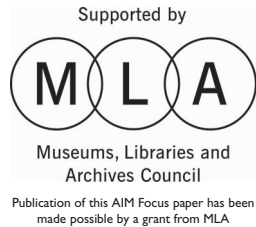


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Learning in smaller museums

Susan Eddisford

with adult learning case study by **Diana Rowsell, Head of Learning, Weald & Downland Open Air Museum**

Learning has always been at the heart of museums. A visit to a museum is a learning experience in itself before any particular programmes are introduced. Many museums, especially independents, were founded through local community interest and with a determination to inform visitors about history. Some museums have established education programmes from their earliest beginnings, but in the last 10 years there has been a plethora of national initiatives in education, particularly for school children, but also, most recently, in adult learning. Museums are well-placed to take advantage of many of these initiatives – and introduce their own – to enhance their visitors' experiences and enjoyment of collections.

A Common Wealth, the influential report by David Anderson, Director of Learning at the Victoria & Albert Museum, highlighted the potential for museums to support a wide variety of learners of all ages and types, from family groups to pupils and students pursuing courses at all levels. Anderson recommended that **all** museums, small ones as well as large ones, should make education a priority. For museums without specialist education staff this can be a daunting prospect but there are simple steps that can be taken to help develop learning opportunities and activities and plentiful sources of information to help.

One of David Anderson's 12 targets for improving museum education and establishing it as a central purpose of museums of all sizes and types was the development of a national framework. In 2004 the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) launched the *Inspiring Learning for All* framework at www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk to help museums find out what the users of their services learn, to assess how well they are achieving best practice in learning, and to improve what they do.

Inspiring Learning for All

The *Inspiring Learning for All* website includes on-line information and learning materials. It has five main sections and additional sections directing you to useful resources and further help. Each section of the site has materials that you can download to read and/or work through with colleagues.

1. The **Introduction** outlines the background to *Inspiring Learning for All*, some of the benefits of using it and the philosophy behind it. You can:
 - Download a summary and the full framework.
 - Explore what is meant by learning in museums, archives and libraries.
 - Find out how to develop the framework.
 - Discover what the sites piloting the framework did and the results of their experience.
2. **Use the framework** enables you to introduce and implement *Inspiring Learning for All* in your museum. This section takes you through a cycle from initial planning to taking action. It includes checklists for the framework itself, practical workshop activities and guidelines for involving colleagues.
3. **Measure learning** includes guidelines on how to assess learning outcomes for users using the Generic Learning Outcome system (GLOs) developed for this project. This provides a useful method for measuring learning in museums, often informal and intangible, but invaluable for providing evidence to funders.
4. **Win support** will help the development of advocacy work for education within your organisation and externally. It includes relevant sources and statistics and two presentations that you can download.
5. **Go further** looks at strengthening commitment to learning within your organisation

and working in partnership with others. It includes guidance materials and case studies which show how organisations piloting *Inspiring Learning for All* and the Generic Learning Outcomes successfully raised the profile of learning.

6. **Resources & further info** has a glossary of terms, frequently asked questions, other relevant resources and important contacts. There is a full list of downloadable documents.

Inspiring Learning for All contains wide-ranging and useful information. Don't be overwhelmed – dip into the sections as and when you need them.

Creating a learning organisation

Ensure that education is a priority throughout the museum and with all staff and volunteers. Make sure learning is part of all aspects of work within the museum, when planning displays, exhibitions or special events, and when dealing with visitors, as well as when providing specific learning opportunities.

- Appoint a trustee with a particular brief for education. Trustees as a whole can give invaluable support for the museum's educational work through discussing and agreeing to the overall direction of the education policy, determining annual goals and monitoring progress.
- If you do not have a budget to employ staff with educational qualifications and experience, recruit volunteers with an interest in or experience of education, such as retired teachers or teaching assistants or newly qualified graduates who wish to work in museum education and are looking for work experience. Volunteers can develop education policy and programmes; deliver activities; give guided tours to visiting schools; supervise handling sessions; give talks to visiting groups or groups outside

the museum; lead reminiscence sessions; promote educational activities, and take bookings for school and other group visits.

- Create opportunities for staff/volunteers to develop their skills and keep up-to-date with developments in education by attending courses, through placements, mentoring or shadowing. Training can be included in externally funded projects or may be available through the Renaissance in the Regions programme.
- Develop partnerships with other museums and learning organisations such as libraries to share ideas and best practice.
- Develop partnerships with schools to find out what teachers want, how museum resources can support formal learning and how exhibitions can relate to their work.
- Consider employing freelance museum educators to lead some sessions where the cost can be recouped from the charges paid by those attending the sessions or external funding.
- Build funding for specialists, artists, crafts-people or education specialists into applications for museum projects.

Writing an education policy

This will help you to provide a context for the educational work of the museum and set achievable short and long-term objectives. An education policy can save time, focus effort and improve the quality of the museum's work. It is best done in discussion with all staff who have a part to play in any aspect of the museum's educational work. It does not need to be a lengthy document and should include the following:

- 1. A mission statement** – a summary statement about the educational purpose of the museum such as defining education as one of the museum's main purposes and expressing a commitment to deliver learning opportunities to the widest possible audience and to the highest possible standard.
- 2. Aims** – which identify the museum's intentions (these will depend on the nature of the museum and its collections). They could include for example:
 - To maximise the educational potential of museum collections for schools and lifelong learning.
 - To enhance the formal and informal learning of children and adults of all ages through the imaginative use of the museum and its collection.
 - To ensure that quality museum provision is accessible to all sections of the community.
 - To develop new audiences and encourage local communities to become active partners in the development and use of the museum.
 - To be aware of developments in the changing world of education and lifelong learning and respond to them as necessary.

- To provide opportunity for people to increase their knowledge of the local community.
- To provide inspiration for people to enjoy and appreciate the cultural produce of previous generations.

3. Target audience – identify the audience and potential audience for learning provision. This could include:

- Pre-school children, parents and carers.
- Pupils from schools and colleges.
- Teachers.
- Families.
- Adult education groups.
- Young people and adults engaged in lifelong learning.
- Young people and adults with special needs.
- Senior citizens.
- Tourists.
- Non-visitors through outreach.

4. Objectives – outlining how the museum will achieve its aims. These are determined by the aims that the museum has decided upon but could include:

- To develop a service for formal education providers that provides resources and expertise tailored to suit their requirements, including handling collections, assisted visits, teacher resource packs, outreach visits and teacher training sessions.
- To provide stimulating and exciting family-friendly activities within the museum to create a memorable and enriching experience for those involved.
- To increase the use of the museum by all target groups for formal and informal education.
- To develop the use of the museum for lifelong learning.
- To respond to developments in formal education and their implications for all areas of the curriculum.
- To improve the quality of displays and interpretation to enhance the visitor experience.
- To maintain and extend databases contained within the museum and improve access to and awareness of these facilities.
- To develop outreach services as required.

5. Resources – be realistic about what you have:

- The collection.
- The staff and volunteers.
- Any available funding.
- Income generated from education activities/school membership.

6. Partnerships – identify possible links outside the organisations such as:

- Formal education providers, schools, colleges, adult learning.
- Other museums and their education officers, particularly Hub museums who may be able to give support for education development as part of their commitment to working with the wider museum community.
- Professional groups such as GEM (Group for Education in Museums).
- Local records office.
- Local Family History Society.
- Disabled organisations.
- Library Service.
- Learning Skills Council.

7. Training – outline possible training opportunities for staff and volunteers:

- Training courses.
- Mentoring.
- Skills sharing.
- Job shadowing.

Developing an education programme and action plan

It is essential to consider what you can do well. Think about:

- The learning opportunities within the organisation including the strengths of your collection.
- Potential audiences.
- The resources available within the museum – staff/volunteers, expertise/knowledge, available objects, photos, documents, original or reproduction, budget, access, space.
- Your limitations – staff/volunteers, expertise/knowledge, available objects, photos, documents, budget, access, space.

Short Term Action Plan (two years) – How your museum will implement the identified objectives. This may include such outcomes as:

- Form a team of paid staff/volunteers willing to develop educational work in the museum (and as part of outreach) with contracts/job descriptions outlining their responsibilities.
- Pilot programmes for schools linked to the National Curriculum and related in-service and initial training for teachers.
- Identify the topics of interest to adult learners, family groups and/or tourists and develop pilot activities in the museum for them.
- Develop a programme of outreach work to take learning into the community.
- Plan displays which take account of the learning needs of visitors.
- Publish materials to encourage the use of the museum and support learning related to the collection.
- Identify training needs and begin a training programme for staff and volunteers.
- Develop goodwill towards the museum within the community by providing

opportunities to hear people's views about the museum.

- Develop effective partnerships with other museums and learning organisations in the locality and region, especially Hub museums.
- Evaluate progress each year and evaluate users' responses to the museum's educational provision.

Long Term Action Plan (five years) – could include:

- Continue to respond to and develop the service for the formal and informal education sector.
- Extend the community's use of the museum through activities, events and other learning programmes.
- Continue to develop the skills and training of all staff and volunteers to enable them to support the museum's aims.
- Install new exhibitions with a range of associated learning activities.
- Provide a well-equipped education room or flexible gallery spaces for the use of educational groups.
- Continue to develop links with the local community.
- Continue to develop links with other museums.
- Continue to develop links with education providers.
- Act on the feedback obtained through evaluation and continue to evaluate progress and responses.
- Develop new services both on and off-site, to meet the needs of new target audiences.
- Extend the provision of special activities and consider the buying in of expertise, such as drama specialists, costs to be covered by participating groups.
- Extend holiday activities for all age groups to provide enjoyable informal learning opportunities such as story telling sessions, art and craft activities, special interest sessions and a museum club.
- Improve access to and encourage the use of the museum's databases, archives and secondary sources as a resource for individual research.
- Improve access to information about the collection.

If possible it is useful to define the success criteria for the short and long terms action plans, such as number of participants; number of groups; tangible outcome of project; deadlines, etc. This will make a useful working document and reference for any further planning.

You should review your education policy every five years.

Further reading

Hooper-Greenhill, E, (ed), *Writing a Museum Education Policy*, University of Leicester, 1991.

Museums and Galleries Commission, *Guidelines for good practice: Managing museum and gallery education*, 1996.

Child Protection

Museums need to have in place a 'Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Policy' which clearly outlines procedures within the museum. This needs to be a simple working document that everyone will read.

Paid staff whose job requires them to work primarily with children should be CRB (Criminal Records Bureau)-checked. Volunteers need not be CRB-checked unless they have unsupervised access to children, and work with them on a one-to-one basis or in a regular ongoing situation where they would be able to develop a relationship of trust, perhaps in a monthly museum club. If volunteers are to be CRB-checked the circumstances which require this should be clearly outlined in their job description.

From October 2009 there will be a new layer of safeguarding, the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA), whose role is to help prevent unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults. They will assess every person who wants to work or volunteer with vulnerable people so all potential employees and volunteers will need to apply to register.

Registration for volunteers will be free and applying for registration will be done through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) but, unlike Disclosure checks, will be portable and will also not need to be renewed once you have signed up.

For school groups, decide on a ratio of adults to pupils that suits your organisation. This may vary with different groups depending on age; discuss this with the teacher when booking. You are entitled to request appropriate adult supervision and should never be put in a position of vulnerability. You should also insist in your initial information sent to teachers that the accompanying adults remain with the groups at all times, to safeguard staff or volunteers.

Do not take photographs without written permission from schools or parents.

Further information: website links

Writing a child protection policy:
http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/resourcesforprofessionals/readinglists/writingachildprotectionpolicy_wda48907.html

MLA SouthEast briefing paper on safeguarding children in museums:
<http://www.mlasoutheast.org.uk/assets/documents/10000AC5IB27Safeguardingchildreninmuseums280307.pdf>

CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks:
<http://www.crb.gov.uk/>

Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA):
www.isa-gov.org.uk

Further reading

NSPCC, *Firstcheck: A Step by Step Guide for Organisations to Safeguard Children*. Second edition, 2006.

Risk assessment

A risk assessment should be completed for general museum visits and it is important that museums carry out simple risk assessments for all learning activities, but these should be based upon common sense and not seen as a barrier.

Schools are required to carry out their own risk assessment before any visit. Encourage them to do so by allowing them to visit free of charge. You may wish to provide schools with information about general perceived risks but it is not advisable to provide them with a risk assessment as such.

Further information: website links

Risk assessments for school activities:
<http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/default.asp?document=200.50.120.10>

Risk assessment at IWM Duxford:
<http://duxford.iwm.org.uk/server/show/nav.00d00c00a001>

Information about risk assessments for schools and downloadable documents:
http://www.museumse.org.uk/ABC_working_with_schools/preparing_school_visit/risk_assessments.html

National context – Government initiatives

Museum learning takes place within a national context. Government initiatives and agendas influence opportunities to provide learning and may provide funding streams.

Young people and learning: Every Child Matters (ECM)

This is a new, overarching government approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19.

Aims and outcomes

The Government's vision is to create a joined-up system of health, family support, childcare and education services so that all children get the best start possible. The *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme, outlined in the 2005 Childcare bill enables organisations providing services to children, such as schools, hospitals and the police, to work together and share information, so that all children, and especially those from vulnerable groups, have the support they need to:

- Be healthy.
- Stay safe.
- Enjoy and achieve.
- Make a positive contribution.
- Achieve economic well-being.

Museums have a unique role to play in helping to deliver *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*. They provide a wide range of opportunities to support effective learning, raise attainment and help children enjoy and achieve. This presents new opportunities for museums to develop learning activities.

Extended schools

A third of all secondary schools will provide pre-school, after-school and holiday activities by 2008, and they will all be part of a network of provision by 2010. By 2010, all primary schools will also offer childcare provision between 8.00am and 6.00pm all year round, either on-site or in partnership with other schools and local providers. There could be opportunities here for museums to work with local schools to become a provider and to access funding to develop learning provision.

Learning Outside the Classroom

The *Learning Outside the Classroom* (LOtC) manifesto was launched in November 2006 to achieve the goal of creating more and better quality learning outside the classroom experiences for young people. It acknowledges the role of other learning environments in motivating learners, helping schools to raise standards and in delivering *Every Child Matters* outcomes. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DFCSF) and the Manifesto Partnership have developed a series of measures to support users, schools and families, and providers such as museums, in achieving this goal.

From January 2009 there will be a new Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge scheme. This is intended to enable schools and other users to more easily identify organisations which offer good quality learning opportunities, and give providers a developmental framework through which to evaluate and develop their own learning provision. There will be a charge for registering for the LOtC badging scheme.

Further information: website links

Every Child Matters: Change for Children:
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Department for Children, Schools and Families:
www.dfes.gov.uk/

SEMLAC document to help schools see how museums help meet the needs of the ECM agenda:
www.segfl.org.uk/library/1149608588/everychildmatterspdfversion.pdf

Extended School: Building on Experience:
http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/41989AB45948163B6B7CD07D5D2D1C72.pdf

http://www.museumse.org.uk/ABC_working_with_schools/learning_out_school/extended_schools

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/extendedschools/>

The *Learning Outside the Classroom* Manifesto is available at
<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/LOtC.pdf>

Information on the *Learning outside the Classroom* Quality Badge at
<http://www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/>

Museum Learning for Schools

Planning learning activities for schools

There are a number of things to consider when planning learning activities for school groups.

Teachers are looking for a learning experience they cannot provide in the classroom. Museums should offer a hands-on experience with primary sources such as objects, photographs and documents. Museum visits can make links across the curriculum and promote creativity. They motivate, inspire and make learning fun. They can address different learning styles, engage learners and help pupils understand difficult concepts such as chronology and change through artefacts that relate to their own experiences.

If possible consult with teachers, invite them to your museum to look at and discuss the collections and how they might use them. You might need to provide supply cover for their time out of the classroom.

Visit other museums to see what resources they offer.

Primary schools are more likely to arrange out of school visits than secondary schools which are more restricted by timetabling. It makes more sense for small museums to target primary schools unless you have a specialist collection which supports GCSE, or A level examination courses.

Teachers will expect their visits to relate to the National Curriculum (NC) for the 5-14 age range, and so museums need to know how their collections are relevant to NC subjects and how they can be used to support units of work.

The National Curriculum, taught to all pupils in state or maintained schools, is made up of blocks of years, known as key stages:

- Year 1 and Year 2 (age 5 to 7) of primary school are known as Key Stage 1.
- Years 3 to 6 (age 7 to 11) of primary school are known as Key Stage 2.
- Years 7 to 9 (age 11 to 14) of secondary school are known as Key Stage 3.
- Years 10 and 11 (age 14 to 16) of secondary school are known as Key Stage 4.

Compulsory National Curriculum subjects are the same for Key Stages 1 and 2:

- English.
- Maths.
- Science.
- Design and technology.
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
- History.
- Geography.
- Art and design.
- Music.
- Physical education.

For each subject and for each key stage, programmes of study set out what pupils should

be taught, and attainment targets set out the expected standards of pupils' performance.

Changes to the secondary curriculum are being implemented from September 2008. Changes to the primary curriculum are currently under discussion.

Further information: website links

National Curriculum:
www.nc.uk.net/webdav/harmonise?Page/@id=6016

QCA schemes of work

Schemes of work show how the National Curriculum programmes of study and attainment targets can be translated into a practical plan. They give detailed units of study with learning objectives, teaching activities and learning outcomes. Each scheme of work is recommended for a particular year group.

Schools choose how they organise their school curriculum to include the programmes of study but many take the schemes of work as the starting point for their plans.

Look at the units and decide which ones your collection can support. Look at the teaching activities and decide what you can provide to help deliver them:

- In the museum, through assisted activities such as handling sessions or a guided tour by providing handling objects with notes for teachers, or notes for a self-directed visit.
- In handling collections for outreach or for loan.

Most teachers plan a museum visit to support a history topic but there are many other cross-curricular links. Do think about literacy opportunities, scope for maths, science, art, geography, ICT, citizenship for example, and look at schemes of work for other subjects. These can provide added value to a history visit or could even be the topic for the visit.

Further information: website links

School planning:
http://www.museumse.org.uk/ABC_working_with_schools/designing_resources_for_schools/How_Schools_Plan.html

Schemes of work:
<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes3>

Providing learning activities for schools

Teachers need advice, support materials and/or access to staff and/or volunteers on site to help interpret the exhibits for pupils. The more support you can give teachers the more likely they are to visit. It is important to consider how you can best deliver this with the resources available.

- Guided tour.
- Self-directed school visit with handling objects available for schools to use in sessions led by the teacher, using teaching notes/pack provided.

- Direct teaching sessions with original/reproduction objects, documents, photographs in the museum led by museum volunteer/staff.
- Visit to school with objects, documents, photographs led by museum/volunteer staff.
- Role play.
- A loans service using boxes of objects compiled upon set themes loaned out to schools and other groups.
- Virtual resource, on CD or web.

Do encourage free preliminary visits for teachers to familiarise themselves with the museum and carry out risk assessments.

Managing school visits

Teachers appreciate pre-visit information, such as how long is the session, what does the trip involve, where can they eat lunch, what is the cost, can they leave their coats and bags somewhere, how do they book, how does the session relate to the curriculum? It is worth creating an information pack or leaflet to answer these questions.

Make sure you have a point of contact in your museum for taking bookings, either education staff or volunteers with responsibility for education. Teachers usually phone to make bookings between 8.30am-10am; 12-1pm; and 3pm-4.30pm so if no one is available use an answer machine and be sure to return calls.

Bookings

Write down the following information when taking a school booking:

- Name of school.
- Teacher.
- Telephone number.
- Number of children.
- Class and age of group.
- Date of visit.
- Arrival and departure time.
- Topic to be studied.
- If they require facilities for lunch.
- Any special needs or requirements.
- Are they requesting a guide or talk?
- Are they requesting any other information or resources?

Send a copy of the booking form to the teacher, keep a copy yourself and make sure your front-of-house know about the visit. Keep a diary of school bookings.

Pre-visits

Make sure that teachers are aware of exactly what level of support and resources you are able to provide. Offer them the chance to visit the museum free prior to their school visit. This will enable them to become familiar with the content and layout of the museum and if you have limited staff and resources it will help them in planning their own activities for visiting the museum.

Prepare a basic information sheet for teachers to use as reference for their Risk Assessments. You may want to include a 'Code of Behaviour' for the children.

Records

Always keep accurate records of school bookings, date, number of pupils, school, year group, teacher, topic of study and any follow-up work produced. This will help to 'fine tune' the work you do with schools and enable you to contact them at the appropriate time to make sure they include you in their planning. The Museums, Libraries & Archives Council (MLA) has developed the Schools Participation Database, www.mlaschools.org.uk, which helps you to keep and use this information. All registered museums have been allocated a password. Contact MLA for details.

Timings

It is best to specify a recommended timetable bearing in mind the time it will take to travel to and from the museum and the activities you are providing.

Be aware of the school day and take into account the normal daily routine of schools: think about when they normally break for morning snack and lunch. Most schools will need to be back for school transport. Think about your opening times. Are you prepared to open earlier to meet school needs?

Charges

If you are a non-charging museum, you may wish to make a small charge to cover any materials produced for the group and the museum time spent on the visit. Museums' charges will vary depending on what is on offer, whether a workshop is included and what resources are available.

Have a look at what other museums and attractions in your area charge for similar school visits. You should then be able to set a fair price.

Further Information: website links

Information about all aspects of learning activities for schools including developing resources:

www.museumse.org.uk/ABC_working_with_schools/index.html

A downloadable example of a school booking form is available as a Word document at

www.gem.org.uk/grassroots/GR%20Resources/gr_example_booking_form.doc

Schools Participation Database:
<http://www.mlaschools.org.uk/>

Marketing to schools

Teachers are busy people and often difficult to contact. Flyers and information soon disappear from staff rooms and teachers move on so be sure to send out information regularly to a named person if possible. Primary schools are unlikely to visit if they are more than an hour's journey away.

- Send out a termly newsletter. Build up contacts from bookings forms for mailings and emails. Contact the LEA (Local Education Authority) and see if it will email information to schools. There is a directory of school addresses in all schools. Borrow one from a friendly head and photocopy it.
- Invite teachers to look around the museum for a 'twilight' session. You can demonstrate new resources or test out new workshops. Remember it is the end of a busy school day, so offer refreshments, keep it to less than two hours and make sure teachers aren't standing for the whole time! Don't be disappointed if not many attend.
- Contact schools and arrange to attend a staff meeting to tell teachers about your resources. Make sure you have printed information to leave.
- Offer to be part of an assembly. Take some objects and you should be able to interest staff as well as pupils.
- Remember to include details of your education resources on your website and printed materials. Increasingly teachers are searching for information via the web. School children are often encouraged to visit the museum's website before and/or after a school visit. Make sure your marketing information is clear and up to date. You may want to include a booking form that teachers can print and fax/send to you or email back to you.

14-19-year-olds

This is a particularly difficult to reach age group which rarely visits museums. Museums can provide work placements for BTEC students in Travel and Tourism or Heritage Studies, usually 60 hours. Contact your local Further Education College to explore possibilities.

Proposed changes in the curriculum for 14-19-year-olds, the extension of compulsory education to 18 and the development of work-related learning and qualifications could provide opportunities for museums to work with this age group, providing placements for the new work-based diplomas. The new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) currently being developed will recognise the achievement of individual units as well as whole qualifications.

One of the keys to preventing social exclusion in adult life is to engage young people positively in their communities. There could be opportunities for museums to develop high-quality and engaging work-based learning activities for young people and targeted support to reach out to disaffected youth. It may be possible to fund this through the Learning Skills Council which has responsibility for delivering education for 14-19-year-olds.

If museums want to target youth groups outside formal education it is important to work in partnership with the local youth service. Successful projects should give young people a voice and ownership. Teenagers tend to be attracted to learning programmes that relate

to their specific interests – music, specialised art courses, dance, fashion and design.

Youth projects could be funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund *Young Roots* programme. (<http://www.hlf.org.uk/English/HowToApply/OurGrantGivingProgrammes/YoungRoots/>)

Further information: website links

Information about the 14-19 curriculum: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/>

For information about the new diplomas visit: www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/14-19implementationplan/docs/14-19%20Implementation.pdf

Learning Skills Council: www.lsc.gov.uk

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/museum has information about the museum's successful *Young Roots* lottery funded project 'Teens through the Time Warp'

The Sandford Awards for Heritage Education

This award scheme was set up to provide guidance on learning provision through monitoring standards and has been run by the Heritage Education Trust since 1983. It is regarded as an independently judged Quality Assured Assessment of Heritage Education within the historic and cultural environment

Heritage properties where special provision has been made for educational visits by children of statutory school age are eligible to apply. Entrants are assessed by a panel of independent judges. The awards are made annually, are non-competitive and are valid for five years. A 'Sandford Award Holding Property' has the right to display the 'Sandford Award Winner' logo on publicity and educational material.

The criteria for assessment are included in the judges' handbook. This provides very useful guidelines for setting up a learning service for schools.

Further information: website links

The Sandford Awards for Heritage Education: http://www.heritageeducationtrust.org.uk/het_ssi/awards.shtml

The judges handbook: http://www.heritageeducationtrust.org.uk/image_components/Judges%20Handbook%202009.doc

Higher education

Some university courses such as archaeology and heritage studies offer a work placement as a course module. Once a partnership has been established this can be a regular learning opportunity for students, with benefits for the host organisation.

Make contact with the department of education at local universities to encourage visits from BEd students. This is an opportunity to show future teachers how museums can support the National Curriculum. Also students may be able to help with developing resources for schools.

Initial teacher training (ITT)

Teaching outside the classroom supports the development of placements for trainee teachers in settings other than schools, such as museums, to provide trainees with new professional relationships that improve teaching and learning. ITT providers are looking for organisations to develop partnerships to offer diverse placements for trainee teachers. Placements could provide useful knowledge and input for museums that are developing schools programmes and is an opportunity to influence the next generation of teachers.

Further information: website links

Teaching Outside the Classroom. This website helps you set up and evaluate placements, and provides case studies of existing good practice: <http://www.teachingoutsidetheclassroom.com/introduction>

Special schools

Museum learning can be hands-on and multi-sensory providing appropriate learning experiences for children and adults with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, visual impairment or hearing impairment. By implementing access recommendations and developing multi-sensory learning experiences museums can provide enriching learning experiences.

It is useful to get input from a teacher in a special school or SEN (Special Educational Needs) teacher to help your team devise an appropriate session.

Informal learning for children and families

Children and family groups are important target groups for the museum's informal learning provision. Museums need to be family-friendly and welcoming, providing exhibits and activities especially for children. These could include the following

- Trails and quizzes.
- Hands-on exhibits and interactives.
- A special children's corner or display area.
- Activity backpacks containing collection-related family activities.

These can be produced in-house or by museum education specialists if funding allows.

Special family events and activities can be very successful in school holidays. These could include

- Craft sessions.
- Dressing up in replica costume.
- Themed days related to the museum collection.
- Role play activities.

Again these can be organised in-house, in partnership with other groups, museums or organisations, or delivered by specialists, artists or craftspeople if funding allows.

Events can link to national celebrations such as National Science and Engineering Week, Family Learning Week, National Archaeology Week or the Big Draw. This can provide additional publicity and opportunities for partnership.

Activities for adults with pre-school children can be arranged during weekdays as well as weekends and can feature story-telling about objects in the collection, craft work and 'feely boxes', for example. Local nursery and pre-school classes can be contacted to help trial activities.

Some museums provide regular museum clubs for children held on Saturdays. Programmes for the clubs include a range of practical activities and sometimes visits to sites and other museums.

Further Information: website links

www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/flw/index.asp – Family Learning Week

www.the-ba.net/the-ba/Events/NSEW/index.html – National Science and Engineering Week

www.britarch.ac.uk/naw/ – National Archaeology Week

www.campaignfordrawing.org/bigdraw/index.aspx – The Big Draw

Planning learning activities for adults

(see the case study on the next page)

"Lifelong learning is an excellent function for a museum; museums which do not expect to be used for lifelong learning are sterile places indeed"

(Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 1995)

"Adult learning in a museum demonstrates its social value"

(NIACE, 1995)

"By proper arrangement a museum... becomes elevated from being a mere unintelligible lounge for idlers to an impressive school room for everyone"

(from an 1853 report quoted by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 1995)

Museums have a special role to play in adult learning. Every museum has its own collections and its story to tell which can lead the development of courses, with audience development as a bonus: often a course, a talk or a walk advertised in a local paper can be that vital first 'hook' to attract someone to come to your museum.

Developing exhibitions with learning in mind

It is important that displays and exhibitions reflect the museum's education policy and its commitment to taking into account the learning needs of visitor. The following strategies can be employed:

- Include an education specialist in any exhibition planning team.
- Agree the basic learning messages early on in the development process.
- Decide which particular visitor groups interpretative material is aimed at.
- Provide text in labels and panels which takes into account the variety of reading ages of visitors.

Learning activities for adults

Case study: Weald & Downland Open Air Museum

This case study shows what it is possible to achieve in a regional independent museum and how that achievement acts as a driver of success, creating its own internal energy and synergy.

Background

The Weald & Downland Open Air Museum opened to the public in 1970. It is principally a regional museum of nearly 50 rescued and reconstructed historic buildings with ancillary collections of around 10,000 artefacts illustrating the traditional rural trades and crafts of the region including architectural salvage and tools of the building trades.

It experienced rapid growth in its exhibit buildings and in visitor numbers throughout the 1970s and 80s, and gained a good reputation as a venue for school visits. In 2007 more than 25,000 children visited in school parties.

The start of adult learning

The museum is an educational charitable trust whose key aims are:

- To run an open air museum which inspires and delights its users.
- To provide lifelong learning based on the museum's collections.
- To ensure high standards of collection care.
- To pursue research and scholarship.

The museum's founder, Roy Armstrong, was a tutor organiser for Southampton University extramural studies. Informal talks and seminars, and local history courses (in conjunction with the Workers Educational Association) had taken place from the museum's inception but it was not until 1991 that the first professional training was offered. By the late 1980s the museum realised that its accumulated resources of skills and experience of building conservation, together with a growing range of examples on site, could be used for teaching, and the catalyst was an offer by the newly-formed Bournemouth University to become a partner in the *Joint Centre for Heritage Conservation and Management*, which was formed in 1991. In that year the museum ran its first three-day training workshop in the repair of timber-framed buildings and a programme of professional seminars and conferences – formal adult learning at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum was born.

Masters degree programmes

Initial growth was largely in response to requests from the burgeoning building conservation industry, and Bournemouth University suggested the development of a part-time Masters programme in Building Conservation, aimed at professionals and craftspeople wanting to work in the industry. The MSc was launched as a joint programme in 1994, and in 1998 a specialist MSc in Timber Building Conservation was validated.

This is run entirely by the museum, and taught on the museum site. In all, more than 56 students have achieved the Post Graduate Diploma, with 18 graduating with their MSc so far. In 2008 a second MSc programme, in Building Conservation, was validated. This is aimed at those who wish to pursue a broader spectrum of study than the specialist timber course.

Adult education – day schools and longer courses

The masters degrees draw on the knowledge and expertise of many experts, and a programme of day schools in historic building conservation developed from them, with subjects ranging from timber decay to wattle and daub and gauged brickwork. In the 1990s, alongside the building conservation courses a handful of courses in traditional rural trades and crafts were developed in response to demand from museum visitors including subjects such as heavy horse experience days and pole lathe turning.

In 1997 the museum ran for the first time a training workshop teaching actual tool skills. Over a period of 14 days a group of five students created, from scratch, a woodshed for the Museum, using traditional timber-framing techniques. This format gradually developed into a range of practical courses centred on the perennially popular five-day *Timber Framing from Scratch*, which is taught by the museum's resident carpenter.

In 1998 it was felt there was potential for significant growth in formal adult learning and that a new staff member would be required to develop and co-ordinate this growth. Two charitable trusts (one national and one local) agreed to contribute to the salary for the new post for the first three years, by which time the post needed to be self-supporting. The responsibilities included formal and informal adult learning, the daily craft demonstration programme and the provision of demonstrators and trade stands for the museum's special event days, and the post holder rapidly developed an 'explosion' of new courses based on the Museum's collections and other resources.

Two fundamental principles underpin the programmes: all courses are based on the museum collections and all tutors are current practitioners with a flair for passing on their skills and knowledge. In addition to experts of national standing, local people skilled in regional traditional rural trades and crafts are drawn upon and courses have been developed in, for example, willow weaving, corn dolly making, coppice work, blacksmithing, textile crafts, watercolour painting, experiential archaeology, uses of herbs and Tudor

cooking. Colleagues within the museum also contribute to courses, giving them in many cases their first experience of teaching and increasing the sense of ownership of the learning department by the museum as a whole.

Expansion of the Adult Learning Department

Course pricing is designed to cover all direct and indirect costs, including salaries, and make a contribution to overheads. By 2002 course programmes had grown to such a level that further expansion required further resources. Funding was secured from another charitable trust to pay the salary of an assistant on a reducing scale over three years, so that the post became self-financing through expansion. This was achieved, and the same process was repeated in 2007. In 10 years we have grown from fewer than 200 student days of adult learning in 1998 to more than 2,500 in 2008.

The student experience

"Learning is a process of active engagement with experience" (*A Strategic Plan for Action*, Resource 2001) and to maximise the benefit to each individual the ambience, the refreshments and the friendly smile can be as important as the content of the course. Successful learning experiences leave the student wanting to learn more. It is essential that all tutors and students feel appreciated and looked after, so close attention is paid to the details – from first enquiry to saying thank you and goodbye at the end of a day school.

Museum learning experiences do not happen in isolation. One course booking often leads to another, and sometimes a whole new way of life is opened up, providing new employment and leisure opportunities.

While remembering that an adult learning programme can make a financial contribution to a museum it is important to keep the cost to the student as low as possible to aid accessibility for all.

Marketing

With a limited budget, the museum makes use of free and low-cost marketing opportunities wherever possible, including:

- The museum website (which receives 770,000 visits per year with an average of 11 pages viewed per visit).
- Course leaflets on display in the museum shop.
- Listings in the museum's biannual magazine.

- Free listings in local press and specialist magazines.
- Free listings on appropriate websites.
- A mailing of course brochures is sent out yearly to previous course participants and enquirers.

The worldwide web is an increasingly important marketing tool, especially for the building conservation courses where participants come from further afield and are searching for specialist topics.

Synergies

The Museum's adult learning activities have created circularity and synergy. Some examples of this are:

- Tutors who teach one subject book a place on someone else's course.
- Students offer to become tutors, teaching their speciality.
- MSc alumni return to teach units of the course.
- Museum volunteers attend courses as students and/or tutors.

Developing your own formal adult learning programme

Look at your museum as a teaching resource. You can start delivering adult learning without having an individual specifically employed to run it. The director or curator can take the lead and draw on administration staff or volunteers to process the bookings. A good start is to encourage visiting groups to have some 'value-added' features for their visit, such as an hour's talk on a particular part of the museum or specialist guided tour with the curator. You may be able to offer bespoke sessions to targeted companies, universities or local authorities. You may want to consider outreach as a means of widening your audience, taking the learning to the students rather than waiting for them to come to you.

It is for individual museums to decide on their own approach, but it is advisable that reasonable income and expenditure targets are calculated and budgets are set and approved by the governing body of the museum. This should be clear and transparent so that whoever is responsible for that

part of the museum budget has been involved in the process, knows what is expected and most importantly feels confident that it can be delivered.

Diana Rowsell
Head of Learning,
Weald & Downland Open Air Museum

Further information:

A Common Wealth published by The Stationery Office ISBN 0-11-702337-X

Museums and the Education of Adults published by NIACE ISBN 1-872941-67-2

Museums and Adult Learning: perspectives from Europe published by NIACE ISBN 1-86201-021-8

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education: www.niace.org.uk

Websites for Weald & Downland Open Air Museum –

General: www.wealddown.co.uk

Learning specific:

www.openairclassroom.org.uk

- Include open-ended questions as part of interpretation.
- Provide opportunities for interaction, from lifting a flap and opening a drawer to accessing information on a computer.
- Provide supplementary reference material.
- Have staff available to answer visitors' questions.
- Create some support workshops, talks or events around the exhibition.

Further reading

Durbin, G., *Developing Museum Exhibitions for Lifelong Learning*, The Stationery Office, 1996

Learning spaces

If there is space and funding an education room is a useful resource. It provides a storage area for bags and coats and schools appreciate facilities for children to eat packed lunches. Additional toilet facilities are also useful.

It can be used by for adult groups for lectures and training and possibly hired out to community groups to provide income.

It provides a space for craft activities and special events during holidays, or for families and general visitors to take part in other activities such as object handling sessions or dressing up in reproduction costume.

Equipment

The choice of equipment is influenced by budget and the proposed uses of the room.

- Furniture and fittings need to be chosen to allow maximum flexibility for the use of the space; perhaps stacking chairs or benches and tables that take into account

the different age groups who will use the room.

- Storage units need to provide secure but ready access to handling objects and other resources such as clip boards and drawing materials.
- Floor coverings need to be suitable for holding art activities in the room and to allow school groups to eat packed lunches. A sink unit is useful.
- Display panels on the walls provide an opportunity to display photographs, resource materials or pupils' work.
- Ideally a loop system should be fitted for the benefit of visitors with hearing impairments.
- A full-length mirror is needed for sessions involving trying on costumes.
- An overhead projector, screen or white wall and black-out window blinds are useful.

If there is no space for an education room, the museum will need to decide how gallery space can be arranged to provide a space flexible enough to fulfil as many of the functions of an education room as possible.

Further Information: website links

Space Invaders: a good practice guide for museum education spaces by Nicola Bell is very practical and has lots of useful references in the bibliography.

http://www.mlanortheast.org.uk/documents/Space_Invaders1.pdf

Space for Learning booklet:

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/English/PublicationsAndInfo/AccessingPublications/Space+for+Learning.htm>

http://www.sfc.ac.uk/information/information_learning/AMA_spaces_for_learning.pdf

Spaces for Learning, a report produced by the Clore Duffield Foundation has case studies and tips on creating learning spaces in a variety of contexts.

<http://www.art-works.org.uk/research/spaceforlearning0.shtml>

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important part of delivering successful learning activities at all levels, enabling success to be built upon and extended and improvements to be made. It should inform future planning to ensure that the learning programme meets the needs and expectations of users and potential users. It can be used to market learning activities more effectively and provide evidence of benefit to funders and trustees.

The Generic Learning Outcomes of *Inspiring Learning for All* provide a good basis for evaluation:

- Knowledge and understanding.
- Skills.
- Attitudes and values.
- Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity.
- Activity, behaviour and progression.

Evaluation does not need to be a complicated or time-consuming task but be clear about what you want to find out – and why.

- Simple evaluation forms can be used although it is worth using more detailed forms with teachers after school visits.
- Mix written and spoken evaluation – collect comments before and after the learning activities.
- Evaluation of exhibitions or family activities and events could be achieved by providing post-it notes to be stuck on boards with headings such as: 'What I learnt', 'What I

enjoyed most', 'Today I found out that...'

- Use speech bubbles – 'What you would tell your friends about today's visit'.
- Use comments from letters and pictures sent by schools.
- Use photographs but make sure you have the necessary written permissions.

Keep accurate records of education bookings, date, school, college, address, number of pupils, year group, teacher, topic of study.

Keep similar records of attendance at exhibitions, family events, lectures, out-of-school activities. Monitor the effectiveness of your publicity by asking people how they found out about the event. Compile a mailing list of people attending for future publicity (but remember to get their agreement in order to comply with the Data Protection Act).

Further information: website links

http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/measuring_learning/steps_in_the_process/default.aspx

Further reading

Hooper-Greenhill, E. (ed) *Evaluating a museum education service*, EMAMS, 1996.

Renaissance in the Regions and learning

Renaissance in the Regions, part funded by DfCSF, has included a strong focus on learning.

The programme can provide opportunities for museums without education specialists to share and develop skills by working in partnership with Hub museums to develop education resources for schools and learning activities and events for early years and families.

Contact your Museum Development Officer or local Hub museum to find out what support and funding is available.

Useful information about learning in museums

Further Information: website links

A Common Wealth: go to www.culture.gov.uk, click on Reference library on the top menu, then click on Publications on the left hand menu. Choose Archive 1999, move to the second page and open *A Common Wealth: Museums in the Learning Age Part 2*

Campaign for Learning through Museums and Galleries: www.clmg.org.uk

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council: www.mla.gov.uk

Campaign for Learning: www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk

Group for Education in Museums: www.gem.org.uk

Museums Galleries Scotland: www.museumsgalleriesScotland.org.uk/members_services/learning_and_access_intro.asp

DCMS (Department for Culture, Media & Sport): www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/Museums_galleries/Education/

Working with Schools South East Museums Hub: Excellent information about all aspects of working with schools http://www.museumse.org.uk/ABC_working_with_schools/index.html

Department for Children, Schools and Families: www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/resourcematerials/museums/

Further reading

A Common Wealth: Museums and Learning in the UK, by David Anderson, published in 1997

Durbin, G. *Developing Museum Exhibitions for Lifelong Learning*, The Stationery Office, 1996

Durbin, G., et al *A teacher's guide to learning from objects*, English Heritage, 1990

Susan Eddisford has recently taken up the post of Community Museums Officer at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, a Renaissance-funded post at this Hub museum. For the previous 11 years she was part-time Education Officer at Tiverton Museum of Mid-Devon Life, establishing a successful education service, delivered by a team of volunteers. The museum's online learning resource *Virtual Victorians*, developed on a shoestring, is used worldwide. She also works as a Heritage Education Consultant, developing schools and learning resources in museums and heritage sites, and online learning, for both national and local museums. Her portfolio of experience includes working as a Museum Development Officer with volunteer-run museums in South Devon, 10 years as a primary school teacher and delivering training on developing and delivering resources and sessions for schools for MLASW (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council for the South West).



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