
- Cheltenham Festivals

These organizations all reach out to different public groups, and share their engagement expertise with UCL staff in return for UCL input into their programs.

The UCL Public Engagement Unit works to support activities that encourage a culture of two-way conversations between university staff and groups outside the university. We recognize that there are a number of different ways in which staff can involve the public in their work, and we encourage staff to move from dissemination of their work to full participation and co-production of knowledge with the public.

The techniques that we use to improve UCL's public engagement work include:

- Training
- Recognition, including promotion and awards based on engagement work
- Mentoring staff

- Lobbying on behalf of public engagement
- Providing networking opportunities
- Co-ordinating projects
- Funding projects and staff
- Finding opportunities for staff

Research

In May 2008 an online survey of UCL staff's attitudes to public engagement was conducted by Freshminds.[1] The survey had been drawn up following in-depth interviews with senior staff at UCL, looking into the engagement issues that challenge this particular university. 708 UCL staff took part in the survey. The results were very encouraging, and revealed a real appetite for this type of work. Only 7% of staff who replied were not interested in doing any public engagement work.

A number of major barriers to academic-public engagement were identified. For example:

- 73% of respondents feel that they need to spend more time on research or teaching duties, and don't have the spare capacity to do engagement work;
- 40% of respondents feel that they have no opportunities to engage the public with their work.

Staff were also asked what would help them to do more public engagement work. 40% of respondents would like help finding opportunities, and 37% need partner organizations to work with. After funding, these are the biggest needs for UCL staff in this area.

These findings tally well with those of the Royal Society's *Survey of factors affecting science communication by scientists and engineers,*[2] despite the fact that they include staff from a much wider variety of disciplines.

Anecdotal evidence, based on in-depth conversations with over a hundred UCL staff, corroborates these findings: staff with an eagerness to work with the public often don't know where to start in developing projects; the first steps in public engagement are always the hardest; people are short of time, and need projects constructed to allow them to work around existing duties; staff often don't have relationships with partners who can help them deliver projects, or know where to start in making these relationships; staff have little knowledge of the importance of audiences for activities, either in terms of recruitment or tailoring of content.

The role of museums

University museums can play a vital role in providing the bridge between academic staff and public groups. Museums bring an expertise in communication and interpretation of academic subjects, and neutral spaces that break down the power divide between academics and the public.

University museums also have existing audience relationships, often working with groups representing communities that are under-served by HE. In the UCL survey, the two biggest areas in which staff would like to see more engagement work are with schools and local communities, both groups with existing relationships with the museums.

Museums can bring all of these strengths to bear when they create opportunities for academics to engage the public. UCL Museums & Collections, for example, hosted the launch of *The Big Draw* 2008, in partnership with Wellcome Collection.[3] *The Big Draw* is an annual festival of drawing, organized by The Campaign For Drawing,[4] that takes place in many venues nationwide.

---

[1] A full report is available at www.ucl.ac.uk/public-engagement (accessed November 18, 2009).
[2] Available from www2.royalsociety.org/downloaddoc.asp?id=3074 (November 18, 2009).
[3] www.wellcomecollection.org.uk (accessed November 18, 2009).
[4] www.thebigdraw.org.uk (accessed November 18, 2009).

A vital part of the launch, which attracted 1200 visitors to UCL, was the creation of a framework into which academics could drop events tailored to their research interests. Staff from across UCL's spectrum of disciplines took part, including medical, biological and physical scientists, fine artists and lecturers in the humanities. Undergraduate students acted as guides, with PhD students, research staff and academics hosting activities alongside museum staff and artists. Some of the UCL staff involved were experienced public engagement practitioners, but a significant number had not been involved in an event like this before.

The burdens of event organization, venue-booking, audience-recruitment and marketing were lifted from academics, who worked with museum staff to ensure that experiences were tailored for the audiences. Museum staff also coordinated evaluation of the activities. A number of new relationships were created, some between UCL teaching staff, and some with UCL museums.

Given the success of the day, this is an avenue that UCL's Public Engagement Unit is keen to continue exploring, and we would encourage other university museums to think about how they can use their expertise to help research and teaching staff to bring the public into their work. [5]

Acknowledgements

UCL Public Engagement Unit is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust.

Contact

Steve Cross
Public Engagement Co-ordinator, UCL
Address: Wilkins Building, University College London, Gower St, London, WC8E 6BT, United Kingdom
E-mail: steve.cross(at)ucl.ac.uk
www.ucl.ac.uk/public-engagement

[5] Copyright note: This article is released under the 'Attribution-Non-Commercial-NoDerivs 2.0 UK: England & Wales' Creative Commons license (www.creativecommons.org)

University museums and outreach: the Newcastle upon Tyne case study

LINDSAY ALLASON-JONES

Abstract

This paper describes developments in attitudes to public access and outreach at the University of Newcastle over the past thirty years, and the impact of those developments on the University's Museum of Antiquities. The author describes some of the ground-breaking educational initiatives undertaken by the museum, and the plans for its future as part of the Great North Museum.

Early days

When I first began work at the Museum of Antiquities at Newcastle in 1978 the University was very clear as to the Museum's role. It was there to assist teaching firstly and secondly to provide a basis for research. The museum was always a curious phenomenon because, although it was run by the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, the collections were mostly owned by the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne. When the joint agreement to establish the Museum was signed in 1956, the Society was very firm that members of the public were to be allowed in for free. The then University of Durham was equally firm that the Keeper of the Museum had to be a longstanding member of the academic body, preferably at the level of Senior Lecturer. When the University of Newcastle upon Tyne was created, and the agreement renegotiated, this was still adhered to.

By the time I took over responsibility for the Museum of Antiquities from Dr David Smith in 1989 and later added the Shefton Museum of Greek Art and Archaeology to my portfolio, I had already become very aware that a university museum was in an unenviable position, caught between the demands of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on the one hand and the museum world on the other. These two sets of demands were often contradictory. To serve the needs of the academic community one had to ensure that one's collections were fully involved in the teaching and research of one's institution, but in order to get the support and, more importantly, the funding from museum sources, one had to be working with the public, mounting temporary exhibitions, and running an education program for schools and adults. I felt the Museum could not concentrate on one area of activity alone, but had to keep all the balls in the air at once; let one fall and the impact on our finances could be catastrophic.

This wasn't always very easy. Every year, directives would come down from on high instructing me to concentrate on research or teaching, never on public outreach. No-one actually told me to stop engaging in public outreach – the upper echelons were vaguely aware that this would mean the loss of some valuable income – but neither did they actively encourage me. The Museum's staff were simply seen as somewhat eccentric and not a little difficult but, as we kept within budget, there was no incentive to stop us and the Museum was largely left to its own devices for several years.

There was then a definite sea change. HEFCE announced that universities were not just for teaching and research but for teaching, research and public outreach. Suddenly the Museum of Antiquities and the Shefton Museum began to be looked upon very favorably and a real interest was shown in what they were doing.

Achievements

The two archaeological museums had always run a very successful schools education program but now a properly qualified Education Officer was engaged and it became possible to do more community work. A series of projects were carried out with local schools, including *Benwell: Centre of*

the Universe with a secondary school in Benwell. This involved a class of 11 year olds, who covered all abilities and origins, coming into the Museum of Antiquities and choosing their favorite object – it could be of any date but had to have been found in Benwell; they then had to write a piece about why this object particularly appealed to them before helping to produce a website on the subject.

Then there was *Reticulum*. This began in 2000 and was first funded by the Department of Education and Science. It was designed to help the junior schools in Blyth District find a way of using the computing equipment they had been provided with by a government initiative in order to learn about the Romans in Northumberland. This proved an amazing project. Not only did children of all abilities respond with enthusiasm but teachers with many years' experience begin to blossom and develop new ideas. Even the children of St Andrew's Roman Catholic First School, who weren't due to study the Romans that year but didn't want to miss out, took part as they used the project for their literacy hour and redesigned the Museum of Antiquities' new publicity leaflet and posters.

The *First Cohort Project* built on *Reticulum* and took in schools up the coast. Then the *Flavinus Project*, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, invaded the remote primary schools of Northumberland. *The Curator as Artefact* was the published assessment report and a teacher's pack was made available in print and on-line. The *Reticulum* methodology is now used throughout the North East of England, the rest of Britain, America and Australia, and has revolutionized the teaching of history. It is regularly mentioned in government reports as an example of best practice. It was, however, the shortlisting of the project for the Gulbenkian Museum of the Year Prize in 2004 that brought home the realization that our outreach work had had an impact. From all over Northumberland people were phoning us to wish us luck. Jo Catling, the project's education officer, found even taking the dog to the vet or going to the supermarket took longer than usual as people kept stopping her to say they were rooting for us. We didn't win, but to us the real prize was in discovering how much the local community saw us as one of them and were supporting our activities. For a university museum this was truly something to be proud of.

Not all our outreach was directed towards schools. We made a point of giving talks to local groups, such as Women's Institutes, Retired Gentlemen's Associations and Local History Societies. One year we provided 35 lectures; this may not sound like many, but there were just two of us involved and that's quite a few evenings to commit. These lectures were very time consuming as our catchment area of Northumberland and Tyne and Wear was very large, and one often ate a lot of cake, but they were a very worthwhile way of meeting one's constituents. These events rarely result in higher visitor figures but they do result in an ever increasing network of goodwill. One also meets some very interesting people and there have been times when I've used these groups to try out an idea for a temporary exhibition or research project or if I needed a particular contact. Colleagues in the Department of Archaeology often approached a farmer or developer with some trepidation as to whether they would allow excavation or survey only to find that I'd been there before and prepared the diplomatic ground, usually without realizing that's what I was doing. These small scale outreach activities pay dividends but, I will admit, they are not always easily quantifiable dividends.

One of our early projects was *Projecting the Past.* It took temporary exhibitions to the waiting area of the Freeman Hospital, the canteen of the Nissan Factory at Washington, the ante-room of the Council Chamber of Newcastle City Council, the Rates Hall in the Civic Centre and St Mary's Roman Catholic School - all places that wouldn't normally show an exhibition. This was taking the Museum to the people rather than expecting them to fight their way past the students on campus, because one thing university authorities do not always understand is that the general public find students in the mass quite frightening.

We also took part in *Northumbria For All* in 2005. This was part of a North of England Museums, Libraries and Archives Council project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and was intended to investigate barriers to museum visiting in the area. The Museum of Antiquities' part in the project was to research the problems of rural transport. Throughout the May half-term buses were provided to bring visitors to the University's museums from the far-flung villages of Whittingham, Redesdale, Wooler and Edmundbyers. In this project we were aided by two international Museum Studies students on placement, who saw a great deal more of Northumberland than they had bargained for.

2007 saw the Museum participating in the *Museum of My Life* project. This was an arts project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund through New Writing North and was part of a regional project to engage people in their local museums through creative writing. Our project involved two groups of adults who came to the Museum of Antiquities one day a week to work with our Poet in Residence, Maureen Almond, and later our Artist in Residence, Gilly Rogers, as well as with the Museum's staff. This project resulted in a fascinating exhibition of poems and 'memory boxes' which were placed carefully in the First Gallery to provide insights and personal views on some of the Roman artifacts. The contributors to the project enjoyed their relationship with the Museum and, to our great delight, asked if they could continue to work with us. Mondays became very busy as members of the group assisted us with organizing our archives.

The *Museum of My Life* team were also able to assist us in our collaboration in two projects with Culture Lab within Newcastle University. The first formed part of the European 6th Framework INSCAPE project, whose aim was to develop a suite of tools to support the authoring of interactive stories. Two mock museum galleries were set up and explored by a mixture of virtual and augmented reality. The second project involved providing the raw data for Culture Lab staff to produce an interactive table which allows the visitor to access and question information about individual objects. Both of these projects represent cutting-edge research into how to provide intellectual access to museum collections for visitors and the *Museum of My Life* members much enjoyed their involvement in the future of museum display.

Great North Museum

No matter how involved a museum's staff is in outreach work, their core work has to be within the museum building and those at Newcastle University were no longer in good order. The Museum of Antiquities' building, which was built as a coke testing station at the end of the Second World War, was well past its sell-by date, to the extent that a colleague in the School of Architecture started to use it as a teaching aid for his first year students as it demonstrated just about every ill a building can fall prey to, except Death Watch Beetle. The Shefton Museum was on the first floor of a teaching building and visitors had to have the courage of their convictions and a certain grim determination to find it. One visitor, who engaged my whole hearted sympathy, wrote in the visitors' book that the museum was like Everest: difficult of access but worth it when you reached the summit. I've always felt that we should have awarded each successful visitor a bottle of wine for finding us.

There is also the problem that modern museum visitors have higher expectations than they had before and an academically rigorous but somewhat dry permanent display isn't going to enthrall them. At Newcastle we tried to solve the problem virtually by using the internet. Indeed, the Museum of Antiquities was the first museum in Britain to mount an exhibition on the World Wide Web and this area of our operations was continually expended so that the collections burst out of the constraining walls of the actual museum and reached out to the whole world. This was unbelievably successful: in our last full academic year (2007–8) the Museum's websites had over 2.5 million virtual visitors, making this one of the most active heritage websites in Britain. At any time of the day or night there were virtual visitors on-line. But this was never going to be more than a temporary solution.

At the same time the University was struggling with what to do with the Hancock Museum. This museum of natural history is owned by the Natural History Society of Northumbria who own the collections and the building but there is a legal agreement in place that the University will be responsible for the museum until 2058. The 19th century building was in a poor state, needing a new roof and a complete overhaul of its heating, plumbing, and electrical systems. It was decided that all the University's museum problems could be solved in one ambitious project – The Great North Museum.

This is a £27.5 million project which has involved gutting the Hancock Building and giving it a new roof. There is also a large extension which has been built on the back of the old building to take storage, staff offices, café, education suite, a very impressive temporary exhibition gallery and the joint libraries of the Museum of Antiquities, the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle and the Natural History Society of Northumbria, and the offices of both societies. The main part of the building has been given over to galleries displaying the collections previously housed in the Hancock, Shefton and Museum of Antiquities along with some of the ethnographic material from the Hatton Gallery. An offsite store cum resource centre is to be based at Discovery Museum, to the west of the city centre, so valuable display space in the main building will not be taken up with the reserve collections which are needed for teaching and research.

It was decided early on that, as Tyne and Wear Museums had run the Hancock Museum for the University for some years, it should take on the responsibility for the Great North Museum. It should be emphasized, however, that the Great North Museum will remain a university museum, still with responsibilities for teaching and research but in a better position to fulfill the University's outreach needs and to provide the high level of display and interactives that the modern museum visitor expects to see. The new museum is seen by the University as being a major element in its Beacon Project.

Beacon

The aim of Newcastle and Durham Universities' Beacon project is: firstly, to change the culture of the two universities towards public engagement; and secondly, to work with people within the local community to produce research of mutual interest.

The research envisaged is covered by three themes:

- Energy and the Environment
- Aging and Vitality
- Social Justice and Social Inclusion

The intention is to involve twelve academics from the two universities and twelve members from the local communities in work on these themes. In order to ensure that the widest range of participants from the local communities can take part, funding is available to pay people to come out of their day jobs to so that a good range of contributors can take part.

The Museum's formal role is currently under discussion but Newcastle's Beacon Project has already been able to draw upon its museums' staff's years of experience in public outreach to provide contact names and advice. We have also identified a number of ways in which the Museums' varied collections can be linked to the three proposed research topics.

From my position of 30 years of public outreach within a university context I am aware there are some problems which will need to be overcome.

Firstly, changing the culture of a university is never easy. Academics who are totally absorbed in their own research are rarely inclined to welcome new initiatives. Some, I regret to say, also probably don't

have the social skills to engage effectively with other people. It will also be hard to convince some colleagues that public engagement is cost effective, as the obvious outputs of research assessment exercises, successful funding bids, good teaching quality assessment results, etc will not be evident.

There is also a fear that our academic colleagues will see public engagement as being the sole responsibility of those specifically involved in the Beacon Project and not as having any relevance to themselves. It will behoove the Beacon Project team to get across the message that involving the public, even in regard to quite esoteric research, often gives one different insights which can only enhance one's own research. In this the Museums' record is being quoted extensively.

It should also not be underestimated how hard it is to engage the public. It took us the best part of 30 years for the Museum of Antiquities to be truly regarded as the archaeological museum for the North East of England, other than in the scope of its collections. For the Museum to be considered as somewhere that reflected the local public's interests, somewhere one automatically went with an object that needed identifying or when children were doing a school project or needed work experience, has taken time and effort. And the Museum had a sign with the opening hours blatantly displayed; open access to a university is not so obvious.

In the case of the Beacon Project, both the universities of Durham and Newcastle are involved, and this results in an enormous catchment area. It is also an area which has had a very low take up of tertiary education. There is little tradition of public involvement with either universities, other than at the level of the professional classes. The project will be covering the counties of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and Cleveland. It's a very long way from Hartlepool to Berwick upon Tweed, so there is a fear of the project being spread somewhat thinly. Nor are the concerns of the people of the West End of Newcastle or parts of Middlesbrough, which the media invariably use when they need examples of inner city deprivation, going to bear much resemblance to the concerns of those who live on isolated farmsteads in North Northumberland. Yet they are all our local community, their opinions are equally valid and they all have potentially interesting contributions to make.

Those universities who do not have a Beacon Project will, no doubt, be watching the progress of those that do with some interest. However, museum curators in universities have been engaging with the public for many years and it is important that they continue to do so. University museums, which invariably have to prove their worth and usefulness to their colleagues, can lead the way and should grasp the opportunity to do so.

Contact

Lindsay Allason-Jones
CIAS – School of Historical Studies
Address: Armstrong Building, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU, UK
E-mail: l.allason-jones(at)newcastle.ac.uk

Web communication. A content analysis of German university collections and museums websites

CORNELIA WEBER

Abstract

The internet opens up new horizons for (science) communication: through classical websites, weblogs, wikis, podcasts, or videos. Specific research on the potential these communication media offer for university museums and collections is still missing. Therefore, the paper presents and surveys the current use of internet communication in order to provide fundamental material for critical discussion. The study is based on collections registered in the online database "University Museums and Collections in Germany".

Introduction

The great variety of information technologies and the widespread use of the internet offer vast opportunities for interaction. The times have passed when universities or museums had to produce brochures to reach their communities. Today, even the smallest institution is able to generate and distribute information in a simple way by using digital media. And it is not only easy to create adequate instruments, it is also inexpensive.

Compared to other museums, university museums do not merely aim to address the general public, they also have to serve communities inside the university such as students and staff. The use of the internet can help to meet the specific needs of all these groups.

Therefore, the internet is an ideal communication platform for university museums and collections, which often suffer from a lack of financial and human resources, but nonetheless have to interact with all kinds of communities.

Currently, interaction is mainly channeled into traditional websites, videos, podcasts, weblogs, or wikis. The interest of this survey is to learn which basic technologies are used by university museums and collections in general, and which technologies are used to reach individual communities in particular. The study is based on institutions registered in the online database *University Museums and Collections in Germany*[1] which contains 760 entries with 436 websites. In addition, I would like to provide an overview of the basic elements of the wide range of web technologies and to encourage collections staff to privilege the use of the internet over 'analog' communication tools.

Basic web technologies

The simplest way to reach the internet community is through a traditional website, which is a collection of web pages, images, videos or other digital assets.

There are many varieties of websites which can be set up for university museums and collections, e.g.:

- Information sites which contain content that is intended to inform visitors;
- News sites dedicated to publishing news and commentaries;
- Database sites whose main function is to allow the searching and displaying of a specific database's content like an inventory or a catalogue;
- Blogs (or web logs) which provide news or commentaries on particular subjects;
- Wiki sites for collaborative work.

[1] publicus.culture.hu-berlin.de/sammlungen/ (accessed September 12, 2008).

Larger organizations often run extensive websites, sometimes including special services for purchasing replicas or publications.

In Germany, most of the university collections run static information websites which present basic information in order to enable a first contact. Alternatively they present a description with images that gives a first impression of the collection, sometimes even a virtual tour through the museum. Some of these tours are specially produced for children or school classes.

A few collections offer surveys on their holdings in form of catalogues or databases which in most cases are interesting only for expert users.

Sadly enough, videos and podcasts, which are highly popular among young people, are very rarely used.

'Podcast' is a blend of 'broadcast' and 'iPod'. A podcast is a series of digital media files which can be downloaded for playback on portable media players and personal computers. The initial appeal was to allow individuals to distribute their own radio-style shows, but the system quickly became used in a wide variety of other ways, e.g. audio tours through museums or exhibitions or interviews with scholars to explain academic facts. The production of podcasts is easy and inexpensive: Everybody who can work with a computer is able to produce a podcast.[2]

For the world of university museums, podcasting is a wonderful instrument, not just as a tool to inform people outside the university about current projects or exhibitions. It also makes it possible to include the university community in creating podcasts, simply by recording commentaries or interviews with colleagues or students.

The production of videos or videocasts requires more expense and knowledge. Therefore, it is advisable to look for qualified partners who can support the production. This could be the ICT unit at the university, students from local departments of film and media or even television broadcasters interested in certain subjects and willing to co-operate with the museum or collection.

Only a few collections offer databases with information on their holdings, although databases of digitized objects are useful to support display, research, and teaching, especially e-learning. The great advantage of multimedia databases is that holdings from different spheres can be united in one tool and can be presented in their multifaceted historical, cultural, and scientific contexts.[3]

The second generation of web sites, the so-called Web 2.0 with its interactive and collaborative elements, offers far more potential for university museums and collections. Blogs and wikis are of especially strong interest because of their value in facilitating collaboration and information sharing among users. Oddly enough, in Germany, blogs and wikis hardly appear on university museums and collections websites.

A blog is a website with regular entries such as commentaries, descriptions or other material on particular subjects. It combines text, images, and links to other resources. The possibility for readers to leave comments is an important part of a blog and enables a large number of users to generate and distribute content.

Blogs can be used to enhance communication internally or externally. They are particularly practical for university museums and collections because they are able to transport messages directly to the

[2] The basic equipment including software costs 180 EUR upwards.

[3] This is the case at Humboldt University, where a database called *Cabinets of Knowledge* was developed, which currently makes available about 13,000 selected objects dating from the last 200 years: www.sammlungen.hu-berlin.de/ (accessed September 12, 2008).

public and do not only address colleagues and students, but also people from outside the university. In this way, it is possible to create an important news source.

A wiki allows authorized users to create, edit, and link web pages easily. It is often used to create collaborative websites. The most prominent example is Wikipedia.

A wiki is an excellent instrument for teamworking, in particular for supporting all kinds of projects. This can be potentially relevant for group work on exhibitions or research projects, or for participants of university seminars. For example, recently, UMAC started a wiki for the board, not just to improve the workflow, but also to produce a digital information repository for UMAC. The wiki enables every board member to enter his or her results or thoughts or to make a comment on the contribution of a colleague. In this way it is possible to produce a comprehensive, updated survey on UMAC's activities and sources for the entire board.

Communities

The majority of analyzed websites do not address a specific community. A few websites are offered in English and are exclusively intended to inform experts. Others, offering instructive and exciting virtual tours through their collections, are meant to communicate their content especially to school classes and are often referred to as e-learning programs. The internal university public, however, which should be one of the main communities for university museums, seems to be of no relevance. This is difficult to understand since university museums and collections should primarily serve their parent institutions. The use of the internet can help to support the needs of the internal academic community.

Concluding remarks

The result of my analysis is that most university museums and collections in Germany are not seizing the available opportunities provided by the internet. Why so? Usually, universities are open-minded about new web technologies: Why should university museums and collections be any different? Is it a matter of costs, time, or reserve over these new concepts? Or is it just a lack of knowledge and skill? Whatever the reason, it is necessary to address the situation immediately and try to make up lost ground.

Contact

Dr Cornelia Weber
General Manager of the Hermann von Helmholtz-Zentrum für Kulturtechnik, Humboldt University of Berlin
Address: Unter den Linden 6, 10099 Berlin, Germany
E-mail: weber(at)mathematik.hu-berlin.de
publicus.culture.hu-berlin.de/sammlungen

Chasing the online audience

MARK CARNALL

Abstract

Museums have engaged with web audiences and web technologies with mixed success. Some careful consideration and analysis of general web browsing trends suggests that in order to enable museums websites to reach a wider audience, online museums should make sure that they are tied into relevant Wikipedia entries on the key themes and figures that a particular museum represents. In addition, translating websites into Asian languages significantly increases the potential global audience by several billion online users. These simple steps dramatically increase the availability of existing content. However, currently, few museums have done either.

Introduction

Although the situation is slowly changing, museum websites are typically very content-light, only listing events, activities and location directions. Museums were very slow to latch onto the seemingly endless possibilities available through the web. This was due to a combination of factors: the extortionate cost of employing web literate people in the early 1990s; the inability of a generation of museum curators to keep up to date with web technologies; and a genuine fear that people would stop coming to museums if they could access museum collections online. This slow start led to the gap observed today between the ideals of the semantic web and the typical museum web content. With rare exceptions, museum websites offer less content on subjects than Wikipedia has to offer, less scope for two-way debate than any typical forum, less scope for multimedia content than sites like Facebook and YouTube, are less intellectually stimulating than a typical blog and less interactive and visually appealing than most videogames. Museums do not have the resources to compete effectively with some of these competitors and arguably nor should they.

Measuring success

Measuring the popularity of websites can be problematic and ascertaining exactly what a 'hit' means in terms of visitor experience is fraught with difficulty. In a rudimentary analysis, the 'most popular' museum website appears to be the Saatchi gallery (ranked 16,505 on Alex.com with an average reach of 0.24% of global internet users).[1] Compare this to the top ranked sites www.google.com and www.yahoo.com which have an average daily reach of 30% of the global internet users. Search engines aside, user enabling sites feature highly in the top 100 rankings including websites like Blogger (9), Flickr (39), Deviant Art (77) and Photobucket (26) but the reach drops dramatically by 10% after the top 3 sites. Commercial sites such as Amazon (28) and Ebay (18) are predictably present, as are social networking and content-sharing sites such as Facebook (8), Myspace (6) and Youtube (3). The BBC (46), CNN (50) and ESPN (65) all appear close together. Wikipedia (7) and IMDB (29) seem to be the only reference sites in the top 100 ranked websites.[2] On the face of these statistics it would appear that in online space, museums are of niche appeal and that in general the most successful sites (in terms of reach) are those that enable users to generate or share content or those that provide convenience (online shopping etc.) and easier access to content.

[1] www.alexa.com (accessed February 24, 2009)

[2] This information was correct at the time of writing but obviously it varies from week to week and month to month. However, there is very little change in the top sites listed with rare exceptions such as twitter and facebook.

With so many users accessing online content through Google, Yahoo and Wikipedia it seems that to truly make content available to wider audiences museums should aim to structure their websites so that users interested in a topic, where a particular museum has something unique to contribute, can find that site easily. If users are interested in penguins, for example, it is difficult to make content that will beat Wikipedia in terms of quantity, quality and freshness. Expecting your web team to compete with the millions of users who add, edit and tweak content on every subject your museum represents is not feasible. If users are looking for information about the teaching of zoology at UCL, for example, then UCL's zoology museum will have relevant information to contribute. Rather than provide this information on a museum webpage and hope that users can find the content amongst the bitslag and millions of other sites competing for hits, the museum should put some of the relevant information on Wikipedia with links available for readers to find out more. At least 8% of the global online audience has used Wikipedia before and the site allows parsimonious browsing or moving from one subject to another. By providing enough information on Wikipedia, that will act as filter, and an increased number of web visitors with a genuine interest in the content will end up on the site.

Who is the online audience?

But what do we mean by online global reach and online audiences? This question is important to those museums which have tried to make collections available online. Online access can remove the geographical and physical barriers to entry to stored collections but this does not mean that museum collections are made available to everyone. Some quick calculations using the data from www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm show that online availability is very different from true global availability.[3]

Parsimonious solutions

Approximately only a sixth of the world's population is connected to the internet and that proportion is massively skewed, with Europe, North America and Asia making up 80% of those users. Although this constitutes over a billion people, how many of them can access museum content in a language they understand? A site in English creates a considerable barrier to the largest single group of internet users; the 40% based in Asia.

If web pages have not been customized for handheld internet portals such as mobile phones, or the latest generation of handheld games consoles, another section of the potential audience is excluded. If a site requires a downloadable plug-in to access content many students at schools and universities can not access that material from the learning place. A number of museums are engaging with cutting-edge technologies. This work is important for research but end products not designed for general users can act to alienate audiences rather than increase them. All of these barriers exclude sections of the potential audience even before design factors and the actual content subject matter has been considered.

In summary, the online audience is difficult to interpret, measure and predict. Online initiatives should only be undertaken once the end users have been identified and the strategic benefit to the museum fully evaluated. It is vital that web development helps the organization to achieve its strategic goals. Museums cannot expect everyone to visit their website nor compete with leading web companies. But if museums truly want to remove barriers to

[3] Miniwatts marketing group. 2001-2009. *Internet World stats usage and population statistics*. www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm (accessed February 2, 2009).

content and provide better online access to collections, they should translate their web pages into Asian languages and put images of and information about their collections onto Wikipedia. This is the most effective method of increasing potential access straight away.

Contact

Mark Carnall
Curator of the Grant Museum of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy
Address: Grant Museum of Zoology, University College London, Gower Street. London WC1E 6BT, United Kingdom
E-mail: mark.carnall(at)ucl.ac.uk
www.ucl.ac.uk/museums/zoology

The effect of digitalized museum information on learning

DAMON MONZAVI

Abstract

Five years ago, the Gemstones Museum began introducing Iranians to the art, science and industry of gemstones and minerals. One of the ways that the Gemstones Museum tries to communicate is through making its digital documentation accessible through Bluetooth technology. When visitors turn on their Bluetooth in the Museum entrance, they are asked to subscribe to the SMS newsletter. By subscribing, the member receives an SMS newsletter every two days. When a child or student subscribes, he or she receives a quiz question or a puzzle and can win points in a competition, leading to a prize. Inside the Museum, visitors are encouraged to enter into their phone the numbers next to exhibits. On doing this, they receive information about the exhibit, together with images and music. Most of the Museum's visitors (especially from the younger generation) enjoy this kind of learning, and in the course of less than one year more than 5,000 people have subscribed to our SMS newsletters.

Communication in the Gemstones Museum

The Gemstones Museum began five years ago to introduce Iranian visitors to the arts, sciences and the industry of gemstones and minerals. One of the ways that the Gemstones Museum tries to affect people is through its interpretation, and nowadays the means of communication is important to consider.

In the Gemstones Museum we tell stories using digital interpretation and Bluetooth technology. The next step will be to extend this to use on the metro and buses. At the entrance to the museum, visitors are asked to please turn on their Bluetooth. The Bluetooth center automatically sends an introductory message asking visitors to subscribe to our SMS newsletter and to tell us their age.

By subscribing the newsletter, every two days the member will receive information. We know from our research that visitors find this very exciting. It is very important for us to know the ages of our visitors; if a child or student subscribes he or she will receive a puzzle or question and will be able to score points in a competition and receive gift from the museum.

We are also changing our interpretation from text and images into video format, which can convey much more information, more effectively in a much shorter time. Increasingly we are using film, images and music and creating short clips that we can use with target groups in the museum.

With Bluetooth visitors also have the opportunity to enter the number displayed by each object onto their mobile, and to receive contextual information and images relating to that object.

Conclusion

Iran is a young country and young visitors especially enjoy this kind of learning. In less than one year more than 5,000 people have subscribed to our SMS newsletters.

Contact

Dr Damon Monzavi
Darya-e-Noor Gemstones Museum & Kooh-e-Noor Sadabad historical-cultural complex, & Faculty of World Studies, Tehran University
Address: Daryay-e-nour Gemstones Museum of Azadi Tower, Tehran, Iran
E-mail: arvand_taban_co(at)yahoo.com
www.gemgem.ir

Beyond teaching: Out of hours at the Grant Museum

JACK ASHBY

Abstract

To a large extent university museums are dependent on their governing institutions for operational funding and support, space and staffing. At the Grant Museum of Zoology, we identify University College London (UCL) students and staff as our primary audience in order to advocate our work and worth. We strive to attract the UCL community to use the collection informally, in addition to academic teaching. These two formats enhance each other.

UCL students and staff attend the Museum's public events. Not only does this communicate our value to UCL, but as our most local community they can be easier to attract than people further afield. Internal communication systems allow for cheap, efficient marketing. We run free specimen-based activity days for families, which succeed in attracting UCL staff as well as the wider public, and programs of innovative, light-hearted, evaluation-driven events for adults which interest students too. These include exhibitions, hands-on activities, talks, discussions and film nights. Themes addressed are animal-related, but look beyond individual disciplines to attract students and staff with wider interests. Choosing topics that pique our colleagues' interests, but are fun enough to encourage them to visit out of work hours and bring in the public as well are a recipe for success at the Grant Museum, with total visitor figures increasing 1,000% since the Learning Programs began.

Introduction

The Grant Museum was founded as a teaching collection, to resource England's first Zoology degrees, and has been used ever since for teaching and research. In 2004 learning programs were initiated to service non-university audiences – including schools, families and adults - as well as to increase use in traditional university teaching.

I will discuss the informal adult learning program's successes and how and why we have put efforts into attracting members of the academic community to take part in these programs.

University museums as public interfaces

UCL is a Beacon for Public Engagement, with goals to provide formats for the public to engage with academic issues. The museums at UCL function as a key gateway for the public to the university.

University museums are reliant on governing institutions for administration, space, funding and staff. Much of what universities do is geared towards increasing levels of income generation. Therefore museums are under constant pressure to prove their worth and demonstrate that they are more valuable than a potential research group that could occupy the same location and probably generate more income. It is up to the museums to show that the services they provide are more important than alternative allocations of resources.

At the Grant Museum, providing free learning services to the public and schools is a key way of demonstrating this kind of value. Universities are under pressure to be part of their local communities; external learning services fulfill such a role. However, we can go further than providing opportunities for the public, and begin to target our internal community for informal events.

The university community in public events

Our number one strategic aim is to increase the number of students and staff in Higher Education using the museums' collections. While traditional student use of the collection in formal teaching is paramount, another way to improve their engagement with us is through informal evening events.

The Grant Museum's adult learning program runs light-hearted events based around zoological issues. One aim is to go beyond subject-specialism and engage with topics with broader appeal, to include people who would not normally attend science events.

We realized that many of our informal participants were coming from UCL. By slightly modifying the way we programmed and marketed our events, we could dramatically increase the number of Higher Education users engaging with the collection. In this way we could maintain our public audience, increase overall visitor numbers and fulfill our key aim of increasing Higher Educational use.

The key is to program events with cross-disciplinary themes, attracting people from outside the specialty in addition to enthusiasts. In 2008 we tackled cryptozoology: the study of hidden animals, including animals unknown to science like Big Foot and Nessie, and sightings of animals that are presumed extinct. The series was designed to debate the validity of cryptozoology – is it mainstream science or paranormal research?

Such event programming must appeal to the varying types of people in the 'adult' audience group. Some events are largely light-hearted, such as a discussion with professional cryptozoologists reporting on their expeditions searching for Mongolian death worms. This was designed to attract a broad range of people from any field or level of knowledge, and encourage them to come back to future events in the series.

Other events can be considered more academic and attract the university sector more specifically. For *The Cryptozoology Season* we invited a scientist from the Zoological Society of London to discuss his research on the Yangtze River dolphin which became extinct in 2007, in the context of asking what it is like to search for extinct animals.

The two styles – academic and lighthearted – are certainly not mutually exclusive. Combining the two is the best tactic. Our topics have enough of a hint of an academic discipline to attract people with interests in these areas, but are light-hearted enough to bring in an audience from beyond the confines of any one specialism.

Evaluation and marketing

At the heart of the programming is evaluation, and this allows us to monitor how many Higher Education users are hidden within a public audience. Following events we ask standard qualitative questions, but also whether people belong to an academic institution.

There are great advantages to treating the internal audience as leisure users beyond fulfilling the aim of increasing the number of Higher Education users. For one, they are easy and cheap to market to through existing communication channels – such as departmental emails, newsletters and internal mail; as well as the fact that they are physically local enough to see promotional signage. They are easy to attract because they are already on-site; UCL staff and students do not have to travel for an entertaining evening out.

Outcomes

The results of the program so far have been hugely successful. Last year saw a 54% increase in the number of university staff and students on the previous year, against a back-drop of 15% growth

across all of our audiences. This increase above the baseline can solely be attributed to the internal audience coming to public events.

There have been secondary results which have been encouraging – students and staff from our informal adult program have gone on to use the collection in other ways, either by bringing their children to our family events, or by using the collection in formal teaching and research. Over the past year the number of research enquiries received increased by 115%. At least in part this can be attributed to the increased awareness of the collection and the work we do.

To conclude, at the Grant Museum we have found that by encouraging university students and staff to take part in informal adult programs, we meet our strategic objectives of increasing the number of Higher Education users, research users and overall growth, as well as benefiting from the advantages that targeting an on-site audience brings.

Contact

Jack Ashby
Head of Learning and Access
UCL Museums & Collections
Address: 224 Wilkins Building, University College London, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT, UK.
E-mail: j.ashby(at)ucl.ac.uk
www.museums.ucl.ac.uk

Internal audience: A key to success

MIRNA HERUC

Abstract

The University of Adelaide (founded 1874) is a third oldest university in Australia. It has 23 collections that represent the wide range of its academic research across the arts and the sciences. A central challenge in utilizing these collections is the absence of a comprehensively representative museum.

We have developed awareness of the university's collections through strategic public programs of focused exhibitions, discussion forums and partnership events in a variety of locations. From 2004, the first year of Art & Heritage Collections operations, this program has enhanced key university activities while proving to be of significant interest to the general public.

Our core audience at the outset was principally staff with an interest in culture. Students have been harder to entice, but we now attract a growing number – mostly higher degree candidates. The university community has thus provided an engaged audience for events. Further, university staff have come forward as volunteers within Art & Heritage Collections programs, their knowledge of the university proving to be a particular asset. The cycle of staff / audience member / volunteer has proved to be a particularly productive if unexpected aspect of our activities, significantly complementing our wider community outreach.

Introduction

Founded in 1874 – the third oldest university in Australia – the University of Adelaide has a significant reputation to uphold. The colony of South Australia was founded according to Enlightenment principles and in consonance with this the university has tended to pursue a socially progressive agenda, including for example, the awarding of degrees to women (from 1880) and more latterly reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. An important thread of concern throughout the university's history has been the fostering of connections between the university and the wider community.

This legacy underpins the establishment of the Art & Heritage Collections branch at the university. Established in 2004, with approximately 25 years gap since the previous collection manager was (briefly) employed, yawning gaps were obvious in terms of both collection management practice and public profile.

A key challenge is that the university holds some 23 specialized collections but has no central museum, and that even those few collections housed in a museum-like space, are not resourced to present themselves to the broader public as a museum. Leaving 23 collections out on the limb is a significant deficit in marketing to any community.

The beginnings

The University of Adelaide had no profile to speak of on the collections front in 2004. This was a dilemma for our area as it meant there had been no audience for art and cultural events from within the university, and without a focus of a museum style space, cultural/collection activities had no regularly identifiable location.

Art & Heritage Collections devised a cultural program which initially was principally supported only by internal audience – the staff. This internal audience was gathered through personal networks as

well as through the complementary nature of their academic and professional interest to our program.

Cultural program

The cultural program we offer comprises a series of art and cultural interventions consisting of discussion panels, focused exhibitions and special events.

Given the high level of staff interest, events are timed to fit within or around the working day, with events being generally short, to the point and informal enough to allow people to come and go. Exhibitions for example are launched at 4.30pm, a good time for a social drink and conversation before heading home. Discussion panels are generally between 1–2pm so that people attending can get back to work. We always offer refreshments to help those who skipped lunch to concentrate, but people are also welcome to bring their own lunch.

Choosing venues for our events also has been an important element in the success of the program. The Barr Smith Library, at the centre of the main campus – on North Terrace, Adelaide's cultural boulevard – has been our principal location. It was from the Library that we gathered most of our support at the beginning. Now the spread of supporters is wider and includes members of both academic and professional staff from many areas.

Once the program was established on the main campus it allowed us to collaborate with other three campuses and curate events suited to their particular teaching and research foci. In this way our cultural outreach stretches out to all four campuses.

Cultural celebrations

As part of the cultural program we organize cultural celebrations which mark significant points during the year – Open Day, Reconciliation Week, end of year gatherings and the like.

One of the most successful projects we undertook was a Reconciliation Handshake ceremony which formed part of the process to erect, in 2007, a reconciliation sculpture in the prominent position on North Terrace streetscape. The project was directed by especially commissioned artists Karen Casey and Darryl Cowie who worked in collaboration with Wilto Yerlo Centre for Indigenous Studies and Research at the university. The university in 2003 signed a reconciliation statement with the local Indigenous community and the public sculpture was a physical manifestation of this commitment. 1,500 people attended the handshake ceremony and over 600 attended the unveiling of the sculpture – staff were prominent among participants. This celebration brought the internal community together around a significant commitment on reconciliation and partnership with Indigenous communities.

For the celebration of National Aboriginal Day Observation Committee Week we invited Indigenous artists originally from Pitjantjara lands in central Australia now resident in Adelaide, to perform an inma – traditional dance and story telling – along with painting demonstrations. This was a successful lunchtime event, with non-Indigenous staff thanking us for giving them an opportunity to meet Aboriginal people.

Volunteering

We are a very small branch with only 2 full time staff. We are faced with a backlog of cataloguing and researching so we looked to volunteers for assistance. This in itself is a significant program within the university. We have 20 people registered 2 of whom are university staff. They are keen to work on the hospitality aspects of our program, including tours, and to contribute within their areas of expertise.

Student participation

Unfortunately students are much harder to entice. We endeavored to set up activities that involved student interests such as an exhibition celebrating 75 years of *On Dit*, the university student newspaper and one of the few remaining in the light of funding reductions for student unions. The interest was only on that topic with little evidence of repeat visits on the part of participants. The same was found with discussion forums about sport, visual arts and the future of the student union. It is hard to disseminate information effectively to students. The changing nature of the student life, with most of them working, negatively affects the time they are able to spend on campus and explore cultural offerings.

Conclusion

In our situation attracting university staff members was a key to creating a critical mass of audience support on which we could build a significant public profile and establish a viable organizational unit. The loyalty shown by the staff to the program and its content was a total surprise – especially the transition of audience to volunteers. Now we are setting our sights on students. In the meantime we are using the close relationship that we now enjoy with the internal professional and academic staff as the foundation of our strategic push for a university museum.

Contact

Mirna Heruc
Manager, Art & Heritage Collections
Address: Division of Services and Resources, The University of Adelaide, SA 5005, Australia
E-mail: mirna.heruc(at)adelaide.edu.au
www.adelaide.edu.au

Courting controversy - the Lindow Man exhibition at the Manchester Museum

BRYAN SITCH

Abstract

The discovery of the well-preserved body of a 2,000 year old man at Lindow Moss near Wilmslow, Manchester, UK, in 1984 provided archaeologists and forensic scientists with a veritable time capsule of evidence concerning life during the late Iron Age and early Roman period. Not only was the body of considerable antiquity, but the forensic examination established that the man had suffered a violent death. He had been hit on the head, apparently garrotted and had his throat cut (the so-called 'Triple Death') in what appears to have been a ritual sacrifice to the gods. Exhibitions about Lindow Man, as the body came to be known, were held at the Manchester Museum in 1987 and 1991 to widespread acclaim. This article discusses the approach taken by the museum in its most recent exhibition about Lindow Man (April 2008-April 2009) which proved to be unexpectedly controversial. Acknowledging alternative interpretations of Lindow Man's death, and changing attitudes towards human remains in society, the Museum adopted a polyvocal approach to the exhibition. Eight specially-selected contributors shared their personal thoughts and theories about the dead man. These included a forensic scientist, peat diggers involved in the discovery, a landscape archaeologist, a member of the local community, a Pagan and museum curators from both the British Museum and the Manchester Museum. Personal items belonging to each of the contributors appeared alongside more conventional museum exhibits in order to explore the different meanings that Lindow Man has for different people. The design of the exhibition was also challenging and made innovative use of MDF. Public response to the exhibition was mixed, though still broadly favorable. Thousand of visitors' comments cards collected during the course of the exhibition provide a rich resource for future study of the public response to the debate about human remains in museums.

Discovery and interpretation

When the remains of an adult human male body were discovered during commercial peat extraction at Lindow Moss, near Manchester, during the summer of 1984, the police became involved in case they were linked to the disappearance of a local woman. After preliminary radiocarbon dating indicated that the remains were indeed ancient, Lindow Man, as the body became known, underwent painstaking archaeological investigation and forensic examination by a team of archaeologists and scientists led by Dr Ian Stead at the British Museum (STEAD, BOURKE & BROTHWELL 1986; STEAD & Turner 1987). The man had died violently, from blows to the head, perhaps being garrotted and having his throat cut. This classic pioneering study could not answer all of the questions definitively and there has been protracted debate ever since amongst archaeologists, anatomists, anthropologists and others about how, why and when he died (CONNOLLY 1985; TURNER & SCAIFE 1995). Subsequent work seems to show that Lindow Man dates from the late 1st century AD or early Roman period in the North of Britain (GOWLETT, HEDGES & LAW 1989). More recently, the debate has embraced the ethics of displaying human remains in museums (e.g. VASWANI 2001; RANDERSON 2007).

The Manchester Museum exhibition

The Manchester Museum's exhibition *Lindow Man a Bog Body Mystery* (19th April 2008 – 19th April 2009) drew upon research carried out over the last 25 years and explored the different meanings that Lindow Man's body holds for different people. This was not the first time that Lindow Man had been displayed at the Manchester Museum. Earlier exhibitions in 1987 and 1991 explored Lindow Man's life and times and presented the results of the latest forensic work. Much had changed in the meantime,

however; human remains had become more contentious, partly because of the Alder Hey scandal, in which it emerged that organs had been removed by hospitals from hundreds of deceased children without the families' permission (BUTLER 2001); and partly because of the repatriation of human remains to indigenous communities in Australia, New Zealand and the Americas (FFORDE 2004). Old orthodoxies had been questioned and new interpretations proposed (TAYLOR 2002; HILL 2004; HUTTON 2004). For example, archaeologists were less confident that Lindow Man suffered a 'triple death' as the trio of fatal wounds discovered during the forensic examination of the body became known. New approaches emphasized the importance of place, in particular, the liminal nature of peat bogs (GILES 2006) and René Girard's sacrificial theory was applied to Lindow Man (GIRARD 1972). The debate has not been conducted solely within the archaeological and curatorial professions. Increasingly the voices of marginalized groups such as pagans, whose relationship with the dead is based on spirituality and a respect for the ancestors, were also making themselves heard (RESTALL ORR & BIENKOWSKI 2006).

When it accepted the offer of the British Museum to lend the body of Lindow Man for a year, the Manchester Museum was anxious to take account not only of changing academic interpretations of the discovery but also of increasing sensitivity towards human remains within society more generally. This was reflected in the most recent exhibition, which featured the personal testimony of a forensic scientist, a landscape archaeologist, two museum curators, a former peat worker, someone from the Lindow community and a Pagan. Each speaker's testimony was supported by written and audio extracts from interviews, personal items that demonstrated the nature of that person's association with Lindow Man and exhibits drawn from both the British Museum and the Manchester Museum collections. Alongside a selection of some of the finest Iron Age artefacts from the British Museum collection were displayed laboratory equipment used in the study of an ancient body, spades used to dig up peat, personal memorabilia about the unsuccessful Lindow Man repatriation campaign of the 1980s, a wand used in a pagan ceremony and even a child's toy Care Bear.

Public response

In presenting Lindow Man's story, or rather stories, from different points of view the Manchester Museum was implementing the findings of a public consultation held in February 2007. Following the opening of the exhibition in April 2008, however, there was a vitriolic response from certain Manchester websites and comments from the public were mixed. Some visitors were baffled by the polyvocal approach; others were affronted by the innovative design. Some questioned the justification for including the voice of a pagan alongside that of a forensic scientist; others the inclusion of a Care Bear. Although some visitors criticized the apparent lack of factual detail, in fact there was a great deal of information in extracts from recorded interviews with the contributors. Some of the insights that sprang from the Lindow Man exhibition, such as the link between the deposition of high status votive objects and human bodies in water, depended on visitors engaging with a variety of senses (visual, oral and tactile) and in this way potentially making new meanings for themselves.

Despite criticism, it is clear from the thousands of comments cards left by visitors that the Museum achieved its aim of stimulating wider public debate about human remains in museums, even if in retrospect Lindow Man might have been displayed more sensitively. The body was deliberately divorced from any interpretation; visitors had to make up their own minds from the information available in the exhibition. The Museum was careful to avoid suggesting that any one interpretation was to be seen as authoritative.

The inclusion of an offerings box in the exhibition, allowing the public to show their respect for Lindow Man, was also criticized, even though visitors to Christian religious sites often light a candle as a mark of respect, irrespective of their personal religious beliefs. A fascinating collection of personal offerings accumulated during the exhibition and is currently being assessed following the end of the exhibition.

This, it is believed, represents one of the first instances of the formal study of this type of ephemeral material. The thousands of comments cards also offer a rich archive for future research.

More detailed visitor survey suggests that some of the fiercest criticism of the exhibition came from more conservative museum goers, whose expectations of an authoritative and straightforward presentation of Iron Age life were disappointed by the polyvocal approach and the innovative design (BROWN 2009). Whilst everyone involved in the project wanted to do something different from the exhibitions of 1987 or 1991, the Museum recognized that some visitors struggled with the exhibition and put in place measures to help them by training Visitor Services Assistants to answer questions and provide more detailed information if required.

Some conclusions

This was not an 'easy' exhibition and the Museum learnt some important lessons: the importance of public consultation was confirmed; the need to review the design as part of the development process; and the fact that university museums have an important role to play in presenting novel and potentially controversial work that would be difficult for a different venue such as a local authority museum. Although the approach that was taken was not to every visitor's taste, academic response was broadly favorable (BURCH 2008; JAMES 2008; REES LEAHY 2008; RESTALL ORR 2008) and the exhibition won the 2009 Design Week Award for best temporary exhibition.[1] At the very least, the three exhibitions held at the Manchester Museum about Lindow Man provide a fascinating case study of changing interpretations of the body since its discovery in 1984 and of changing curatorial practice over the last 25 years.

Acknowledgements

The writer wishes to thank Piotr Bienkowski, Pete Brown, Melanie Giles and Nick Merriman for commenting on this paper. Any errors are the responsibility of the writer.

The Lindow Man exhibition was made possible through the generous support of The Heritage Lottery Fund, The Wellcome Trust, Renaissance in the Regions, The Foyle Foundation, The Dorset Foundation and the Northwest Regional Development Agency. The Manchester Museum expresses its deepest gratitude to the British Museum for lending Lindow Man to the Manchester Museum for the third time since his discovery.

Literature cited

BROWN, P. 2009. *Us and them: who benefits from experimental exhibition making*? Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Liverpool.

BURCH, S. 2008. Review of Lindow Man a bog body mystery. *The Museums Journal* 108, (*7)*: 46–49.

BUTLER, T. 2001. Body of evidence. *The Museums Journal* 101 (*8)*: 24–27.

CONNOLLY, R.C. 1985. Lindow Man: Britain's prehistoric bog body. *Anthropology Today* 1 (*5*): 15–17.

FFORDE, C. 2004. *Collecting the dead: Archaeology and the reburial issue*. London: Duckworth.

GILES, M. 2006. Bog bodies representing the dead. Paper delivered at the conference *Respect for ancient British human remains philosophy and practice* at The Manchester Museum November 17, 2006. www.museum.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/documents/respect/bog_bodies_representing_the_dead.pdf (accessed December 9, 2009)

GIRARD, R. 1972. *La violence et le sacré*. Paris: Grasset. (English translation: *Violence and the sacred*, 1977) translated by P. GREGORY. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

[1] Design Week Awards 2009: awards.designweek.co.uk/dw/2009/categories.php (accessed December 10, 2009).

GOWLETT, J. A. J., HEDGES, R. E. M. & I. A. LAW. 1989. Radiocarbon accelerator dating of Lindow Man. *Antiquity* 63: 71–79.

HILL, J.D. 2004. Lindow Man's Moustache. *Times Literary Supplement*, March 5, 2004, 15.

HUTTON, R. 2004. What did happen to Lindow Man? *The Times Literary Supplement*, February 7, 2004, 12.

JAMES, N. 2008. Repatriation, display and interpretation. Antiquity 82: 227–228.

REES LEAHY, H. 2008. Under the skin. *Museum Practice* 43: 36–40.

RESTALL ORR, E. 2008. Lindow Man in Manchester. Display', Honouring the Ancient Dead website. www.honour.org.uk/node/87 (accessed December 9, 2009)

RESTALL ORR, E. & BIENKOWSKI, P. 2006. Respect for all. *Museums Journal* 106 (*5*): 18.

RANDERSON, J. 2007. Give us back our bones pagans tell museum. *The Guardian* February 5, 2007.

STEAD, I.M. & TURNER, R.C. 1987. Lindow Man an ancient bog body from a Cheshire Bog. *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* 84: 1–14.

STEAD, I. M., BOURKE J. & BROTHWELL D. 1986. *Lindow Man the body in the bog*. London: British Museum Press.

TAYLOR, T. 2002. *The buried soul: How humans invented death*. London: Fourth Estate. Paperback edition 2003.

TURNER, R. & SCAIFE R. 1995. *Bog bodies: New discoveries and new perspectives*. London: The British Museum Press.

VASWANI, R. 2001. Remains of the day on the ethics of displaying human body parts. *Museums Journal* 101 (*2*): 34–35.

Contact

Bryan Sitch
Head of Human Cultures – The Manchester Museum
Address: The Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, UK
E-mail: bryan.sitch(at)manchester.ac.uk
www.museum.manchester.ac.uk

On the road again: Reaching out to isolated school communities

KARL VAN DYKE

Abstract

Country New South Wales is very isolated from the urban environment of Sydney. As such, country schools find it difficult to access ancient museum material to support the teaching of the school curriculum in ancient history. With the financial burdens of distance, along with severe drought, many schools cannot make the journey to Sydney to see the archaeological material held in the Museum of Ancient Cultures at Macquarie University, one of only a handful of such museums in Australia.

Consequently we have developed a 'traveling road show', which takes our education programs to them. In this way we also fulfill our strategic obligations to our parent university in the core area of community outreach. In return the university benefits from the on-going goodwill of teachers, students, their families and the local communities. It is through such networks and the loyalty our programs foster, that we help the university attract students to Macquarie.

This paper looks at the approaches we take to support disadvantaged rural communities. It also suggests that this traveling program may serve as a model for other university museums in similar geographical circumstances to follow, as they also seek to reach out to wider audiences and increase interest in, and access to, their unique collections.

Introduction

University museums by their very nature are concerned with education. As educational theory has developed throughout the twentieth century, the approaches taken in developing museum-based education programs have also changed. Today those concerned with such programs in museums (HEIN 1991; HOOPER-GREENHILL 1999) espouse the constructivist model whereby the learner constructs meaning as he or she learns in the museum context (HEIN 1991: 1).

Fig. 1 - Two Year 11 students from Leeton High School in south-western NSW handling ancient objects from the Museum of Ancient Cultures collection © P. Medcalf

For over twenty years, the education programs offered at the Museum of Ancient Cultures, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia have allowed students such experiences when they visit us on campus. At the museum, these students engage directly with ancient artifacts, under the supervision and guidance of our Education Officers who are also trained teachers. The museum contains archaeological material from the ancient Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Cypriot and Near Eastern worlds, and is somewhat unique in the Australian context. Unlike UK and European museums, in Australia there are few museums that contain ancient antiquities, and fewer still that allow students to handle, study and experience these artifacts in the learning process.

However schools in outlying rural communities have been at a significant disadvantage to their city counterparts, being affected by a number of factors that have precluded their students from attending the programs we offer.

The first is the *Tyranny of distance*, identified by the Australian historian Prof. Geoffrey Blainey (1977). Country students have limited access to educational support services such as major library collections, universities or galleries, and travel costs to Sydney are high. While various organizations, such as the NSW Department of Education and Training, the NSW Board of Studies and NSW HSC Online, provide information and resources via the internet, it is not the same experience as actually handling and interacting with ancient artifacts.

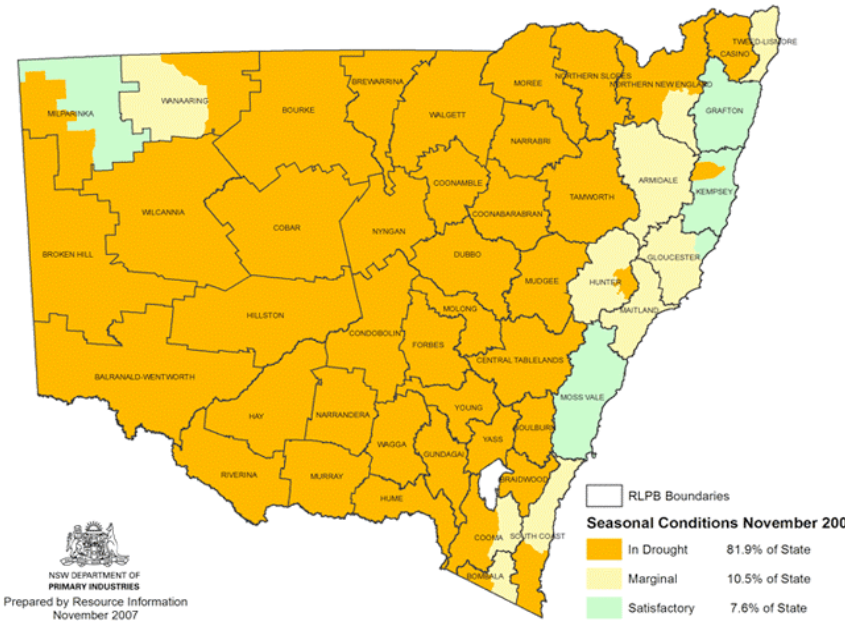

Fig. 2 - A NSW Department of Primary Industries map showing the extent of drought across the state of NSW in November 2007 © NSW Dept. of Primary Industries

The second factor is drought where vast areas of rural NSW have been affected, with some communities having no rain for the last ten years!

This has economically devastated many communities, with families often earning less than $20,000 p.a. (c. £9,000). When local schools try to organize a museum excursion, in some cases for up to five days where they might have to travel 800 kilometers each way, the costs (transportation, accommodation, museum entry, general spending money for food, general entertainment and entry to other venues) is beyond their reach. Such an excursion also takes students away from part-time jobs or from responsibilities they have on family farms.

Lastly, there is internal school disruption. Students on a protracted excursion are absent from other subject classes and miss out on class work, and there is general turmoil in school administration. As a result, many school principals do not allow such excursions.

Social exclusion is at work as disadvantaged communities are further marginalized. As a consequence, over the last six years, we have devised an educational *Traveling road show*.

Fig. 3 - On the road to Leeton, NSW, looking at drought-affected countryside © K. Van Dyke

Traveling road show

When schools ask us to visit, we create a program in consultation with the teacher/s to suit their classroom or syllabus needs. A museum team is put together, the necessary equipment (data projectors, computers, padded table covers and gloves) is assembled and relevant, robust artifacts are selected from our teaching collection and packed up. We drive to the school in either my car or a hire car. Occasionally we fly. The university covers travel and personal insurance and the team is either billeted in a teacher's home or is accommodated in a local motel at the school's expense. Many schools receive special government funding for such events.

Meanwhile, at least one other staff member is left behind to keep the museum open and functioning, or to conduct in-house education programs where we have a booking.

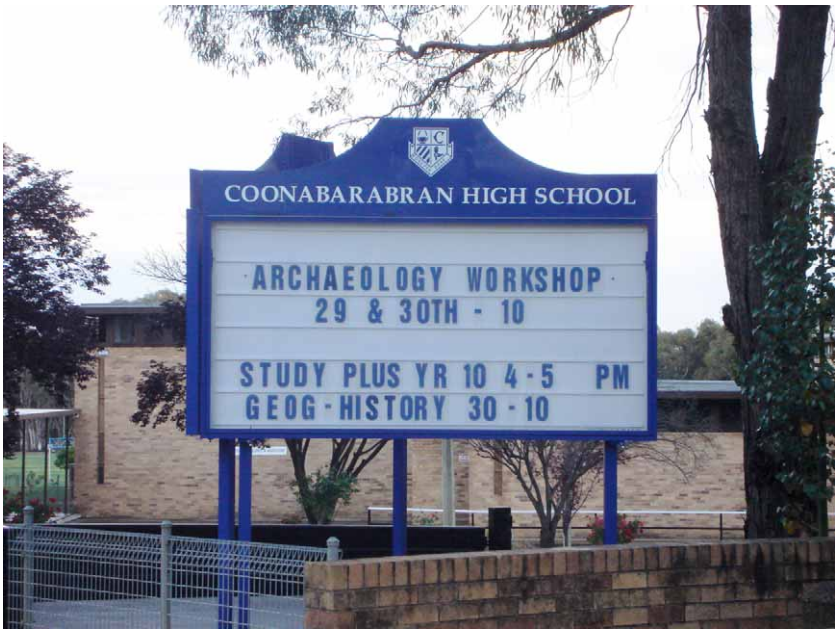

Fig. 4 - The public noticeboard at Coonabarabran High School announcing the two-day visit of the museum team presenting an archaeology workshop

The away team then spends a few days with both the senior ancient history and the junior history students (often up to 250 students in total) at their school and enjoys the hospitality of the local community. In many cases our visit also attracts publicity via local newspaper, radio or TV coverage – good public relations for us, the university and for the school.

The education program

The education program is designed around a number of activities carried out in booked classrooms, the school library, the school hall, or a combination of these, depending on student numbers.

Large groups or combined classes can take part in PowerPoint presentations on relevant curriculum topics, along with exam stimulus work or historical role-plays.

Fig. 5 - Dr. Jaye Mackenzie-Clark, an Education Officer with the Museum of Ancient Cultures, setting up furniture for a hands-on session in the Leeton High School hall © K. Van Dyke

Single classes, with their supervising teachers, can don gloves and work with the artifacts over padded tables in a 'hands-on' session, or carry out archaeological sherd-based exercises.

All the activities operate within the school's regular class times, students take their normal recess and lunch breaks and there is minimal internal disruption to the school's daily routine.

The disadvantages for the road show team are that we are away from our homes, we make the tiring, long-distance journeys and we run an increased risk to equipment, artifacts and ourselves. The benefits, however, far outweigh these.

Community engagement

By providing this service to students and teachers, we are the first point of contact for students thinking about enrolling at Macquarie University. Through our museum programs we see students from primary and junior high school levels and then as senior students, with a flow-on effect into undergraduate studies. Our programs, especially in the country, create a loyalty pathway into our university. For us, community engagement is part of student recruitment.

We also build up a huge professional network of teachers who attend the annual Ancient History Teachers' Conference, professional seminars and student Study Days. They also seek our advice regarding syllabus topics or resources and many also sign up for postgraduate studies, often by distance education.

The students, their parents and the broader local communities that we serve also become a source of support for the museum. For us, they are a positive force giving endorsements to the university about our relevance and usefulness to their educational needs. However, given that many university museums and collections in Australia were identified as being in a 'parlous' state (McMichael 1996: 1), and a number of museums overseas may be in a similar position, it is vital to enlist the support of advocates who can champion their cause when they are in peril or in need of support.

Strategic alignment

The traveling road show is one part of the strategic alignment of the museum to the university. It links with the concept of 'engagement', one of the core values of Macquarie University (MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY 2008: 6). It also echoes the themes of the university, namely "Macquarie's commitment to social inclusion and equity …" (SCHWARTZ 2008). Our active involvement with the broader community has, in turn, been recognized by the University through awards for Excellence in Community Engagement (2005, 2007, 2008).

Fig. 6 - Students from Leeton High School wearing gloves and working with ancient Egyptian artifacts over padded tables © P. Medcalf

In providing the away program to country schools, the museum also generates an income from the fees charged. While staff salaries and travel costs are paid from these monies, any remainder is invested back into the museum to offset university expenses or is used to purchase more artifacts.

Where to from here?

Based on our experiences, I would suggest that the traveling road show may be a model for other university museums to adopt and adapt in order to reach isolated school communities. In this way they find wider audiences and increase interest in, and access to, their unique collections, while at the same time providing an invaluable community service.

Literature cited

BLAINEY, G. 1977. *Tyranny of distance: How distance shaped Australia's history*. Melbourne: Sun Books.

HEIN, G. 1991. The museum and the needs of people. CECA (International Committee of Museum Educators Conference, Jerusalem, Israel 15–22 October 1991). www.exploratorium.edu/ifi/resources/constructivistlearning.html (accessed September 2, 2008).

HOOPER-GREENHILL, E. 1999. Museum learners as active postmodernists: Contextualising constructivism. In: *The educational role of the museum*, ed. E. Hooper-Greenhill (London: Routledge).

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY 2008. Review of academic programs White Paper. www.provost.mq.edu.au (accessed September 1, 2008).

MCMICHAEL, D. & al. 1996. *Cinderella collections: University museums and collections in Australia*. Canberra: AVCC.

NSW Department of Education and Training. www.det.nsw.edu.au (accessed March 5, 2009).

NSW Board of Studies. www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au (accessed March 5, 2009).

NSW HSC Online. www.hsc.csu.edu.au (accessed March 6, 2009).

SCHWARTZ, S. 2008. Equity in higher ed: Reasons to be optimistic. *Vice-Chancellor's blog*. www.vc.mq.edu.au/blog/2008/06/11/equity-in-higher-ed-reasons-to-be-optimistic/ (accessed March 6, 2009).

Contact

Karl Van Dyke
Manager/Curator
Museum of Ancient Cultures
Address: Museum of Ancient Cultures, Macquarie University, NSW 2109, Australia
E-mail: karl.vandyke(at)mq.edu.au
www.mac.mq.edu.au

A purpose-driven university museum

JULIETTE BIANCO

Abstract

University museums expend much energy dividing their time, staff, and resources serving the needs of both the academic institution and the surrounding community. Not only does this often duplicate efforts, but can lead to either faculty and student disenfranchisement if the museum focuses more effort outward or to jeopardizing precious town/gown relations if the focus is too much inward. Through careful consideration of mission, implementing strategic planning that involves all stakeholders, and evaluating the impact of the mission on its audiences, the university museum can transform itself into a purposeful museum and address this audience conundrum. This paper will present the Hood Museum of Art's two-year initiative to demonstrate that through realigning its purpose and practices towards cultivating teaching and creating meaningful learning encounters, the museum, the university, and the community benefit equally.

> "The purpose of the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College is to inspire, educate, and collaborate with our college and broader community about creativity and imagination through direct engagement with works of art of historic and cultural significance by making effective use of our collections and staff."
> *Purpose statement written by Hood staff, Fall 2005*

Introduction[1]

University museums exist for university students. They also contribute tremendous life-long learning opportunities for local residents, alumni, and visitors of all ages. Dartmouth College, located on the New Hampshire/Vermont border, has continuously operated a museum for the benefit of its students since 1772, and the Hood Museum of Art's commitment to teaching with objects has been unwavering. The museum's expansive collections and changing exhibitions also attract tens of thousands of visitors from the general public each year; indeed many in Northern New England consider it 'their' museum. The idea of contributing to both campus and community life is de rigueur for most university museums, yet many struggle with an audience conundrum as they work to appropriately allocate funds and human resources for collections, exhibitions, and programs. University museums can be seduced to favor their appreciating public, resulting in faculty and student disenfranchisement. Museums can also focus too much inward, becoming less relevant to the community and jeopardizing the university's precious town/gown relations. This paper will briefly present the Hood Museum of Art's response to this challenge. Through careful consideration of purpose, implementing strategic planning that involves all stakeholders, and evaluating the museum's impact on its audiences, the museum chose to demonstrate its commitment, first and foremost, to teaching and learning – formally in the classroom and through facilitated gallery presentations, and informally in the galleries for the unguided visitor.

Strategic planning and evaluation

In summer 2005, the Hood's newly appointed director, Brian Kennedy, held his first full staff meeting outside on the Dartmouth Green, the heart of campus and gathering place for community members

[1] Two notes on choice of terminology. I chose to use the more internationally recognized word 'university' throughout, simply to avoid the awkwardness of the alternatives 'college or university' or 'campus-based'. Also, the Hood chose to write a 'purpose' rather than a 'mission' statement, and I also consistently use 'purpose' in this essay. Although the two terms are used somewhat interchangeably in strategic plans, the definition of purpose as it relates to intentional practice was felt by the staff to be more pertinent to the direction of the museum.

and students alike. He asked us to consider the unique value of a museum on a campus and in a community and how we communicate that value to everyone. Following this provocation, the entire museum staff engaged in an invigorating three-month strategic planning process. We sought direct input from campus and community leaders, decided to write a new statement of purpose, and created a four-year plan. The Hood's strategic plan (2006–10) was written to be consistent with the mission, intellectual character, and core values of Dartmouth College, including its academic and student life and its commitment to diversity. It was also written to more vigorously engage the greater community through developing partnerships, increasing public relations efforts, and creating a membership program. It underscored the value of connecting people with original works of art through the use of our greatest resources: our collections and staff.

Once written, purpose statements are often relegated to the realms of annual reports and letterhead, and strategic plans begin to collect dust well before that 'new book' smell vanishes. Even when consulted, they rarely become the organic documents that *should* be our greatest tools for steering the museum's work. The Hood staff realized that our new statement, while adequately describing purpose, did not bring us close enough to our true intentions as a teaching museum, or to the early morning jolt a few months earlier on the Green. Many museums continue to describe the purpose of their institution in terms of *what* they do: collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret. Others joined a shift over the past two decades towards *who* they do it for: first, serve the public. Although compromise between these two models seems simple enough ("well, it's both"), it is not middle ground that we sought, but an alternate model, one that was reflective and responsive to the complexities of a museum on a university campus.

At this point, it became apparent that what we lacked most was information about the impact of the museum on our audiences. Evaluation needed to be an integral part of the planning cycle. In spring 2006, we partnered with Randi Korn, a leader in the museum evaluation field and author of several articles on intentional practice, to model a new form of evaluation that raises it from the programmatic to the institutional level. Korn had recently developed a model for *Mission Evaluation*, but had not yet tested it in any institution. This form of evaluation is designed to help museums assess how and to what degree they are achieving their purpose by being directly connected to the museum's purpose statement and strategic plan. Its goal is to measure the overall impact of the museum on its audiences and it involves the entire staff rather than being project, program, or exhibition specific, meaning that its potential to positively impact overall museum practice is quite high.

The Hood staff developed, with Randi Korn, two measurable intentions that are derived from and reinforce the museum's purpose:

(1) cultivate teaching with objects, and
(2) create learning encounters.

They were written to measure the desired outcomes specific not to a particular audience, but to any single visit to the Hood Museum of Art. These intentions, which distill the museum's educational purpose to its essence, can be used to measure the museum's current success and to guide future museum activities. Three survey tools were developed to benchmark the museum's current level of success against its purpose and were implemented between August 2007 and March 2008. One focused on the Hood's intention to cultivate teaching (Dartmouth faculty and local teachers) and two focused on learning – facilitated (public program participants) and unfacilitated (walk-in visitors).

Teaching

The Hood's intention to cultivate teaching with objects lies at the core of a university museum's contribution to the educational purpose of its parent institution. Interviews with Dartmouth faculty who

use the museum revealed a very high satisfaction overall and indicated what they value most: (1) the museum visit benefits students by providing stimulation and inspiration, (2) the object's physicality and authenticity promotes depth of learning, (3) the museum visit facilitates visual learning, and (4) the museum visit affects Dartmouth students. Based on their detailed feedback, the museum has already increased advocacy for visual literacy in a liberal arts education to the college administration, increased staff time allocation to directly support teaching, and increased object digitization to support use of the museums collections more broadly across academic disciplines in the college classroom.

In addition to setting these ongoing strategies for cultivating teaching with objects, the Hood has specifically chosen to improve the faculty teaching experience. The purpose evaluation study taught us that we should work more closely with professors on their interpretive practice, focusing not only on which objects they choose teach from, but *how* they teach with those objects. The museum staff now offers targeted workshops for faculty entitled *The Art of Observation: A Workshop on Teaching with Visual Material*. Survey feedback from faculty members who already value the collections helped us create workshops that demonstrate effective strategies specifically for teaching with works of art. In the interviews, faculty members also indicated certain obstacles to making their teaching more effective. These included the small size of the Hood's designated teaching space and their desire for study collections that could be viewed outside the museum's facility, for example in their classrooms. This feedback provides the museum, and the college, with valuable data for future collections and facility planning.

Learning

Regarding its intention to create learning encounters, the Hood has already begun to adjust its walk-in interpretive materials based on purpose evaluation feedback. The four hundred interviews conducted with walk-in visitors revealed that visitors roughly divide into three groups, with most preferring to visit with one or more other people and learn through discussion with those companions. Others enjoy reading labels quietly themselves, and still others prefer to be left on their own with no interpretive materials. Interviews conducted with in-gallery program participants revealed what they most valued about a facilitated learning experience: (1) they inspire new or heighten existing interests, (2) they make personal connections, (3) they stimulate thought, (4) they deepen knowledge, and (5) they create experiences that transform the way a visitor looks at art, the world, or their own lives.

The purpose evaluation study has shifted our practice most profoundly in the area of interpretation. The vast majority of Hood visitors do not attend programs, but rather walk into the museum to see an exhibition or permanent display. The question became: how do we create those same high-level learning outcomes for our walk-in visitors? What we learned from the program participant interviews is that the most successful programs were those where the presenter emulated the *Learning to Look* teaching technique developed by Hood staff for regional K–12 teachers and their students. This technique was developed to empower students to approach and learn from any work of art using five steps: observation, analysis, research, interpretation, and critique. The adult program participants reported the best learning experiences when the program leader – whether a curator, professor, or other museum staff member – encouraged direct looking, reflection, and group discussion, supplied supporting materials, and gave time for individual reactions and questions. Based on this, the Hood has chosen to adopt *Learning to Look* as its overall interpretation strategy for visitors of all ages, and has begun to develop new materials for walk-in visitors that utilize this technique, including special exhibition *Looking Guides* and permanent collection brochures entitled *A Closer Look*. The texts describe the five-step process and lead visitors through the steps with particular works of art. The brochures are designed to be useful for a visitor on their own, or in discussion with companions, in response to the learning dynamic preferences reported by walk-in visitors. Further evaluation will test if

walk-in visitors describe more similar outcomes of their museum experience to program participants, indicating that we have achieved a higher level of success in creating learning encounters for everyone.

Conclusion

University museums are uniquely situated to be leaders in demonstrating the positive impact of purpose-driven practice. Ultimately, this impact should demonstrate to the university administration, faculty, and students the value of visual literacy in a liberal arts education while attracting and retaining the support of the local community because they value a museum that demonstrates its commitment to learning. This paper introduced two ways that the Hood staff addressed the audience conundrum by focusing not on one audience or the other, but on our intentions to cultivate teaching with objects and create learning encounters. Purpose has become not a lofty statement that covers all the bases, but a carefully crafted set of intentions that are easily understood, flexible, and meant to deliver particular experiences. The Hood is currently launching its next strategic planning cycle armed with the knowledge that effective and inclusive planning, implementation, and evaluation continues to lead the university museum towards greater achievement of purpose, a course where everyone benefits.

Contact

Juliette Bianco
Assistant Director
Hood Museum of Art - Dartmouth College
Address: Hanover, NH 03777 – USA
E-mail: juliette.bianco(at)dartmouth.edu
www.hoodmuseum.dartmouth.edu

Building creative communities: How does a university museum work with family learning in a challenging community context?

CELINE WEST

Abstract

UCL Museums and Collections have worked with parents and children in the London Borough of Haringey for the past 4 years. The successful partnership between the Collections' education officer and Haringey's parental involvement coordinator has led to a sustained program of outreach in the Borough, mainly with parents at family learning workshops in schools, and with parents and primary school children in schools, children's centers and play groups. Haringey is home to one of the most diverse populations in the UK, with a high proportion of recent immigrants as well as low levels of attainment at school, high levels of poverty and crime. Community cohesion is viewed as key to strategies for improvement; Haringey has been a leader in parental involvement in schools and in creative work with museums partnering schools for the past decade. This paper analyses the special impact a university museum can have in this context, with museum outreach used to engage parents not only in new subjects and their own creativity but also in understanding more of what and how their children learn and raising aspirations. Object handling workshops provide a forum for discussion with others in the community and often act as a starting point for people to tell their own stories for the first time.

Background

Parental involvement in children's learning has been recognized as a key element in their development. In the UK today it is seen to be something that public services can help parents to do, beyond the classroom.[1] University collections have the potential to help parents inspire their children about learning and their future education as well as giving them rewarding experiences with objects and museums that they share with their children.

At UCL Museums & Collections we have worked with family learning groups since 2004. These are groups of parents who attend regular informal workshops at Primary (ages 5–11) schools, where they learn different ways they can support their children's learning from dedicated family learning tutors working in the school.

We began this work for three main reasons:

- family groups were under-represented in our visitor profile;
- it provided a valuable opportunity for us to discover what family groups could gain from our collections, as schools were the focus of our outreach work up to this point in time;
- it provided an opportunity to introduce the collections to a new audience.

The aim of the project was to develop this audience through a series of engagements with objects, taking objects for handling to groups of parents and children and bringing the groups to visit the museums.

Working in a community

A partnership was established between the museums' Education & Access Officer and local staff working in the London Borough of Haringey. Haringey already had an established program of family learning and parental involvement schemes and had worked with some other museums early in the

[1] See e.g. Every Parent Matters, UK government policy document 2007, available to download www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/DG_066880 (accessed November 26, 2009).

2000s so this was a good place for UCL Museums to begin work that was new to us. The partners worked together to plan object handling workshops using our Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, Grant Museum of Zoology and UCL Art Collections. The aims of the outreach sessions were to introduce family groups to objects from the museums, involve them in a variety of object-based activities and develop their knowledge and confidence around objects.

The geographical area of Haringey is north of central London, with communities that often do not travel into the centre. There is a mixed population with some socially excluded groups and a high proportion of recent immigrants. Schools are the place for newcomers' first contact with the community and are the focus of community activity. Activities and events at schools cater for different learning styles through arts, museums, storytelling and many other themes, helping to create the sense of community and build social capital. The aim is to encourage parents to think about how children learn and use what they have available at home and in the community to engage them.

Object experiences

Over the past five years UCL Museums & Collections education staff have worked in most of the schools in the area, delivering handling workshops with family learning teachers. Initially, parents have the task of working out what the objects are and discussing them as a group along with ideas about context and their reactions to them. The children then join the parents and parents handle an object with their child, asking the child many questions about how it feels, what do they think it was used for and similar concepts. The parents and children also take part in a related creative activity such as drawing from the objects or writing stories about them.

During a workshop like this, parents are engaging with their children in a direct way, focusing their attention on one child (which can be a rare time they are able to do this) and the children are always happy to be brought into the session to have special time with their parent. Parents use a range of communication skills such as questioning and providing information; they are encouraged by the workshop staff to give support and positive feedback to their child, to enter into a creative activity with them, to discuss heritage with them, particularly for example during Black History Month when we have run workshops around that theme.

Outcomes

The museum outreach is part of a wide spectrum of experiences for these family groups. However it is an important part particularly where it introduces museums and objects to people who have not had these as part of their cultural norm. It expands parents' knowledge of how they can communicate with their children and gives them new ideas for activities they can do together, from drawing to hunting for natural history specimens to making up stories about objects.

Feedback from the parents has been consistently positive, with many comments that they enjoyed handling the objects and learning something new, they enjoyed the group discussions that came out of the handling and they liked having new activities to do with their children. With some subjects, particularly rocks and fossils, they have been pleasantly surprised at how interesting they have found the workshops.

One less positive outcome for the museums is that the majority of parents have not gone on to visit the museums on their own which we had hoped would happen, especially some whom we had brought to the museum on public transport to show them how easy it is. This is partly to do with the sense of community that is generated locally in many parts of London – residents do not feel a need to visit the central attractions the way that visitors from further afield do.

However this raises the question of why we do outreach – is it to raise awareness of our collections and to promote them to people as places they must visit or is it more to provide access to collections for people who would not otherwise have the opportunity to have that experience, inspiring their interest in learning and education as well as in the artifacts themselves?

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Veena Sharma of the London Borough of Haringey Education Service for work on this partnership.

Contact

Celine West
Head of Learning and Access
UCL Museums and Collections
Address: University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT, United Kingdom
E-mail: celine.west(at)ucl.ac.uk
www.ucl.ac.uk/museums

Family matters: The role of university museums in intergenerational learning

REBEKAH MORAN

Abstract

Working within university museums in England, both museum educators and faculty staff are comfortable with pre-defined formal learning groups and subjects that 'tie into the curriculum'. However, when engaging with 'the wider community' there is no curriculum and groups are self-selecting and ephemeral – so how do we design, market and map this kind of informal learning? One method of attracting informal or 'free-choice' learners is through the development of a family learning program. Such programs often represent a marketing coup and a boost to visitor figures but they also raise questions about style of delivery, modes of assessment and, most importantly, the validity of such learning within a university context.

This paper discusses how family learning can meet university public engagement objectives and provide university students with key transferable skills through innovative 'family learning volunteer' programs. Finally, it illustrates that intergenerational learning is an important area of potential growth for university museums.

What do we mean by the term 'family'?

Before attempting to define family learning, it is perhaps helpful to examine the term 'family' as it can mean different things in different cultures and countries. To some it is the extended family of parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. To others it is the nuclear family of parent/s and child/ren or perhaps the step or 'blended' family which occurs when separated/widowed parents form a new relationship and two families join or blend together.

For the purposes of this paper, and also in the programs that are run at the University of Reading Museums & Special Collections, 'family' means adults and children together; what FALK & DIERKING (2000: 110n2) describe as "an intergenerational group of adults and children who self-define themselves as family (in other words not necessarily biologically related)". Whilst it is appreciated that families can also be adult couples or made up of all adult members, as museum visitors, they tend to behave as adult groups do rather than as adults with children do (FALK & Dierking 2000).

What is 'family learning'?

Family learning is a fluid term with different meanings in different countries and hence attempting to pin down family learning pedagogy is also difficult. In Ireland, family learning is family literacy, enabling adults to gain literacy skills but not engaging with the children. In Poland, family learning is about parenting skills and family interaction. In the UK, family learning is often linked to numeracy and literacy skills of the whole family. The University of Reading Museums and Special Collections follow the practical definition of family learning described by ALEXANDER & CLYNE (1995). Family learning is identified as having five distinct aspects:

- informal learning within the family;
- family members learning together;
- learning about roles, relationships and responsibilities in relation to the stages of family life, including parenting education;
- learning how to understand, take responsibility and make decisions in relation to wider society, in which the family is a foundation for citizenship;
- learning how to deal with agencies that serve families.

The common feature of these five aspects is intergenerational-learning, adults and children learning together. It is collaborative learning in a social context, and this is the essence of family learning.

Why university museums and family learning?

In 2004 the University Museums (UK) Group published the advocacy report, *A National Resource for the 21st Century* in which it reported how university museums having started life as academic institutions were moving forward with social engagement to engage with local communities and schools. In encouraging lifelong learning

> "*university museums are particularly well placed to help people explore new areas of interest through liaison with their Extra-mural or Continuing Education departments. Programs run in collaboration with FE colleges, senior citizens, volunteers of all ages and Friends organizations extend the university's community far beyond the campus confines*" (UMUKG 2004: 16)

Lifelong learning extends equally to the other end of the spectrum and can and should include children below school age and their families, as well as those of school age and above. Families are our first places of learning and are formative influences in peoples' lives. They are places of 'deep learning' which can touch all other aspects of our lives in some way (HAGGART 2000).

Many UK universities have taken such ideas on with public engagement. *The Beacons for Public Engagement* wiki states that "engagement is about getting people involved" (MANNERS 2008), with the National Coordinating Centre aiming to:

> "*break down barriers and open up higher education to the public. Universities will be more welcoming and accessible, and people in higher education will find their research, teaching and learning enriched by contact with the outside world*".

The Manchester Beacon project "connects people, places and knowledge, making the resources of both Manchester and Salford's universities and cultural assets accessible to all". For Manchester, this clearly includes families with the work of Manchester Metropolitan University artist Lynne Setterington being enjoyed by families at The Great Indoors, a free family event attended by over 10 000 people (NCCPE 2008).

Both the University of Reading and the University of Oxford museums see families as a core audience and one which deserves attention and specific programming. They have both taken part in a region-wide family friendly museums program and have contributed to family friendly training for other museums. In 2005, the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford won the Guardian newspaper *Kids in Museums* award in recognition of the work they do with families and children (KENNEDY 2005).

What do 'family friendly' museums have to do with our students?

For students at the University of Reading, being a learning program volunteer gives them

- non-academic credits which are added to their degree or postgraduate transcripts;
- career experience and insight;
- transferable skills and the knowledge that they are a positive representative of their university in the local community.

Family learning volunteers assist with workshops, drop-in sessions, *Toddler Time* and even museum sleep-overs. Their dedication and enthusiasm for the museums and their subject matter is transmitted to those families who attend.

Aside from formally participating in family sessions via volunteering, students are increasingly attending the family sessions as participants. As Reading, along with many UK universities continues to grow it's 'mature' student population, many of these students have their own families and look for places to visit and activities for them at weekends and during holidays. What better place than the university museum to have fun and be together, and for the children, an opportunity to see where their parents or grandparents study and find out more about what they do?

For the universities, along with their continuing education departments, their museums are often the 'public face' or 'front door' to the local community. If they truly wish to engage with local communities and play a vibrant and important role in their neighborhood, they must place an importance on working with families.

Family learning and the University of Reading's Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology and Museum of English Rural Life

The Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology was founded in the early 20th century and named after Professor P.N. Ure, the first Professor of Classics at Reading (1911 to 1946). Although the title of the Museum includes 'Greek Archaeology', the Ure Museum also has a collection of Egyptian material.

The Ure Museum is used as a research resource by scholars from all over the world, as well as in teaching University of Reading students, and increasingly as a source for teaching groups from local schools and other universities. The renewal of its learning environment, launched in 2005, furthers Percy Ure's aim "to give life and variety to the study of Greek History" and has enabled the museum to further engage with its wider community, including families and young children.

One way in which the Ure Museum engages with families is through its popular fish mummification workshops. The workshops are cross curricular in science and history, allowing museum staff to engage with those families who are already interested in Ancient Egypt (which is studied in the history curriculum in England by children between the ages of 7–11) extend their school knowledge and encourage them to discover the science in everyday life (or death!).

Staff prepare a fish mummy prior to the session. The dehydrated and preserved fish is used to encourage the families to make comparisons and contrasts with material in the museum's collection. During the session, staff gut and prepare a fresh fish for mummification, showing the families which organs were stored in canopic jars and why and how the natural salts of the Nile were used in the dehydration process. Families then make their own mummy (making a pipe cleaner frame), covering it with linen strips and sealing it with pink PVA glue to simulate the Gum Arabic and Rose Madder used to seal and color some mummies. Finally, families make a sarcophagus and decorate it with hieroglyphs and symbols.

Many parents bring their children along to the workshops because they wish to support what their children are doing at school, as FALK & DIERKING surmise "educational value may often be an important factor in family choice of outing" (FALK & DIERKING 1992). For some of the children who have developed or are developing 'islands of expertise' (CROWLEY & JACOBS 2002) in Egyptology, such activities add further to their enjoyment of, and interest in, the topic. Such workshops could easily be just for children, but the parents/carers enjoy themselves just as much as the children, often learning from them as the traditional roles of 'teacher' or 'leader' and 'learner' or 'follower' are reversed in this collaborative learning environment.

> "*Parents mediate children's experiences in and out of museums to help weave multiple moments of learning into broader informal knowledge about academic disciplines.*" (CROWLEY 2002)

The Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) was established in 1951 with the aim of preserving and celebrating English rural traditions at a time of rapid and irreversible change. MERL houses collections of objects, archives and books relating to the English countryside which have been 'designated' of national importance (MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES & ARCHIVES COUNCIL 2009).

The Museum moved to its new home in 2005 and the state of the art storage conditions and permanent exhibition house objects, books and archival documents which are used as a research resource by scholars from the UK and around the world, and for teaching museology and the history of the countryside to University of Reading students. Primary schools (pupils age 5–11) use the museum to teach history, science, literacy and art.

The museum's forward plan identified families and under fives as target audiences, and booked workshops, drop-in activities and *Toddler Time* followed. *Toddler Time* has been running for 18 months and was inspired by the Renaissance South West 2007 report *Communicating with Objects: Children under fifth engaging with museums*.

Toddler Time runs every Friday between 1–2 pm during local school term time. The sessions are drop-in and scheduled on a day and at a time when there is the least activity for under fives in the local area. The time was also chosen to allow parents with an older child at school enough time to collect them at the end of the school day.

Toddler Time is for both parents/carers and their children aged 2–4 years. The hour long session is divided into three 20 minute segments of singing (nursery rhymes, children's songs relating to rural life, e.g. Old MacDonald had a farm); a craft activity relating to the museum's collections or garden and 'free play' on the 'magic carpet', allowing the children and parents/carers a chance to socialize and play with rural themed toys and books.

Toddler Time helps both parents/carers and young children to feel comfortable in both a museum and an academic space. It fosters a sense of belonging and enjoyment from the learning and socializing with both other children, parents and museum staff and volunteers.

Alice, aged 2 years and 8 months has been attending the sessions with her mother since TODDLER TIME started last year. Alice is an only child and attends other playgroups and pre-school sessions with her mum, who is a stay-at-home mum. For Alice, there is only one museum, MERL, and every time she passes the building with her mum, she asks to come in. When Alice attends *Toddler Time*, she greets the session leader by name and joins the other families on the mat ready to start singing. After the session, Alice and her mum, along with some of the other children and parents, will either look around the museum or go and play in the garden. For them, this is their museum; an exciting, interesting place that encourages curiosity and learning, just as universities do.

Literature cited

ALEXANDER T. & P. CLYNE. 1995. *Riches beyond price: Making the most of family learning*. Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

CROWLEY, K.& JACOBS M. 2002. Building islands of expertise. In: *Informal science: Find, share, connect.* www.informalscience.org/research/show/1693 (accessed February 6, 2009).

CROWLEY K. & M. JACOBS. 2002. Building islands of expertise in everyday family activity. In: *Learning conversations in museums,* eds. G. LEINHARDT, K. CROWLEY & K. KNUTSON (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates), 333–356.

FALK J. & L. DIERKING. 1992. *The museum experience*. Washington: Whalesback Books.

FALK J. & L. DIERKING. 2000. *Learning from museums visitor experiences and the making of meaning*. Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press.

HAGGART J. 2000. *Learning legacies: A guide to family learning*. Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

KENNEDY, M. 2005. Oxford museums win children's vote. In: *The Guardian Online*, UK News section. www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/jul/06/kidsinmuseumscampaign.arts (accessed February 6, 2009).

MANNERS, P. 2008. Understanding public engagements. In: *Beacons for Public Engagement Wiki*. nccpe.pbwiki.com/Understanding-public-engagement (accessed February 6, 2009).

MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES & ARCHIVES COUNCIL. 2009. *Designation scheme.* www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/designation (accessed February 6, 2009).

NCCPE. 2008. Manchester beacon. In: *Beacons for Public Engagement – The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement*. www.publicengagement.ac.uk/beacons/manchester/default.htm (accessed February 6, 2009).

UM(UK)G. 2004. 2.2.3 Lifelong Learning. In: *University Museums in the United Kingdom: A national resource for the 21st Century*. www.umg.org.uk/media/Text.pdf (accessed February 6, 2009).

Contact

Rebekah Moran
UMASCS Learning Manager
Address: University of Reading Museums & Special Collections Services, Museum of English Rural Life, Redlands Road, Reading RG1 5EX, United Kingdom
E-mail: r.h.moran(at)reading.ac.uk
www.reading.ac.uk/merl
www.reading.ac.uk/ure

Secondary school program at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History

SARAH LLOYD

Abstract

The Oxford University Museum of Natural History runs a series of themed science study days for up to 300 Key Stage 5 students. The day's program includes short lectures from academics and curators and a range of smaller group activities. The program always features an activity called 'Science Behind the Headlines'; a small group discussion framed around a theme taken from science stories in the news and focused on a topic covered in one of the lectures. Groups are facilitated by scientists from within the University. Scientists are given a framework to work with. Those with little experience can support the more experienced and everyone willing to contribute can be involved in the program. Uptake from both schools and academics is very strong; the university museum context provides an ideal opportunity for students and scientists to engage. Each discussion is unique; however 'Science Behind the Headlines' enables students to understand the impact that science has on their lives and provides role models to inspire students to consider a career in science.

The study day program

Oxford University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH) has a popular and varied program of activities for secondary school students. In the last academic year the small education team taught free sessions to 3,889 secondary school students.

Work of the OUMNH education team can demonstrate how a small museum with limited resources can make a significant impact on secondary school science teaching.

The University Museum is well placed to develop activities with a biology theme, supported by University scientists. Students have the opportunity to study specimens, discuss ideas with scientists and reflect on a career in science in an informed way. The program includes taught sessions for students at every key stage.

Each term the University Museum hosts a study day for up to 300 Key Stage 5 biology students. Themes are varied from one term to the next, and include genetics and biodiversity.

A typical day begins with a program of three short lectures given by research scientists. This is followed by a discussion session entitled *Science Behind the Headlines* university scientists at varying stages in their career, volunteer to run this part of the day. Each session involves approximately 20 students facilitated by three scientists.

Students begin by guessing the missing words in real science headlines. The headlines used are all linked to the talks from the morning session.

Students are then given more information about each story then analyze the story more closely and figure out why it is in the news. Is the story particularly timely, interesting or controversial? Using a list of criteria students choose which of the stories they would include in their newspaper and explain why?

Scientists and students do the same exercise in parallel and each group justifies their choice. The activity is fun, has a purpose and provides an opportunity for scientists to talk about their work. Students and scientists talk about the way science is perceived by the wider population and how this perception is influenced by the way science is presented in the news.

Sessions for KS4 students are based on the collections. The objects are used to give an insight into the scientific process. The acceptance of controversial scientific ideas is the theme of a session called the Great Debate. From the specimens students search out evidence for evolution, evidence for the mechanisms of evolution and evidence that can be interpreted in different ways by rivals and collaborators. During this process students try to choose a single object that could be used to support the idea of evolution. The aim of the session is for students to appreciate that each line of evidence has strengths and weaknesses, and that the evolution idea is accepted because of the sheer quantity of evidence to support it.

Objects are also used in sessions for KS3 students to show how science works. In a program of talks and activities on a dinosaur theme, students study fossils. Students appreciate how scientific ideas change as new evidence is discovered, or old finds are studied in new ways.

OUMNH is a typical university museum with a natural link to university science departments, an array of real objects displayed for study and fascinating stories about historic scientists.

Using these assets it is possible to engage with secondary school students and change perceptions about science and scientists. Young people view Oxford University Museum of Natural History as an interesting place in which to learn with specialist teachers that are not only familiar with the school curriculum but also the role of the university and its collections. Students also view the museum as a place to revisit, part of the university with open doors, seven days a week, free of charge.

OUMNH Secondary school program is part of *Real World Science*. This project, a partnership between four natural history museums,[1] is jointly funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Its aim is to inspire secondary science students using the Museums' collections, galleries, educators and scientists.

Contact

Sarah Lloyd
Education Officer (Secondary)
Oxford University Museum of Natural History / Botanic Garden
Address: Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Parks Rd, Oxford OX1 3PW, UK
E-mail: sarah.lloyd(at)oum.ox.ac.uk; education(at)oum.ox.ac.uk
www.oum.ox.ac.uk

[1] Oxford Museum of Natural History, www.oum.ox.ac.uk; The Natural History Museum, www.nhm.ac.uk; The Manchester Museum, www.man.ac.uk; Tyne and Wear Museums, www.twmuseums.org.uk (accessed November 26, 2009).

The community service of the Ghent University Zoology Museum

DOMINICK VERSCHELDE

Abstract

The Ghent University Zoology Museum is not only providing guided exhibitions, but is more and more organizing fun workshops and practical exercises for all members of the community: families, toddlers (kindergarten), students of the primary, secondary, and high schools as well as adults. Our approach is an informal teaching of formal learning; we offer 'tantalizing teasers to taste Science'. We teach the public to use their senses to observe, and their mental sensibilities to create critical ideas; all this in a fun and passionate way instead of the commonly believed 'boring scientific way'. We allow high school trainees and apprentices of unemployment offices and the Department of Social Service to work and train in our museum, thus getting a taste of the immense workload surrounding a university collection. But this is not a fairy tale, as it is not without some bitter side effects.

Universities and university museums not only have a duty towards a small part of the community, in carrying out research and training students, but need to focus on the entire population in order to get the critical scientific way of thinking into the society as well as improving transparency of an academic environment for laymen.

Taking this into consideration, UMAC does not only stand for 'University Museums and Collections', but even more so for 'University Museums and Communities'.

Introduction

More than ever the Ghent University Zoology Museum is focusing its mission on community service. I consider two different communities in our quest for science communication: the window – and backstage community.

The window community

This is a most diverse group. We organize fun workshops and practical exercises for all members of the community. All exercises are focused on the use of all senses, in order to make objective observations, which have to lead to the appreciation of the scientific critical thinking process and forming of a scientific hypothesis. These workshops are easily adaptable to all ages so they can be enjoyed by schoolchildren, students, and even the entire family. We don't confront the public with the cold scientific facts, but we present this knowledge using tricks and comparisons so people can grasp the subject in an interactive and exciting way. We teach the public to use their senses to observe, and their mental capabilities to create critical ideas; all this in a fun and passionate way instead of the commonly believed 'boring scientific way': a lot depends on the packaging. The public's response is one of excitement and gratitude.

To observe objectively you need all your senses. Certainly, as our eyes are easily deceived, it is much better to rely on all our senses when observing nature. The next step is to focus on the relation between observation and critical thinking.

Some examples:

- *The Call of Nature*: children recognize different calls or sounds of animals; different levels of difficulty ensure that this 'game' can be played with small children, adolescents or adults.
- *Feeling Fur*: every small child wants to touch and feel an object in order to fully appreciate its features. In this they instinctively know more about observing then adults. This is an important reason why young children don't like visiting 'boring' museums where they have to keep their

hands in their pockets. In this exercise, however, we present the children with a whole range of animal furs and trinkets which they can touch and smell. In an informal way but with their full attention, we sensitize the children's awareness towards nature preservation.

- *Every mouse, its own house*: children have to place animals in their correct nesting sites, and in the appropriate level of the food-chain.
- *The Duck and the Platypus: a tale of convergent evolution.* Children look for different animals with similar shapes (external morphologies) and then try to formulate a possible explanation for that character or shape and subsequent lifestyle of these animals. It doesn't matter whether the answer is correct or not, it only matters if it is a reflection of critical reasoning and deduction. As devil's advocate, I try to break down any answer they can come up with, illustrating the value of the scientific method and critical thinking.
- *Pond critters*: children collect a pond water sample, and identify the encountered microscopic wildlife.
- *Family quiz on animal families*: a quiz about taxonomic families and animal family / community life.
- *Tasting is more than taste*: participants get to experience how hard it is to taste known foods when their eyes and nose are closed, thus proving that the observation of 'tasting' is done with more than the taste sense, but also with our sight and smell.
- *Tasting science*: we let people taste and eat all animals that are discussed in this exhibition. The message: What do we eat and what are the environmental consequences?

Is there a need?

Last year our government made a call towards all regional museums to organize family activities during school holidays. Astonishingly enough, although being an university museum, we were the only museum to organize an educational kindergarten children's activity from a total of 78 attending museums. University museums can clearly set an example here! By organizing children's activities during exhibitions, museums can score two blows with one strike: the children as well as their parents are satisfied. In our experience, children's workshops during temporary exhibitions are fully booked within one or two days of announcement. Parents even book these activities as a birthday gift for their children and friends.

The down side to our story is the continued lack of staffing and funding, which obliges us sometimes to work under almost prehistoric conditions and infrastructure.

The backstage community

This community forms a great challenge for our teaching/communications abilities. We teach high school trainees to work out exhibition topics, - texts and - posters. We learn them to downsize the enormous amount of information one can find on any given topic, and to filter that information which will contribute to a coherent and yet diverse exhibition text. Every exhibition demands that we consider and convey information on a topic coming from any possible angle or view, in order to stress our objectivity and to be of interest to any member of the community. So in an exhibition on a person, say Darwin, we do not only show his or her scientific accomplishments, but we also elaborate on the personal life and character of the person in question. From the exhibition text, trainees need to shape a text for the guided tour as well as produce a series of scientifically based, yet tantalizing posters to illustrate the exhibition. All of this is done in consideration to the choice of collection specimens to be used in the exhibition. Trainees especially appreciate the large amount of new information they encounter and learn when considering different approaches to or views of any subject, and also the difficulty of downsizing the acquired information to a manageable package and coherent story.

Others work on taxonomy and the digital inventory. Apprentices of unemployment offices and Department of Social Service train in our museum, thus getting a taste of the immense workload surrounding a collection and the responsibility that comes with communicating scientific knowledge.

Another backstage group comprises foreigners who want to work and settle in a local, in our case Belgian, community. If applicants hold a degree obtained in their home country, our government evaluates the person's diploma/degree, and declares the degree to be of the same level of expertise (or not) compared to local standards of education. In few cases the government can ask universities and university museums to evaluate or further train applicants in order to properly prepare them for competition on the Belgian labor market.

Problems

It is not a fairy tale, as there can be bitter side effects. Problems in attitude and lack of motivation can occur in adolescent students and also in apprentices of the unemployment office. Persons sent by the Department of Social Services often carry along the psychological burden and background of their predicament.

You not only have to teach these people new tricks in a new profession, but in a few cases you inevitably find yourself listening to social problems and anxieties or even solving aggressive conflicts. These situations can lean heavily into our own productivity.

Problems with the latter group of the backstage community, can arise even when their degree is, on principle, declared equal to the locally issued degrees. It is difficult when you notice that a person with a foreign degree does not meet the standards of our local labor market, and hence will have difficulty competing with other applicants for a certain job. It is hard to convey such information to a person diplomatically without them taking it personal, and to decide on an appropriate course of action in other to further train such a person to improve his or her chances on the labor market. In this diplomacy is our only currency, but unluckily enough it does not always pay the bill.

There always has been a need to inform the community, as is illustrated above, but it has perhaps never been as pressing as now. Communicating scientific knowledge to the general public does more than its specific job. Aside the knowledge transfer on itself, we educate people in our way of conducting science, in the use of the scientific method. The necessity to convey the strength of critical reasoning to the general public rises with the recent revival of ideologically based beliefs. Children are taught religion and are confronted with creationism from an early age. It even goes as far as religious groups handing out free bibles at the front door of the university building of our Faculty of Sciences. It is therefore necessary to provide the public with the scientific alternative, being the scientific method and critical reasoning, at that very same young age.

The growing revival of creationism

For some time, scientists have been blind to the very efficient marketing techniques, lobbying strength, and remarkable communications abilities of the proclaimers of 'Intelligent Design' and Islamic creationism (*cfr*. 'Atlas of Creation', YAHYA 2006; self-clamed 'scientific' yet not scientifically based). While these ideologically guided convictions are rapidly conquering the world, many scientists thought that they didn't need to counteract to this, and have not appropriately and sufficiently provided the public with the objective facts and critical evaluations supporting the theory of evolution.

In itself there is absolutely no problem with teaching faith and religion in schools – even Belgian schools are starting to lecture Islam next to Christianity and morality. But it becomes alarming when in some schools biology classes are discarded to make room in the students' schedule. In these schools, children no longer have any notion of Charles Darwin's evolution theory, and therefore are not

encouraged to question or critically reflect on ethical or ideological teachings. This emphasizes the urgency of our work: it is, more than ever, important to teach the general public the value of the scientific method and critical reasoning as a sensible and powerful tool to properly evaluate the validity or non-validity of ideologically guided preaching's. If people, after critical analysis, still choose to believe in religion, it is their full right, but religion shouldn't be forced on them. We need to provide people with the means to choose. The name 'scientist' doesn't make us one, we need to act accordingly. Even if you stop doing research, you (must) never stop being a scientist!

In conclusion

Universities and university museums not only have a duty towards a small part of the community, in carrying out research and training students, but need to focus on the entire population in order to get the critical scientific way of reasoning into society, as well as improving transparency of the academic environment towards the laymen.

Scientists need to recognize public hunger for answers and thus need to focus not only on their research and contacts within the scientific community, but also on the education of the community at large.

Herein lays a great responsibility of university museums and collections, not only to teach and inform the general public, but even more to draw the scientists' attention towards this community: we need to reach out and reach in.

UMAC does not only stand for *University Museums and Collections*, but also for *University Museums and Communities*; or ideally: *UMACC*, *University Museums and Critical Communities*.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Prof. Dr. D. Adriaens, P. Stanbury and A. Jonaitis for critically reading this paper. I would further like to thank UMAC for considering this paper, with in my opinion a very important subject, for publication.

Literature cited

YAHYA H. 2006. *Atlas of Creation*. Vol. 1. Turkey: Global Publishing.

Contact

Drs Dominick Verschelde
Curator/Conservator
Ghent University, Zoology Museum
Address: K. L. Ledeganckstraat 35, 9000 Gent, Belgium
E-mail: Dominick.verschelde(at)ugent.be
www.zoologymuseum.ugent.be

The role of the university museum in community development

DAVID ELLIS

Abstract

The development of universities as participants in the cultural life of a city is a new and welcome development that in many cases has been led by the university's museums.

This paper discusses the resulting change in the perception of university museums, both within the institution and among the broader community, and argues that university museums have a unique potential to be cultural players and leaders within their university and community. With direct call on experts across a diverse range of subject areas they have an ability to provide an extraordinary range of public programs from performances, concerts, and artist interventions to more traditional lectures and forums.

The benefits can be enticing. For some museums that have gone down this path and strategically aligned themselves with their university's goals, these developments have lead to an increased visibility (internal and external) and funding (including new buildings and increased staffing numbers).

Case study: The University of Sydney's Museums and their role in developing and defining the university as a cultural precinct.

Introduction

Like many universities of its age, the University of Sydney's cultural resources are rich and diverse, comprising two public museums, three art gallery spaces and a performing arts centre as well as specialist museums used primarily for teaching.

On the university campus on any day or night can be found an equally rich and diverse array of exhibitions, talks, performances and concerts. Yet many of these events are held in isolation, disconnected from one another.

I want to investigate the role of the university's museums as both venues and as leaders, co-organizers, and promoters in opening up the university to the community. I also want to look at their role in creating a cultural precinct to assist the university in achieving its aim of turning itself from an inward-looking institution to an outward-looking one.

The university's museums are one of the few parts of the university to undertake a deliberate strategy to connect with the broader public, to create programs that welcome those outside the university community, outside the 'ivory tower', on a consistent and on-going basis. They break a continuing perception of the university as being separate and closed off from the broader community.

We have a rich array of things happening across the campus and at the same time, a broader public unaware the University is an accessible and welcoming place.

In the same way that bringing together the museums through a recent amalgamation gave them a collective strength, so bringing together the university's cultural activities into a cohesive precinct creates something greater and more effective than each individual activity.

Someone must lead this and take the role of bringing it together. Museums with public programs as a part of their core business have staff with the expertise to organize events, publicize them and bring together the extraordinary talents disseminated throughout the campus. Staff, speaking the language of academics, can engage with a broad range of specialists and, at the same time, engage just as effectively with school-aged children and members of the general public. They become ambassadors

for the university, communicating and making accessible research and innovation often hidden from public view except for a fleeting press release.

In defining and harnessing all that is happening on campus, what we end up with is a vibrant and active precinct, a cultural precinct, open to the public and recognized and associated with a variety and diversity of cultural experiences: performing arts, visual arts, social debates, etc.

Why is this important?

The creation of a cultural precinct within the campus provides a focus for what in many cases is already happening in a university. It provides a voice to the many programs and activities being undertaken by faculties and departments and the museums and performing arts spaces and provides a bridge to engage with wider and diverse communities.

An example of the energy that can be created started with a faculty that had an idea for a lecture on the restoration of the Acropolis in Athens, to be delivered by a visiting academic. As originally planned it would have reached the usual small group of followers, mainly architectural students and perhaps engineering students and alumni. The organizers sought the museum's assistance to host a small reception for it. Initial discussions soon resulted in the event becoming larger and of higher profile, with more prestigious speakers coming out from Greece. It grew to encompass the big issues – repatriation of cultural property, debates over restoration versus conservation, focusing in this case on the inevitable discussion over the repatriation of the Parthenon marbles.

What started as a single lecture ended up as a two-week long series of talks, lectures, events and performances across the campus and a two-month museum-based exhibition. It reached new audiences and received widespread media coverage. Generous financial support from the Greek community for our programs followed and we are now holding a Greek Day in the Nicholson Museum as an annual event.

The cultural life of the city

Defining ourselves as a cultural precinct puts us in competition with other recognized cultural precincts in the city, competing for visitors and participants for events. This is not necessarily a bad thing.

The University of Sydney has followed the strategy of involving ourselves in the cultural life of the city, working together with other institutions and with community events such as Science Week, History Week, Festival of Sydney, Chinese New Year and the gay and lesbian Mardi Gras. The connections we have made by involving ourselves in these events have lead to on-going partnerships, the creation of new programs, and promotional support.

Results

Overall the effect of these programs has been positive:

- visitor numbers to the museums have tripled over the past five years, as have donations to the museum;
- membership of the Friends organization have more than tripled bringing with it a powerful group of advocates and supporters;
- and with each new month brings offers of gifts of paintings and artifacts as well as notification of intended bequests.

The university itself has changed to become more inviting as the 'gated village' disappears. I feel it is no coincidence that benefaction to the university is at record levels.

Challenges

Having set the standard and level of activity we now need to sustain it. Budgets are still challenging, and staffing levels are too low as expectations placed upon us keep rising. There is a danger of failure borne out of initial success.

The quality and standards of programs need to be constantly monitored and balanced with the need to take some risks in what we do.

We need to build on these developments and at the same time strengthen our connection and use of collections with the core teaching, learning and research of the university.

Curatorial staff are often torn between the needs of the collections and the demands placed on them by the more publicly-focused agendas, with exhibitions and public programs sometimes driving research. For some staff it has meant a shift in the way they allocate their day.

Summary

We are still finding our place in the broader cultural landscape of Sydney, but the approach we have taken has strengthened our position and profile within the university and has provided a new emerging and evolving cultural precinct for the University and the City of Sydney.

Contact

David Ellis
Director, Museums and Cultural Engagement -incorporating the Macleay Museum, Nicholson Museum, University Art Gallery and Seymour Theatre complex
Address: Quadrangle A14, University of Sydney NSW 2006, Australia
E-mail: d.ellis(at)usyd.edu.au
www.usyd.edu.au/museums

University museums in a university town: University of Tartu Museums in the service of the local community

REET MÄGI

Abstract

University museums bring academic potential to bear on community development in culture, education and tourism. Tartu as the seat of Estonia's oldest and only classical university provides an excellent example of this. Tartu is a town with a university that has for a number of centuries played an important part in shaping the face and identity of the entire nation. This article will discuss the role that the museums of the University of Tartu – the University History Museum, the Art Museum, and the Natural History Museum – play in the cultural and educational life of Tartu. The author will also touch upon the role of the museums as tourist attractions and support to the museums by both the municipal council and the university.

Introduction

Tartu is a university town. It is home not only to the oldest and the only *universitas*-type university in Estonia – the University of Tartu – founded in 1632, but also to the Estonian University of Life Sciences and several other higher education institutions. Tartu is a town with a rich cultural heritage. The University of Tartu has always played, and continues to play, a pivotal role in the whole country but also in Tartu's development and in shaping the town's cultural environment. Tartu's numerous museums include three museums of the University of Tartu: the Natural History Museum, the Art Museum and the University History Museum. The first two, founded in 1802 and 1803, respectively, are the oldest museums in Estonia. The university's museums are open to the public and attract visitors from the entire Estonia and also from other countries. The present paper focuses on the role of these museums as cultural, educational and tourist attractions in the local community and in the Tartu region. The paper will also discuss how the development of this role is currently conceived by the town administration and the university.

The role of the university's museums in the development of local culture, education and tourism

The University of Tartu museums boast a tradition of community outreach spanning two centuries. Created to preserve and manage the university's teaching and research collections, the museums have been open to public since their inauguration. Although the number of visitors at certain periods in history has been even higher than it is today, it is safe to say that the museums' community outreach work has never before been more fully and purposefully developed.

The nature of the collections, the high qualifications of the museums' employees and the museums' attractiveness to visitors, coupled with the high reputation of the university in Estonian society, means that the university's museums can exert significant impact on the town's cultural life and the development of its tourism industry. In Tartu, the University is an important marker of identity for the whole region.

The collections of the university's museums are unique in Estonia. The Museum of Natural History holds the largest natural history collection in the country. The Art Museum has a rich graphic art collection and Estonia's only collection of antiquities. The University History Museum is the only science history museum in Estonia. The history of the University of Tartu Museums and their collections up to the present day has been outlined in *Mapping of the Collections of the University of*

Tartu in 2006-2007, an overview put together by the University of Tartu History Museum (LUST & LEPPIK 2007).

The value of the collections and museums is greatly enhanced by their highly qualified staff. It is important for visitors to have the opportunity to meet and talk to museum specialists. Besides their own staff, the museums can also obtain assistance from specialists affiliated to other units of the university.

The University of Tartu museums are located in historical university buildings, which represent popular sights and symbols of the town, thus adding to the tourist value of the museums' exhibitions. The Art Museum, for example, is located in the university's main building which makes it easy for its visitors to see also the university's assembly hall and the historical student lockup in the same building (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 - The University of Tartu Art Museum has preserved a mid-19th century interior and Pompeii-style wall paintings. Photo by Andres Tennus, University of Tartu

The University History Museum is located in several old university buildings on Toome Hill, the site where a complex of university buildings was constructed at the beginning of the 19th century. The museum's main exhibition is displayed in the former university library that was installed in the ruins of a medieval dome cathedral rebuilt for that purpose at the beginning of the 19th century. The museum also organizes visits to remaining dome cathedral ruins and to the viewing platforms built on the bases of the cathedral's two towers (Fig. 2). The University History Museum also operates in the Old Anatomical Theatre and is about to start restoring the old observatory, so that it can be opened to the public as a museum in 2011 (Fig. 3). All these buildings are located in the downtown area, within the immediate vicinity of the town hall square, and are usually visited as part of any guided tour of the town.

The museums are a natural part of the town's cultural landscape and form a network with other museums and cultural institutions in town. The museums offer diverse educational programs, which are aimed at the townspeople of Tartu (Fig. 4). According to a poll administered on behalf of the municipal council to a selection of tourists who visited Tartu in the summer of 2008, Toome Hill and the ruins of the dome cathedral were regarded as the town's most popular attraction. The main building of the university placed third among the popular attractions.

Cooperation experience and prospects

As defined in the Republic of Estonia Universities Act, and in the University of Tartu Act, the university is not only an institution that engages in research and education, but also one that fosters culture. Local and national support to the university is crucial to the success of this third area of the university's

mission. The municipal council, in particular, can do a lot by providing assistance and cooperating with the museums to contribute to their success on the local level. University museums co-operate with agencies of the town in various everyday activities and in larger projects. Of the more important co-operation projects that have received funding from the municipal council, mention should be made of the renovation of the roof and the tower of the observatory, the partial restoration of the ruins of the dome cathedral, and the educational program of the University History Museum in the history of medicine at the Old Anatomical Theatre.

Fig. 2 - The University of Tartu History Museum is situated in the former university library that was built in the ruins of the medieval dome cathedral in the beginning of the 19th century. Photo by Margot Sakson, University of Tartu

Museums participate in developing the region. University museums are regarded as competitive advantage to the university among other universities (BOYLAN 2002), but in the context of Tartu as a university town, the university museums should be seen as an asset for increasing the competitiveness of the whole region. The development of the university's museums is best outlined in Tartu's Development Plan for Culture, Sports and Youth Work (2008), in the town's Tourism Development Plan (2008) and in the strategy Tartu 2030 (2006). The first of those documents sees the development of the university museums as a necessary prerequisite for diversifying the cultural life of Tartu and for creating a stimulating cultural environment. The development plan for culture provides a list of museum facilities that require investment in order to facilitate the town's development. The university itself has also set a series of goals for serving the society through culture work. The cultural mission of the university is also included in the university's strategic plan 2009-2015 (2008). The relevant strategic tasks include the development of tourism and education services offered by the university and the introduction of the collections of the university's museums to the public. The university's heritage

Fig. 3 - The observatory of the University of Tartu will be opened as a museum in 2011. As part of Struve Geodetic Arc, the observatory has been included in the list of UNESCO's World Heritage.

stands to benefit from the academic community's interest in communicating science to society (SOUBIRAN 2008).

The university's co-operation with the town hall has yielded some success stories, but there is room for improvement. For example, the financial contribution of the local council needs to be more predictable. Financial support from the municipal council is especially important because no national government support exists for the community outreach activities of the university museums. University museums' cultural and educational services are financed mainly by the university, supplemented by grants from various sources.

Fig. 4 - A group of children at the exhibition in the University of Tartu History Museum. A museum specialist explains an exposition of Adam Johann von Krusenstern's circumnavigation which took place in 1803–1806. Photo by Andres Tennus, University of Tartu

The lack of financial resources, however, may significantly restrict, or lead to termination of some university services to the community. For example the lack of resources to repair old showcases that are no longer safe, or to provide access for handicapped persons may require restricting public access. The university's resources that can be invested in the museums are limited because the university's research and teaching needs take precedence. Thus, only projects that have the highest priority for the university will receive the green light.

Conclusion

The university's museums play an important role in the cultural and education life of the town and constitute a significant tourist attraction. The plans of both the municipal council and the university include goals to develop the museums. Support and co-operation between the town and the university are the prerequisite for success.

Acknowledgements

The author of the article wishes to thank Ain Rada and Meelis Leesik for their contribution in translating this article into English.

Literature cited

BOYLAN, P. J. 2002. Museums and collections in the relation to the heritage of the university. In: *The heritage of European universities*, eds. N. SANZ & S. BERGAN, (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing), 49–61.

LUST, K. & L. LEPPIK. 2007. *Mapping of the collections of the University of Tartu in 2006-2007*. Tartu: University of Tartu. www.ut.ee/ajaloomuuseum/TY-kaardistamine.pdf (accessed February 13, 2008).

SOUBIRAN, S. 2008. What makes scientific communities think the preservation of their heritage is important? *University Museums and Collections Journal* 1: 1–8. edoc.hu-berlin.de/umacj (accessed February 13, 2008).

Contact

Reet Mägi
Director of the University of Tartu Museums
Address: University of Tartu Museums, University of Tartu, Ülikooli 18, 50090 Tartu, Estonia
E-mail: reet.magi(at)ut.ee
www.ut.ee

Ways of seeing: A model for community partnership working

GILL HART

Abstract

This project was devised by staff at The Cambridge Resource Centre for individuals recovering from mental health problems and the Fitzwilliam Museum Education department. The aim was to move towards a program that was inclusive and did not involve segregated access for people recovering from mental health problems. Sessions took place at the Resource Centre and were open to mental health service users and the general public. A five-week course gradually moved away from the Resource Centre and into the museum.

A quote from a participant: "I walked past a couple of paintings in the museum that we had looked at previously as a group. I felt such a shiver of delight as I looked at a painting I'd otherwise paid little mind to – thinking about what I knew about it now. The joy of recognition; the beginning of knowledge & skills.""

Some participants signed up for a ten-week course taking place in the Fitzwilliam Museum and at Kettle's Yard. Members of the public booked places on the course (30% of the places were allocated to those referred by the Resource Centre). Participants visited different departments within the museum and met keepers, technicians and other staff as well as taking part in group discussions and debates. This project was rigorously evaluated using questionnaires, discussion and consultation.

Ways of seeing

The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge works in partnership with the Cambridge Resource Centre,[1] to deliver a rolling program of talks and events known as *Ways of Seeing.* This program has been running since January 2007 and is currently in its third year. It is a program that is aimed at people with or recovering from mental health problems although others are also welcome to take part. The overarching aim of *Ways of Seeing* is to create an environment or community of interest enabling people to participate in events without the stigma of a 'mental health label'.

History

The idea for the program developed out of an informal arrangement between a local day centre and the museum (users of the day centre plus a staff member visited the museum where they were met by a member of the education department and taken on tours and into the education studio for practical art sessions). Restructuring in the partner organization led to a hiatus in the partnership but by October 2006, staff at both organizations were well placed to think about reviving the program.

Planning in partnership

In breathing new life into this partnership, a careful planning process was adhered to. It was recognized by both organizations that there had to be absolute clarity in the definition of each partner's roles and responsibilities. For this reason, a *partnership agreement* was drawn up by the Museum and

[1] The Cambridge Resource Centre is staffed by the Cambridge Social Inclusion Team – part of Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust. The Resource Centre works with individuals recovering from mental health problems and helps these individuals identify the changes they would like to make and how they might work towards achieving them. The Centre also works in partnership with other community providers in education, work, the arts and leisure to develop opportunities for users of the centre. In addition to this the Social Inclusion team are developing a community based resource that includes a café, an internet café, an exhibition space and rooms that partner organisations can use to lead workshops/sessions for visitors to the centre.

staff from the Museum and the Resource Centre had to commit to the terms and conditions agreed to therein[2].

A careful planning process inevitably threw out yet more questions about what we were hoping to achieve and why we do the work we do. There was general consensus that providing targeted provision for 'closed' groups may be a good way to get things started but how should we continue? Were we, without intending to, contributing to further social segregation? In June 2004, the Social Exclusion Unit of the Government published 'Mental Health and Social Exclusion'. This report demonstrated how segregated services for people with mental health issues contributed to social isolation and poorer mental health and therefore led to poorer community participation.

We had this report in mind when we asked ourselves the following questions:

- Is it enough to ensure that people can come in on a chaperoned visit?
- Where do we go from here? How do we move on from a member of staff meeting up with a 'closed' group?
- What can we do to promote understanding of the needs of individuals among our different audiences? Is it possible that we could successfully integrate seemingly disparate groups of people?
- And lastly, how can we encourage participants to be not just a 'consumer' but an 'active citizen'?

Taking these questions into account we defined our collective aims:

- To encourage non service users to visit the resource centre.
- To encourage service users to visit the museum.
- To engage all participants with the museum's collection - initially in outreach sessions at the Resource Centre and then in the museum itself.
- To gradually integrate the audience into the mainstream museum audience.

Finding the participants

With the agreement drawn up and the aims and hoped for outcomes identified, it only remained for us to start promoting talks and events and build up a participant base. Staff at the Resource Centre took care of this. Some participants were referred to the program by care workers whilst others found out about it when visiting the Resource Centre for other reasons. Posters advertised the program within the centre and the general public found out about it via a poster campaign on the street where the centre is located (a relatively busy public thoroughfare).

What does the program involve?

The program starts with two drop-in sessions in January and February. The concept is that if these are enjoyed, attendees will be encouraged to sign up for a five week course in April and May. The last week of the course is held at the museum. All sessions are led by a member of museum staff and attended by at least one member of staff from the Resource Centre. This is a discussion based program – encouraging people to look at art, talk about it, formulate ideas and communicate and share those ideas with other participants. We use paintings from the museum's collections as a shared experience external to anything that may be going on in an individual's life. Often these discussions do take a personal turn and that is not discouraged, although staff work together to gently steer the direction of the session if need be. We aim to encourage people to have the confidence to

[2] The agreement functions as a form of risk management, including information about staff to participant ratios, maximum group sizes, guidelines about what will happen in the event of an incident occurring etc. Both organisations are involved in drawing up the content of the agreement and absolute clarity about where responsibility lies is an integral element of the agreement.

speak up in the group and to boost their self esteem as well as to learn something about art and art history.[3]

The next component of *Ways of Seeing* is a ten-week summer school held at the museum, with two sessions taking place at Kettle's Yard. The summer school is promoted to the general public in the Museum's *What's On* guide. Fifteen places are available and five of these places are reserved at a concessionary rate for people referred by the Resource Centre. Participants can sign up and take part in this course in the knowledge that they are now part of a mainstream public program at the museum. At this point we engage colleagues in the facilitation – technicians, curators and administrators have taken the lead in different sessions. Participants make behind the scenes visits to different parts of the museum and meet with members of staff they may not otherwise come across. In this way, we are attempting to encourage staff from across the museum to engage with new audiences. No one is labeled or stigmatized and everyone is an equal in these information exchanges.

Conclusion

This program is not expensive to run and is sustainable. It involves engagement with individuals over an extended period of time. It is an example of a mutually beneficial partnership where both organizations involved work together to encourage participants upon the program to achieve success with their longer term goals.[4]

Contact

Gill Hart
Outreach and Access Officer at the Fitzwilliam Museum
Address: University of Cambridge, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, CB2 1RB, United Kingdom
E-mail: gmh33(at)cam.ac.uk
www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

[3] Evaluation results demonstrated a desire to learn more about art history across the group. In 2008, one participant went on to study history of art at Cambridge University, two participants regularly book places on courses run for the general public and five regularly attend lunchtime talks held in the museum. This represents over 50% of the overall group.
[4] Details about the Museums community and outreach work: www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/education/outreach/ (accessed November 25, 2009)

Accessibility to university museums: A strategical objective

EDMON CASTELL

Abstract

In the National University of Colombia there are currently 25 museums and collections including art, medicine, natural science, anthropology and history. Taken together, they comprise the largest, most diverse and most important museum in Colombia, and also the least known. The collections are the product of the conservation and research work of the university in the 141 years of its existence. In recent years, the National University of Colombia has not only become more aware of the importance of its cultural and scientific heritage, but also of the marginality of the work in the university museums. For that reason, in 2006 the university began to work on a Museums and Cultural Heritage Project to develop policies for the conservation, acquisition, documentation, research and communication of its own cultural heritage.

The National University of Colombia hopes, through the development of a stronger, structured, ethical, responsible, efficient and representative project about Museums and Cultural Heritage to be better prepared for current challenges. In addition, the project hopes to generate a new landscape of accessibility to the museums and collections of the National University of Colombia. In short, the Museums and Cultural Heritage System of the National University of Colombia, through a 'Museums portal' located in a colonial building in Bogotá known as Claustro de San Agustín (Cloister of St. Augustine) seeks to highlight the cultural heritage of the university, and become, beyond the classrooms and research centers of the campus, an important reference for the meeting of teachers, students, citizens and other cultural and academic institutions.

Open door policy

Colombia National University has 25 museums and collections, which together give the university the largest and most diverse collections in Columbia. The collections of science, art, medicine, natural science, and anthropology are the result of the research and collecting of the university during its 141 year history.

The goal of the Cultural Patrimonio and Museums System (PMS) is to provide more public access to the cultural heritage of the university so that the university becomes meeting place; a place where teachers, students, academic and cultural institutions, social actors, and citizens can come together.

In October 2007 the San Agustin Cloister opened its doors as the headquarters of the PMS of the National University. At that time we had 3 to 5 visitors daily and in December 2008, the average was 125 people daily. To date, we have had a total of 27,400 visitors. Yet even more important information can be obtained by looking beyond the numbers.

The essential question is: Why is it so important open the doors of university to the citizens? The answer is as simple as it is political: because the audience has to have access in order to contribute to the preservation of National University heritage.

Beyond the campus: The other visitors of the university museums

The museums that are located on the campus of the university are known to the community because of the importance of the campus, but access to the museums was limited in the past because the activities of the museums were primarily linked to the university's curriculum.

The cloister is located strategically in downtown Bogota, in the main cultural zone. It is able to distribute information about the university museums, resulting in visits from people who work in the

area and the rest of the city, national and foreign tourists, and of course, scholars, and academic groups.

Citizenship as a driver of heritage management

The Cultural Patrimonio and Museums System has had other positive effects on National University museums. PMS offers visitors an opportunity to see collections with normally restricted access. This helps in getting the collections conserved. Examples are the collections of the Forensic Sciences Museum and the History of Medicine Museum that are now housed in 'visitable storage' in the San Agustin Cloister.

The National Astronomic Observatory is in a similar situation. The building is a significant part of the architectural heritage of the university but it is located in the Presidential Palace yard. For that reason, people from outside the university did not visit. In September 2008, the PMS organized the first guided visit to the observatory and since then, observatory audiences have quadrupled.

Specialized university collections that in the past had been used primarily for academic research, have been used by PMS as part of public exhibits and other projects done in collaboration with other administrative and academic units of the university. This is the case of exhibitions such as *Ants* and *140 years of the Medicine Faculty.* These exhibits were jointly organized by the staff of the entomology laboratory and school of medicine faculty and revealed collections not widely known even inside the university.

Because an exhibition requires a lot of time consuming research and planning, the PMS has developed other kinds of activities to provide access to the National University collections and cultural heritage. One is the web portal, where anyone can learn about all the university's museums and collections through pictures, contents, and articles.

The most important result of the project is the new player on the scene: the audience. Because of the success in attracting visitors, the National University has created new relationships and agreements with other academic and cultural institutions who share the aim of providing more public access to their collections. In summary, the audience is a new engine that drives a weighty machine.

The National University in the sector of culture and heritage

A simple action like extending opening hours had a positive impact on visits. Another positive action was the touring of exhibits to other locations, the launch of a web site, and the distribution of cultural events calendars and information brochures at strategic points in the city.

As a result of all these activities, we can conclude that the PMS is a distinctive venue, yet one that reflects and respects the diversity of the university's cultural heritage. One of the important characteristics of the PMS is its decentralized model of management that allows the diverse collections to retain their own personalities.

Thanks to these new audiences the National University is finding a new balance between the conservation of the collections and their uses. Citizens are helping to renovate the collective character of the university heritage and even of the university itself.

Making collections accessible is both an academic necessity and a major social responsibility. The PMS, located in the San Agustin Cloister, operates on the basis that its visitors are – first of all – citizens, and that they have the right to know about and enjoy the patrimony that belongs to all of us.

Contact

Edmon Castel
SPM – Sistema de Patrimonio y Museos
Address: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Edificio Uriel Gutierrez, Vicerrectoría de Sede Bogotá, Cra. 45 # 26-85, 4to Piso, Bogotá D.C, Colombia
E-mail: edmon.castell(at)gmail.com
www.museos.unal.edu.co

The University Museums and Collections Journal (UMACJ) is a peer-reviewed, on-line journal for the proceedings of the International Committee for University Museums and Collections (UMAC), a Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). The journal appears at least once a year.
http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/umacj

Editors
Sally MacDonald
University College London Museums and Collections
UCL, Gower Street
London WC1E 6BT
United Kingdom

Nathalie Nyst
Réseau des Musées de l'ULB
Université Libre de Bruxelles – CP 175
Avenue F.D. Roosevelt, 50
1050 Brussels
Belgium

Cornelia Weber
Humboldt University of Berlin
Hermann von Helmholtz-Zentrum für Kulturtechnik
Unter den Linden 6
10099 Berlin
Germany

Copyright
© International ICOM Committee for University Museums and Collections
http://umac.icom.museum

ISSN 2071-7229