



Learning to Live

Museums, young people and education

edited by Kate Bellamy and Carey Oppenheim



Learning to Live

Museums, young people and education

edited by Kate Bellamy and Carey Oppenheim

Institute for Public Policy Research

30-32 Southampton Street

London WC2E 7RA

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7470 6100

www.ippr.org

Registered charity no. 800065

National Museum Directors' Conference

Natural History Museum

Cromwell Road

London SW7 5BD

www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

© Institute for Public Policy Research and National Museum Directors' Conference 2009

Front cover photographs (clockwise from top):

Young visitors learning about light © Science Museum/SSPL

Up close with a giant sloth © Natural History Museum, London

Young participants in the 'On Common Ground' project © Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales

Enjoying sculpture at the Lady Lever Art Gallery © National Museums Liverpool

CONTENTS

About ippr	5
About NMDC	5
Acknowledgements	5
About the authors	7
1. Learning to Live: Museums, young people and education <i>Kate Bellamy, Louie Burghes and Carey Oppenheim</i>	9
2. Museums and Young People: Where are we now? <i>Sir Nicholas Serota</i>	21
3. The Listening Museum <i>David Anderson</i>	30
4. The Power of Cultural Learning: The role of museums within a new cultural learning agenda <i>Sally Bacon</i>	43
5. American Museums as a Borderland <i>Diane Miller</i>	53
6. Museums and Schools: Nurturing an indispensable relationship <i>Estelle Morris and Martha Spurrier</i>	58
7. Beyond the School: Museums and young people <i>Tim Desmond</i>	67
8. Museums, young people and social justice <i>David Fleming and Carol Rogers</i>	74
9. Online Technology: Unlocking opportunity, unlocking collections <i>Jane Finnis</i>	81
10. Museum Learning: Not instrumental enough? <i>Alec Coles</i>	91
11. Why Young People? Attracting a new audience to our museums <i>Kate Pontin</i>	103
12. Science, Learning, Museums and Young People <i>Jean M. Franczyk and Alexandra Burch</i>	113
13. Creating a Learning Adventure <i>Mick Waters</i>	122

About ippr

The Institute for Public Policy Research is the UK's leading progressive think tank, producing cutting-edge research and innovative policy ideas for a just, democratic and sustainable world.

Since 1988, we have been at the forefront of progressive debate and policymaking in the UK. Through our independent research and analysis we define new agendas for change and provide practical solutions to challenges across the full range of public policy issues.

With offices in both London and Newcastle, we ensure our outlook is as broad-based as possible, while our international and migration teams and climate change programme extend our partnerships and influence beyond the UK, giving us a truly world-class reputation for high quality research.

About NMDC

The National Museum Directors' Conference represents the leaders of the UK's national collections and major regional museums. These comprise the national museums in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, four leading regional museums, the British Library, National Library of Scotland, and the National Archives. Our members operate in over a 100 locations around the UK. While our members are funded by government, the NMDC is an independent, non-governmental organisation.

The NMDC was founded in 1929 and today provides its membership with a valuable forum for discussion and debate and an opportunity to share information and work collaboratively. It works to inform and shape the museums and cultural policy agendas across the UK.

Acknowledgements

The editors are grateful to the National Museum Directors' Conference (NMDC) whose funding has enabled us to commission the chapters of this book.

We are particularly grateful to the members of the project steering group who provided excellent feedback and direction: Louie Burghes, David Anderson (V&A), Sally Bacon (Clare Duffield Foundation), Nick Canning (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit), Paul Collard (Creative Partnerships), Dr Michael Dixon (Natural History Museum), Jean Franczyk (National Museum of Science and Industry), John Holden (Demos), Ruth Mackenzie (Department for Culture, Media and Sport), Sir Nicholas Serota (Tate Museums), Carole Souter (Heritage Lottery Fund), Sue Wilkinson (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council), and Erica Bolton (Bolton & Quinn).

Many ippr staff gave assistance, feedback and advice during the project, in particular Carey Oppenheim, Jennifer O'Brien and Lisa Harker, Julia Margo, James Crabtree and Kay Withers for their early involvement. We would also like to thank the many contributors to the book.

Georgina Kyriacou at ippr edited and managed production of the book.

About the authors

David Anderson is Head of Education at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Sally Bacon is Director of the Clore Duffield Foundation

Kate Bellamy is Head of Strategy & Communications at the National Museum Directors' Conference

Louie Burghes is a Research Associate at ippr

Alexandra Burch is Senior Visitor Researcher at the Science Museum, London

Alec Coles is Director of Tyne & Wear Museums

Tim Desmond is Chief Executive of NCCL Galleries of Justice, Nottingham

Jane Finnis is Director of Culture24

David Fleming is Director of National Museums Liverpool

Jean Franczyk is Head of Learning at the Science Museum, London

Diane Miller is Senior Vice President, School and Community Partnerships, at Saint Louis Science Center, St Louis, Missouri

Rt Hon Estelle Morris is the Chair of the Strategy Board for the Institute of Effective Education at the University of York and the Chair of the National Coal Mining Museum

Carey Oppenheim is Co-Director of ippr

Kate Pontin is a freelance consultant specialising in the evaluation of learning in museums and other informal learning centres

Carol Rogers is Executive Director of Visitor Services at National Museums Liverpool

Sir Nicholas Serota is an art historian and curator, and has been Director of the Tate since 1988

Martha Spurrier is Estelle Morris's researcher, and is training to be a public law barrister

Mick Waters is a Professor of Education, President of the Curriculum Foundation and former Director of Curriculum at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

1. LEARNING TO LIVE:

Museums, young people and education

Kate Bellamy, Louie Burghes and Carey Oppenheim

This collection of essays, authored by prominent and expert figures from the worlds of culture and education, addresses key questions about the role of museums and other institutes of material culture in young people's wellbeing and learning. Our aim in bringing their thinking together was to explore what museums, working with policymakers and delivery bodies such as schools, can and should be doing, both within and beyond the classroom, to inspire learning and creativity among all young people.

The current economic climate gives added impetus to the issue. More than ever young people need the chance for self-reflection, to think about the world and their place in it, and the opportunity, which museums can provide, for developing the creative skills for a new economy. Families, too, need affordable, inspiring and uplifting things to do and places to go in the safe and inclusive spaces that museums provide. Debates about children's quality of life in Britain, and the need for a more holistic approach to education – moving beyond the three Rs – also provide the basis for a re-evaluation of the powerful contribution museums have to offer (UNICEF 2007, Layard and Dunn 2009).

The chapters in this book are drawn closely from the authors' own personal experiences, whether as curators, educators, politicians or funders, and they reveal how museums can and do make a difference to young people's lives. Our view is that museums as a sector offer a huge and still relatively untapped resource which is relevant to, and can support, inspiration and learning – in its widest sense – for everyone. To fulfil this brief, however, there will have to be concerted action by museums, schools and government to:

- Enable children and young people to have equal status with adults within museums
- Put learning at the heart of museums and museums at the heart of learning
- Embrace a more holistic approach to learning: valuing informal and formal learning equally
- Reach out to all young people, including the hard to reach.

Where are we now?

Until relatively recently 'learning' was marginalised in the museum sector, and 'culture' sidelined in the education sector. But in the past few years both sectors have made a concerted effort to engage with one another. There has been real progress in widening access for children and young people in museums, with the launch of the Government's Find Your Talent initiative, and a plethora of activities that have reached out to communities that have never visited museums before or experienced what they have to offer. And in the education sector, a more holistic approach to child development and a focus on wider child outcomes at school have the potential to widen and deepen the learning experience and development of children and young people beyond the core academic subjects.

Moreover, although museums make a valuable contribution to formal learning, and offer vital alternative ways of learning that complement the formal education system, they are more than an adjunct to it; museums are places of excitement and wonder, that can inspire interest and creativity in all children and young people, and an awareness of the wider world and their place in it, in ways which neither parents nor teachers can provide and that might otherwise remain untapped.

But substantial challenges remain. A particular issue of concern, for example, is that close to a quarter of all children are growing up in poverty.¹ Poorer children's chances of success at school, while improving, still lag far behind the average. Indeed, the formal education system still often fails the most disadvantaged children – those receiving free school meals, or who are in care, or are excluded from mainstream schooling – affecting their future adult lives and employment prospects and putting them at greater risk of unemployment, low pay and poor health. The learning that museums offer, along with other support, can make a real difference to these children and young people, as examples in this volume show; but there are hurdles to overcome to reach them and to develop programmes that do make a difference.

In Chapter 2, David Anderson writes that the issues of learning, access and social justice are the most important that museums will face in the next decade. But it will be no mean feat in today's economic climate for museums to provide all children and young people with the inspiration and learning that they are uniquely placed to do and that the formal education sector cannot, and some museums will have to change substantially to do so. The aim, nonetheless, as Estelle Morris says in Chapter 6, 'must be to make museum education an entitlement for every child'.

The need for children and young people to have equal status with adults within museums

Sir Nicholas Serota opens Chapter 2 with a reference to the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the United Kingdom is a signatory, and he cites Article 31 on children's right 'to participate freely in cultural life and the arts'.² Thus a visit to a museum, he writes, should 'be a normal, familiar and everyday experience for all young people in this

¹ According to the Households Below Average Incomes report, 2.9 million children – 23 per cent of all children – were living in poverty, as calculated before housing costs, in 2006/07 (Department for Work and Pensions 2007)

country'. Research now shows, moreover, that there is a strong link between visits by children to museums and galleries, and their participation in the arts as adults (Oskala *et al* 2009).

Museums have, indeed, increasingly responded to the needs of children and young people by creating children's projects and spaces, developing education programmes, and bringing schools in. The Science Museum's relaunched Launchpad, for example, which aims to provide a fun and educational hands-on science experience, received 1.2 million visitors in its first year, and families praise the warm and welcoming British Galleries at the Victoria & Albert museum, with their participative exhibits and interactive areas.

But is this enough? The task ahead, surely, is not merely to provide some facilities which meet the needs of children and young people, but to see them as partners with equal rights in museums, and in dialogue with them treat them as equal participants in determining what museums offer. There are already good examples of this happening, including the National Portrait Gallery's Youth Forum, whose young participants have a say in what the museum does for them, are involved in developing events, and have opportunities to try creative activities; and Museums Sheffield's Youth Forum, in which young people aged 14 to 24 years old, from across the city, are able to be decision-makers alongside museum leaders.

The online world is now an intrinsic part of the existence of children and young people and in Chapter 9 Jane Finnis explores how the cultural sector has also begun to engage with this world, through sites like ShowMe, specially designed for young children, which provides opportunities for play and education and links to a wide range of museum sites. Finnis calls for us to go further still to integrate culture into our online society and the online lives of our young people and children.

David Anderson in Chapter 3 describes *Every Object Tells a Story*, the large-scale online collaboration between the V&A, three regional museums, Channel 4, and Ultralab, which encourages children (and adults) to contribute meaning, understanding and interpretation of objects. Anderson makes the case for museums to reflect our children's cultural diversity and be '*of other societies, not just about them*'. What is more, changes are important not only for children and young people who have yet to become museums visitors, let alone regular visitors, but also for those who may have been taken at an early age but did not have good visiting experiences. Exclusion, as Anderson says, takes many forms. He recommends that to bring about fundamental change in museums we will need a Charter of Cultural Rights for Children, embracing culture as a whole, from a child's perspective, and providing 'a practical statement of the minimum provision that any child could reasonably expect to receive from any publicly funded cultural institution'. In tune with this, Dea Birkett's *Kids in Museums Manifesto* identifies twenty ways to make family visits more enjoyable and engaging.

If museums are to treat children and young people as having equal status with adults, it will mean a radical overhaul in how they allocate their funds and their resources, in staffing, the use of space, and the choice and display of exhibits. It will involve a change in the relationship and dialogue between museums, children and young people, and the inclusion of children

and young people as participants, with a voice, visibility and places for their own displays. The aim is not to persuade children and young people to make a one-off visit, but for them to become the next generation to see museums as an integral part of their lives.

We recommend that museums:

- Develop a Charter of Cultural Rights for Children
- Include children and young people in decision-making and display development
- Integrate culture into the online lives of children and young people

Learning at the heart of museums and museums at the heart of learning

The role of learning and education in museums has waxed and waned over the last two centuries. In the nineteenth century, learning and education were embedded as the central purposes of museums in recognition of the value of museums' collections and the scholarship of those collections. It is salutary to remember that there was a time when the Director of the South Kensington Museum (the forerunner of the V&A and the Science Museum) was also the head of the Government's Department of Science and Art (the forerunner of today's Departments for Children, Schools and Families, and Innovation, Universities and Skills). Museums resisted the recommendations in the 1918 Education Bill that they should contribute to government's objectives for children's learning, and this signalled a shift away from museums being driven by public education at their core.

More recently, the pendulum has swung back, in part at least, towards making full use of the learning potential of museums – and the knowledge, expertise and collections they contain. It is once again recognised that museums' learning programmes can grow out of and are underpinned by museums' scholarship – offering the public the chance to engage with collections and contribute to knowledge of them – rather than threatening museums' academic focus or reputation. In the last ten years or so both museums and government have taken museums' learning and education role increasingly seriously. Museums, which took the initiative and were innovators in this respect, have been aided, enabled and supported by government initiatives and funding, such as the Museums and Galleries Education Programme, Renaissance in the Regions, Strategic Commissioning, and Creative Partnerships.

Museums have not just *a* role, but a *special* role to play in learning. Their collections, be they dinosaur eggs, medieval kitchen implements, the first maps of the world or local textile designs, and the scholarship and expertise surrounding those collections, offer an invaluable, original and thrilling learning resource. In addition, museums offer a hugely valuable 'third' space between school and home, in which it is safe intellectually and physically for children to learn, where different relationships are forged between children and adults – whether parents, grandparents, teachers, or museum educators – and between children themselves. It is a space where

children learn and experience in different ways, with input from passionate experts, using visual and object-based approaches, and where they can find new forms of creativity, self-expression and confidence. This includes giving space for children to be producers of knowledge as well as consumers and to learn about the 'relationships, connections and interactions between knowledge systems', as highlighted by Mick Waters (Chapter 13).

But museums have two big challenges to face if they are to deliver learning for all. The first – for some museums, at least – will be to make learning a core priority for museum leadership, funding and structure. The second will be to do this in a way that reaches out and has an impact for everyone, including children and young people living in poverty, and those who have been excluded from school or marginalised otherwise.

Museums have begun to tackle these challenges. As learning and education have again become more central to their activities, more schools visit, and more school children take part in tailored activities. In the decade to 2007–08 the number of children under age 15 visiting the eighteen national museums increased from 4.7 million to 8.7 million, and by 2008, 77 per cent of museums had dedicated educational facilities and 55 per cent an education room (see Chapter 2). Museums funded by Renaissance in the Regions are experiencing increasing contact with schools – including a disproportionately large number in areas with high levels of deprivation, more integrated ways of working with them, and greater teacher confidence (RCMG and MLA 2006). Research shows that museums inspire children to learn, and to acquire skills and knowledge, that they enjoy their visits, and find museums exciting and good places to learn differently (*ibid.*).

What, then, is needed to build on these developments and embed learning and education *for all* at the heart of museums' priorities? At least three issues must be addressed:

- Leadership by museums and policymakers
- Positive action by government, local authorities, and schools
- An understanding of what makes successful learning programmes.

Sally Bacon makes an impassioned plea, in Chapter 4, for museum leadership to put learning *in practice* at the heart of museums' purpose and activities; to ensure that funding is allocated to learning, and that learning resources are provided – with sufficient space and funding – at the centre, and not the margins, of museums. Museum staff, boards, trustees and funders all need to be brought on board to achieve this. A further concern is the low status often accorded to museum learning staff. Learning and museums educators, it is argued, need to be valued on an equal footing with curators, have a career structure, and be brought centre stage with their role represented at senior staff, board and trustee level. To advocate and secure cultural learning at the heart of museums' activities, we recommend that all museums appoint education leaders to senior staff and board positions and that funding for learning programmes is ring-fenced.

Cultural leadership will need to be matched as well by leadership from policymakers demonstrating their interest in, and practical support for,

museum learning in the schools curriculum as the best way to fulfil children's cultural entitlement. Measures to ensure the integration of museums throughout the policymaking process should be introduced, including, for instance, a shared Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Department for Children, Schools and Families ministerial position, straddling culture and education interests, created to provide joint leadership, and museums should help shape the curriculum through involvement with the QCA. The link also needs to be made at a local level through Children's Services departments and with individual head teachers. Twenty years ago every county Children's Director had a Cultural Adviser in their Local Authority Education Department, and this is an idea worth revisiting.

Museum learning also needs to be championed with schools, particularly those not yet working with museums, to show what it has to offer them and their pupils, and how working together can be achieved in practice, and obstacles overcome. Options for putting this into practice include museum educators working with clusters of schools, or being twinned with the head teachers of schools in more impoverished areas. Museum educators and teachers could work together to develop educational objectives and programmes. Mick Waters provides evidence that tightly planned museum visits that fit in with specific stages of learning are significant for improved pupil performance. Furthermore, the museum experience can introduce young visitors to career options; Waters calls for the 'wealth of jobs behind the world of out-and-about learning' to be made explicit. Diane Miller also visits this subject: describing the YouthALIVE programme for children living in state housing (the goal of which was to build interest in science), she shows that 'their idea of what you do as an adult changed as they interacted with people working at the museum' (Chapter 5).

How can museums ensure their learning initiatives are effective? The Campaign for Learning's definition of learning places an emphasis on experience. It states:

'Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve increase in skills, knowledge, understanding, values and capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more.' (Campaign for Learning 1999)

The emphasis of this definition – which the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council used to guide its Inspiring Learning for All (ILFA) framework – on experience and on the different ways in which people learn should guide the development of museums' learning programmes and resources and the way in which they collect, display and interpret objects. Successful learning initiatives actively engage learners, supporting them in making their own meanings and developing their understanding. Successful initiatives require experienced professionals to develop resources and build relationships. Under-resourced local museums without dedicated learning staff can struggle. Support for these museums, in terms of resource and expertise, can be provided via partnership and support from larger museums and local

authorities and really make a difference to their capacity and reach. And digital initiatives, such as National Museums Online Learning Project, a resource offering the combined collections of nine national museums online, have a powerful role to play in enabling young people to use pre-eminent museum collections as a learning tool without leaving the classroom.

Whatever action is taken to secure learning as a core museum purpose, museums will need funds to meet the increased demand for it. This is, of course, a difficult economic climate for funding calls. Arguably, though, not least given the needs of the creative economy, it is exactly the right time to offer all children and young people the benefits of museums, and a good case can be made for a stable, ring-fenced funding environment for museum learning that will enable them to do so. Estelle Morris, in Chapter 6, suggests a capital funding stream from government to meet the increased demands on museums' resources, such as their physical space and loans to schools.

For their part, even in difficult economic times museums should hold faith with their learning and outreach role, or refocus their priorities to it, in order to engage all children and young people with their collections and knowledge-providing skills which they will need more than ever before.

We recommend that:

- Educational leaders are appointed to museum senior staff and Board positions to champion cultural learning
- Museums and policymakers ring-fence funding for their learning programmes
- Museums are integrated throughout the national and local policymaking process to champion cultural learning in children's cultural entitlement and to contribute to curriculum development. This could include:
 - A shared DCMS and DCSF ministerial position created to provide joint leadership on cultural learning
 - Museums to help shape the curriculum through involvement with the QCA
 - The establishment of a link between schools and museums, at the local level, through Children's Services departments.
- Museums and schools explore new ways of working together, such as clusters and partnerships, to overcome size and resource constraints

A more holistic approach: giving equal value to formal and informal learning

Eighty-five per cent of learning in this country takes place outside formal schooling, and eight out of ten museum and gallery visits by young people happen outside school lessons (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2007).³ Mick Waters, in Chapter 13, says that the true curriculum goes far beyond the classroom; it 'is not what we teach but what children experience; it is the entire planned learning experience'. Waters describes the work by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority on 'Curriculum Dimensions' – unifying themes that give learning relevance and help young people make

³ According to the DCMS's Taking Part survey, 2007, eight out of ten of the 57 per cent of 11- to 15-year-olds who had visited a museum or gallery in the preceding year had done so outside school lessons.

sense of the world – as a development of real significance to museums, given that it is an ‘open door for anyone involved in out-and-about learning’.

We know that for children in primary school, parents have a more profound impact on children’s learning than the school itself. The focus tends inevitably to be placed on schools and academic outcomes when thinking of education and learning, especially where there is good news of rising standards and a narrowing in the educational achievement gap between disadvantaged schools and others, but there may still be a large gap in attainment as measured by social class (Lupton and Power 2009). And yet the focus on an approach driven by testing and instrumental outcomes is sometimes criticised as impoverishing learning in its widest sense, downgrading its benefits, and leaving some children on the sidelines as a result. Academic and instrumental outcomes have dominated the recent educational agenda – to the detriment of a broad and balanced primary school curriculum, according to the recent Cambridge Primary Review (2009).

The informal learning that takes place in museums can develop, support and enhance learning by children and young people, in and out of school, whether they are flourishing within the education sector or not. Museums provide a safe and neutral ‘third space’ – which may be particularly beneficial for those disenfranchised or marginalised from formal education – and different ways of learning and different relationships with those who are teaching. There are signs of a budding holistic approach to learning as seen with the development of the Find Your Talent programme’s aim of five hours of quality art and culture for every child each week, and the Extended Schools Initiative, with its aim to help children engage with learning. The abolition of the Key Stage 3 SATs (Standard Assessment Tests) may also make room for more creativity in the curriculum. Outside government, others can be seen to be championing a more rounded approach to learning, too; the RSA, for example, with its Opening Minds programme and 21st Century Curriculum, which focus on transferrable core life skills and competencies. Moreover, compared with earlier times, we are more knowledgeable today about learning and the need to embrace a range of approaches and styles.

As examples in this volume demonstrate, museums offer a diverse informal learning experience that can complement formal schooling: from the Ryedale Folk Museum in Yorkshire, where learning is at the centre of what they do, and the museum as an extension of the classroom and a place where children can feel safe and learn, to the Natural History Museum partnership with three other museums, which attracted more than 8000 students in 2006/7 to its programmes supporting secondary school science (Strategic Commissioning Education Programme 2007). More could be done to formalise the link between the formal and informal education sectors, including between museums and schools. David Anderson recommends the re-invention of Saturday schools and courses, to be run as partnerships between museums, arts and science institutions and the formal education sector, integrating formal and informal learning, and giving priority to those with special interests and with the greatest need of such opportunities.

If informal learning, outside the classroom, is to be valued on a par with formal learning, the museum educators and school teachers who together provide that learning will need to be valued too. We have mentioned already the need for increased status and a career structure for museum educators. Both school teachers and museums educators may also find it helpful to receive tailored training for the work they do jointly. For teachers, some of this will or could come in their Initial Teacher Training or through Continuing Professional Development courses and programmes. As Estelle Morris points out, there may be scope for part-time teachers or teaching assistants to be trained in museums and cultural support, and volunteers trained to support professionals. Secondments between the sectors offer another way of developing understanding and knowledge.

To take full advantage of informal learning opportunities, museums need to engage and support parents in making the most of family visits to museums and not focus solely on school trips. After all, the majority of children visit museums with their families, rather than in school groups. These visits, with a smaller child to adult ratio and the ability to focus on the special interests and needs of the child, provide rich and valuable opportunities to engage young people in the museum experience. The 'family offer' should therefore feature strongly in museum learning programmes with consideration given to engaging harder to reach families.

Museums do not just support learning outside the classroom, they can provide learning outside the museum too. Outreach programmes are an important part of the learning opportunities museums provide, working with schools, charities and community groups, and these too should form an integral part of a museum's learning programme. These initiatives can be particularly important for engaging children in the lower socio-economic groups and those outside formal education.

The benefits of informal learning for children and young people will need to be more widely known about if it is to be accepted on an equal footing with formal learning. In part this may come from the creation of more dedicated programmes, drawing and building on some of the very good ones described in this volume, and a continuing concern with excellence. Alec Coles writes in Chapter 10 that how we provide enriched cultural provision must 'be the subject of ongoing, deep and longitudinal evaluation'. In part it may come as more schools, teachers, parents and young people experience its benefits, and teachers and museums educators, with experience and training, become more skilled still at providing them.

To achieve an equal status for informal learning, we recommend that:

- Saturday schools and courses are reintroduced, provided by partnerships between museums, arts and science institutions and the formal education sector
- A career structure is established for museums educators
- Museum and school teachers receive tailored training for the work they do jointly, and school staff training to liaise with museums
- Museums support and encourage family visits and outreach programmes, especially for those less able to visit
- Methods of evaluation continue to be developed and refined.

Reaching out to all young people, including the hard to reach

The stereotype of museums as remote, dusty, daunting and sometimes silent institutions still exists and remains a challenge. As the examples in this collection show this stereotype is far from real, and there are a multitude of programmes and experiments that draw in younger visitors and different communities, reach out to excluded groups, and explore new ways of doing so through online collections, and in partnerships with schools.

The number of visits made by children to museums has increased dramatically since the removal of admission charges but some might argue that there is a considerable way to go if museums are to become open, responsive, pluralistic bodies, which are valued, are as accessible to all young people as a local park or sports centre, and are places where the public can participate and create as well as receive, and where a sense of shared ownership is created.

In Chapter 7 Tim Desmond suggests that museums are the ideal places to nurture and offer opportunities to young people who are not in education, employment or training (known as 'NEETs'), but that there will need to be a radical change in their structure and how they are perceived. David Fleming also thinks that there is a long way to go to achieve the Holy Grail of 'Engaging and then capturing young people as regular users and advocates of museums for the rest of their lives', not least since a genuine difference will only come from 'attracting marginalised young people who come from difficult backgrounds' (Chapter 8). Writing from an American perspective in Chapter 5, Diane Miller calls for museums to become 'borderlands for communities that exist outside of what is considered the majority culture'.

Museums have not confined themselves to offering 'traditional' learning opportunities to schoolchildren in conjunction with schools, but have taken on the more difficult challenge of reaching out beyond their 'usual' visitor profile to offer non-formal learning experiences to excluded and disadvantaged young people. David Fleming sees the way forward to be positive action through relationship building and partnerships, such as the Kensington Youth Inclusion Project in Liverpool, which offers arts and cultural experiences to young people considered 'at risk'. Kate Pontin outlines projects that local museums in Swindon, Yeovil, Bath and Bridgewater have developed in conjunction with foyer foundations, which give young people an understanding of museums and develop their English and IT skills (Chapter 11). Such projects face particular challenges in engaging with young people and providing them with cultural learning experiences; Pontin urges the evaluation of their long-term impact. Tim Desmond writes of the pioneering National Centre for Citizenship and the Law, established alongside but as a separate entity from the Galleries of Justice Museum in Nottingham, and 'an agent of social change', offering citizenship learning and education.

Diverse partnerships between local, national and regional museums and other institutions are also addressing these issues. They demonstrate both the value of partnerships in delivering to young people and the fact that different museums have different strengths, roles and approaches to reaching out to

their communities. For some visitors, engagement with their local museum may provide an avenue to regional and national museums. Projects working with children and young people include the Image & Identity partnership between the V&A, NCH/Action for Children and five regional museums⁴, which encourages vulnerable and hard to reach children to respond creatively to the collections through the theme of image and identity. In another project, What Eye See, small museums in Surrey work in conjunction with youth groups to inspire young people about their local heritage and museums' collections. Programmes that reach out to excluded communities include Liverpool's long-term Engaging Refugees and Asylum Seekers project, which provides cultural engagement and a supportive network, and the V&A's Shamiana: The Mughal Tent project, in which nearly a thousand women participated, starting from a small number of, mostly South Asian women's, community groups.

To be successful in the widening of access, museums need to reach out through deliberative engagement, to consult and enter into a dialogue with the community, particularly those who are not regular visitors. They need to discover who their community are and what they want their museums to do for them. Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum has been particularly successful in consulting widely with both adults and children about the museum's exhibits and facilities through its Community Access and Advisory Panel, embracing representatives from the diverse Glasgow communities, and a Junior Board of twelve primary school pupils. Alec Coles urges museums to 'talk to our audiences' and '...feel what they feel; find out what they want, expect and need' and 'listen to what they consider to be our impact'. For museums, young people's participation needs to become a core fact of life.

We recommend that museums:

- Deliberatively engage with all children and young people in their communities
- Continue to build relationships with other museums and institutions experienced in engaging and supporting all children and young people.

Conclusion

Leadership is a recurring theme throughout this book and museums will need committed leaders and champions to achieve the four key objectives called for here – to achieve an equal status for children with adults in museums; for learning to be put at museums' hearts; for a holistic approach to learning; and for museums to reach out to all young people.

Museums and policymakers should not be daunted by the current economic recession. Museum learning is more important than ever, as young people now need to develop skills for the future economy. The resource that museums have to offer, the richness of their collections, the spaces and expertise they provide and their experience of engaging young people in learning, should be fully exploited and new opportunities for partnership working explored.

⁴ Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, Brighton and Hove Museums, Manchester City Galleries, Museums Sheffield, and Tyne and Wear Museums, supported by Strategic Commissioning funding.

The central tenet of this book is that museums – alongside other cultural organisations – have a key role to play in meeting all children and young people’s cultural needs, in inspiring them, in developing their skills and talents, and helping them to develop personally and socially. Its aim is to explore what more museums, educational institutions, and policymakers can do to enhance this role.

References

- Cambridge Primary Review (2009) *The Primary Curriculum: An Alternative Vision*, press release, 20 February
- Department for Culture, Media and Sports (2007) Taking Part survey
- Department for Work and Pensions (2007) Households Below Average Income (HBAI), 1994/95-2007/07, available at www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai2007/chapters.asp
- Layard R and Dunn J (2009) *A Good Childhood: Searching for Values in a Competitive Age* London: The Children’s Society
- Lupton R and Power A (2009) ‘Disadvantaged by where you live? New Labour and neighbourhood renewal’ in Hills J, Sefton T and Stewart K (eds) *Poverty, inequality and policy since 1997* Bristol: The Policy Press
- Oskala A, Keaney E, Chan TW and Bunting C (2009) *Encourage children today to build audiences for to-morrow. Evidence from the Taking Part survey on how childhood involvement in the arts affects arts engagement in adulthood* London: Arts Council England
- Strategic Commissioning Education Programme (2007) Real World Science. Final Report – 2007, available at www.cultureandschoolseast.org.uk/filegrab/?ref=69&f=RWS_FINALREPORT2.doc
- Research Centre for Museums and Galleries and Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2006) *What did you learn at the museum today? Second Study, Evaluation of the outcome and impact of learning thought implementation of Education Delivery Plans across nine Regional Hubs 2005* Leicester: RCMG, University of Leicester
- UNICEF (2007) *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries* Report Card 7, Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

2. MUSEUMS AND YOUNG PEOPLE:

Where are we now?

Sir Nicholas Serota

The United Kingdom is a signatory to the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states in Article 31 that every child 'has the right...to participate freely in cultural life and the arts'. A visit to a museum should therefore be a normal, familiar and everyday experience for all young people in this country.

A rapid growth in interest

We still fall short of this ideal, but in the recent past there has been a significant increase in visits by young people to museums across the country. Over the last decade for instance, visits to the 18 national museums sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) by children under the age of 15 increased from 4.7 million in 1998–99 to 8.7 million in 2007–08 (DCMS, unpublished). And for the first time, visits by schoolchildren to the Renaissance in the Regions hub museums exceeded one million in 2006–07 (MLA 2007).

Some of this increase is the result of specific initiatives that reflect both the changing position of the arts and culture within British society, and the efforts that museums themselves have made to respond to the needs of contemporary life.

In the early 1990s, only half of museums made any provision for education, and only one in five had an education specialist on its staff. In 1997, David Anderson's milestone report *A Common Wealth* revealed that most museum managers regarded education as a second-order priority after collections management and display. Yet by 2006, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) was able to report that 'there has been a major transformation in the capacity, activities, roles and status of museum education in England' (MLA 2006: 5).

Today, learning is recognised as a central part of the life of museums. Indeed, the MLA's Accreditation Scheme for Museums in the UK expressly states that 'Learning is a core purpose of museums' (MLA 2004: 24).

Why have we seen such a rapid growth in interest in museum learning? In my view, four factors explain the change, and they also point the way forward as we advance into the twenty-first century. The first factor is associated with the growth in the importance of culture and the arts within society generally. The second is related to the creative economy. Thirdly, young people are spending more of their time on the internet, encouraging a greater engagement with learning. And fourth, with the important exception of their contribution to academic discourse, scholarship and research, museums lie outside the formal education sector. I discuss these factors below.

The importance of culture and the arts

Recent social, technological and economic changes have transformed the position of the arts and culture. Rather than being solely a recreational or leisure activity, something peripheral or ornamental, culture in its broadest sense has become recognised as an essential means through which people can understand the world around them. The dynamic of globalisation means that most people now have much more regular contact with diverse cultures. Museum collections help us all to locate ourselves in the world and understand each other's individual and collective identities. Collections are expressions of the identity of a community at all levels: local, regional, national or international.

As I have argued in another context (Serota 2003), public collections of artefacts, works of art and found objects stimulate curiosity, enquiry and the gathering of knowledge. Our understanding of our own strengths, achievements and limitations is profoundly affected by awareness of earlier cultures and other societies.

In 1999, *All Our Futures* (NACCCE 1999), a report to government by the educationalist Sir Ken Robinson, provided a powerful analysis of future educational requirements, arguing that young people need to be able to deal with an increasingly complex and diverse society, and that cultural education could make an essential contribution to this aim.

The creative economy

A 2008 report from the Work Foundation asserts and confirms the importance of creativity and innovation not only within the creative industries but more widely across the rest of the economy. As a nation in which knowledge and adaptability determine economic wellbeing, we need to develop the capacity of all young people to generate original ideas and to act on them. Indeed, as a recent NESTA report argues, it is only by innovating that we will find a way out of our current economic difficulties (Leadbeater and Meadway 2008).

Museums have a vital role to play in the creative aspects of learning. Many of the new museum learning programmes have been designed expressly to promote young people's creative capacities, and to discover how their creativity can best be nurtured.

The internet

Technology has provided new ways for museums to interact with audiences. In 1998–99 the websites of the 18 national museums received 5 million

hits. By 2007–08 that number had risen to 128 million (unpublished DCMS figures). This increase, not simply in the volume, but in the range of activity, has greatly exceeded the predictions of even the most optimistic of technophiles.

Most of our great museums now offer online courses, virtual explorations of their galleries, information about learning spaces, resources for teachers and many hours of videos and special podcasts, among other things. Given that young people are increasingly abandoning traditional broadcast media and looking to the internet as a source of information, entertainment and networking, museums will be obliged to invest heavily in their online presence, and will need to become increasingly sophisticated in their use of technology. As the authors of the YouTube video *Do You Know 2.0* say: 'we are living in exponential times' (Fisch and Mcleod 2007).

'Informal' education

The fourth explanation for the burgeoning interest in museum learning depends on the fact that, with the important exception of their contribution to academic discourse, scholarship and research, museums lie outside the formal education sector. For most visitors and learners – a category that extends well beyond young people and is reflected in increasing numbers of people from all age groups joining courses, attending lectures and accessing online material – museums offer a 'third space'. They are neither school nor home, and there is greater opportunity for self-directed study, with no need for accreditation and qualifications, where different, more personal approaches can be explored. This is significant because throughout history, some of the most creative people have failed to thrive in traditional educational institutions: Albert Einstein and Salvador Dali were both expelled from school; David Bowie gained only one O-Level and the creativity of Richard Rogers and many other artists and architects was unrecognised at school because of their dyslexia. Creative people like these either need a different attitude to learning within the school environment, or places away from school where they can grow.

Museums also occupy an interesting conceptual space, distinct both from entertainment and from the exam room, a place of seriousness, but also of wonder. As James Cuno, the Director of the Art Institute of Chicago, has said, using the words of the poet Peter Sacks: 'Museums should leave us "at a different angle", changed from who we were or thought we were, before we experienced them' (Cuno 2004: 52). Museums stimulate the imagination and promote intellectual inquiry, but at the same time, they are authentic, rooted in material culture. They make connections, putting people in touch, sometimes literally, with the things that they wish to learn about and explore.

Furthermore, as a 'third space', controlled neither by the market nor directly by government, museums, like public libraries, have earned the public trust. They have authority, which comes from their independence, and although trust has to be renewed on a continuous basis, the British public expresses very high levels of satisfaction with their museums (Mayo 2005).

How far have we come?

Two starkly contrasting quotations sum up the distance that museums, as a whole, have travelled in relation to education and learning. Nearly ninety years ago, in 1920, a delegation from the Museums Association told the Board of Education that 'museums are not fundamentally educational institutions' (O'Neill 2002: 27). By 2004, a group representing all the major museums in the UK published their *Manifesto for Museums* that could argue that 'the educational role of museums lies at the core of our service to the public' (NMDC 2004: 6).

Clearly, this represents a significant shift, both philosophically and in terms of practice. This progression is still evolving and depends on complex interaction of funding, academic research, policy development, museum infrastructure and professional attitudes and practice.

In recent years, thanks to the national lottery and substantial contributions from private donors, notably the Clore Duffield and Sackler Foundations, the infrastructure that supports learning in museums has improved both in quantity and quality. In 2008 77 per cent of museums had dedicated educational facilities and 55 per cent a specific education room compared with only 34 per cent in 1994. The Clore Duffield Foundation has provided education spaces at Tate, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, as well as galleries across the country while the V&A has recently opened the Sackler Centre for Arts Education. Improvements in infrastructure have been matched by increased numbers of education specialists working in museums, although in some places education staff still suffer from unequal pay (Holden 2008).

Furthermore, the divide between learning and curatorial functions has begun to narrow. *A Common Wealth* found that in 1994 only 11 per cent of museum staff contributed to education, whereas *Museum Learning* reported in 2006 that 87 per cent of curators were involved with learning, with 13 per cent spending more than a quarter of their time on it. These figures may be partly explained by a changing attitude on the part of curators, but they must also reflect changing practice itself.

In parallel with the increased learning activity for young people and adults, there has been more interest in learning about learning – understanding how it works, researching what are the most successful pedagogic approaches, discovering how museums can learn among each other. A number of reports from funding bodies (in particular MLA and NMDC), University departments (Leicester and City University) and the think tank Demos have provided research, analysis, challenge and advocacy in relation to museums and learning. Collectively these have not only helped individual educators and institutions to learn from what others are doing, but have also provided information to government.⁵

The weight of evidence and the strength of the arguments have persuaded funders and politicians to invest in museum education. Over the last decade several government initiatives have encouraged greater attention to the opportunities created by learning in museums. In almost all cases, the investment has been aimed at young people, especially those

5 For example: see MLA's reports detailing the results of the Renaissance in the Regions Programme at www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/renaissance/renaissance%20results; MLA has also produced the Inspiring Learning for All Framework: www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/. See Travers (2004) for the educational case for museums. At Demos see Holden and Jones (2006), Jones and Wright (2007) and Jones (2005), which all address cultural learning. At the University of Leicester, Professor Eilean Hooper-Greenhill has produced a substantial corpus of work, details of which can be found here: www.le.ac.uk/ms/contactus/eileanhoopergreenhill.html. See also Wu (2007), published by City University.

in disadvantaged areas. Following publication of *A Common Wealth*, two successive phases of the Museums and Gallery Education Programme took place between 2000 and 2004 reaching thousands who had not previously been engaged in museums. The second phase alone involved 20,000 pupils in 118 projects across 130 museums and galleries.

As that programme came to an end, the momentum was maintained through the Renaissance in the Regions initiative, the first ever major programme of central government funding for regional museum 'hubs'. In a scheme that was designed to build capacity in England's regional museums, £15 million was ring-fenced to support learning activities for school-age children, with the intention of increasing teachers' use of museums. A series of annual reports on the Renaissance programme, starting in 2004, and now including partial results from 2007–08, provides detailed information on the scheme's progress and confirms that in the four years to 2006–07, the number of school visits by 5- to 16-year-olds increased by 18 per cent to over 800,000, while the total number of school visits to hub museums was over 1 million (MLA 2007, 2008).

While the national museums and the Renaissance 'hub' museums have been developing their work, another initiative, Strategic Commissioning, has enabled non-hub museums to increase their capacity to respond to increasing demand on the part of schools, through brokering partnerships between museums and schools.

It is encouraging that Strategic Commissioning was jointly funded by the DCMS and what is now the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), with both departments acknowledging the increased need for schools and museums to work together. This inter-departmental cooperation and collaboration, continued in later initiatives, is a very welcome first step in wider government recognition of the role that museums play in the broad educational development of young people.

Creative Partnerships⁶, which has also been jointly funded by those two government departments, aims to give schoolchildren in deprived areas of England the opportunity to develop creativity in learning and to participate in cultural activities. Not specifically aimed at museums, Creative Partnerships has nevertheless successfully involved many museum partners.

Most recently, DCMS has initiated a pathfinder project, Find Your Talent, which will explore how all young people up to the age of 19 can be offered five hours of 'quality culture' a week. The minds of many museum professionals in coming years will be taxed in deciding what 'quality culture' means, and in striving for the 'excellence' demanded by Sir Brian McMaster's 2008 report to government, *Supporting Excellence in the Arts: From Measurement to Judgement*. This commitment to 'quality' in Find Your Talent is a highly significant development, as is the aspiration to universalism. For the first time it is intended that *all* young people be included in a *quality* cultural programme.

Find Your Talent may be the first cultural programme that specifically aspires to be universal, but museum learning as a whole sits within overarching policies that *do* apply to all young people, most notably the National Curriculum in education, and Every Child Matters, introduced in

⁶ See www.creative-partnerships.com/

2003 to provide social welfare standards, which has as its aim that every child should 'Be Healthy; Stay Safe; Enjoy and Achieve; Make a Positive Contribution; and Achieve Economic Well-being.'

Looking forward

In the future the drivers of museum learning – a search for identity, developing creativity, new technologies and innovative 'third spaces' – will continue to make their insistent demands. The provision of learning will become ever more of an imperative for museums.

It is therefore vital that we continue to increase our awareness of what museums can do for young people. Recent research demonstrates that museum learning can take many forms. There are advantages and disadvantages in different models of didactic, behaviourist, discovery, constructivist and socio-cultural learning (Clarke 2006). The work of the American academics John Falk and Lynne Dierking (2000), and MLA's Inspiring Learning for All Framework,⁷ have all added to our understanding and knowledge and have led to improvements in practice. But issues still remain about consistency of measurement when assessing the value that museums add in this area. Straightforward cause and effect are difficult to prove, and the measurement of things like creative skills and emotional development demands an approach that is different from the traditional 'marked' examination.

There are, however, signs of improvement in the collecting of data. Since 2003 MLA has been gathering information about the Renaissance in the Regions hub museums, and in 2006 has added 32 other museums (Designated Collection Holders) to the system, so that a detailed picture is beginning to emerge about education visits.

School visits are on the increase, and more teachers are becoming familiar with using the resources that museums have to offer: the University of Leicester's review of the Strategic Commissioning Programme for example, found that 66 per cent of the teachers involved were using museums for the first time. But increasing activity brings challenges of its own, including the need for increased capacity within the museum sector itself. Even where such capacity exists, the authors of the latest Renaissance in the Regions report are concerned that 'it may be that the market for Key Stage 1 and 2 (Year 1–6) visits has almost been fully penetrated and that even with spare capacity, it may require significant additional resources to attract "non-participating" schools' (MLA 2008: 29). The same report reveals a further challenge in that school visits to museums are dominated by primary schools. Almost half (48 per cent) of visits by British schoolchildren take place in Years 3 to 6 (ibid). Maintaining that momentum in secondary schools is the most pressing task for museums, as for many others in the cultural sector.

However, within the primary school sector there will be new opportunities for museums as a broader definition of learning is adopted. In February 2009, Professor Robin Alexander of Cambridge University argued that testing, and a concentration on numeracy and literacy, have narrowed

⁷ www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/default.aspx?flash=true

primary education, in the 'mistaken belief that breadth in the curriculum is incompatible with improved standards in the "basics" of maths, literacy and numeracy' (BBC News online 2009). An interim report (DCSF 2009) from the Government's own independent inquiry into primary education led by Sir Jim Rose, has already called for a 'more flexible, less-overburdened timetable' (BBC News online 2009). Both reports suggest that primary schools should be given more freedom to determine how they achieve their goals, and at secondary and higher level, new priorities for education are emerging, such as a greater emphasis being placed on so-called soft skills (Nordling 2008). Museums must market themselves to schools and universities as answering part of their needs.

What about young people themselves? They have been taken to, or encouraged to visit museums. They have been assessed, measured and scrutinised, both in terms of their educational progress and in the development of their attitudes and behaviour. But what do they think? Culture, after all, is not something that is done to people, it is something that people discover within and for themselves. Only if young people are engaging willingly, indeed enthusiastically, in what museums are offering, can we legitimately claim to have been successful.

Young people live within a context of family, school and peer groups. All three of these contexts need to be better understood and explored. We have already seen that during the last decade there has been a surge of interest in museum learning from teachers. The same is true of families. Undoubtedly, free museum entry, introduced in 2001, encouraged this change, but free entry alone is not enough. Parents have to be persuaded that museums are effective places in which their children can learn new skills and discover new dimensions.

Statistics show that 80 per cent of parents agree that 'museums and galleries are among the most important resources for educating our children' (NMDC 2004: 2) but this general approval masks class differences, and ABC1 parents are significantly more likely than other parents to agree strongly with the proposition. Despite the fact that they are a universal public resource, museum audiences reflect the divisions that exist within society. Introducing young people to museums through schools, new technology and learning, challenges those divisions. There is good evidence that museum learning can be successful in reaching young people who suffer the most severe social deprivation. The University of Leicester's review of the Strategic Commissioning Programme found that 30 per cent of all visits were from schools located in wards where child poverty is highest.

We have come a long way over the last fifteen years. But there remain areas of concern, which we can group under two headings: willingness and ability. David Anderson's *A Common Wealth* called for education and learning to be included in the mission statements of all museums. However, as yet, this is by no means universal. More importantly, the words in a mission statement have to translate into reality across the whole organisation, meaning that Boards of Trustees, Museum Directors and museum staff all need to understand and believe in the mission. There are still places where earlier attitudes linger.

Then, in order to carry out the mission, museums need a predictable operating and funding context. Many museums still find it difficult to resource education and learning: MLA's 2006 survey found that half of all museums still have no budget to pay education salaries, and that for the 11 per cent of museums who provide no direct education service, a shortage of funds was given as the main reason.

In this regard, museums still suffer from the problem of having multiple funding streams, with the attendant need to spend a great deal of time fundraising and meeting the requirements of different funders. In the United States a different approach is being adopted in states such as California⁸, with some funders coming together to agree a standard form of reporting and grant application, a model that could usefully be considered in the UK.

We have learned much from the special initiatives and programmes of the last ten years but we now need a more settled pattern to encourage stability and growth (see Holden 2008 and Hunt 2008). New projects take time to become effective, or even to be discovered by those who are supposed to benefit from them: 46 per cent of museums surveyed by MLA in 2006 were either unaware of, or not involved with, Strategic Commissioning, a programme specifically designed for them.

Government needs to provide a stable economic environment for museums, within which museums can plan with confidence. In turn, all museums must respond by bringing education and learning into their mainstream activities; increasing their understanding of learning through research and inquiry; understanding better the difficulties faced by schools and teachers and working with them to overcome those problems; and directly engaging with young people themselves both in and beyond the framework of school to understand their wants and needs. Above all, museums must begin their work by understanding learners, and adapting their approaches so that they 'start with the learner'.

Young people want to learn and need to learn, but they are also confronting the perennial questions of existence, summed up in the title of Gauguin's masterpiece, now hanging in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, *Where Do We Come From? Who Are We? Where Are We Going?* Museum collections can help young people discover what is of interest around them, but also to explore what lies inside themselves. That, perhaps, remains the most valuable part of museum learning, and the most important reason why we should, as a nation, do everything that we can to meet the cultural aspirations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

References

- Anderson D (1997) *A Common Wealth: Museums in the learning age* London: DCMS
BBC News online (2009) 'Primary education "too narrow"', 20 February, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7896751.stm>
Clarke P (2006) *Museums and Learning*, MLA Southwest
Cuno J (2004) 'The Object of Art Museums' in Cuno J (ed) *Whose Muse? Art Museums and the Public Trust* Princeton and Cambridge: Princeton University Press and Harvard University Press

8 See the California Cultural Data Project at www.caculturaldata.org/home.aspx

- Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2009) *The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum: Interim report*, London: DCSF, available at <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=BLNK-01010-2008>
- Falk J and Dierking L (2000) *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*, Lanham MD: Alta Mira Press
- Fisch K and McLeod S (2007) 'Did you know 2.0?', YouTube, February, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMcfLYDm2U
- Holden J (2008) *Cultural Learning: Towards a new Agenda* London: Demos
- Holden J and Jones S (2006) *Knowledge and Inspiration: The democratic face of culture* London: Demos
- Hunt J (2008) *Arts Speech*, 24 June, available at www.shadowcms.co.uk/pdf/JeremyHuntArtsSpeech.pdf
- Jones S (2005) *How old do you have to be to be an Artist?* London: Demos
- Jones S and Wright S (2007) *Making Good Work: Realising the value of young people's creative production* London: Demos
- Leadbeater C and Meadway J (2008) *Attacking the Recession, How Innovation Can Fight the Downturn* Discussion Paper, December. London: NESTA
- Mayo E (2005) *Playlist for Public Services* London: National Consumer Council
- McMaster B (2008) *From Measurement to Judgement* London: DCMS
- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) (2008) *Renaissance in the Regions DCH Data Collection 2007-08* London: MLA
- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) (2007) *Renaissance: Results for 2006-07* London: MLA
- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) (2006) *Museum Learning Survey 2006* London: MLA
- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) (2004) *The Accreditation Scheme for Museums in the United Kingdom* London: MLA
- National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) (1999) *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education. Report to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport*
- National Museum Director's Conference (2004) *Attitudes of Parents Towards Museums* London: NMDC
- National Museum Directors' Conference *et al* (2004) *Manifesto for Museums* London: NMDC
- Nordling L (2008) 'From soft skills to hard job offers', *Guardian Online*, 2 September, available at www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/sep/02/students.highereducation
- O'Neill M (2002) 'The good enough visitor' in Sandell R (ed) *Museums, Society, Inequality*, London: Routledge
- Serota N (2003) Keynote speech: 'Why save art for the nation?', 11 November, available at www.arifund.org/policyandcampaigns/confpapers-nicholasserota.pdf
- Travers T (2004) *Valuing Museums* London: NMDC
- Work Foundation (2008) *Staying Ahead* London: DCMS
- Wu K-L (2007) 'What do families with children need from a Museum?' *Cultural Policy, Criticism and Management Research*, August, London: City University, available at www.city.ac.uk/cpm/ejournal/ejournal2_wu.pdf

3. THE LISTENING MUSEUM

David Anderson

Many people inside and beyond the museum profession still question whether education is central to the purposes of public cultural institutions. Others accept that museums have a role as centres for formal and informal learning, but believe that they cannot and should not try to address issues of social justice. If we are to move forward over the next ten years, this debate is fundamental to resolve. I believe there is no more important issue for museums.

One day some 20 years ago, I stood outside the gates of the Royal Observatory in Greenwich collecting data for a visitor survey. A young girl and an older woman – perhaps her grandmother – approached the entrance and looked at the prices on the board. “Can we go in?” asked the girl. “It’s too expensive,” the woman replied. They turned away and walked back down the hill.

A year or two later, in 1988, the National Maritime Museum staged its hugely popular *Armada* exhibition. The Museum decided to create a separate discovery gallery with a ship and storytelling area for children. I recruited four student teachers from the Early Childhood course at nearby Goldsmith’s College as staff for the centre. At the end of the project, I asked the students if they would consider a career in museum education. They all said that they had enjoyed the project but they felt that the Museum as a whole did not welcome children and was not supportive of its education staff, and they would not want to work in such an environment. What really surprised me, however, was to hear that most of their fellow students had not responded to my recruitment advertisement because they themselves had had bad experiences in museums as children, and preferred to work in a shop that summer.

A few years later, I was working at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum. Our first South Asian Arts Education Officer, Shireen Akbar, had developed a textile project, *Shamiana – the Mughal Tent*, with groups of South Asian women. Each group had designed and made their own textile panel, inspired by the V&A’s Islamic collections. A sample of the participants

were interviewed by an evaluator. In the past, one woman said, she had lacked the confidence to go into her son's school, and always waited for him outside the school gate. Then she and a group of other women heard about the V&A project. They created their own textile panel, and her son's teacher had invited her to come into the classroom to tell the children about it. Through the project, she had found the confidence to do this. Her son had told her that he had been embarrassed by her before, but now was proud that she had done something special in front of his friends.

These few examples, from many that might have been chosen, demonstrate that exclusion takes many forms, and its relationship to cultural institutions is complex and sometimes unpredictable.

Education and social justice

In September 2008 Professor Alison Richard, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, said at a Universities UK conference:

'As institutions charged with education, research and training, our purpose is not to be construed as that of handmaidens of industry, implementers of the skills agenda, or indeed engines for promoting social justice.' (quoted in Gemmell 2008)

Responding at the same conference, the Universities Secretary John Denham said:

'It has been suggested that universities, and by extension, education, [are] not an engine for social justice. I have to say, I profoundly disagree. Education is the most powerful tool we have in achieving social justice. From that recognition, the responsibility arises not to lower standards but to seek out, support and nurture talent, wherever it exists ... That is the fundamental case for both widening participation and fair access.' (quoted in Ross 2008)

A study by the Sutton Trust⁹ reveals the very high rate of 'leakage' among the least privileged pupils – those in receipt of free school meals (FSM). Two thirds of those top-performing 'FSM pupils' at age 11 were not among the top fifth of performers taking GCSEs at age 16. And a further half of those who were among this top fifth at age 16 do not subsequently go on to university. Pupils not receiving free school meals who go on to university stand an 11 per cent chance of attending one of the 13 top universities (as defined by the Sutton Trust); for FSM pupils, the likelihood is only 5 per cent (The Sutton Trust 2008a).

The 100 schools with the highest admission rates to Oxbridge (2.8 per cent of all schools with sixth forms) are composed of 78 independent schools, 21 grammar schools, and just one state comprehensive. These top 100 schools gain an astonishing 31 per cent of all Oxbridge places. The top 200 schools and colleges take up 48 per cent of Oxbridge places, leaving the remaining 3,500 schools in the UK to take only 52 per cent of

⁹ The Sutton Trust is an independent organisation that aims to promote social mobility through education.

places (The Sutton Trust 2008b). The support, expectations, and expertise that underpins the academic excellence of these universities is thus only available to a tiny proportion of school pupils, mainly those whose parents can afford to pay. Such parents also deploy other resources, such as networks of professional contacts, to gain advantages for their children.

The impact of educational inequality extends into professional employment. Only 14 per cent of the 'top 100' journalists in news and current affairs have attended a comprehensive school. Just under two-fifths (37 per cent) of the top journalists in 2006 went to one institution: Oxford (The Sutton Trust 2006). The Sutton Trust has not yet undertaken a comparable study of the top jobs in the arts and museums, but it would be no surprise if there were a similar pattern of inequality.

This is the education system from which children come to museums.

Epistemic injustice and its impacts

Polly Toynbee and David Walker of *The Guardian* accompanied a group of the most academically able 16-year-old students from London Borough of Brent's Capital City Academy on a weekend visit to Oxford, funded through the Government's *Aimhigher* programme. None of the group had ever seen a university before, and virtually none of their parents had any further education. Nearly a third of the school's intake live in bad housing. A large number live in poverty. Many imagined university to be 'really hard work, and no social life', and had no one in their family to tell them differently.

The Brent students were astonished by what they saw at Oxford, and shocked that about half of its students came from independent schools. Some of the children were refugees who had only learned English a few years earlier; some were cared-for children. As Toynbee and Walker ask, 'Would an Oxbridge tutor ever hear these stories – and get to assess how their potential stacked up against the attainment of a young person who had no obstacles to overcome?' (Toynbee and Walker 2008)

Young people like these experience a kind of disadvantage that Miranda Fricker defines as 'epistemic injustice', in which someone is 'wronged specifically in their capacity as a knower' (Fricker 2007). Her analysis has direct and profound implications for cultural institutions. As Fricker points out, conveying knowledge to others by telling and making sense of social experiences are two of our most basic epistemic practices. She argues that social identity is the main source of 'testimonial injustice', which is what occurs 'when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's words' [p. 1]. It can be either localised or systematic. Fricker cites as an example of localised injustice the intellectual disdain with which many scientists regard philosophers of science [p. 28].

Similar prejudices operate in the cultural sector. One head of research at a major UK national museum told me recently that, in their institution, educators are regarded by many of their collections colleagues as 'staff' – a lower social group not worthy of intellectual and professional respect. The private testimony of a number of senior museum educators in national museums suggests that intellectual disdain for education and visitor research

as disciplines, and educators as professionals, is widespread and persistent, and a source of constant personal stress for many educators. As Fricker notes, 'the accumulation of incidental injustices may ruin [someone's] life' (Fricker, *op. cit.*: 29).

Fricker describes testimonial injustices that are connected via a common prejudice with other kinds of injustice as 'systematic'. Many stereotypes of historically powerless groups such as women, black people or working class people invariably involve an association with some negative attribute, social stereotypes that are sustained, in the words of Walter Lippmann, as 'pictures in our heads' (p37). Systematic testimonial injustices, Fricker says, track the subject 'through different dimensions of social activity – economic, educational, professional, sexual, legal, political, religious and so on' (p27). She might have added 'cultural' to this list.

If young people are denied the opportunity to contribute as givers of knowledge in a conversational environment of trust and respect, then this injustice sends them the message that they are not fit for participation, and denies their very status as knowers and learners (Fricker, *op. cit.*).

Systematic, testimonial injustice, Fricker says, 'can cause deep and wide harm to a person's psychology and practical life, and it is too often passed over in silence' (p145). Their intellectual performance may be inhibited, their confidence in their general intellectual abilities eroded, and their educational development thwarted. They literally lose knowledge and are prevented from developing essential intellectual virtues – impartiality, intellectual sobriety, and intellectual courage. They may be effectively silenced, or may never even develop the capacity to 'speak' in whatever media. Their identity – the focus of the prejudice they experience from others – may be fundamentally undermined. Keeping one's dignity in the face of such an assault on one's personhood can take great courage, says Fricker, especially if the assault is persistent and systematic.

It does not require much imagination to see that epistemic injustice could be a significant factor in the lives of students such as those from Capital City academy in Brent.

Those of us who work as professionals in the arts and museums may have values and attitudes that are so different from those of many young people from other backgrounds that we are, in effect, from another culture. We may hold prejudices about their knowledge and capabilities, and may lack awareness of the ways in which the experiences and systems of access we communicate in our (or, rather, the public's) institutions may radically exclude and alienate such young people. We may, in short, be a source of epistemic injustice – part of the problem, not part of the solution.

Children – a disadvantaged group

Children are also systematically disadvantaged in their identity as young people. On 3 October 2008, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child criticised the 'general climate of intolerance and negative public attitudes towards children' in the United Kingdom (UNOG 2008).

According to Carolynne Willow, the National Coordinator of the Children's Rights Alliance of England, the UN's criticism is justified (Willow 2008). The Alliance's dossier of discrimination includes evidence of children being refused help from health and social services and the emergency services, encountering prejudice from the police when they report crimes and disrespect from a wide range of other public officials, and being refused entry to restaurants and gyms – treatment that would be unlawful if it were imposed on individuals because of their gender or race. Ministers have so far opted to exclude under-18s from new protection from age discrimination.

However, on 11 November 2008 the law was changed in an important respect to place a duty on all maintained schools in England and Wales to consider the views of children and young people. Announcing the change, the Children's Minister Baroness Delyth Morgan of Drefelin said, 'As a minimum, schools should seek and take account of pupil's views on policies on the delivery of the curriculum, behaviour, the uniform, school food, health and safety, equalities and sustainability, not simply on what colour to paint the walls.' This may be a sign that attitudes to children are changing.

The effectiveness of cultural institutions

Speaking after a highly successful performance by the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela at the Royal Albert Hall on 19 August 2007, the cellist Julian Lloyd Webber described the performance of the Orchestra as 'frankly shaming' to the British cultural establishment. The youth orchestra is the result of a Venezuelan state scheme to lend instruments and offer free tuition to the poorest children from city ghettos, and has been taken up by 250,000 children over the last 30 years. Speaking of provision for access to classical music in the UK, Lloyd Webber said: 'When I went to the Royal College of Music, I was one of the few public school educated children there. Now I am told the reverse is true. The problem is nothing to with the music itself. It is about access' (quoted in Thorpe 2007).

The Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra provides evidence of the benefits of cultural and educational vision and commitment in overcoming disadvantage, but also the benefits of sustained and substantial government funding over the course of decades.

The examples that follow address different dimensions of the public educational role of the museum. What all have in common is their attempt to give visitors opportunities to speak, and to be listened to.

The British Galleries, Victoria and Albert Museum

Academic historians have praised the scholarship of the V&A's British Galleries, which opened in 2001, and their child-friendly exhibits. The whole project team made an effort to design the galleries around the needs of different audiences, from school children and students to black and minority ethnic communities and self-directed adult learners. Many of the exhibits provide an opportunity for visitors to contribute or respond to a growing public bank of ideas, comments and interpretations in the form of drawings, stories and online contributions.

The key to the success of the galleries has been research, including audience research. At an early stage, the British Galleries project team made the decision to conduct a major visitor study, in 1998, in the old galleries before redisplay, and another parallel study in 2002, the year after the new galleries opened. As a result, the impact of the new design, including the participative exhibits, can be profiled in some detail. The new galleries have been rated an average 8.0 out of 10 for learning, with 67 per cent of the sample scoring it higher than 8.0; this compared with just 4.1 out of 10 for the old galleries, with just 19 per cent giving it a score higher than 8.0. A total of 93 per cent of visitors said the new galleries are 'just like a museum should be', and 89 per cent said they are 'warm and welcoming'.

Over two thirds (69 per cent) of respondents used the Discovery Areas and other interactive areas in the new galleries, well over 90 per cent of whom felt these features enhanced their appreciation of the objects on display, and helped them to improve their knowledge of the galleries' subject matter. Only 1 per cent of the total sample felt these areas hindered their appreciation of the objects or hindered their efforts to improve their knowledge of the subject matter (Creative Research for the Victoria and Albert Museum [2002], unpublished; see also Wilk and Humphrey [eds] [2004] for details of the project and the thinking and research that supported it).

The message to museums from this visitor research is detailed, consistent and could not be clearer: visitors to art museums such as the V&A welcome high-quality participative exhibits that foster learning, and the opportunity they offer to contribute and share their responses to the exhibits with other visitors.

Every Object Tells A Story

Every Object Tells a Story was a large-scale collaboration between the V&A, Channel 4, and Ultralab (at Anglia Polytechnic University). The project aimed to encourage mass public participation and to increase understanding of the meaning and importance of objects. It comprised an online learning resource and a national outreach campaign, supported by television advertising on Channel 4.

The website was launched with around 900 contributions from V&A staff, members of the public, and the V&A's regional partner museums in Tyne and Wear, Birmingham and Brighton. The outreach element of the project began in April 2005, when a customised London taxi and state-of-the-art digital storytelling equipment arrived at Tyne and Wear Museums to gather stories, starting a national tour of schools, community centres and cultural venues. The television advertising campaign began the following month.

Digital media offer museums the opportunity to engage audiences in mass cultural activities that can also involve meaningful participation. Every Object Tells A Story was based on the premise that every adult and child is an expert in culture because it is the stuff of their lives, and then offered them a chance to contribute something to a growing resource.

Shamiana: The Mughal Tent

'No one visiting the exhibition Shamiana: The Mughal Tent in any of its incarnations could fail to be moved by the visual power, strength and vitality

of the textile panels', wrote Deborah Swallow, then Curator of the Indian and South East Asian Department (and now Director of the Courthauld Institute) in 1999. 'Few of us who were initially involved in the Mughal Tent project had envisaged the technical skill, creativity and virtuosity that would be released, and the richness of the objects that would result from it' (Swallow 1999: 31).

The project was the idea of Shireen Akbar, the V&A's first South Asian Arts Education Officer, who took up her post in 1991 and within months began to work with a small number of community groups of mainly South Asian women. By 1997, when the project was exhibited in the form of a large Mughal tent in the garden at the V&A, nearly a thousand women in over 80 groups from Britain and overseas had created panels.

As Shireen herself wrote:

'Focusing on the collections in the Nehru Gallery, the South Asian Arts Education Initiative was set up to ... bring the cross-cultural education debate into the Museum ... Groups of women from across the country were invited to design and make embroidered textiles on a scale equivalent to those at the V&A, following visits to the gallery. It would be a collaborative process – all skills and knowledge would be pooled, undertaken mostly in community centres, adult education institutes, colleges and homes, with frequent visits to the museum.' (Akbar 1999: 15)

Shireen recalled one group of female teenagers from Tower Hamlets, East London, who were brought to the museum by their community worker.

'All the young women were British-Asian second-generation immigrants with little or no direct contact with their root culture, and with minimal formal education about Asian history or culture. On their first reluctant visit to the V&A they were shown a selection of miniature paintings of the Mughal period, including one of the Emperor Shah Jehan, which caught their attention. The appeal of the painting was not its technical excellence or interesting subject matter but the mystery of Mumtaz Mahal, Shah Jehan's wife, and the inspiration behind the Taj Mahal. By her very absence from the painting, Mumtaz became a tantalizing figure and fired the imagination of the young women.' (ibid: 18-19.)

The teenage visitors decided to create a panel. As the young women wrote:

'Our panel is of a woman symbolizing freedom. Shireen Akbar told us the story of Mumtaz Mahal ... We chose the colours according to their meaning in Islam: brown means roots and fertility; green is the colour of paradise and self-assertion; yellow is powerful, it is also the colour of the sun. The roots are holding her down, but her branches are blossoming at the top. She is breaking free from what is holding her back. The roots are trapping her. The symbols in the branches are our freedom of choice. They are our rights as women: to education; to

choose a career; to earn our money and be financially independent; to choose our own husband and the kind of marriage we want; to travel; to choose our own time to do things. We felt the book should be at the top because it symbolizes education. If you are educated you have better opportunities, more power. If you have education you can have all the others.' (ibid: 22-23)

Shamiana showed (as if evidence were needed) that groups of girls and women no different to any others can produce works of art of extraordinary freshness, originality and skill. What is lacking for most people is not capability but opportunity. The project also showed that museums are immeasurably enriched by the cultural traditions, philosophies and artistic practices developed in other countries and cultures. There is no doubt that many staff at the V&A learned far more from the women who participated in the project than the women learnt from the staff. It is museums that so often are culturally impoverished, not the cultural groups that are under-represented in their audiences.

Towards cultural rights for children and young people

The UK Government is already a signatory to the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights as well as the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 31 of the Convention states the rights of children to leisure and participation in cultural life, and governments' role in promoting and encouragement of those rights.

A difficulty with cultural rights is that (depending upon how they are defined) some or all are experienced within, by the individual or community concerned; they cannot be distributed directly by the state in the way that is possible for basic commodities like food and shelter. Nevertheless, the achievement by individuals and communities of cultural rights is a responsibility of the state. In so far as they are immaterial, cultural rights depend primarily upon the attitudes and behaviour as well as the actions of intermediaries (such as local community organisations and museums) and the cultural environment – the public sphere – which the state or community creates or manages.

Onora O'Neill suggests cultural rights can derive more effectively from an ethical theory that takes obligations rather than rights as its foundation (cited in Turner 2001). One of the obligations of institutions such as museums in a democracy is to maintain a social environment that creates space for plural public communication without the destruction of languages, vulgarisation of cultural traditions, coercion or deception by governments, or manipulation by the communications industry.

Henry Shue, in his classic study *Basic Rights: Subsistence, Affluence and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Shue 1996), makes three points with regard to the liberty of participation. First, to be meaningful, participation must be effective and include influence over fundamental choices and strategies, implementation and operation of social institutions and policies, as they affect oneself. Second, participation must affect the outcomes. Third, participation

should not be construed in a narrowly political sense as, for example, the right to vote; it also relates to having the power to influence public and private organisations. Shue adds that the supplying of information is barely, if at all, a form of basic participation. The implication for publicly-funded museums is that they need to offer substantial and effective opportunities for participation to all users, including young people.

Through education and participation children and adults can learn not just how to understand design or to make a bowl, or painting, or film, but also that it is their *right* to participate in cultural activities. The challenge for cultural institutions is to find ways to draw from the participation and contribution of audiences in a meaningful way – to learn from learners.

Looking forward

Britain is entering a period of austerity. Corporate mismanagement and corruption have brought the financial system close to collapse. The public mood has changed. The age of excess, with its conspicuous consumption and celebrity events fuelled by the media and communications industries, is fading.

All public institutions are being forced to undertake a fundamental rethink of their strategies, to take account of these new realities. They will need to identify and articulate their core values if they are to retain public and government support. After two decades of frenetic capital works, neither the lotteries nor the private sector can sustain continued construction on such a scale. The next phase of museum development will be about using wisely what we have still got, founded on clear and visionary principles of public service. How should we meet children's needs in response to this change?

1. Give children the same status as adults within the organisation's priorities and planning

Whatever museum staff may think their priorities should be, a majority of the public believes that museums are funded, as one of their key purposes, to educate and inspire children. Investing in children means investing in the future of museums as much as in the future of society. Delivering this in practice means reviewing all key elements of the museum's service, to ensure that the needs of children are given the same weight as those of adults.

2. Celebrate and promote the cultural sector as the nation's learning sector

'Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do to make sense of the world. It may involve an increase in skills, knowledge and understanding, a deepening of values or the capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and a desire to learn more.'

This definition of learning, developed in 1998 by the Campaign for Learning, is still one of the clearest and most relevant. As applied to museums, this kind of learning is not a contained or limited activity, but one that all visitors engage in, in all dimensions of their museum experience: on the museum's

website, at visitor service desks, in permanent galleries and temporary exhibitions, at events and activities, as well as through other education services. Most museums accept that they have a limited responsibility to offer some services for schools, and perhaps other educational institutions. What is not yet so widely accepted is that the whole institution should be a resource for learning in all its forms – informal and self-directed as well as formal – for all ages.

The cultural sector is the nation's (and the world's) learning sector – in effect, a parallel universe, distinct in many positive and important ways from the formal education sector. Almost everyone who learns through the cultural sector does so voluntarily, through direct personal experience of authentic, original cultural artefacts, historic sites and natural environments.

The value of this alternative universe of learning appears to be almost invisible to many leaders and board members of museums. As a result, museums are only half as effective as they could be in fostering and supporting learning, and young people in particular lose out. Yet many people still come to learn, if necessary despite the institutions themselves.

3. Actively redress the impacts of inequality and injustice in museum participation

Few museums know the socio-economic profile of their overall audience of children and young people. Yet this will be a necessary precondition if they are to move from isolated 'outreach' projects to strategies for institutional inclusion. Aiming at equality of opportunity is not adequate, since almost every child has, in principle, the opportunity to participate in museum activities. The tough, but more meaningful, challenge will be to achieve, so far as possible, equality of outcome – visible change.

4. Rethink representations of culture in learning

In the nineteenth century museum collections were created to inform their visitors about other societies, while observing these societies from cultural and intellectual perspectives that remained resolutely British. Has this really changed? Not as much as it needs to do. Young people are the most culturally diverse of all age groups in Britain, growing up in a country that is now more globally connected than at any time in the past. Museums that embrace educational philosophies, methodologies and cultural perspectives (such as group learning, which is strongly developed in, for example, Asia and Africa), will open new avenues of experience and understanding to young people. Museums in future will need to be *of* other societies, not just *about* them.

5. Rediscover traditions of independent education and self-directed learning, including Saturday learning

In mid-nineteenth century Britain, there was a thriving independent local network of organisations such as literary and philosophical societies, libraries, museums and trade unions that provided opportunities for self-education (Anderson 1995). This was not a universal system, and it served some better than others. Nevertheless, it had the advantage of being for the most part

locally organised by those who benefited from it. As the publicly-funded formal education sector grew and became universal, these alternative local networks for learning diminished.

The radical movements of the Victorian era were innovators in self-education. We need effective models for out-of-school learning for all ages, and may find them in our own past.

One such innovation would be the introduction of Saturday schools and courses in museums and arts and science institutions across the country, rather like the Saturday music schools that are still run in many areas. These should reach as many children as possible, but give priority to those with a special interest (in, say, fashion, natural history or graphic design) and those with the greatest need of such opportunities because they are currently lacking in their lives. Such programmes could be run in partnership with the formal education sector – integrating the best of informal and formal learning.

6. Develop more effective ways to listen to and include young people's voices

Visitors have great stories to tell. Yet in museums, as in society, it is so often analysis rather than the story that is valued. As Karl Kroeker points out, professionals can have a disguised contempt for narratives, as if they are for simpler minds, whereas analysis – so often the knowledge privileged by experts – is given status. Yet, genuine storytelling evokes judgemental responses, is ethically provocative, is inherently anti-authoritarian, leaves space for multiple responses and interpretations, preserves ideas, beliefs and connections, and is a counter to the accelerating rationalisation and technologisation. Storytelling is more easily remembered, and more likely to influence people's lives. As Kroeker says, 'storytelling may be the best use to which we can put any language' (1992: 193).

Effective storytelling demands as much from the listener as it does from the teller – to imagine, to empathise, to understand, to interpret and to retell. For the most part our profession has not valued these skills highly in ourselves or our audiences, yet they are the ones we most need.

7. Develop a charter of cultural rights for children

The success of the Find Your Talent initiative will depend on the commitment and support of thousands of cultural organisations across the country. For most young people, particularly those experiencing poverty and exclusion, these local choices need to be: active, not passive; informal as well as formal; universal and personalised, and relevant to their lives and aspirations. If these opportunities are not accessible locally they do not, in a sense, exist. Other choices depend on these foundations.

The Manifesto for Children's Arts, launched in July 2008 by Action for Children's Arts, is admirable for its recognition that children have rights, but retrograde in its focus on the arts alone. Young people's interests and capabilities extend across the full spectrum of the sciences, humanities and arts. The arts do not exist in isolation, in society, or in the mind, hand and heart of any individual child.

We still lack a comprehensive Charter of Cultural Rights for Children that embraces culture as a whole, from a child's perspective, and offers a practical statement of the minimum provision that any child could reasonably expect to receive from any publicly funded cultural institution. Dea Birkett, as a parent, journalist and now Director of Kids in Museums, has campaigned energetically on behalf of children as users of museums. The whole cultural sector can build on her work.

Turn again

The contribution of museums as centres for learning, cultural rights and cultural democracy for children and young people, and particularly those facing inequality and injustice, is one of the strongest they can make to society. This requires our institutions to listen, as well as tell. 'A sign of health in the mind,' wrote Donald Winnicott in 1970, 'is the ability of one individual to enter imaginatively and accurately into the thoughts and feelings and hopes and fears of another person; also to allow the other person to do the same to us' (quoted in Phillips and Taylor 2009). Do museums as institutions have such collective health of mind?

Do we really believe that museums can still pick and choose their obligations? It was said of Irish society that, at a key period in the early twentieth century, it reached a turning point and failed to turn. Museums, too, have reached a turning point. Will they, too, fail to turn?

References

- Akbar S (1999) 'Introduction: The making of the Mughal Tent' in *Shamiana: The Mughal Tent* London: Victoria and Albert Museum
- Anderson D (1995) 'Gradgrind Driving Queen Mab's Chariot: What Museums Have (and Have Not) Learnt from Adult Education' in Chadwick A and Stannett A (eds) *Museums and the Education of Adults* Leicester: NIACE
- Creative Research for the Victoria and Albert Museum (2002) *Summative Evaluation of the British Galleries: Overview of Findings* (unpublished)
- Fricker M (2007) *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Gemmell C (2008) 'University is not for promoting social justice, says Cambridge vice-chancellor', *Telegraph*, 10 September, available at www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/politics/education/27780
- Kroeker K (1992) *Retelling/Rereading: The Fate of Storytelling in Modern Times*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press
- Phillips A and Taylor B (2009) 'Love Thy Neighbour', *The Guardian Review*, 3 January
- Ross T (2008) 'University Secretary John Denham sparked a new social class row with Oxford today, demanding that "highly selective" colleges do more to help poor students', *Evening Standard*, 11 September, available at www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23554353
- Shue H (1996) *Basic Rights: Subsistence, Affluence, and US Foreign Policy* New Jersey: Princeton University Press (2nd edition)
- Sutton Trust, The (2008a) *Wasted Talent? Attrition rates of high-achieving pupils between*

- school and university*, London: The Sutton Trust
- Sutton Trust, The (2008b) *University Admissions by Individual Schools* London: The Sutton Trust
- Sutton Trust, The (2006) *The Educational Background of Leading Journalists* London: The Sutton Trust
- Swallow D (1999) 'The Panels as Works of Art,' in *Shamiana: The Mughal Tent* London: Victoria and Albert Museum
- Thorpe V (2007) 'UK "Shamed" by Music's Elitist Label', *Observer*, 26 August
- Toynbee P and Walker D (2008) 'Breathless with amazement', *The Guardian*, August 5
- Turner BS (2001) 'Outline of a General Theory of Cultural Citizenship,' in Stevenson N (ed.) *Culture and Citizenship*, London: SAGE
- United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) (2008) 'Committee on Rights of the Child concludes forty-ninth session: Issues Conclusions on Reports of Austria, Uganda, Djibouti, Lithuania, Bhutan, United Kingdom and Tanzania', available at [www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/3F255A0F8CC1A2C3C12574D7003EEC89?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNewsByYear_en)/3F255A0F8CC1A2C3C12574D7003EEC89?OpenDocument)
- Wilk C and Humphrey N (eds) (2004) *Creating the British Galleries at the V&A: A study in museology* London: Victoria and Albert Museum
- Willow C (2008) 'Adults-only film screenings are part of a climate of intolerance', *The Guardian*, 14 November

4. THE POWER OF CULTURAL LEARNING:

The role of museums within a new cultural learning agenda

Sally Bacon

A group of independent and public funders, the Culture and Learning Consortium,¹⁰ has recently been considering the role of learning in cultural organisations and the role of culture in the education sector. Following a major consultation, the project's concluding report, *Get It: The Power of Cultural Learning* (CLC 2008), is intended as a stimulus for ongoing debate and action. Its approach is not just about museums, but cultural learning in its entirety – whether in museums, galleries, performing arts, heritage, schools or colleges – but its findings reveal much that is pertinent to those concerned with museum education and material culture, and to this publication. The Culture and Learning Consortium report reveals a shared belief that cultural learning has the potential to transform people's lives, and that realising this potential will require changing the way in which cultural learning is valued and practised in schools and other learning organisations.

A new agenda for advocacy and action

Why is this the right time for a new approach? Children and young people are central to the Consortium's report because of the potential that currently exists to increase and transform culture and learning opportunities for them. There is growing support for the Government's proposed universal cultural entitlement for all children and young people, referred to as the 'Cultural Offer'. The Government's Find Your Talent programme aims to 'ensure that all children and young people no matter where they live or what their background have the chance to participate in at least five hours of high quality culture a week in and out of school' (Find Your Talent 2008). A new organisation, Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE), is responsible for managing the ten Find Your Talent pilots and the Creative Partnerships programme, which brings schools together with creative and cultural organisations and practitioners in long-term partnerships.

¹⁰ Arts Council England; Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; Clore Duffield Foundation; Esmée Fairbairn Foundation; Foyle Foundation; Heritage Lottery Fund; Museums, Libraries and Archives Council; Northern Rock Foundation; Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Significant changes are underway in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools, with a greater emphasis on creative and cultural development and on personalised learning. Compulsory national tests (SATs) at the end of Key Stage 3 (at age 14) have been abolished, giving more flexibility to teachers in their approach to the curriculum. And new qualifications are being introduced to support young people's personal and career interests in creativity and culture.

Schools and colleges are looking at how best to respond to the challenges of these changes in order to deliver an exciting and wide-ranging entitlement within school, and through the Learning Outside the Classroom and Extended Schools initiatives. There is also greater awareness of the value of cultural involvement to learners' personal and social development. On a wider scale, both learning and cultural sectors need to be better placed to work with the creative and cultural industries, which – we all hope – will remain a major force in the UK economy while our financial services industry is so evidently in decline. The case for a better cultural offer for all learners, and especially children and young people, is compelling, and now is the time to build on the best existing work to establish cultural learning as a national priority for education and for the cultural and heritage sectors. There is new public and political space for museums here – if they can move to claim it.

Get It reveals that while there is undoubtedly a great deal of good practice already in place, there is a strong need to explore and promote ways in which cultural organisations, schools, colleges and other learning environments can work together successfully to develop consistently high-quality cultural learning experiences, in sustainable ways (CLC 2008). There is a requirement to explore how to promote cultural learning in organisations that currently give low priority to its role, value and potential – and, as is covered in other chapters, cultural organisations have a responsibility to consider how best to deliver learning programmes to those who are currently marginalised for a whole range of reasons (material, social, physical, geographical), from what is on offer to them.

The Consortium's report calls for a series of changes: the development of a common language and shared understanding of cultural learning across the culture and learning sectors; and an agreed set of benchmarks and standards for cultural learning. *Inspiring Learning for All* (MLA 2004) was revealed to be an invaluable tried and tested model which could be recognised, adapted and taken up more widely across the cultural learning sector: a positive example of the museum world leading the way. The Culture and Learning consultation report calls for an increase in the profile, scale and impact of cultural learning; and a commitment by local and regional government to work together with cultural and heritage organisations, schools and colleges in order to meet the demands of a 'cultural entitlement' for all children and young people.

There is a key recommendation in the Consortium's report for central government to recognise and promote cultural learning in the curriculum and as the best way to fulfil the commitment to universal cultural entitlement

for all children and young people, and also to the Government's *Every Child Matters/Youth Matters Vision* (Cabinet Office 2003, 2005), and the Children's Plan (DCSF 2007). A major focus for the report is local authorities, with the recommendation that they make cultural learning a more explicit part of their planning for children and young people through existing Public Service Agreements. Organisations are encouraged to work together on cultural learning by building local and regional partnerships through Children's Trusts¹¹ and Local Area Agreements.¹²

There are several important recommendations around training, focusing on initial teacher training and training for cultural educators. Funders are encouraged to refine or develop long-term funding models that encourage and support sustained collaborations between cultural and learning organisations. And the learning and cultural sectors are encouraged to come together to form a time-limited Cultural Learning Alliance, to develop and advocate for a coherent national strategy for cultural learning, drawing on the report's recommendations.

The report focuses on sharing in the context of evaluation and research, and of the dissemination of innovative practice in cultural learning provision. It begs the question why is there not wider public and web-based sharing and replication of exemplar projects, and this question is particularly relevant for museums. Is it because of museums' origins – that deep-rooted culture of collecting and ownership that lies at the heart of so many of our museums – is it that which makes genuine collaboration so difficult, and ideas that are not self-generated so hard to take up? There is much of this kind of sharing going on – the National Museums Online Learning Project is just one example – but there must be more if the sector is to cohere in its bid to establish cultural learning as more of a priority across both the cultural and learning sectors.

All possible participants in cultural learning are addressed in the report and its findings give voice to the experience of practitioners – teachers and cultural educators – rather than providing a summary of the ambitions of policymakers and funders. They have emerged from a wide consultation process and therefore reflect the wide and complex views of the many, rather than the few.

The original impetus for the formation of the Culture and Learning Consortium was a concern about the centrality of learning to a museum's mission, and crucially about reality versus rhetoric. This long-held disquiet evolved out of the Clore Duffield Foundation's experience of funding learning spaces in museums and everything they reveal about an organisation's approach to their audiences. It developed following troubling conversations with people who felt that too much importance had been attached to education in museums since 1997 and that it was time for the curatorial voice to re-assume supremacy. And it evolved, most specifically, in issues around leadership.

It is worth tackling the points about learning spaces and leadership in more detail here than is presented in the Consortium's report, and more specifically in relation to museums. Learning spaces present us with an exemplification of some of the wider issues surrounding learning, and

¹¹ Children's Trusts bring together all services for children and young people in an area, underpinned by the Children's Act 2004.

¹² Local Area Agreements (LAAs) set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and a local area and other key partners at the local level.

creating the Clore Leadership Programme has given the Clore Duffield Foundation wide experience of the inter-relation between leadership and learning. When put together, learning spaces and leadership present two of the cornerstones of what museum learning should be: well-resourced and located – materially, physically, organisationally; and fundamental to a museum’s core mission and vision as presented, and represented, by its director and board.

Space for learning

I am often struck by how rarely the wonderful learning work of some museums is made visible to the wider world. In the best cases it is because the richness and diversity of a wide-ranging programme for learners of all ages cannot easily be presented on a side of A4 – for funders, for internal staff, or for the external world. One physical mechanism for delivering this visibility is a vibrant learning space, somewhere in the line of sight of all visitors.

For over 15 years the Clore Duffield Foundation has funded many museum learning spaces, large and small, across the UK: from £2.5m Clore Education Centres in the capital, to donations of less than £5,000 for single rooms in tiny local history museums. We now provide grant applicants with guidance on cost; lighting levels; location; dimensions; pricing of programmes; use and nature of the space; architect’s plans; and research (Clore Duffield 2009; see also Rogers 2004). We seek information about programming, asking to see a ‘day in the life of’ proposed learning spaces. Clore Duffield also wants to see consideration given to display and user-generated content: where will the wider visiting public be able to view the creative work, visual and otherwise, produced through the museum’s learning programmes? We direct applicants to the very best museum spaces, not all funded by Clore. Learning spaces, and the discussions around them provide a perfect micro-illustration of a much bigger issue that is only briefly touched upon in the *Get It* report.

First there is the space allocation and the cost. Then the debate about fit-out, resourcing, and use. Rare are the museums that have the footprint that enables space not to be a problem – and this immediately makes a battleground of the issue. In the context of a redevelopment, space must be found for more display, more catering, more retail, more storage, more staff offices, more corporate hire, more entertaining. It is not always the case that learning is allocated the space it needs – and architects can be terribly good at compliantly providing drawings showing 30 children fitting easily into a 50 metre-squared space, when the reality would leave little space for individual creative work. We have also seen museum staff so in thrall to their architect that they cannot listen when sound advice is given by those much more experienced in what works and what does not: the aesthetics should never become as important as making a space fit for purpose.

Clore has seen learning staff unable to run the events they desire due to their space being given over to corporate hire. We have seen new spaces, in major institutions, able to accommodate only 15 pupils. We have seen precious metres shaved off learning space allocation for catalogue storage

(i.e. retail). And we have withdrawn funding, or allocated it to other aspects of a museum's work, when, for example, a museum has found the funding that can triple its space, yet has only allocated a little over 40 metres-squared of existing space to learning – 2.2 per cent of its total new floor area. I am sure I need not add that the majority of these spaces have been at basement level. We have even seen a spacious, light-filled director's office on the top floor of a building and a dark learning space in the basement several floors below it – what does that say about the priority a museum gives to learning?

Of course, this picture is by no means universal, but what do we deduce from these negative experiences? We ascertain much about the DNA of an organisation, what is important for it and who it is deemed to be for. And who is responsible for that DNA; who crafts it, hones it and presents it to the world; who is taking the decisions that downplay spaces for learning in museums?

Leadership matters

The Culture and Learning Consortium report revealed, perhaps not surprisingly, that there is still a need to look further at how a cultural organisation's artistic and curatorial imperatives can co-exist with its learning mission – and how any tensions between them might be resolved. And it is for a museum's director and board to dispel or perpetuate these tensions. Leadership is critical: effective leadership for cultural learning requires commitment from the top. As well as recommending that cultural and educational leadership programmes should incorporate and promote cultural learning as a core and valued element, the report proposes that cultural leaders and leading educationalists should champion the role and potential of learning.

The Culture and Learning Consortium report presents a vision of how a cultural learning responsibility might take shape: a commitment to provide cultural learning opportunities for all. And not enough emphasis is placed on the notion of cultural responsibility, with its obligation on the part of the cultural organisation rather than the individual. Cultural entitlement is vital, as Nicholas Serota has noted in his reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but cultural responsibility places the onus on publicly funded cultural organisations to work to find ways of engaging with people at all stages of their lives. Museums must visibly signal to the entire community that they are centres of learning, and any museum that fails to deliver on this is failing in its contribution to civil society.

Much has been written of the three types of cultural value: intrinsic, instrumental and institutional (see Holden 2006). And about (among many others) three types of leadership model: situational, action-centred and transformational (Adair 1968 – present; see www.johnadair.co.uk/published.html). And the triumvirate approach remains useful for considering museum leadership styles. It has become clear to me over many years of working with museums that there are three very specific types of museum director, each of which has a particular set of behaviours when it comes to cultural learning.

The first, let's call him¹³ the Intransigent, pays lip service to cultural learning but has no interest in it. He is a curator, and is not really in favour of the democratisation – the *haute vulgarization* – of culture. He is a public servant with a private agenda. He relies upon colleagues to deliver education and gets involved only when he feels it is going too far and absorbing too many resources, or conversely, when a positive spotlight is upon it and he must be seen to be celebrating it (which makes him tricky to spot – he may sometimes disguise his true nature, particularly with external audiences). Children are useful for photo-calls with ministers but are generally noisy, demanding and troublesome. I would like to think of him as an endangered species – but not one worthy of protection.

The second, the Pragmatist, is in many ways the most interesting, and has the most potential. He is a political pragmatist: he is not hostile to cultural learning but his true concerns are curatorial. However, he sees the necessity of engaging with his organisation's learning work and in promoting it, as it chimes so perfectly with his paymasters' instrumental agenda – and with the wider media agenda. He listens to his staff – and acts on it. The third is a rare creature. He is a Believer, deeply committed to his organisation's capacity to change people's lives and futures; deeply committed to building new audiences and to creating memorable and transformative experiences for young people.

Little will change in an Intransigent's organisation until he leaves his post – and with luck he will have able learning staff who will deliver excellent programmes in spite of his obduracy. But the Pragmatist's and the Believer's organisations provide fertile environments for outstanding learning programmes. All three, the Intransigent, the Pragmatist and Believer, will set the tone for their respective museum's programmes, staff approach, and external perception. Brilliant programmes can be delivered in an Intransigent's organisation, but in a context of subversiveness, embattlement and low staff morale which is neither healthy nor productive. The Intransigent can be seen as self-centred – not caring for cultural responsibility; the Pragmatist as public-centred – with a primary concern for the museum's public role (in the sense of its profile, rather than its relationship with its audience) and a secondary concern for its engagement with individuals; and the Believer as user-centred, absolutely committed to individual experience and visitor engagement.

John Holden recently wrote that 'What is at work here is the belief that only a small minority can appreciate art, and that art of quality needs to be defended from the mob. If the mob gets its hands on the art, the art will be destroyed. Therefore art must be kept as the preserve of the few, because only the few understand and value it' (Holden 2008: 14). His words could well apply to any Intransigent in the context of learning. He writes that the 'cultural *aristos* necessarily wishes to exclude the public, the *demos*, from its ranks, because to admit the *demos* would undermine its own status' (ibid: 21). Our Intransigent is Holden's cultural *aristos*. In his Foreword to Holden's paper, Nicholas Hytner, artistic director of the National Theatre, writes that Holden 'takes on the cultural snobs, for whom a democratic culture is a debased culture, and he challenges cultural professionals to acknowledge their responsibilities as educators and public servants' (ibid: 7).

¹³ It is estimated that only 16 per cent of national museum directors in the UK are women. This percentage is calculated using the National Museums Directors Conference membership list, as at the date of publication: www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/members.html

We come back to cultural responsibility: all museum leaders are educators – they should not, as public servants, be working to private agendas. A key finding from the Arts Council England's Arts Debate in 2007 was the 'strong sense among many members of the public of being excluded from something that they would like to be able to access', combined with a desire for young people to be given increased access to the arts: almost all consulted were 'keen for their children to be able to access [the arts]' (Bunting 2007: 15).

From my experience, there are fewer Intransigents in the performing arts world. Pondering why this might be has led me to conclude that there are fundamental differences in approach. The curator studying Egyptology has very different drivers to the person conducting or playing in an orchestra; to the actor or director of a play. The performing arts are so fundamentally an ensemble affair and that has to lead to a different way of working in terms of the functions of an organisation.

As one national artistic venue commented during our Culture and Learning Consortium consultation, 'we are trying to reach a point where cultural learning as a programme is indistinguishable from the development of the entire artistic, social and site-based programme'. Collaboration between different functions (artistic, operational, and educational) is so much more at the heart of what a performing organisation is about. Learning departments can be seen as the R&D for the business, key to growing new audiences. And possibly the business imperative is more pressing. Visitors may generally wander into museums or galleries at any point between ten am and six pm, and while there may be Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets, or exhibition visitor or income targets, it is very different to working towards a seven-thirty pm curtain-up with every ticket sold. There is nothing so bleak for a performer as a partially-filled auditorium, but quiet galleries do not provide quite the same powerful form of reproach for those responsible for filling them.

In terms of our national museums, maybe the business imperative is not as keen as it is for independent organisations. Maybe the Department for Culture, Media and Sport does not drill down deep enough into national museums' expenditure – does it really know how much is being spent on learning? And maybe numerical PSA targets are an entirely inefficient way of tracking achievement in relation to expenditure where learning is concerned. Which leaves us with the question of how we can ensure that public money is well spent on public benefit: it is clear that numbers alone do not answer this key question.

Those in performing arts organisations are also possibly better acquainted with risk, given the nature of the artistic processes involved in creating their output – which might make them less risk averse. And this is relevant when considering the risks and difficulties involved in delivering some of the more challenging learning programmes for socially excluded young people.

And, of course, there is the stewardship issue. Audiences are the oxygen of the performing arts world. They are sometimes the kiss of death for artefacts. Light, touch, air, stiletto heels on sixteenth-century floors – in the case of historic houses – are all problematic. Meaning that conservation often sits aggressively opposed to access, unless the directors of museums and

historic environments are deeply committed to seeing that the value inherent in their collections resides in their value to those who can see, understand, appreciate them and learn about them – that is, to their audiences.

The emphasis that the National Trust has placed on family membership in recent years, and on activities for young people, demonstrates a sound awareness of the need to cultivate interest in its historic holdings if it is to retain its membership base, and therefore its primary income stream, into the future. Which is not to say that there are not warring factions within, but somehow the Trust has, by and large, found a way to reconcile these tensions in terms of its public provision: which brings us back to the point about marrying a museum's curatorial imperatives with its learning mission – and dissolving the tensions therein. I should add here that in some museums the curatorial and learning functions co-exist entirely happily and extremely productively – but we need to aim for that being the norm.

Another critical leadership point revealed by the Culture and Learning Consortium report is governance. In recent years the cultural sector has been recognising more widely the value of appointing educational leaders to senior staff and board positions in order to advocate on behalf of cultural learning, and to encourage a wider commitment to learning. This is largely about subject-matter expertise: organisations are very good at seeking legal, financial, media, curatorial or artistic expertise on their boards, but who will be looking out for the learning agenda unless there is a board member with responsibility for, and wide knowledge of, the education sector?

The report makes a further leadership point about high-level advocacy. The performing arts education world – again, possibly because of its inherently collaborative ethos – has been better at harnessing the support of its stars (Sir Simon Rattle, Howard Goodhall, Julian Lloyd Webber) to promote its cause. Powerful initiatives such as Youth Music, the Music Manifesto and Sing Up have all followed from such engagement. All elements of the cultural sector need to work together to identify and support well-known and respected national and regional figures to act as high-profile advocates for cultural learning, and we have to find the appropriate external figures to become champions for museum learning. The cultural sector has to get much better at pleading its cause in a cross-cultural, joined-up fashion, with museums lined up alongside performing arts organisations. There is scant reference to cultural learning in the latest Department for Children, Schools and Families' consultation, *21st Century Schools: A World-Class Education for Every Child* (DCSF 2008), and although the National Campaign for the Arts and the Museums Association will surely respond, there is no coherent cultural learning lobby to put the case for a more cogent inclusion.

All of this is thrown into sharp relief by the context in which we are now all operating. Learning departments have grown during an economic boom period overseen by a government committed to education. The key question now is how much of that growth has been related to learning as a core function of a museum's activity, and how much as an add-on. If that growth has been fuelled by financial opportunism, by sponsored learning posts, and externally funded programmes, then what is left when that external funding goes?

Only if the growth has been to the core-funded learning function will it now be able to survive intact. Curatorial posts are more likely to have been in place for decades, core-funded, and are therefore more likely to survive the storm. We have to hope that whatever the funding struggles now ahead, museums are very different entities in 2009 than they were in 1997, and very much more committed to their young audiences. Those led by the Pragmatists and the Believers are likely to be, but in the case of the Intransigents, this may not be the case. There are clearly rocky waters ahead: the headwind is set to increase and we must build up our tailwind if we are to ride the storm.

A new approach

So what do we conclude? That museum leaders must take their cultural learning responsibility seriously in the context of the schools Cultural Offer; that leadership is crucial if museums are going to respond effectively to the new cultural learning landscape; that traditionally prevailing orthodoxies no longer stack up – learning should no longer be marginalised under the curatorial domain in any organisational hierarchy; that there is a new direction of travel and museum directors need to embrace and not ignore it; that this new direction of travel is lent a new urgency by the current economic climate. As the Culture and Learning Consortium *Get It* report emphasised, ‘In an economic downturn, funding needs to be protected or ring-fenced to enable cultural learning opportunities to thrive’: it becomes all the more important to justify all our public expenditure.

With any luck the Intransigents will soon become the dinosaurs of the museum world – although the Natural History Museum is unlikely to wish to find space for them. Meanwhile, there is much great work going on, and much still to be achieved. The *Get It* report and this publication can both provide a spur for action in focusing attention on the civic engagement and power of cultural learning for the collective good. The key will be a new shared commitment, and thereby a new coherence, to cultural learning across the cultural and education sectors. We need an active confederation of cultural and educational stakeholders to work together, put the case more effectively, work with existing structures and create new ones. And there is no time to lose.

References

- Bunting C (2007) *Public value and the arts in England – Discussion and conclusions of the arts debate* London: Arts Council England, available at www.artscouncil.org.uk/downloads/publicvalueartsdebate.pdf
- Culture and Learning Consortium, The (2008) *Get It: The Power of Cultural Learning*, London: CLC, at www.cultureandlearning.org.uk
- Cabinet Office (2003) *Every Child Matters* London: TSO, available at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk
- Cabinet Office (2005) *Youth Matters* London: TSO, available at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthmatters

- Clore Duffield (2009) *Additional Guidance for applicants submitting proposals for Clore Learning Spaces*, available at www.cloreduffield.org.uk/cms/user_files/files/Additional%20Guidelines_11.03.09.doc
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) *The Children's Plan – Building brighter futures* London: TSO, available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/childrensplan
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) *21st Century Schools: A World-Class Education for Every Child*, London: DCSF Publications, available at <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-01044-2008>
- Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2005) *Extended schools: Access to opportunities and services for all – A prospectus* London: DfES Publications, available at www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/8509/Extended-schoolsprospectus.pdf
- Find Your Talent (2008) 'About Find Your Talent', web page, available at www.findyourtalent.org/content/about.html
- Holden J (2006) *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy: Why culture needs a democratic mandate* London: Demos
- Holden J (2008) *Democratic Culture: Opening up the arts to everyone* London: Demos, available at www.demos.co.uk/publications/democraticculture
- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) (2004) *Inspiring Learning for All* London: MLA, available at www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk
- Rogers R (2004) *Space for Learning: A Handbook for Education Spaces in Museums, Heritage Sites and Discovery Centres* London: Space for Learning Partners, available at www.cloreduffield.org.uk/page.php?id=38

5. AMERICAN MUSEUMS AS A BORDERLAND

Diane Miller

In this chapter I present views on the power and importance of museums from an international perspective, and observations about museums' role in the lives of at-risk young people, through the lens of personal experience.

I grew up in the American state of Pennsylvania, in the Hill District of the city of Pittsburgh. My family, like most of the families on the Hill, was African American and poor. When I was seven, my older, wiser, and much more worldly cousin of nine took me on an almost mythic journey to a foreign section of Pittsburgh to see great marvels. "You will never believe what treasures they have there," she regaled us on returning from her third grade field trip to the Natural History Museum. "You will never see anything as magnificent, not even in the movies", she said. There were real mummies and a huge monster bigger than a truck. None of it was cheesy fake like what we saw during our monthly trip to the movies. And best of all it was completely free. I was hooked.

Our trip took all the planning and logistics of a wartime enterprise. Secrecy was paramount. By our logic, all was lost if our parents found out. Armed with a packed lunch, we set off on a mile's trek across the city to a section called Oakland which was far beyond the small radius of the couple of blocks we were allowed to explore in our own community.

The Emerald City of Oz paled in comparison to the marvels I discovered on that first museum visit. The University of Pittsburgh's gothic Cathedral of Learning towered an incredible forty storeys above me. My own home, one of the largest in our neighborhood, was three storeys tall. When compared to my home, the Cathedral of Learning was not so much a building as a monument.

An exhibit showcasing classrooms from different time periods around the world occupied the first floor. I had a hard time comprehending that kids went to school in classrooms that were not the same as mine. I wondered what else was different – how was I different from other kids around the world – in Pittsburgh?

That visit to the museum generated questions that led me on a lifelong quest to find answers that started at my local library. I was compelled to read about other people, to find out who they were, what they did, and how their minds worked. But mummies and other monsters beckoned and our next stop was the Carnegie Natural History Museum where to my astonishment I actually gazed upon the bones of huge animals that once roamed the earth and viewed the remains of mummies from the tombs of Egypt. I spent hours in a trance-like state wandering through room after room resplendent with remarkable objects. But on that first visit I was out-voted to leave the museum for the library.

From then on, museums and libraries were always part of my leisure time choice. They were my sanctuary. It was in them I learned about the rest of the world. I learned the small things like no running, no yelling, inside a museum. I learned that if I dressed neatly I would get less negative attention. Protected by museum and library walls I dreamed of taking risks of leaving the safety of a familiar community to rub elbows with the rest of the world. I learned about man's inhumanity to man, the strength of the human spirit, and that power comes from inside. I looked past the lacklustre present of the low-income community I had been born into and looked forward to the future that was hinted of inside those museum and library walls.

I did not realise that museums only show a part of the world, but I was determined to see that part of the world for myself. I would see the places, meet the people, and have the kind of experiences of people who had who contributed items that went into museums. I was born in Pittsburgh but I was a citizen of the world. This knowledge set me apart from most of my classmates living in the present, weighted down by the grimness of reality. I lived in the future and planned to see the things I needed to see by travelling the world.

Working in the sector

I never planned on working in a museum and never knew what people did who worked in them. As a child, I thought of museum workers as prim, authority figures with some vague responsibility for maintaining soft-spoken propriety and protecting the exhibits from the likes of me. I cannot remember ever having spoken to one of these guardians of propriety and artefact treasures or, even more unlikely, having one acknowledge my presence by speaking to me. Museums were fascinating places with remarkable things to gaze at and ponder. But somehow I always felt invisible on my visits.

When I think back on my youth, I am saddened by the Cathedral of Learning's missed opportunity. It was perfectly positioned to become a borderland for kids in my community and other communities in the Pittsburgh area. Museums can and should become borderlands for communities that exist outside of what is considered the majority culture. These outside communities generally have difficulty gaining equal access to resources that other, more privileged Americans take for granted. Often these communities do not thrive in the educational system, have little access to health resources, and are unable to fully participate in economic resources.

I grew up, my love for museums still undiminished. I graduated from college and went to work in retail merchandising. Eventually the siren song of the California Museum of Science and Industry (now the California Science Center) called to me and I left for the museum's more tranquil environment.

This is what I did on my first museum job: I directed visitors to the restrooms and made sure no one brought food or drink into the exhibit areas. I did my job well, but the need for intellectual stimulation dogged me. It was not long before I found a way to engage my own intellect and those of some of our young guests. I studied exhibits that interested me, learning everything I could about them. Then I sought out an unescorted minor, one with that familiar look of awe and wonder I knew so well from my youth, and engaged her in a discussion about the exhibit. Our youthful visitors generally responded with a mixture of shy enthusiasm and disbelief that I, a museum official, had chosen to talk to them.

I was amazed. Museums had had a thirty-year head start since I had been that invisible kid visitor, but they still had not invested in maximising the visits of children who chose to spend their free time in their environs. Without being fully aware that I was being driven by my own 'invisible kid' I set out to help make youthful visitors to museums fully visible.

I moved on to the Center's education department, working on a two-year grant-funded project designed to explore strategies for encouraging more people from underserved communities to consider museums careers. Five other museums participated in the project: Liberty Science Center, Boston Museum of Science, New York Hall of Science, and the Saint Louis Science Center. I was selected because I met the requirements of a college-educated person of colour.

Museums and at-risk young people

Attending in my official capacity, it was at the Association of Science and Technology Center (ASTC) conference in Ontario, Canada that I first learned about YouthALIVE!

In 1990 the DeWitt Wallace foundation gave funding to the Association of Science and Technology Centers to encourage member museums to explore ways in which museums could become resources for young people between the ages of 10 and 17 who were dealing with multiple risk factors. This initiative was called Youth Achievement through Learning, Involvement, Volunteering and Education, YouthALIVE. Youth were considered at risk if they lived in rural communities where resources were scarce, were children of colour, were impoverished, came from single-parent homes, or were young girls – all young people cut off from access to the so-called 'American Dream'.

Meeting childhood developmental needs is essential if we are to prosper as a nation and as a world community. Only when those needs are met do children have an optimum chance to transition from childhood to a successful adulthood. In a report published in 1992, *A Matter Of Time, Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours*, the Carnegie Corporation examined this phenomenon. The study highlighted the value of pairing the

risk for children with opportunities for positive youth development. The report highlighted the developmental needs of youth and opportunities for meeting them in community settings. More than 60 museums were funded to develop and implement programmes that used museums as a resource to meet the developmental needs of young people between the ages of 10 and 17.

My first grant, which was funded by ASTC, allowed me to develop a YouthALIVE programme for youth between the ages of 10 and 13 years old who lived in public housing. The goals of the programme were simple: build interest in science by making it fun, make sure all youth successfully master the content, complete all assignments, and that their work is honoured.

The students and their parents taught me a lot during those first six years. The young people explored areas of interest to them and designed simple 'exhibits' to explain what they had learned to their families, friends, and the museum staff and visitors. The youth in the programme became the Curators Kids Club.

The students and their parents took the work seriously. The topics they explored ranged from bubbles to kites, to silly putty, to plants to insects, to fish, to building tops and yo-yos. They explored and examined and explained. The more they explored the more they noticed the more they wanted to explore, examine and explain.

The unexpected outcomes were that the young people's attitudes to learning changed. It went from something other people made you do to something you do for yourself. Their idea of what you do as an adult changed as they interacted with people working at the museum. When they met their first PhD they were surprised to learn that he had not been a child genius and had trouble learning algebra in the eighth grade. They thought that smart people were born smart; they did not know that most of what we know is learned. They were also surprised that he was an African American like them and had grown up in an African community, like them.

After 16 years of working in the museum I now spend time working with young people living in low-income American communities. I have a staff of 200 young people between the ages of 14 and 17 who each work for me for four years. Usually I hire 40 a year. About 35 stay for the entire four years. They all finish high school and at least 33 go on to college each year. Just as I was the first in my family to go to college, the same is true for most of our youth.

Their job is to learn Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths and to teach those subjects to younger children and community partners. They also work at understanding and acquiring skills necessary for success in the world of work and college. They perform research and practise scientific techniques. By the time they graduate from high school our youth have a thorough understanding of how to function effectively within systems of various types: school, work, church, museum and family. They know how to learn and adapt to different systems.

After four years of having spent a part of each week in the museum youth programme the young people develop into strong young adults with good decision-making skills. They have built interest in various topics, especially understanding the world around them. They have developed strong process

skills: observation, problem-solving, working in teams, communicating information, and persistence that allows them to be risk-takers. They have developed a strong locus of control and overcome the risks to their learning. They have built skill sets to live productive lives.

Do museums matter?

You bet museums matter. They mattered in my life and they matter even more to today's youth. But I like the answer given by my friends at the American Association of Museums the best: museums are:

'Safe places for the exploration of ideas and experiences. Vital partners in our communities. Economic engines. Sources of civic pride and accomplishments. Catalysts of social change and partnerships in a knowledge economy. Stewards of a shared heritage that represents humankind's greatest achievements and nature's greatest treasures.'

In the United States as elsewhere, museums collectively have control over a large amount of resources, they organise things and thoughts and have contributed to the rituals that define us as citizens.

If we agree that museums matter, then everyone must have equal access to their vast resources. Museums can be the perfect borderland because they have the capacity to provide a safe and nurturing place for young people to learn and grow. Museums are dynamic places filled with people and interesting objects. Museums provide places where young people can achieve, learn, be involved, volunteer or be employed.

Creating a youth programme that allows young people to be successful as youth and to build skills to be successful adults must be done by design. Young people need the opportunity to try new behaviours, new languages, and to explore values of majority cultures around them. They need a space that is non-judgemental and does not require a choice to be made between different cultures, a space that allows them to value each culture equally. Young people need space to explore and learn the tools of multiple cultures in order to maximise the benefits and the resources of all.

By embracing their role as borderlands, American museums – and those in other countries – can play a significant role in helping everyone assimilate to the majority culture.

6. MUSEUMS AND SCHOOLS:

Nurturing an indispensable relationship

Estelle Morris and Martha Spurrier

The relationship between museums and education is long-standing. Museums grew out of a desire to pass knowledge from generation to generation, to foster cultural understanding and to engage people in their environment. It is no coincidence that the old university towns are the homes of some of the UK's oldest museums: the Fitzwilliam in Cambridge (1848), the Ashmolean in Oxford (1683) and the British Museum in London (1753).

These museums and the many more that flourish continue to stand as educational powerhouses across the country. There have been times in their history when their mission to educate has not been as central to their activities as it ought but museums have always been institutions associated with learning. They have also always been a reflection of their time. The social attitudes and values that define society at any stage of its development are reflected in the education system and in the institutions that support it. For centuries these attitudes and values were elitist and exclusive. In turn, museums were too often bastions of the establishment, refusing entry to unaccompanied women during the suffragette movement, charging prices beyond the means of many ordinary families and demanding respectful silence.

Times have changed. Different social values and public expectations are reflected both in our schools and in our museums. Museums have become more democratic, opening their doors to the entire community, cleaning out their dusty cabinets and exploring ways to impart knowledge that does not involve Latinate labelling. In 2007–08, the National Museums of Liverpool saw 375,353 young people under the age of 15 participating in on- or off-site educational activities, a dramatic increase on the 71,800 of six years earlier. Manchester's National Museum of Science and Industry saw an increase from 272,000 in 2001–02 to 962,715 in 2007–08. And according to a survey of the big urban museums, children participating in educational activities have almost trebled since 2001–02 (Hooper-Greenhill *et al* 2006). However, progress has been more evolutionary than revolutionary and can hardly be said to have touched every corner of the land.

Pressure to change

The arrival of the Labour government in 1997 brought pressure for the sector to change more quickly. Free admission was introduced along with extra funding but with the arrival, too, of targets on access and education; the first specific grant for museums to work with schools was awarded in 1999. This approach of targets and ring-fenced money is often criticised as over-prescriptive but it was designed to make sure that changes taking place in social attitudes were reflected in the museum sector. Social and political imperatives meant that the material, cultural and academic education that museums can offer young people should be on offer to *all* young people.

Whatever the criticisms about the way government has sought to influence museums the results have been impressive. Interestingly, in a letter to the *Guardian* newspaper in June 2007, in which a group of leading directors from the national museums sought to defend the free entry policy, it was the statistics on the increase in visits by young people that was at the centre of their argument: 16 million visits by children, 78 per cent more than a decade earlier; 6.5 million more people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and in the preceding six years a 54 per cent increase in visits from black and minority-ethnic people.

The pressure to change has not just been directed at museums. The economic need to educate more children to a higher level and our greater knowledge about how children learn has led to a culture of rapid change in our schools, too. There have been seismic shifts in educational theory and child psychology; from Skinner to Steiner and Neill to Montessori. Eighty per cent of what we know about how the brain works has been discovered in the last twenty years. We understand the forms of learning that are vital to the cognitive development of any child and no one now thinks that schools can operate separately from wider society or that skills other than those of teachers are not essential in educating our children. There is a sense of urgency in putting all this newfound knowledge into effect.

It is the coming together of these two sets of changes – the democratising of museums and the growing body of research on learning, together with higher aspirations from citizens – that has given us the chance to transform the relationship between the education and the museum sectors.

We are not, of course, starting from scratch. Many of us will have had our own first museum visit as part of a school group. However, the relationship we need now must be deeper, sustainable, more coherent and focused. Museums must be seen as an essential part of the education we provide for children and young people, not just as an optional extra but because they enable learning that is not found in schools.

Why museums matter to education

Three main strengths make museums indispensable to a child's education. First, museum education uses a different teaching style from that employed in school: they teach through objects and images. Museum education is

creative, pedagogic learning. Learning through objects is different to the more text-based and often passive learning in classrooms. Some children will find learning through objects easier; all will find it different. Feeling or looking at artefacts, imagining their story, reconciling the object with its accompanying text is a way of learning unique to museums. They can promote a 'jigsaw' approach to learning, encouraging children to find and research a niche area of the subject and present it to others.

Second, museums help develop a different set of relationships to those in schools – both between pupils and between pupils and adults. They allow children to use space, technology, time, facilities and adult skills in a different way. Anyone who has ever seen a school group in a museum will recognise that these visits give children a chance to engage differently with their peers, allowing and encouraging peer group cooperative learning, which research tells us is underused in schools. Children learn alongside one another, using their own systems of understanding to help each other. They move about; they sit – or lie – on the floor; they change groups or find a quiet spot to work alone if that is what they want. The bell does not ring and there is no rigid timetable to demand they move on. They seek adult help when they need it and often on a one-to-one basis. They are also surrounded by people who are not part of their group but just fellow visitors, there at the same time and they have to reflect this in the way they behave.

In effect, they are in charge of their own learning in a way that is far more difficult to achieve in a structured school setting: a museum provides a safe place where students feel comfortable taking risks and working at their own pace.

Third, the content of museum education is built to nurture a sense of community, shared history and cultural value. Not only is the environment physically safe but it is intellectually safe as well. Museums engage children in complex and sensitive issues and provide a secure forum for debate. Controversial issues can be addressed within walls of information, expertise and encouragement. For example, at a time when society has sometimes found it difficult to debate immigration in a constructive way, museums trace the movements of people through generations, across continents and from one end of the United Kingdom to the other. They tell the story that immigration and emigration is not just of our time but part of the history of the world and part of every child's and every family's history.

We often worry about communities being less cohesive, less strong than they used to be. As globalisation gathers pace there is an even greater need for children to feel secure and understand their place in the world. They need to know that they belong. Museums with an anthropological or sociological theme like the Ashmolean help children to understand their roots. Individuals need this security and it is crucial to the welfare of society. William Empson recognised this quality, too, writing in his poem *Homage to the British Museum*, 'Attending there let us absorb the cultures of nations, and dissolve into our judgement all their codes.' Whereas a classroom can help children understand the parts, a museum is there to show them the whole.

Maximising the relationship

There is, of course, much good practice right across the sector, in local authority and independent museums and urban and rural areas. Box 1 provides one example.

Box 1. Strengthening the museums and schools relationship: the approach of Ryedale Folk Museum, North Yorkshire

'We've put learning, through engagement with the collection, at the centre of all we do. We've built robust relationships with our schools making that learning relevant. We've worked hard to create a sense of place that everyone can feel part of. One project, called Heather and Maple, involved sixth formers researching emigration from the local area to Canada from 1830–1880. With help from primary schools they then made a documentary that is now part of our permanent display in the museum. It is all about giving ownership and control, enabling the students and children to celebrate their past.

'What we do is not about "one off" projects. It's about building relationships where the children see the museum as an extension of their classroom, where they feel safe and secure to learn. As well as delivering cutting-edge project work we deliver after-school clubs, family learning and traditional school trips. We strive to shift away from folk coming to us as visitors; [instead they come] as supporters of something that they feel is worth supporting.'

Mike Benson, Director of Ryedale Folk Museum

Yet the reality is that we have some way to go to make the most of the relationship between the two sectors. There is always a danger that trying to structure things that have developed organically dampens their creativity and spontaneity but leaving it to the enthusiasm of individual teachers and curators leaves too much to chance. We have enough experience and good practice to learn from and we should now have the confidence to begin to shape a more ambitious agenda. Our aim must be to make museum education an entitlement for every child. It still too often depends on the location of the school, its proximity to a major museum or the enthusiasm of an individual teacher or curator.

The school sector is hugely diverse – in size, geographical location, pupil intake and social background. The museum sector could be said to be even more diverse – not only in size or location but in funding, breadth of expertise and capacity. There is no one model but there needs to be support for the different models that develop.

Some key questions need to be addressed:

- Do museums and schools need to change in any way to achieve greater benefit for pupils?
- What are the most effective models of working relationships given the diversity of the two sectors?

- What external support is needed?
- How can we measure success?

Changes in museums and schools

At the heart of any debate into museum education there is a fundamental challenge. Museum education is in part the point where schools and museums overlap yet they have different traditions, different hinterlands and other relationships to forge and maintain. They train and promote people in a different way, have different accountability mechanisms and different reward systems. Their worlds touch but they have different roots. Our aspiration must be that what the two create together has real meaning and strength but does not divorce them from their backgrounds. Rather, museum educators have to drive change on two fronts: in their relationship with schools and in re-positioning themselves in museums. They cannot do one if they ignore the other; they are interdependent.

This need to 'look both ways at once' could be seen as marginalising education in museums, but in fact it enhances the argument for its importance. Museum education should both strengthen the relationship between schools and museums and reflect on how both do their core business. This is a challenge for everyone and across the whole sector it is some way from being achieved.

We now turn to look at ways in which the space that is jointly occupied by schools and museums can be improved – how the experience for learners can be of a higher quality and accessed by more children.

Museum educators and teachers have different roles but they work with the same children and must develop an overlapping agenda. First and foremost, museums and schools must work together to develop joint educational goals. There can be national frameworks and models of good practice but essentially the educational objectives need to be developed and owned *locally*. They need to reflect local circumstances and local provision.

At its very simplest, museums and schools must physically accommodate each other. Museums must be welcoming and practical places for children; they need to think about how to organise their space, when and where they hold demonstrations and workshops, and what they can offer children to touch, play with and take away. This includes everything from the sublime to the obvious – school groups need good canteens, plenty of toilets and disability access, they also need displays that are for people under four feet tall, they need big writing, bright colours and funny jokes; it is no coincidence that a museum holding an exhibition called *Does My Bum Look Big In This?* went to number two in the nation's top five museums on TimesOnline. New acquisitions, new objects conserved, documented or on display, re-hangs and innovative interpretation using technology can play a part in advancing educational achievement.

In order to make the most of museum visits, teachers must view them as integral to their pupils' learning, not something that would be 'nice' if it could be fitted into an overcrowded timetable. In turn the classroom must act as a support for what happens in museums. There needs to be preparation for the visit, feedback and continuous reinforcement if museum trips are not to exist

in a vacuum. Museums must not be allowed to be isolated from the learning system and this requires a truly integrated and collaborative approach from both ends. This means that practitioners in both sectors must be trained in how to incorporate the social, emotional and cognitive aspects of learning that make material education so effective.

For this to happen the training of both teachers and museum educators needs to change. If both professions develop completely separately they will find it harder to shape a shared agenda. Of course, huge parts of their jobs are independent from each other but the work we expect them to do together needs to be recognised either in initial training or further professional development. Secondments between institutions do happen but can hardly be said to be fully integrated into the priorities of schools and museums. We cannot rely on these to deliver the changes we want. We need to be more inventive and offer more choice in how both can improve their understanding and skills. We need sector-endorsed local events; professionally accredited certificates; specialised masters courses; 'leaders' dinners' run by both the nation's leading head teachers and museum directors... any or all of these would be a small step towards strengthening the skills of those we expect to take this policy forward.

Importantly, there will be no momentum for change without career recognition for those involved. Those curators specialising in museum education must have their expertise recognised in their own sector. There must be a proper career structure and those in charge of education in museums must be given the seniority needed to propose, implement and manage changes and reforms to their educational policies.

Building effective working relationships

Some schools already have excellent working relationships with their museums. Small, not necessarily nationally known, museums have put themselves at the centre of their communities. The Ryedale Folk Museum in North Yorkshire (see Box 1), the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, and the Salford Museum and Art Gallery have all sought to actively strengthen their links with local schools. The latter, for example, in partnership with museums in Leicester, Sunderland and Liverpool, began a project in 2003 entitled Engaging Refugees and Asylum Seekers with local school children and immigrant families, to promote community integration and English language learning. This project has gone on to win an award from the Learning and Skills Council and to secure support as a national initiative from the Departments of Culture, Media and Sport, and Children, Schools and Families.

Others schools have excellent and regular links with national and local authority museums. The exciting development over the last decade has been the partnerships that have begun to develop. Organisations like the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) support regional 'hub' museums as part of the Government-funded Renaissance programme. Between 2002–03 and 2006–07 it awarded £64.7 million to the nine regional hubs who in turn built local partnerships with other museums from all sectors. These museums saw an overall visitor increase of 9.6 per cent in

the same time period (the North West and Yorkshire saw a 19.8 per cent and a 16.2 per cent growth respectively).

Collaboration and partnership have taken other forms as well: touring exhibitions linking the nationals with regional and independent museums have meant that school children can see and learn from unique and rare artefacts without having to leave their own town. Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens recorded its highest visitor total in 2006–07, in part because it staged exhibitions from the Victoria and Albert Museum, the National Portrait Gallery and the British Museum. Similarly, Bradford's staging of the British Museum's Emperor's Terrapin exhibition contributed to 90,000 increase in visitors in 2006–07 and the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle achieved its highest level of Years 1–11 school visitors to date when it participated in the National Gallery's Passion for Paint project.

There comes a time when any good idea needs to attract those who have not naturally signed up – those who do not see the benefits or do not feel they have the skills to take up the chance. For these people it must sometimes seem an insurmountable task. Indeed it probably would be insurmountable if each school or museum had to do it themselves. Just as partnerships between museums have been such a vital part of our recent progress we need to encourage partnerships between schools and between groups of schools and museums.

It is nothing new to suggest that schools should work in clusters. Most already do. Working as a cluster with museums – and other cultural institutions – would make the most of the time and resources they have and give them the confidence they need. Each cluster of schools might have a key teacher who liaised with a museum or group of museums. Schools could share ideas about preparation and follow-up work; the link teacher would be the main point of contact for the museum educator. Furthermore, there are ways that these links can be strengthened that are not dependent on actual on-site visits: for example, via websites with interactive learning programmes that schools could subscribe to or loan-boxes of materials from museums for children to explore in the classroom.

External support

No one is suggesting that the work between museums and schools should have a statutory underpinning. Its success will instead depend on the skill and commitment of those involved; but others can help or hinder and progress will be easier if there is support from outside.

Museums must be given a high profile both by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, endorsing further the value of museums to education and their commitment to innovative ways of teaching and learning.

Inevitably, funding is an ever present issue. All of these proposals are more difficult to implement for the non-government-funded museums and those with a small staff. Yet these activities do need funding. Only 22 museums are sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and while they received £340.3 million from the Government in 2007–08, others are not so lucky even though we need *all* our museums to play a part.

The evidence of a decade of increased funding shows that museums are not a bad investment – there are 2000 accredited museums in the UK and the annual economic benefits of the sector are estimated to be £1.5 billion, based on turnover and visitor expenditure. If we want them to do more as an integrated part of our education system it will have to be paid for – but the ‘return’ could well justify the expense.

Museums must see education as part of their core tasks and accept that this needs to be financed from their own resources in the same way as the other things they do. Yet if this is a key part of a child’s education ought not schools to feel that it has a call on their resources as well? Money allocated to schools could be used, for example, to pay a part-time teacher to develop the link and the relationship. If schools acted as a cluster this may not be the challenge it seems. The Government could adjust the funding model so this not only became possible but was actively encouraged.

For the national museums the argument will be that they are funded by government and this should suffice. This is right but there is a growing issue about the level of funding. The record of this government on museum funding is second to none. Yet the more successful a museum, the more school visits it receives, the more it costs. There is more wear and tear. The more teachers and curators develop their work the more they will want to change their physical space or the range of materials loaned to schools. This ‘development’ money is not there – even for the government-funded nationals. We would suggest that there needs to be at least a capital funding stream from those government departments that deliver education services – at the moment the Departments for Children Schools and Families, and for Innovation, Universities and Skills – in addition to existing money allocated to museums.

More people are needed, too. As we develop the new group of teaching assistants and higher level teaching assistants as a key part of the school workforce, could some be trained in museum and cultural support? Could this become a specialised career route? Both schools and museums have ‘armies’ of volunteers. Could we recruit a new group of volunteers through both sectors, who could support the professionals?

Arguments for the better use of the educational facilities of museums must not be mistaken for furthering the school system and nothing else; integrated learning will lay the foundations for future adult involvement in museums, for children bringing their relatives in the holidays and for future teachers to encourage museum visits both on and off their watch. Adult visits to museums are already on the increase – since 2002–03 regional museums have seen a 79.6 per cent increase and national museums an average increase of 83 per cent, with some, like the Natural History Museum, seeing a growth of over 100 per cent. Starting to get children involved earlier will only bolster these statistics in the future.

The figures tell only part of the story yet we will need to be able to measure and describe real success. It will be evident in the enthusiasm of those involved and in the choices both sectors make to maintain the relationship. Yet we will need to recognise the difference between good and poor practice and understand the things that make the difference. This is not easy

without dampening the creativity and responsiveness that should be central to excellence but it is something that the sectors will need to take on.

Through coincidence or design, the first decade of the 21st century sees both the cultural sector and the education service raising the scale of their ambition to reflect their growing importance and higher public expectations. Both sectors are facing up to change; both have accepted new roles and responsibilities; both have received significant extra public funding.

If ever there were a time to believe in a different future relationship between the two it is probably now. If we can become a society in which it is taken for granted that our children are introduced to the wealth and knowledge held by our museums and in which they grow up feeling comfortable and confident in using them, then that will be a change for the good. Such ambitious plans do place huge extra demand on all who work in these sectors and an obligation on all who can support them. If we do not make this happen now we might not get another chance for a long time. So let's go for transformation while we can.

Reference

Hooper-Greenhill E, Dodd J, Gibson L, Phillips M, Jones C and Sullivan E (2006) *What did you learn at the Museum today? Second study. Evaluation of the outcome and impact of learning through the implementation of the Renaissance in the Regions Education Programme Delivery Plans across nine Regional Hubs (2005)* Leicester: RCMG

7. BEYOND THE SCHOOL:

Museums and young people

Tim Desmond

For argument's sake, let's consider the stereotypical British views of a museum visit: for children, a once-a-year day-out from school, to learn first hand about the lives of their ancestors and for families, predominantly from middle-class backgrounds, a cultural pastime for occasional weekends and holidays.

Being aware of this stereotype, museums must tackle head on the agendas of social exclusion and mobility. But how do they currently do it? Is it perhaps through appointing social inclusion officers and running softly evaluated short-term projects for minority groups who come into the museum for their activity then promptly leave?

These opening words are designed to cause a sense of polite disgruntlement for those within the museum sector, but sadly beyond our institutions these stereotypes do, at least in part, still exist.

If museums are to have a widespread social 'renaissance' and 'inspire learning for all' they will need to undergo a revolution and this revolution needs to be shouted about to policy advisers, and of course to young people themselves, using a format and language that they can understand. The challenge is to look beyond measuring success via increased visitor numbers and self-congratulation over bringing more minority groups to museums. Rather there is an opportunity to design exhibitions and activities that educate and galvanise participants and aspire to bring about a change in society that segues with the bigger picture represented in social reform.

George Orwell said in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* 'who controls the past, controls the future' and these words illustrate what a great and powerful resource museums have in their stores and exhibitions. Indeed, there is no doubt that the potential is there: museums have the infrastructure, the themes and the breadth of content to be at the heart of learning, and far more so, we could claim, than other cultural organisations such as

theatres, art galleries or cinemas. But there is a passive element within the mindset of many museums whereby collections are shown using the display cases as frames and interpretation is more textbook than engaging and educational.

Historically, theatre has played a part in our education and national understanding by holding a mirror up to society, showing it warts and all. Playwrights and directors such as Bertolt Brecht in Germany and Harold Pinter in England set about trying to change society by affecting people's political understanding. Why can museums not be more radical? In the 1950s the Royal Court changed the face of theatre by showcasing the work of the 'Angry Young Men' who put a mirror up to society. In the 1960s the National Theatre set a standard mark for excellence by creating a people's theatre on the South Bank. Both had in common champions who changed public perceptions and pushed English drama forward, being creative and controversial and reaching out to different audiences. Where are these champions in the museum world?

While theatre has practised the art of reinvention, it has in recent years seen a decline in visitor numbers as it competes increasingly with film and TV. On the other hand museums have seen numbers increase, yet they have not really known what to do with these extra visitors apart from more of the same.

With an acceptance that museums can attract large numbers of people comes the possibility of using education more proactively for a social purpose rather than simply a history lesson. Through education museums can reach out to the broadest possible spectrum of young people and aid a level of learning that can benefit society now and in the future, rather than simply limiting it to an awareness of the past.

Young people who fit into the 'NEET' category (not in employment, education or training, between the ages of 16 and 18) desperately need nurturing and giving the opportunity to map out their future with new positive experiences and skills. Museums as institutions can fulfil that role not only because they are used to encouraging learning but also because they provide opportunities for volunteering.

As a starting point museums can offer young people the chance to broaden their experiences and knowledge by understanding past lives and how they have been formulated. As organisations museums provide a safe, stable environment with professionals who on the whole love their job and enjoy conserving and educating. What better place to be than in a museum for a teenager who has spent his or her formative years learning about failure and with little sense of their surroundings beyond the bubble in which they live?

However, with all their strengths as positive environments for learning, like many other institutions such as schools and hospitals, museums are not good at promoting their social purpose within our society. They tend to see their goal as sharing the secrets of their collections with the lucky visitor. Engaging the young outside the National Curriculum requires more than this: museums must find out what young people need and what they are not getting. Furthermore, for museums to play a more active role in socialising young people there needs to be a radical change in their structure and how they are perceived outside the sector.

Museums x funding = visitors

In recent years we have seen many of the larger national museums achieving record visitor numbers. For example, the British Museum received 35,000 visitors to its Chinese new year day and Terracotta Army exhibition. In total, this exhibition went on to receive 4.8 million visitors in 2007, a staggering foot flow by any standards.

The Renaissance – Museums for changing lives programme for transforming regional museums, has received £149 million over the last five years, another way in which the sector measures its success. Writing in the *AIM Bulletin* in June 2008, the vice chairman of the Association of Independent Museums (AIM), Matthew Tanner, said 'Renaissance has proved that investing large amounts of money in a small number of museums can increase audiences at those museums.' Renaissance has led to increased levels of museum staffing, with 188 new curatorial posts, for example. Visitor numbers have also risen, particularly to the Renaissance regional hub museums.

But should museums set their criteria for success by visitor numbers and the amount of funding they receive? There is a need for them to understand that these measurements and evaluation are not significant outside the sector to organisations that are serious about learning and young people.

Changing lives?

Are museums changing people's lives and, just as importantly, are they perceived as institutions that can change people's lives? The simple answer to both these questions is no; and the challenge is a mammoth one.

Government has shown through frameworks like Every Child Matters and strategies such as Local Area Agreements that young people need a multi-agency approach. Museums can play their part if they can build organisational relationships outside the sector. They also need to work at the relationships they create with their visitors and participants. There is a desire for and a focus on educating young people, but this message is not reaching young people or the agencies they are connected to.

Within government cross-departmental communication is not always fluid and museums whose value is more noticeably cultural than social struggle to reach beyond the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The challenge and indeed opportunity now is to look beyond visitor numbers and exhibition development to create a facility for social change. To do this a new way of thinking is required.

Case study: National Centre for Citizenship and the Law and the Galleries of Justice

The Galleries of Justice museum in Nottingham is a charitable trust occupying the heritage site the Shire Hall and includes Victorian court rooms, a Georgian prison and an Edwardian police station.

In 2002 the museum's education department of five full-time staff became the National Centre for Citizenship and the Law (NCCL) with the strap line

'Learn from the past, act in the present, change the future'. The aim was to bring together the formal and informal learning programmes in the museum including the day-long History-based school visits and the community-based social inclusion programmes. The goal was that all the young people who worked with the museum would gain an understanding of legal literacy, community involvement and their rights and responsibilities, thus contributing to their 'Citizenship' learning, and looking beyond a History market that has been declining in importance in the curriculum. The NCCL sees itself as an agent for social change and a progression from the Galleries of Justice, which is a museum of social history.

Citizenship education has value within primary and secondary schools and could also be targeted at young people at risk of exclusion from mainstream education and involvement in crime.

The name National Centre for Citizenship and the Law reflects the desire for education to have an equal status to the museum rather than being simply a department of it. By giving the NCCL autonomy it allowed partnerships to be formed outside the museum sector which brought about new projects and funding. As such, it was conceived for both philosophical and practical business reasons.

The museum, capital funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is rich in resources and strongly supported by well trained, motivated staff. As funding increased – over the last five years the NCCL has attracted over £2 million for its citizenship and crime prevention programmes from a wide variety of funders – and the education aspect grew rapidly, dedicated staff were appointed to run programmes and projects both in the museum and through outreach across the East Midlands.

Museums are often viewed as cultural organisations that facilitate visits with 'soft' outcomes. The fact that a museum can use its resources to be a social educator and also cultural entertainment is difficult for many to reconcile. Yet the Galleries of Justice, with its court rooms, police station and prison and its wealth of exhibition and activity spaces, offers a perfect setting for stimulating learning. Add to this a sympathetic core staff, who are trained to work with young people, and the ability to bring in specialists and you have a real opportunity to take children out of their environment and facilitate learning.

The understanding that the Galleries of Justice came to was that the word 'museum' counteracted their social purpose to deliver citizenship and crime prevention programmes and stopped them accessing the funding they needed. The solution reached was to brand the National Centre of Citizenship and the Law as an agent for social change and a separate entity from the Galleries of Justice. While the NCCL was seen to deliver the education programmes at the museum, it also had a life of its own when delivering its crime prevention projects across the country.

The NCCL was encouraged to gain in status away from the museum and divided the trustees to represent the two sides of the business. And the role of education was given an explicit purpose beyond the collections – what was originally set up as a museum has been divided into two complementary parts of equal standing: a museum and an educational provider.

Currently, planning is taking place with the Ministry of Justice to create a National Centre for Citizenship and the Law in London using a disused courtroom. What is interesting about this is that the organisation that is being proposed will not be a museum, but will have the facility to put on exhibitions and collaborate with museums in London.

While the NCCL has a number of partners outside the museum sector such as Crime Stoppers, the local youth justice board and the youth offending team, it also works with museums such as Imperial War Museum North and the Oxford Museum Service. The objective is to deliver projects rich in social outcomes and that have access points to young people that other organisations can use.

It is unlikely that the NCCL would have made the progress it has over the last few years had it been branded a 'museum education department'. Relationships with other crime prevention and learning agencies such as the Citizenship Foundation would have been more tentative, and funding bodies would have complained of mission drift.

As the NCCL has achieved success in reducing crime in Nottingham through early intervention and gained recognition from the Ministry of Justice the challenge now is to disseminate this model of practice to the museum sector and attract champions.

A model for progression: Museum + education syndicate = progress

It is important to recognise how flexible museums can be in their work. Other cultural organisations are rooted to their genres, for example theatres exist through their stages and art galleries through their pictures and exhibits. However, it is entirely possible for museums to use their collections and buildings as a launch pad to explore the wider world. The majority of museums are already doing this through children's activities during school holidays, and celebrating historical events and social and cultural dates. Could this be developed further?

Museums that have developed their education programmes to have social outcomes do exist: Nottingham city museum service has for many years run social inclusion programmes with specialist groups, using museums to work, for example, with teenage mothers on communication projects building self esteem and offering skills training. The Imperial War Museum's Moving Minds project offers cross-generational programmes whereby young people learn about war through dialogues with veterans. The Museum of East Anglian Life's education team works with ex-offenders.

But museums pioneering exciting new initiatives such as these are few and far between; nor are they heralded in the media or in the public's understanding.

Using the Galleries of Justice/NCCL as a model I believe that museums need to restructure themselves so that they have annexed 'education syndicates' to deliver their learning programmes and allow them access to funding and the prospect of cross-domain and cross-sector partnership work.

Most museums are rich in resources and facilities, are stable organisations, well managed with a range of skilled staff, and hold a good reputation

in the community. But the sector tends to be conservative by nature with a tendency to be introverted; there needs to be a change in how museums perceive themselves and how they are perceived.

By changing the dynamic of how education is structured within the sector there is also the opportunity to make museums and the MLA stronger and more vocal in their engagement with government and local authorities.

Changing the museum sector and how it operates is a mammoth task but education can no longer be seen as a poor relation to the collection; it needs equal status so that all can work together effectively. Giving education its own standalone structure (a syndicate to the museum) allows for far greater autonomy and scope that can bring about a more proactive and socially joined-up approach to learning within museums.

Museums could use the example of schools that have standalone special units that facilitate tailor-made curricula for children with special needs. They are run by skilled staff who manage to complement the way the main school is run but at the same time progress the children in a more intense and individual way. Museums invariably have education departments with their own suites that could carry out a similar function, offering young people a neutral safe environment in which to learn. Beyond these units participants would be able to access and importantly use the exhibition areas as resource spaces to aid their development. Ideally museums would use the space they have within the museum but where this is impractical learning areas could be at other locations, as long as they were formally linked to and managed by the museum.

In terms of curriculum and subject matter managed by such subsidiaries the possibilities are endless and such teaching is currently already in action across the sector. Museums can cover a range of academic and vocational disciplines including: understanding the collection and its historical significance; learning the technical and artistic skills of putting on and constructing exhibitions; and experiencing at first-hand the running of a visitor attraction including corporate hospitality, catering and retail work. Museums offer all these routes to learning and employability.

Acting as 'interns' is also beneficial for young people's confidence and futures. At the Galleries of Justice, the NCCL is a chief provider of interns who work within the museum. They consist of volunteers, students and, notably, prisoners from HMP Sudbury, an open prison. The '925' project offers placements to prisoners and young offenders at the museum, where they are engaged across the departments gaining training and work experience. Furthermore, they are encouraged to feel very much part of the museum team and indeed the wider community through their public-facing delivery.

The key element to creating 'education syndicates' annexed to museums will be to standardise delivery, increase understanding within the local community of what is on offer to them, and draw in funding. These subsidiaries, while linked to museums (or a group of smaller museums), would need to have core funding from government and the capacity to fundraise; they would also need to develop so that they become attractive for statutory bodies to commission them for tendered services.

Like schools that have applied for status as specialising in technology, performing arts and so on, museums could have their own specialist areas that would obviously be influenced by the content of their collections. The subsidiaries would offer a menu of programmes to serve the needs of young people be they excluded from society or needing access to courses to complement their studies.

Given that museums operate in different ways and at different scales, there would be a need to join some smaller institutions together in cluster groups where appropriate. As the model started to take shape, there could be development outside the sector to draw in partners such as libraries, theatres, art galleries and even sporting organisations.

The key will be to standardise the offer through a shared national curriculum albeit one that allows room for interpretation, but culminates in recognised, transferable qualifications. This standard service would fit into youth education provision and fill a gap currently not served by schools and colleges. With this shared outlook local authorities would be able to direct young people to those museums that best meet their particular learning or social needs.

Museums have the breadth of collections and subject matter to cover a range of disciplines: from natural history through to art, design and citizenship. The objective, though, is not to bring young people to museums and put them in classrooms but to use the sites and collections to stimulate learning and enhance the communication of ideas.

Conclusion

The creation of 'education syndicates' to museums would need significant funding to set up and develop, a process of training and recruitment and a high-profile marketing campaign. The end result would be a series of education facilities that would do justice to the museum sector and allow us to play a significant role in the educating of all our young people outside the limitations of schools and colleges.

The easiest way to do this is through adapting the existing Renaissance in the Regions programme so that it enables an investment in 'educational syndicates' and encourages future investment in learning from outside the sector. This would also produce more measurable outcomes in terms of an increase in educational attainment.

What we need is a 'republic of museums' with an education facility at its core that connects with mainstream learning providers but also with those young people who have fallen out of society, who can take a route back in via the safe haven that museums provide.

8. MUSEUMS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

David Fleming and Carol Rogers

In this chapter we concentrate on the issues of poverty and deprivation, and look at how museums might work to overcome the barriers to young people that these issues place in the path to their participation. This is not a job for the faint-hearted or the unmotivated.

No-go, elitist, irrelevant?

It is an uncomfortable truth that museums remain a no-go area for many people. Most modern museums regret this, and put efforts into broadening their appeal. Nonetheless, the museum sector generally remains locked into a situation wherein large swathes of the population have no appreciation or respect for what it does and why it does it.

If museums are losing their reputation for being elitist, this is happening only slowly – as is their gaining of a reputation for being relevant. We must not underestimate how much there is still to do. Museums are nowhere near achieving broad social relevance and value (this they have in common with the publicly-funded cultural sector at large). Until they do, museums will remain out of step with democratic principles, and with the concept of social justice. At best, this is a dangerous position for the museum sector to be in; at worst, it represents a betrayal of society at large.

There is a growing number of exceptions, of course. There are museums that do have an increasingly broad appeal, that fight for relevance, that believe in social entitlement and that they should be delivering social value in return for public funding.

It is obvious that the challenge of engaging young people is the most important one museums face. Engaging and then capturing young people as regular users and advocates of museums for the rest of their lives is the Holy Grail of museum activity – and in fact can be relatively straightforward

to achieve. Museums are, after all, bursting with stimulating concepts, ideas and images.

But the hard fact is that some young people, those on the margins of mainstream society, are exceedingly difficult targets, so difficult that many cultural institutions never succeed in engaging them to any worthwhile degree. If museums are to make a real contribution to social justice then they have to reach out and find ways to engage these young people. It is not through winning over young people from comfortable backgrounds that museums will make a genuine difference in society, but through attracting marginalised young people who come from difficult backgrounds.

Understanding deprivation

What is it like to be living 'on the margins of mainstream society'? By far the most important feature is poverty. People in poverty are living on low incomes with poor job prospects for adults. There is a high rate of people claiming benefits, such as Jobseeker's Allowance and incapacity benefit. Infant mortality is high, as are the rates of GCSE failures, Key Stage 2 failures, teenage pregnancies, recorded crime, childhood obesity, underweight babies, binge drinking, bad diet, tooth decay; there is a low rate of breastfeeding. There is a lack of basic skills in reading, writing and communication generally. There is a lack of social contact, low self esteem, anger. There is a mistrust of officialdom and of institutions, and people feel stigmatised. The incidence of abuse of alcohol, drugs and other stimulants is high, as is debt, which creates need, illness and stress.

We must not make the mistake of lumping together all people living in poverty as though they were a homogeneous group or class, and living in poverty does not inevitably result in family life that is devoid of love, warmth, support and hope. Nonetheless, there are recurring issues that museums need to understand if they are to make any impact in disadvantaged communities.

As well as these issues, museums need to comprehend the sheer scale of poverty in this country. While Britain is the fifth richest country in the world, nearly four million children are living on less than ten pounds per day. In some urban parliamentary constituencies more than 50 per cent of children are living in poverty.

Overcoming barriers: Liverpool

The authors of this article work in Liverpool, overall the most socially deprived city in the UK. Along with Belfast and Hull, the city has recently been placed on 'red alert' status in a review of the social, economic and environmental strengths and weaknesses of sixty-four UK cities. It is inconceivable to us that the social and economic condition of Liverpool and, indeed, its neighbours such as Knowsley and Birkenhead, should not loom large in the thinking about our work with young people at National Museums Liverpool (NML).

There are many barriers to be overcome if we are to engage the interest of young people from deprived backgrounds in museum activities.

Research undertaken for the Liverpool City Region's Find Your Talent Pathfinder Delivery Plan in 2008 showed that lack of money crops up time and again in young people's responses to what dissuades them from engaging in cultural activities (Liverpool City Region 2008). One response to a question about what stopped a young person from doing creative and cultural things was: *"Money – it's ok if your parents are on a good wage, but my mum's not got a job and my dad's deceased."* Somewhat more encouraging was another response: *"All you can do now that's free for families is museums and galleries."*

One issue for museums is admission charges. It is obvious that museums which, through choice or necessity, levy admission charges, will struggle on simple economic grounds to attract anyone from a deprived background. And even if admission to the museum is free, the practice of levying a charge for special activities will, similarly, create a kind of cultural apartheid, wherein young people from a comfortable background can partake and those from a deprived background cannot.

National museums have a mixed track record in levying admission charges, and only in 2001 when the Labour Government offered specific financial incentives did they all begin once more to make admission to core collections free for all. This is bound to have improved the chances of usage of national museums by young people from deprived backgrounds, but there is surely a contradiction in that many national museums continue to levy significant admission charges for special exhibitions.

So significant a barrier do we feel admission charges are to running a truly inclusive museum service that, here in National Museums Liverpool, not only do we not have any admission charges for any exhibitions, but we do not charge either for access to facilities such as our planetarium, or to any educational activities and events. We offer all these routes into the museum service for free because we believe in our responsibility to be inclusive, and we structure our budgets accordingly.

The Find Your Talent research gave rise to more challenges in terms of engaging the interest of young people: many young males simply see 'culture' in general as not interesting. One young female said *"I have a brother who doesn't do anything; he just sits around all day playing on his [PlayStation] 3...he knows he likes something but he pretends because it's not cool...it's a boy thing..."*

The importance of parental and family influence on younger people aged 5–13 is critical, whether in terms of encouraging cultural involvement, or in stifling it; the importance of what friends do, say or think is of supreme importance to all young people but absolutely critical in the 13-plus age range; 'not knowing what's going on', the 'old fashioned' nature of cultural buildings, lack of confidence and low self-esteem were confirmed as other significant barriers to engagement.

Positive action

At the core of this challenge of engaging young people from disadvantaged backgrounds is the need for *positive action*. Museums must take specific

actions to reach out to marginalised groups and individuals, and to do this they must envision, budget and structure themselves appropriately. There is a range of actions a museum might need to take in order to make progress, and we are working on the assumption that the museum has already publicly and determinedly committed itself to a social justice approach.

Relationship-building and *partnership* lie at the heart of positive action. Partnerships challenge museums. Forging partnerships with social agencies takes museums right out of their traditional comfort zones. Nonetheless, museums are most effective in achieving a broad relevance when they work collaboratively with other agencies – with education, health, other cultural and voluntary sector agencies, for example, and with networks that support young people – Sure Start, for example. ‘Working with’ includes securing museum representation at senior planning forums within local authority children’s services departments and at schools networks locally and nationally. It also means establishing regular dialogue and consultation to ensure the museum has a clear understanding of the challenges faced generally by communities, and by young people in particular.

There is a host of economic research and data that can be drawn upon so that museums can get to grips with opportunities for and barriers to engagement with marginalised people, and there are Government departments, especially the Departments for Culture, Media and Sport, and Children, Schools and Families, to lobby in a bid to align thinking, resources, research and outputs for children and young people – at present lobbying happens less often than we would like.

We should be ambitious and innovative, but also patient, realistic, approachable and informed. Above all we have to build on existing good practice, and be aware that creating trust and understanding takes time as well as effort. Indeed, the time dimension of work of this kind is critical – it must not be rushed and there are no quick fixes. It has to be mission-led and value-driven, not simply a response, seen so often, to the availability of project funding.

A case study in reaching out to a marginalised social group is the Kensington Youth Inclusion Project in Liverpool. Every two years NML organises the John Moores exhibition of contemporary painting at the Walker Art Gallery. Part of the *John Moores 25* exhibition in 2008 comprised a display of young people’s work arising out of working with an artist. The project was designed to appeal to young people with a variety of interests and featured a range of activities.

Kensington, Liverpool is (unlike its London namesake) an area with extremely high levels of deprivation and complex social problems. The unemployment rate at 8.4 per cent is more than double the national average; its unemployed/long-term sick/disabled rate is almost three times the national average; life expectancy is low, infant mortality is high; so the list goes on.

The Kensington Youth Inclusion Project (KYI) provides positive interventions for young people deemed to be ‘most at risk’. These interventions include sports, arts and other cultural experiences. Young people are referred to KYI through various agencies such as Connexions (a government service that

offers advice on education, careers, housing, money, health and relationships to 13- to 19-year-olds), schools and youth offending teams. The Walker Art Gallery targeted KYI because of the physical proximity of Kensington to the gallery, and it presented the opportunity for building a long-term relationship with KYI rather than a one-off project. Initial workshops were held at the KYI centre, followed by visits to the Walker that were supported by KYI staff, which led to an improved pattern of behaviour and relaxation among the young participants.

The experience was positive for those involved and resulted in an increase in knowledge and skills, but crucially, evaluation suggests that through the project the young people's attitudes and values changed towards contemporary painting, and their tolerance of and their ability to judge and discuss the views of others were increased. Furthermore, during the course of the exhibition of the young people's artworks the Walker was visited regularly by their families and friends.

A recent project involving young people in Kensington was the creation of the now celebrated *Superfiveadaylambanana*. One of a flock of 125 Superlambanana sculptures¹⁴ created citywide for Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture, *Superfiveaday* was conceived and painted by children from crime reduction charity Nacro's Kensington Junior Youth Inclusion Project, working with a professional artist. The group worked hard on painting, layering and adding textures and 3D effects to *Superfiveaday*, creating a strawberry face, apple torso, broccoli legs, orange rump and banana tail. Jessica and Ashleigh from the Kensington Junior Youth Inclusion Project said:

"We're going to be dead proud when we go into the Walker and see our Lambanana, and people say 'did you see that Superfiveadaybanana?' and ask us 'wow, are you the ones who did that?'. We think that people will be surprised when they find out it is kids that have painted this Lambanana! They might think that kids have designed it, but that it's been painted by professionals, but when they find out it's us kids that have done the painting, with a little help from Vince, I think they'll be shocked!"

Another project that exemplifies some of the positive action we are talking about is National Museums Liverpool's Engaging Refugees and Asylum Seekers project. This is a long-term scheme funded by Strategic Commissioning, which is enabling NML to assist in developing a small, supportive network of refugees and asylum seekers in the city, with considerable benefits for the participants. In one strand a core of nine young people working with sculptor Hilary Manuhwa, himself a refugee from Zimbabwe, made two stone sculptures at World Museum which were shown in an exhibition entitled *Freedom*.

Freedom has had a demonstrable social impact for the participants, affecting individuals rather than a community. The project demonstrated impact across all three of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)'s *Generic Social Outcomes* – safer and stronger communities, health and wellbeing and strengthening public life. For example, young men taking

¹⁴ See www.gosuperlambananas.co.uk for more information.

part in the project clearly relished its hands-on nature, which was technical, physical and demanding, and they have a strong sense of pride in the result. The work did not need to be related directly to issues surrounding asylum or refuge-seeking to have a social impact, and the project clearly delivered a range of learning outcomes for the young people involved.

There is tremendous promise locked up in the current Find Your Talent scheme. This is currently being piloted in ten different locations across the country, including Merseyside. NML is leading the Liverpool City Region Pathfinder, which is a partnership including eight major cultural arts organisations, working alongside children's services strategic teams from three local boroughs – Knowsley, Liverpool and St Helens.

The partnership aims to use the success of Liverpool, European Capital of Culture 2008 as a catalyst to increase the participation of children, young people and families in cultural activity. It will be based in the heart of the most disadvantaged local communities, but will be connected to the city centre. It will ensure the best universal cultural offer reaches every child and young person regardless of where they live, stretching from the banks of the Mersey to St Helens' easternmost boundary. Targeting areas of highly significant deprivation, the Liverpool programme will place a strong focus on young people aged 11–19, including those currently not in employment, education or training ('NEET') or at risk of exclusion.

It is to be hoped that the Find Your Talent schemes demonstrate once and for all that cultural activity in general, and museum activity in general, can make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the pilot schemes will only work if they abide by the principles of engagement that we outlined above.

Renaissance in the Regions

In terms of providing access to London-based national museums and their collections to young people around the country who are living in poverty, there is an obvious way forward. This is the networks and structures created under the Renaissance in the Regions banner. Renaissance in the Regions is a government initiative to channel national funding into regional museums, so that millions of people living in the regions, and especially those living in or with access to our bigger regional cities, can enjoy enhanced museum provision.

Renaissance in the Regions was set up at the beginning of the decade with a main aim of encouraging coordinated partnership efforts on the part of national museums, the majority of which are geographically dislocated from most of the people in need of the benefits of first-class museum provision. These partnerships were likely to be with the major regional museum services that were identified in the Regional Museums Task Force report (Resource 2001) as being underfunded and lacking in capacity, yet which were based in the very cities where social, economic and educational deprivation were at their most acute. So here was an opportunity for national museums to join with regional colleagues in addressing, on a national scale, issues of access to museums for young people.

It is rather frustrating that the full potential of this coordination has yet to be realised, as the three-phase review of Renaissance, commissioned by the MLA and currently underway, will almost certainly conclude (see MLA 2009). Nonetheless, the report will also conclude that Renaissance has delivered many successes and must be cherished and nurtured. The fact is that Renaissance in the Regions has not yet been seen at full power. When it is, the role of the national museum sector will be clarified, and the potential of the national collections released. As the keystone of a national strategy for museums, under development as we write, Renaissance in the Regions can be a powerful agent for creating social justice.

Conclusions

We must not underestimate the challenge of engaging young people from deprived backgrounds in museum activity. The challenge will defeat all but those with a thorough knowledge of what it means to suffer deprivation, and all but those with iron determination and commitment, as it will defeat those who devote insufficient effort, time and patience. Time-limited projects with short-term funding are unlikely to achieve anything other than superficial and ephemeral gains. We need realistic strategic thinking, long-term investments, and a greater belief in our capacity to achieve social justice.

References

- Liverpool City Region (2008) Find Your Talent *Pathfinder consultation*, June, see www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk
- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) (2009) 'Renaissance review', web page at www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/renaissance/renaissance%20review
- Resource (2001) *Renaissance in the Regions: A new vision for England's museums* Resource – The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries

9. ONLINE TECHNOLOGY:

Unlocking opportunity, unlocking collections

Jane Finnis

The new wave of web, with which our children are growing up, is already having a huge impact on how children come to know about the world around them and learn about life. But what values are driving this online world? Where is culture in all this and what role could museums play to add value to the online world for young people? In the chapter I look at the current state of play in the sector as I see it and suggest a plan of action for the next three years.

My nine-year-old daughter recently asked me a great question as she sat down at our home computer. "What picture libraries do we have?" Behind this question lie some big assumptions: first, that the computer is networked and online all the time with a fast enough connection to browse images; second, that it is possible to access a world of images that will fulfil her every need.

Neither of these assumptions were in her mind when she asked the question, she just wanted to play, but they demonstrate the way that children often approach online technologies. She thinks the Internet is something that is part of all computers and imagines that because they have picture libraries on the school computer then they must have them everywhere. She treats everything she finds online as part of her own personal giant reference library and expects to be able to move anything she finds around the screen in any way she wants, change it, save it, share it, print it, reuse it endlessly and all without having to wait very long for anything to load. She, like most other kids, expects it all to work, to be free and to be fast. She does not stop to wonder how any of it is possible technically.

I have worked with online technologies since they first appeared in the early nineties, but I clearly remember the analogue era and the TV picture

disappearing into a little dot if I stayed up too late as a kid. As Douglas Adams put it so nicely in his 1979 novel *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, I remember a time 'when digital watches were a pretty neat idea'.

I also remember explaining to a group of pensioners at Eastbourne's Towner Gallery in 1993 that the text they were looking at on a computer screen was actually from another computer on the other side of the world and that the two computers were connected in real time using this new thing called the Internet. They were incredulous, their response being "But how?", whereas my daughter's response has only ever been concerned with whether what she wanted was on the page or not. She is a digital native – someone who has grown up with digital technology – viewing it all from a very different starting place to both the pensioners and me. It is clear that as she gets older her assumptions will only become more profound as her own sophistication and intellect grow.

A merger of tool and user behaviour

The idea that technology is a tool is not new, and like all tools it can be used with either expertise or naivety. It can be effective and to the point, as well as distracting or manipulative. It is a facilitator. But online technologies are more than just tools, more than just facilitators. They change the way that we are able to do things so radically that they create behaviour that would not be possible without the tool and therefore the behaviour and the tool become inseparable. This merger of the tool and the user behaviour can be seen in my daughter's question and in the way that she approaches a computer.

The technologies of the online world add up to more than the sum of their parts. The 'whole' is something bigger and new that could not have been imagined when the individual technologies were built, and it is this 'whole', this bigger, new thing, that children intuitively accept and that many adults struggle with.

This 'new thing' can be seen in a number of examples:

- In the way that many of the big social networking websites work, especially the ones that have a specific focus such as Flickr (photographs) or Last FM (music). These sites have huge online communities who are building and sharing a knowledge base with each other that would not be possible without the fast-networked world they rely on. They make possible new ways to communicate that allow for synchronicity and serendipity. Information is being shared, sorted, classified, reclassified, republished and re-used in a way that is unprecedented in any other media. The community is building the experience collectively and at its best the end result is a shared consciousness of opinion, personalisation and interpretation. You could say that cooperation is built into the infrastructure.
- In the explosion of blogging and the changes that have been effected on traditional media publishers like *The Guardian*. These publishers have had

to embrace new sources of content and find ways to incorporate them, changing their own publishing strategy forever. Sites like Global Voices have gone further still and use the blogging infrastructure to aggregate and amplify a whole generation of new voices from the developing world to resounding applause from online audiences globally.

- In the development of web widgets (small applications that allow a user to add their favourite content to a personalised webpage or site) that allow audiences to interact with the explosion of blogging (Technorati 2008) in ways that add value to the post itself. Video sharing sites like YouTube have been doing this sort of thing for a while by allowing the user to cut and paste code to embed a video into their site, but widgets take this further as they allow for actual interactivity – drawing a picture, leaving a note, or flicking through the person’s photos as if it were a real album.
- In many of the mobile phone applications and gadgets that let the user personalise their own online space and take it with them wherever they go. Even the BBC now offers ways to customise a version of its homepage based on the user’s own preferences, mirroring Google’s iGoogle personalisation.

All these examples are part of the world beyond the basics, or web 1.0. They are sometimes called web 2.0 or the ‘semantic web’ and all of the services are developed with an understanding of the mindset that my daughter has naturally. They are at the leading edge of online developments and are based on similar assumptions about connectivity, availability and the ability to personalise that are implicit in her question to me about picture libraries. Many are social media sites that use tools for sharing and discussing information between people. Many are mash-up sites that take things published in one place and then allow them to be mixed up and filtered for publication again in new ways somewhere else. Some are both.

Where is culture?

This new wave of web, the one where digital natives like my daughter are growing up, is already having a huge impact on how children come to know about the world around them and learn about life. But what values are driving this online world? Where is culture in all this and what role could museums play to add value to this new online world for young people?

Answers to these questions are not easy to find as the museum sector itself is still in transition from the web 1.0 version of the online world, where individual museum websites are built as islands to be visited and explored, not as part of an archipelago that can be full of links and bridges between different people, communities and content. They are the authority on the content they create, they publish it on their own website (where they can) and do not often allow reuse of their data by anyone else after the point of publication.

The reason for this lies deep within departmental divisions, policy decisions and restrictive governance. A world where online technologies are *just* tools and there is often a lack of understanding of how they have changed and shaped user behaviour – and crucially, how user behaviour can change and shape them. This is compounded by a lack of understanding of how fundamental the structure of the online world is to the way that information is communicated, shared or retrieved – no matter what the subject. When I say ‘structured’, I mean literally the language used to describe something, the metadata about that thing and the relationships between things and their context (subject, location and time).

The online world is full of things that many in the museums sector and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) ‘don’t know they don’t know’ and therefore making policy to support development becomes a bit of a catch-22. My point is brought home poignantly by the fact that within this book technology has been given its own chapter. Why, when exploring and delivering the ideas and values within the other chapters, could they not *all* be underpinned with digital infrastructure, methodology and online promotion?

So what can be done? How might government, cultural organisations and museums in particular begin to embrace the mindset of our children and really begin to unlock some of the creative potential of the online world to engage kids and young people in culture? What kind of leadership is needed to move into this online world and embrace the risks of the unknown?

Developing new services like Flickr and Last FM is problematic for the museum sector and perhaps inappropriate. They would need high levels of understanding of what is possible, in-house production and editorial skills and a commitment at an executive level to investment not just to build, but also to sustain such a resource. An organisation like Flickr has many things: a user interface, database functionalities, a community, brand, appeal, services and a business model that is financially independent. There are probably only at the moment about ten to twenty museums globally that have enough of these things to take on online development of this magnitude. But even if they do have the capacity, maybe they can instead work with those that already are developing these resources instead of going it alone. This is exactly what some have done. They have started to experiment by taking their content into these other worlds and networks as opposed to trying to build their own.

In the UK one lovely example is Tate Britain’s *How We Are* exhibition, which used the Flickr site to encourage submission of photographs via a *How We Are Now* Flickr group¹⁵ to illustrate one of the four themes of the exhibition: portrait, landscape, still life and documentary. The aim of the exhibition, according to the Tate website, was to ‘take a unique look at the journey of British photography, from the pioneers of the early medium to today’s photographers who use new technology to make and display their imagery’.

Tate was able to in effect ‘borrow’ the Flickr community for the project. This, combined with the Flickr toolkit, gave Tate a new way of running this kind of open submission exhibition. The end result was a very balanced mix of content created both on and offline. All of the more than 5,000 images that were submitted were displayed as online slideshows, and 40

15 www.flickr.com/groups/howwearenow

photographs (ten from each of the four themes) were chosen to form a final display in the gallery¹⁶.

In Australia, Powerhouse Museum has been leading thinking and experimentation on ways to open up collections. In 2005 the Sydney museum built a system that allowed users to tag objects with words that meant something to them. These tags added meanings that sat alongside the curator's tags and also created better links between data and search engines. The result, unsurprisingly, was a vast increase in traffic and through the interaction with people it brought new knowledge back into the organisation about the museum's own collection. The process could be described as turning the museum 'inside out' (see Pratty 2006 for a description of the 'inside out web museum'). The collection is not simply online; it is usable, user-centric, self-learning, and dynamic.

Powerhouse has shared its collection data in a variety of interesting ways and the Fresh + New blog¹⁷ written by Seb Chan has been documenting and evaluating the museum's experiments and successes for years. Powerhouse was also the first museum to join the Library of Congress in putting some of its photography collection into Flickr's 'The Commons' Project (which now features 18 institutions, four from the UK).

This project goes further than the Tate's as it brings together historical photography from its collections with related contemporary photography from Flickr users and is in effect a huge record of living social history photography.

But these are all big institutions that have the availability to reallocate funding for building and ongoing maintenance. They have all involved a level of internal commitment and human resourcing that can often be as great as the budget, if not greater. What about the thousands of smaller museums with great ideas, great collections and big ambitions? Should they even try to inhabit an online space in any other way than as an information website?

Some museums are trying new things and experimenting with small-scale publishing into social networks and the world of web 2.0, in particular to try to target younger audiences, for example by:

- Creating groups on the social networking site Facebook; for example, the official 'British Museum' group has 1,748 fans and the unofficial 'I love the BM' has 832 (at time of writing, January 2009)
- Creating video channels in YouTube; Indianapolis Museum of Art, National Railway Museum and Burwell Museum are just a few examples
- Putting photos contributed to Flickr groups onto museums' own sites; Brooklyn Museum was one of the first to do this
- Starting their own 'behind the scenes' blogs; for example, East Lothian museum
- Producing regular podcasts; more than 100 museums internationally are doing this.¹⁸

However, it would be fair to say that the majority of this activity is social media marketing and does not address how a museum and its collections might plug in and mingle genuine content – objects, texts, images – with

¹⁶ These can be viewed at www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/howweare/slideshow.shtml

¹⁷ www.powerhousemuseum.com/dmsblog/

¹⁸ A list can be found at www.museumspods.com/id31.html

user generated content (UGC) in the way that 'The Commons' project on Flickr has begun to do. My personal view is that for most museums these kinds of activities are still a step too far as without the resources to keep these channels up to date, or the expertise to capitalise on them as effective marketing messages, they can sometimes seem empty and trivial.

Unfortunately, advising museums *not* to invest resources into online activities is only helpful to them if there is an alternative way to contribute their digital content to something bigger and more sustainable; something that could interface with other publishers and services, or connect them to better-resourced social media and marketing campaigns.

At a strategic level within government, the problem is exacerbated by the fact that there is often an ambition to produce showcase sites that target young people in exciting and innovative ways – sites that can go live with a big splash, a big marketing budget and an ambition to target an identified need in a focused way. These kinds of sites tend to have high production values and push content out to kids in well-packaged bites. Broadcasters such as the BBC (particularly for children) and Channel 4 (particularly for young people) have been leading in this area, along with some publicly funded sites such as Film Street, SoundJunction and ArtisanCam.

I am not trying to argue against these kind of showcase sites because at their best they can be very powerful and engaging. Their focus on lively design, animation, games, sound and fun stuff is appealing, well understood and works. Lots of museums understand this point well as the process is similar to staging an exhibition in the physical world and they have transferred these skills to online production and created a wealth of great online interactive games. Examples include the Science Museum's Launch Ball, the Victoria and Albert Museum's Create a Kaleidoscope and the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery's The Mummy Countdown. But this is only one way of working and rather like the museums' own websites, it creates yet more islands and walled gardens that do not join up. In addition, sometimes new sites reinvent the same wheels when it comes to infrastructure behind the scenes and there is often a big problem with their sustainability.

Looking back at some of the past big government online initiatives dealing with culture or young people, many of them have also struggled to crack the sustainability issue. Some have closed or are closing and it would be good to ask how things like the DCMS's Culture Online, the now defunct Curriculum Online and New Opportunities Fund's digitised programme NOF-digi could have been done better. What worked, what did not work and what is still missing?

It seems to me that there is a lack of willingness to learn the important lessons from these kinds of projects and be honest about why some of them have shut down. Which might be called a 'good failure'? How, in the spirit of the *McMaster Review* (McMaster 2008), might the lessons help us to be less afraid of taking risks in the pursuit of excellence?

Perhaps the problem comes down to lack of digital infrastructure within the cultural sector in the UK. If you are big enough on your own you can (sort of) overcome this, especially if you have a big brand and a big name. The V&A almost has enough diversity in its collection to make a search for just

about anything come back with a few results, but many cultural organisations are simply not big enough on their own. So any chance of creating an impact is lost as there is no bigger infrastructure for them to plug into.

The ways that you can catalogue an object, photograph it, record it and turn it into a digital record are not limitless. There are standards that are needed and lessons that are common to all. This means that there is a lot of data that is consistent and could be held within a common architecture.

Sadly, from a political perspective, infrastructure is not very cool. The showcase sites can be winners and attract attention in a way that metadata repositories or bridging classifications could never do. I believe what is missing is the behind the scenes infrastructure of data aggregation, brokering and sharing at a granular level (objects, resources and so on).

Let's imagine that instead of building showcase sites, the DCMS's *Culture Online* had invested in infrastructure between cultural agencies (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, Arts Council England, DCMS, Department for Children, Schools and Families) and those they fund. This would not have won them a Bafta but it might have provided enough critical mass of content that with the right leadership could be brokered to any number of potential partners, commercially, educationally and globally.

An organisation called The Le@rning Federation has managed to do something in this model in Australia. A collaborative initiative of the Australian and New Zealand governments, it has assembled, through a product called Scootle, content from all the big Australian museums and made it available to all Australian and New Zealand schools to use for free, forever. All copyright fees are paid upfront, so schools are not liable for further copyright payments to collection agencies.

If the UK had some kind of shared infrastructure then we could have our own version of Scootle, making data available to any publisher or producer for use everywhere – in showcase sites, in international sites, in social media networks and to aggregators. Furthermore, the examples I have mentioned that push and share data into social networks do not specifically address young people or children. This is a new challenge, as they will want to play with what is in these collections in their own ways – and why not let them?

We should be:

- Enabling kids to see cool objects from their local archive or museum on the screen when they log into their local library
- Making museum collections available to search and use in every school learning platform¹⁹
- Placing museum objects alongside relevant features on high profile public sector broadcaster television programme sites like *Blue Peter's* and *Roman Mysteries's*
- Providing APIs (application programming interfaces) of objects available for developers to experiment with widgets for Bebo, Facebook and mobile phones
- Linking to related cultural content alongside videos on YouTube (as suggested by the RSA's Matthew Taylor at a January 2009 Fabian Society lecture).

¹⁹ A learning platform brings together hardware, software and supporting services to enable more effective ways of working within and outside the classroom (see Becta 2007)

Andy Duncan, Chief Executive of Channel 4, speaking at a recent NESTA event about the Government's Digital Britain initiative said:

'Digital Britain is about more than the domestic problems of the public sector broadcasters. It is about how Britain is going to deploy the assets that we have and build the skills we need to play our part.' (Andy Duncan, 15 January 2009)

I would suggest that museums, libraries and archives are the champions and custodians of many of those assets and we now need to consider how best to deploy them.

Duncan went on to say:

'We are no longer talking about content in the conventionally understood essence, but a rich and complex mix that includes traditional linear content but also includes a growing range of services, networks and tools that allow users to build networks and services in their own designs.'

It is these networks and services that need to contain the rich and fascinating cultural objects that are in collections throughout the UK. These collections are full of things that the public cherish and would love to explore further online if they could.

A plan of action

So what should be done and who needs to do it? I would suggest a three-point plan of action for the next three years:

1. Put in place the kind of partnerships, thinking and leadership that are behind The Learning Federation's 'Scootle'

We need to insist on cross-departmental working when it comes to digital strategy, vision and infrastructure. We need to address the duplication that currently exists at all levels (regional, governmental, funded agencies and so on) and reduce the proliferation of cultural databases, systems, URLs and marketing campaigns. Some first steps have already been taken with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, Collections Trust, UKOLN and Culture24 producing and signing up to a set of digital values and principles for all of their digital work, and working to bring together all MLA-funded databases under a programme of work called 'Open Culture'. Finally, until we can begin to work out how best to exploit the potential of what we already have, there should be a moratorium on digitisation.

2. Value joint promotion and marketing online and the fact that it works better when things are joined up

Successful marketing is grounded in understanding the audience, their needs, their profile and being clear about the aims of what's being done. Successful online marketing also requires an understanding of how search

engines work, and the impact of tools such as RSS (web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works), Adwords (Google's pay-per-click advertising for text and banner ads), tagging, metadata ('data about other data'), churn (frequency of publication and updating) and so on. All of this makes it harder for a small museum to make any kind of impact online on its own. The lesson here is in working together to reinforce key messages to audiences and joining forces to campaign and deliver targeted national services. Culture24's Show Me website was launched exactly in response to this problem – see Box 1.

Box 1. Case study of Show Me website – www.show.me.uk

Culture24 went live with its Show Me website for children in 2003; its tagline is 'we show you crazy/fun/scary/wild/cool [word alternates] stuff from the UK's museums and galleries'. Show Me was unique in the cultural sector in its approach to showcasing the work of others and it has quietly and gradually been building a loyal audience (Show Me 2005).

Significantly, it also filled a gap as it was built for kids to use directly and has championed the value of play despite a very small budget and basic interface.

The next step for Show Me is to take its promotional role a step further with a new project called Caboodle, which explores ways to mix up museum collections with children's own collections.

3. Explore new models and new ways of thinking that take a more open approach to knowledge and ownership

We need to close the gap between the desire to be part of the 21st century and the fear of losing authority over our data. This is a key challenge and highlights the knowledge gap of cultural institutions about the behaviour of young people and children online. We need a mind shift that embraces personalisation, community and mashing (combining data from more than one source into a single integrated tool using a mashup web application); an online world where content finds the user (not just vice versa) and where people do more with your stuff than just look at it! Professionals working in the cultural sector have a special understanding of their content. This is their unique selling point and we need to respect it and use it. At the same time there are other voices, other perspectives, interpretations, values and meanings and we need the online space to be somewhere where they can coexist, either together or in isolation.

Museums are filled with highly educated, highly motivated people, most of whom are crying out to get their collections online, their communities built and lives networked. But for many they come up against barrier after barrier in their everyday working lives – copyright restrictions, worries about quality of user-generated content, fears about theft, safety, or simply the policy from IT Services banning the use of blogging and animation software such as

Wordpress and Flash. All of these things can crush enthusiasm and creativity but they are not insurmountable.

Technology never stands still and neither should we. There will always be something new to try, a new version to replace what we have just got used to or a new way to do something that is better than the last. In many ways trying to unlock the creativity of technology is a perpetual round of R&D activity, with the best going on to inform the next.

But the big vision here, the future prize, the opportunity, is not about technology, but about the integration of culture into our online society and the online lives of our young people and children. This is something that the museums understand and that there is the potential to make happen. Who would want to live in a world without culture? Personally, I don't want to live in an online world without culture at its roots, popping up when I least anticipate it and in ways that I did not expect. I want to see culture readily available for consumption, play, appropriation and experimentation by children, young people (and adults) in their online spaces of choice, in ways that we cannot yet imagine.

This is just the beginning.

Thanks to Anra Kennedy, Nick Poole and John Newbigin for their invaluable contributions and help with this chapter.

References

- Becta (2007) 'What is a learning platform?', web page, available at <http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=re&rid=12887>
- McMaster B (2008) *McMaster Review: Supporting excellence in the arts – from measurement to judgement* London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, available at www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/3577.aspx
- Pratty J (2006) 'The Inside Out Web Museum', in Trant J and Bearman D (eds.) *Museums and the Web 2006: Proceedings* Toronto: Archives & Museum Informatics, available at www.archimuse.com/mw2006/papers/pratty/pratty.html
- Show Me (2005) 'Show Me Up For Webby Award', April 15, available at www.showme.uk/site/about/STO683.html
- Technorati (2008) 'State of the Blogosphere/2008', available at <http://technorati.com/blogging/state-of-the-blogosphere/>

10. MUSEUM LEARNING:

Not instrumental enough?

Alec Coles

The title of this chapter is challenging as it encompasses (and possibly confuses) at least three issues facing museums in the UK today. In the first place, there are semantic distinctions between the terms 'learning' and 'education', which have come to characterise quite different approaches to museum practice and evaluation (Hooper-Greenhill 2007). Second, there is a continuing debate as to how far museums should pursue so-called instrumental ambitions such as increasing educational engagement and attainment, or facilitating learning (Holden 2004). Third, there is the question as to the strength and reliability of the evidence suggesting that museums can make a real impact on education or learning; in short, can they and do they really make a difference?

Making a difference?

Let me begin with some of the impacts that museums claim for themselves:

'Museums, archives and libraries are in a unique position to bring people in touch with new experiences and perspectives, which can radically change their lives.'

So says Sue Wilkinson, of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) on the Inspiring Learning for All website.²⁰

One of the most important and influential documents in English museums policy in recent years has been *Renaissance in the Regions*, published by MLA's predecessor body RE:source in 2001. It states that 'The enormous potential of museums for learning has been demonstrated in many ways and in many places over a long period' (Re:source 2001: 7). Such confident statements about the impact and importance of museum learning suggest that there should be little argument over the credibility of museums as learning or educational establishments. For some critics, however, such claims are neither convincing nor substantiated (Mirza 2006a).

Our museums may be full of the evidence of human creativity and endeavour, and of the diverse wonders of the natural world; these may be accessible to a larger number of people, to an unprecedented degree, and may be the subject of any number of educational programmes. The number of school students visiting the UK's museums may be higher than ever – presumably because teachers think that this is a valuable use of curriculum time. The rigour with which we evaluate our learning programmes is greater than ever before and the results are generally very positive; and yet, despite all of this, according to some sceptics, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that museums have a positive impact on learning. How can this be?

It seems that, to some critics, museums' educational credentials will only be established if they can prove that young people actually get higher grades in their exams as a result of a museum visit. Similarly, the sceptics would dismiss what they describe as anecdotes of life-changing experiences as no longer enough (Burns Owen Partnership 2005).

In Britain, and particularly England, the Labour government of 1997 embraced a vision of cultural enrichment for all citizens. There was increased investment in public cultural institutions based on an agenda of wider engagement. There was a confirmed belief that public cultural provision could impact on all of public life, notably health, wealth, wellbeing and, of course, learning.

Not unreasonably, government expected cultural organisations in which it invested not only to be accountable, but to demonstrate that this investment was effective. A performance management and monitoring regime emerged based largely on levels of engagement or, more accurately, levels of attendance.

This approach served several purposes: it persuaded cultural institutions to take their public role seriously; it strengthened the commitment among those institutions to consider the nature and origin of their audiences; it legitimised and embedded the learning credentials of the cultural sector; and in museums, core business began to shift from merely preserving collections, to a greater emphasis on using them for public benefit.

Consequently, every funding agreement with government, every service level agreement and every local authority performance management regime for museums was underpinned by a set of learning targets.

Many institutions embraced this new regime on the basis that it helped them focus and monitor their activities, improve their performance and, let us be honest, demonstrate their public value to funders (Holden 2004).

There was, however, some dissent and cynicism from a sector that would have preferred to be allowed to carry on regardless. This arose from two diametrically opposite points of view. On the one hand, there were those who thought that public benefit was not part of a museum's core business. In short, they felt that using culture so overtly to address societal issues was inappropriate (Appleton 2001). On the other hand were those who questioned whether there was any real evidence that museum experiences made a discernible contribution to learning (Mirza 2006a).

Since that time, there has been a plethora of publications, largely so-called 'grey literature', that have sought to demonstrate the value of museums in

learning and education. These studies are useful, but they are often conceived and produced as advocacy documents that show little objectivity or rigour, and rely almost entirely on recounting single experiences through case studies (Arts Council England 2006, Travers 2006, Hooper-Greenhill 2007).

Hooper-Greenhill sums up this conundrum rather eloquently:

'...learning in museums ... is potentially dynamic and profound, producing self-identities. How is this complexity to be "measured"? What can this "measurement" reveal about the character of museum based learning?' (2007: frontispiece)

Investment, instrumental, intrinsic, institutional... incomprehensible

The terms 'instrumental' and 'instrumental value' in this context need some explanation. They are terms that, in recent years, have become ubiquitous in western cultural policy as questions of 'public value' have become central. Instrumental value has been contrasted with intrinsic and institutional values. In short, these three kinds of cultural value can be expressed in the following ways (see also, Holden 2004, 2006, Scott 2006):

- **Intrinsic value** relates to the subjective experience of culture, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually: the kind of experience and response that causes people to profess their love or hatred of something.
- **Institutional value** relates to the status, role and public perception of institutions, how these institutions engage with the public, and their status in public life.
- **Instrumental value** relates to the 'further' impacts of culture such as on educational achievement, improved health and wellbeing, contribution to the tourism economy, or to regeneration.

I have long refuted this taxonomy (Coles 2009) precisely because it has been used, sometimes unwittingly, to undermine the public value of culture: so-called instrumental values or impacts were characterised by those who it suited as being less important than 'intrinsic benefits' which were characterised as being more subliminal, harder to define, aesthetically driven and, frankly, more pure. By contrast 'instrumental impacts' are often denigrated even from within our sector: David Barrie of the Art Fund, for instance, wrote, in 2001:

'The real culprits are the politicians, who, having failed to grasp that museums are valuable in themselves have insisted that in return for state funding they must help deliver political goals like social inclusion or urban renewal.' (Barrie 2001: 51)

Furthermore, it is often suggested that there is little point in trying to establish the sector's education, health or wellbeing credentials because public

investment directed into more traditional, mainstream educational or health institutions will deliver greater benefits (Mirza 2006b).

I have never understood the value or the logic of adopting this taxonomy. If I visit the British Museum to see the Terracotta Warriors (which I did), there is a good chance that I will have a profound emotional experience (which I did) so in the world of the three I's, I must have accrued some intrinsic value: but I also learned something (quite a lot, actually), so that must be instrumental, then? There is little doubt that the location of the exhibition in the British Museum was also important: it legitimised it, contextualised it, and somehow enhanced the experience; so perhaps it was institutional after all?

It was, of course, both all and yet none of these. It was a cultural experience, in a special place, that lifted me, made me think about my place in the world and taught me a great deal – all of which were valuable, so I do not need to categorise it any further. It is for this reason that I refute the use of the term 'instrumental' as unhelpful and unnecessary.

Education or learning?

If the semantics of instrumentalism are just a side-show, far more serious is the charge that we are actually measuring (and I use the word advisedly) the wrong things (Selwood 2006): that measuring the number of visitors, or participants, or school visits is a crass and potentially tokenistic approach to service delivery, with the associated danger that programmes could be designed to maximise numbers at the risk of compromising the quality of experience. Cynically, some have suggested, it was a case of *Every Child Matters (sic.)* (DfES 2003) as long as we could count them as a performance indicator.

What is it the sceptics need to be convinced of? That school children visiting should get better grades, more GCSEs, better jobs (eventually)? That our visitors improve their crossword skills, or win more pub quizzes? Or, that people (in this case, young people) have actually learned something?

With respect to the former, there have been many attempts at so-called goal-based studies (Miles and Tout 1994). Such studies tried to explore whether or not participants assimilate pre-assigned messages. The problem with this approach is that it takes little account of the possibilities for additional or alternative learning that might be affected by the individual's motivation, own interests or idiosyncrasies.

As Hooper-Greenhill suggests "'goal-orientated evaluation" has been tried and left behind in the museum world' (2007: 27); let us hope that she is right.

This is where use of the terms 'education' and 'learning' becomes critical. The two have become confused, variously interpreted and imbued with sector-specific meanings. It appears that in this sector, learning characterises something that people do, and that develops them, while education is an organisational construct that describes a service commitment to transfer knowledge to someone.

This distinction is helpful when considering what museums and galleries can achieve, what they should aspire to, and the development of a learner-centred approach.

In the lexicon of cultural evaluation the distinction between outputs, outcomes and impacts has begun to be made, albeit often unconvincingly (MLA 2007). The uncertainty led Estelle Morris when she was Arts Minister to write:

'I know that arts and culture make a contribution to health, to education, to crime reduction, to strong communities, to the nation's well being, but I don't know how to evaluate it or describe it. We have to find a language and a way of describing its worth.' (Morris 2003)

Happily, in the field of museum education, this language was developed as part of the Inspiring Learning for All (ILfA) framework. Developed by Gaby Porter, Anne Murch and Martin Bazely for the MLA, Inspiring Learning for All describes what can be expected from an accessible and inclusive museum, archive or library which stimulates and supports learning. Accessible through the ILfA website²¹, this framework now underpins the approach to museum education and evaluation in many UK museums.

ILfA is focused on users, rather than providers of museum, library and archives services. It focuses on learning rather than education, with emphasis on the individual's development rather than country, or society-wide systems with common standards.

The advent of ILfA was a critical outcome of the first phase of the Learning Impact Research Project (LIRP) (Hooper-Greenhill 2002) carried out by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) in the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. This project was critical to the development of ILfA because it created, defined and honed the five Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs) that are central to the framework, which are:

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

These are expanded on in Table 1, overleaf.

This approach was revolutionary because it gave the sector the opportunity to express the impact of museums, libraries and archives learning in a way that had not been possible before. The GLOs are user-centred in line with contemporary learning theory and in accordance with the very essence of the UK Government's Every Child Matters agenda (DfES 2003). They are non-parametric and do not masquerade as anything else; yet they are manageable and helpful, as the Learning Impact Research Project went on to demonstrate.

It is fair to say, however, that while the GLOs have been widely adopted across the museum sector in the UK and beyond, they are not without their critics (Newman 2008). Some find them too nebulous, frustratingly non-parametric and difficult to relate to educational attainment. I would contend,

²¹ www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk

however, that if used critically, the GLOs do demonstrate both the power and the actuality of learning, particularly from the point of view of the individual.

Through a mixture of good planning and serendipity, the LIRP was able to evaluate the effectiveness of museum learning using the GLOs through three comprehensive studies. Two were closely tied into the Renaissance in the Regions programme under which substantial funding was injected into England's regional museums with a dedicated, ring-fenced sum for educational work – specifically for schools.

The most obvious structural manifestation of Renaissance was the creation of regional museum Hubs in each of the nine English regions – a kind of federation of four or five museums services working together to enhance opportunities for the public to engage with museums and to build capacity within the sector. Three regions received 'full' funding, creating so-called Phase 1 Hubs and the remaining six received a lesser level, initially, to create Phase 2 Hubs. As part of the LIRP, in 2003, the three Phase 1 Hubs were involved in an evaluation of their learning impact (Hooper-Greenhill *et al* 2004b), and in 2005, a follow-up involved all nine regional museum hubs (Hooper-Greenhill *et al* 2006).

The two evaluations of the Learning Impact Research Project looked at levels of usage and, importantly, through a series of interview and survey techniques, obtained feedback from teachers and pupils. Particularly impressive was the number of responses received: a total of 2669 teacher responses and 47,395 pupil responses across the two studies (Hooper-Greenhill *et al* 2004b, 2006).

At the same time, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) had co-funded an education programme called Strategic Commissioning which encouraged national museums to work with partner museums in the regions. If the focus of the Renaissance programme was about widening participation, then Strategic Commissioning was about deepening it. The Research Centre for Museums and Galleries won the contract to evaluate this programme too. Using broadly similar techniques, they were able to add a further 503 adults and 9,415 pupils to the database. Some of the findings are summarised below.

Impact: myth and reality

Ignoring the semantics and even accusations of instrumentalism, let us return to the question of effectiveness and impact. Is there evidence of learning outcomes? The two *What Did You Learn at the Museum Today?* reports suggest that there is.

It is not possible within this essay to provide a comprehensive review of the research and its results; however, it is worth reflecting on some of the findings. In the first place, the increased funding provided by Renaissance led to a significant increase in the use of museums, thus demonstrating the potential market among educational institutions for museum visits. It also affirmed the confidence of teachers in this medium as they were prepared to invest valuable curriculum delivery time in this way.

Table 1: The Generic Learning Outcomes (from *Inspiring Learning for All*)

1. Knowledge and understanding	<p>Knowing about something</p> <p>Learning facts or information which can be: Subject-specific; interdisciplinary/thematic; about museums, archives, libraries; about myself, my family, my community, the wider world</p> <p>Making sense of something</p> <p>Deepening understanding</p> <p>Learning how museums, archives and libraries operate</p> <p>Giving specific information – naming things, people or places</p> <p>Making links and relationships between things</p> <p>Using prior knowledge in new ways</p>
2. Skills	<p>Knowing how to do something</p> <p>Intellectual skills – reading, thinking critically and analytically, making judgements</p> <p>Key skills – numeracy, literacy, use of Information and Communications Technology, learning how to learn</p> <p>Information management skills – locating and using information, evaluating information, using information management systems</p> <p>Social skills – meeting people, sharing, team working, remembering names, introducing others, showing an interest in the concerns of others</p> <p>Emotional skills – recognising the feelings of others, managing (intense) feelings, channelling energy into productive outcomes</p> <p>Communication skills – writing, speaking, listening</p> <p>Physical skills – running, dancing, manipulation, making</p>
3. Attitudes and values	<p>Feelings and perceptions</p> <p>Opinions about ourselves, for example, self-esteem</p> <p>Opinions or attitudes towards other people</p> <p>Attitudes towards an organisation, for example, museums, archives and libraries</p> <p>Positive attitudes in relation to an experience</p> <p>Negative attitudes in relation to an experience</p> <p>Reasons for actions or personal viewpoints</p> <p>Empathy, capacity for tolerance (or lack of these)</p>
4. Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity	<p>Having fun</p> <p>Being surprised</p> <p>Innovative thoughts, actions or things</p> <p>Creativity</p> <p>Exploration, experimentation and making</p> <p>Being inspired</p>
5. Action, behaviour, progression	<p>What people do</p> <p>What people intend to do (intention to act)</p> <p>What people have done</p> <p>A change in the way that people manage their lives including work, study, family and community contexts</p> <p>Actions (observed or reported)</p> <p>Change in behaviour</p> <p>Progression – towards further learning, registering as a library user, developing new skills – the result of a purposive action which leads to change</p>

The surveys also showed a very high approval rating by teachers of the value of the visit, or engagement, in terms of contributing to children's learning. Significantly, younger pupils appeared convinced that a museum visit was a good thing.

In response to questions to young pupils:

- 94 per cent agreed that they had enjoyed the visit
- 90 per cent agreed that they had learnt some new things
- 87 per cent agreed that a visit was useful for school work

For the older pupils, the results were almost as impressive:

- 87 per cent agreed that they had learnt some interesting things
- 82 per cent agreed that museums are good places to learn in a different way to school
- 73 per cent agreed that the visit had given them lots to think about
- 58 per cent agreed that a museum visit makes school work more inspiring
- 55 per cent agreed that they might visit again. (Hooper-Greenhill *et al* 2004b)

These results were borne out by 'testimony' work carried out directly with pupils (MLA 2006a, 2006b).

What do these results prove? Scientifically, not very much: we cannot conclude that any of the pupils involved would perform better in their assessment tests (SATS; now abolished for 14-year-olds) or GCSE exams. All the results are based on testimony and opinion, although they are all impressive in their own right and almost certainly are demonstrative, albeit not empirically, of a real effect. So, in terms of the question of this chapter, is this sufficiently instrumental?

The subsequent RCMG survey (Hooper-Greenhill *et al* 2006) went further, examining the impact of individual influences on individual schools: so for one comprehensive school, it appeared that the impact of a history visit on pupils in a particular class was to elevate their predicted marks for an assignment by two grades. All very compelling but of course a conclusion drawn without the possibility of controlling all the other variables at play and based on one visit, by one class, in one school.

Beyond this, there is interesting data from Renaissance North West (Renaissance North West 2007, Select Committee on Science and Technology 2007) that claims that the evaluation of a literacy programme has shown that museum visits have contributed towards enhanced performance, by pupils, in their standard assessment tests for literacy. The summary publication about the programme is called *Write On*, but it is followed by a strapline: 'How to use museums and galleries to improve pupils' literacy'. The second section is entitled, confidently, 'How museums improve children's literacy'.

The study concludes that the result of the particular partnership programme achieved a 35 per cent increase in pupils' performance above

the expected levels (Renaissance North West 2007). Is it possible that this is finally providing us with the direct impact evidence that we crave? Well, once again, it is technically impossible to isolate all the other variables and we are dealing with small numbers. A mealy-mouthed sceptic could even point to the opportunity cost of the pupils engaging in this activity: what if the pupils had used a library instead? What if they had enjoyed dedicated time with story-tellers outside a museum context? Perhaps they would have improved even further!

These circular arguments are pointless! The fact is that the North West team developed a very successful programme which enjoyed the support of teachers, advisers, pupils and parents. Given the design and delivery of the programme, and the way in which it was embraced by its participants, it would be unlikely not to succeed! As it happens, some compelling evidence has been produced as well.

The review of the Strategic Commissioning programme (Hooper-Greenhill *et al* 2004a) revealed similarly positive results. Furthermore, internal assessment of these programmes showed their potential. In one instance, the Natural History Museum worked with regional partners (Tyne & Wear Museums, the Oxford University Museum, the Manchester Museum and King's College, London), to develop new ways of teaching of secondary science in schools across England (Gay 2007). The project, entitled *Real World Science*, and aimed at Key Stage 4 students, was a great success.

One of the key outcomes has been the high proportion of participants that have indicated that they are more likely to consider a career in science as a result of participating in the programme (Collins and Lee 2006); while there is no guarantee that they will follow this through and secure a position in the sector, surely we can celebrate this positive outcome and response as a short-term win with long-term potential.

Other Strategic Commissioning projects included varying degrees of student participation, but in all cases there were high levels of satisfaction. For example, Tyne & Wear Museums, working with Bristol's Museums, Galleries and Archives, commissioned work from AEA Consulting in 2005. The resulting information has shown that over 90 per cent of 63 people interviewed felt that they had learned something even three to five years after their original participation (AEA Consulting 2005).

Measuring the burden of proof

When investigating the impact of our work, there are several words that I try to avoid using. The first is 'measurement': there is very little we can measure in this domain that is truly parametric, i.e. measurable. Of course, we can count the number of engagements, we can assess take-up and we can try to measure attainment; but that leads us to my second taboo word, and a very significant one in this context: 'proof'. In a world of infinite variables, the leap of faith from a probable impact to a definitive causal link is a fairly large one. So when we read, in an assessment of the Museum and Galleries Lifelong Learning Initiative (MGLI) (Gould and Wood 2004), that 12 learners have '...gone on to paid or voluntary employment as a result

of MGLI...’ a cynic might well still ask ‘How do you know it was because of the MGLI?’

This is of course not unique to the museum and gallery sector but if we continue to search for proof of learning impacts – irrefutable, empirical, scientific proof – my fear is that we will be disappointed.

This does not mean that I believe that museums and galleries do not have many, varied, significant and positive impacts on learning – quite the opposite. It is just that if we try to saddle ourselves with the burden of proving, for instance, increased educational attainment, we risk tying ourselves in knots. We merely create a plethora of self-congratulatory and self-justifying ‘grey’ literature that adds much to our bookshelves but little to our knowledge and, worse still, creates an impression of a sector lacking self-confidence and protesting rather too much.

In fact, I believe that there is huge amount of evidence that museums are effective at promoting, supporting and creating learning. Most of it is borne out by what learners say, what teachers say, and by their readiness to engage with museums and galleries to assist them in delivering the hard outcomes of exam success and demonstrable impact.

To those who say that the evidence is only based on the testimony of the learners, rather than an objective assessment of their intellectual and cognitive performance, I would counter that this is not about performance, nor could it be, because unless we could invent an elaborate control experiment that could truly disentangle the relative impacts of all different experiences on learning and, indeed, on capacity to learn, then how will we ever know?

This leads me, finally, back to the proposition that museum learning is ‘not instrumental enough’ and my issue with the word ‘instrumental’. It is, in my opinion, this obsession with a mechanistic and reductionist approach that leads us down this intellectual blind alley.

My counter question is: ‘*Why instrumental?*’ Why are we intent on discriminating this aspect of the holistic benefits of cultural experience from any other?

Can we not accept that enriched cultural provision probably does mean enriched minds and improved learning? How we provide this must, of course, be the subject of ongoing, deep and longitudinal evaluation. We must continue to seek to provide excellent experiences for our users in the spirit of McMaster (2008) and to improve our ‘offer’. We must, equally, never let our confidence in our potential hoodwink us back into the old elitism.

Above all, we must be prepared to talk to our audiences. We need to feel what they feel; find out what they want, expect and need; in this context, we need to listen to what *they* consider to be our impact.

I would embrace a new empiricism if I believed it truly empirical, but I do not. I do believe, however, the testimonies that have been collected in all the studies referenced in this chapter (and many that are not) do represent overwhelming evidence of the role of museums and galleries in supporting and enhancing learning.

Indeed, if no one had coined the term ‘instrumental’ then this debate would probably be unnecessary. And to those who decry testimonial evidence, I would respectfully suggest that it is rather patronising not to trust

the opinions of our audiences; after all, if they believe that they have learned something, then it is fair to assume that they probably have!

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my friends and colleagues Jocelyn Dodd, Morag Macpherson, Andrew Newman and Sue Wilkinson for helpful conversations in the development of this chapter. I would also like to pay tribute to the work of the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at the University of Leicester and particularly that of Eilean Hooper-Greenhill upon whose work I have drawn heavily. The opinions expressed in this chapter are, however, mine alone.

References

- AEA Consulting (2005) *Social Impact Programme Assessment Tyne & Wear Museums and Bristol's Museums, Galleries and Archives* (unpublished)
- Appleton J (2001) 'Museums for "The People"', in Appleton J (ed) *Museums for "The People"* London: Academy of Ideas
- Arts Council England (2006) *The Power of Art, Visual Arts: Evidence of Impact* London: ACE
- Barrie D (2001) in Appleton J (ed) *Museums for the People*, London, Academy of Ideas
- Burns Owen Partnership (2005) *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England*. London: Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
- Coles A (2009) 'Instrumental death of a reductionist' *Cultural Trends* 68 17 (4) pp. 329-334
- Collins S and Lee A (2006) *How Can Natural Science Museums Support Secondary Science Teaching and Learning?* London: DCMS
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Department for Education and Employment (2000) *The Learning Power of Museums: A Vision for Museum Education*. London. DCMS
- Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2003) *Every Child Matters Green Paper* London: TSO
- Gay H (2007) *Making Science Exciting in A Global Agenda: Natural History Museum Annual Review 2005-06* London: Trustees of the Natural History Museum
- Gould H and Wood C (Ed.) (2004) *Where are they now? The Impact of Museums and Galleries Lifelong Learning Initiative* London: Campaign for Learning in Museums and Galleries
- Holden J (2004) *Capturing Cultural Value* London: Demos
- Holden J (2006) *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy* London: Demos
- Hooper-Greenhill E (2002) *Developing a scheme for finding evidence of the outcomes and impact of learning in museums, archives and libraries: the conceptual framework* RCMG internal document
- Hooper-Greenhill E (2007) *Museums and Education: Purpose, Pedagogy and Performance* Abingdon: Routledge
- Hooper-Greenhill E, Dodd J, Phillips M, Jones C, Woodward J and O'Riain H (2004a) *Inspiration, identity, learning: the value of museums. The evaluation of DCMS/DfES Strategic Commissioning 2003-2004: National/Regional Museum Partnerships* Leicester: RCMG

- Hooper-Greenhill E, Dodd J, Phillips M, O'Riain H, Jones C and Woodard J (2004b) *What did you learn at the Museum today? The evaluation of the Renaissance in the Regions Education Programme on the three Phase 1 Hubs* Leicester: RCMG
- Hooper-Greenhill E, Dodd J, Gibson L, Phillips M, Jones C and Sullivan E (2006) *What did you learn at the Museum today? Second study. Evaluation of the outcome and impact of learning through the implementation of the Renaissance in the Regions Education Programme Delivery Plans across nine Regional Hubs (2005)* Leicester: RCMG
- McMaster B (2008) *Supporting Excellence in the Arts: From Measurement to Judgement* London: DCMS
- Miles RS, Alt MB, Gosling DC, Lewis BN and Tout AF (2001) *The Design of Educational Exhibits*, second edition, London: Routledge
- Miles RS and Tout AF (1994) 'Impact of research on the approach to the visiting public at the Natural History Museum, London' in Hooper-Greenhill E (ed) (1999) *The Educational Role of the Museum* London: Routledge
- Mirza M (2006a) 'Introduction' in Mirza M (ed.) *Culture Vultures: Is UK Arts Policy damaging the Arts?* London: Policy Exchange
- Mirza M (2006b) 'The arts as painkiller' in Mirza M (ed.) *op. cit.*
- Morris E (2003) Speech to Cheltenham Festival of Literature, 16 October
- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2003 onwards) *Inspiring Learning for All Framework*
- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2006a) *The most interesting thing at the museum today was...The impact of museum visits on pupils aged 11-18 years* London: MLA
- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2006b) *What amazed me most at the museum today... The impact of museum visits on pupils at KS2* London: MLA
- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2007) *Renaissance in the Regions planning guidance* (unpublished)
- Newman A (2008) Personal communication
- Opening the Doors (2004) *Museums and Young People* London: Opening the Doors
- Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (2003) *Measuring the Outcomes and Impact of Learning in Museums, Archives and Libraries: The Learning Impact Research Project End of Project Paper, 07 May 2003*, Leicester: University of Leicester.
- Renaissance North West (2007) *Write On* Manchester: Renaissance North West
- Re:source (2001) *Renaissance in the Regions*; London; Re:source
- Scott C (2006) 'Museums: Impact and value' *Cultural Trends* 15(1), pp. 45-75
- Select Committee on Science and Technology (2007) Written Evidence Memorandum 50, Submission from The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester
- Selwood S (2006) 'Unreliable Evidence' in Mirza M (ed.) (2006) *Culture Vultures. Is UK Arts Policy damaging the Arts?* London: Policy Exchange
- Travers T (2006) *Museums and Galleries in Britain: Economic, Social and creative impacts* London: LSE

11. WHY YOUNG PEOPLE?

Attracting a new audience to our museums

Kate Pontin

Why should museums attract young people?

The answer to this question might seem obvious: besides the fact that young people have as much right as anyone else to visit museums, they can enjoy and learn from the experience, as illustrated by these comments from young people visiting Swindon Museum and Art Gallery:

'I have never laughed so much – if all history could be taught like this it would be fantastic.'

'I like going to museums – not something my parents would go to.'
(Pontin, unpublished evaluation report for campaign for learning)

But traditionally, young people do not visit museums and galleries. In 2002/03, only 13 per cent of visitors to museums were aged between 15 and 24, with most visits being made by 35- to 44-year-olds (Woollard 2006). Many young people do not want to do things with their families, preferring to spend time with their peer group. Many do not enjoy school, and some feel marginalised and alienated from society.

Learning has become central to much policy and forward planning in museums and other public services since Labour came to power in 1997 emphasising a strong commitment to education (Lang 2006). This change in policy is leading some professionals in museums to consider how to attract and engage young people. However, many museums still feel that this is a difficult audience to attract. Young people can be reticent to join in, feel a need to be different and sometimes portray awkward behaviour, making them a less attractive group for some museum workers to want to initiate work with. But if young people are ignored until they are adults museums may lose them as an audience altogether.

Considering what young people want not only helps museums to achieve their goals of breaking down barriers and forming museum-visiting habits, but also helps in providing education and personal development to young people at an age when such support is important. Museums have an enormous amount to offer this audience group. And in a political and social climate in which museums are now judged not only by their collections and associated care of them, but also by their visitor numbers and how representative their audience is of the local community, museums need to be seeking new users not traditionally seen in exhibitions and galleries.

Given that some museums *are* successfully working with this audience, it could be suggested that it is not only the attitudes of the young people that are a problem but also those of museum professionals. Funding can often be obtained to run special museum events or programmes to attract new audiences, including young people, and to consult with them on their needs and key barriers to visiting. This chapter considers the findings from a number of evaluations from such museum projects with young people to examine the factors that influence success when working with this audience.

A social commitment

In the past, learning in museums often implied supporting schools' visits to museums and focusing on a knowledge-based approach. However, research into learning processes by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) at the University of Leicester and others has helped show that museum learning is actually much broader than that and often includes providing inspiration, altering attitudes and developing motivation to learn more later, as well as knowledge and skills. It is also clear that different people learn in different ways, perhaps through listening, reading, practical activity, or through solving problems (Gardner 1996) and that they will also be interested in different subjects and in learning different things. Thus, many museums have taken on the challenge, through careful planning and research, to offer wider learning opportunities to a wider range of audiences.

Many professionals in museums are also now addressing social inclusion, exploring ways for museums to 'engage with and impact upon social inequality, disadvantage and discrimination' (Sandell 2007: 96). There is an increasing desire for a shared professional and institutional responsibility to respond to local community need. Some museums, Sandell suggests, have resisted this change through their desire for autonomy and have thus become disengaged from society and its concerns. However, an acknowledgement of the potential to contribute to social change can bring exciting challenges and possibilities.

Working towards social inclusion does not imply that combating inequality becomes the sole aim of museums, nor are they alone in tackling it (Sandell 2007). New government policy has focused on embedding social inclusion within many public institutions including museums, although some have criticised this for its short-term political objectives and leading to museums becoming tools of government. However, others suggest that there needs to be a paradigm shift in thinking so that museum principles are in

step with society and its values (for example, Hein in Sandell 2007). Such a social responsibility requires an acknowledgement of the 'meaning-making potential of the museum and an imperative to utilise that to positive social ends' (Sandell 2007: 108).

Which group to work with first?

Prioritising which excluded groups a museum should or could work with first can be a difficult decision, particularly in a small museum with limited resources and staffing. In Swindon, for example, it was decided to focus on young people living in foyer accommodation opposite Swindon Museum and Art Gallery because they were using the area in front of the museum as a place to congregate. This was causing problems, but instead of being confrontational the museum, working with foyer staff, asked the young people to join a museum-based project on young people's lives in Medieval times and today. The success of the project was not only demonstrated by the quality of the display they produced, but also in the participants' increased confidence and self esteem, and their more positive attitudes towards museums. This example demonstrates the value of a museum considering its current visitor base, the local community, local issues and a community focus to develop its priority new audiences.

A systematic audience development plan is essential. Once this has been established it is important to consider potential partners, funding, timescale and how this links to other museum programmes before making a final selection of who to prioritise. Admittedly, those museums run by volunteers or those with less experience in education or audience development are likely to find working with young people a challenge. It is therefore important that such institutions consider working with reasonably accessible groups, for example those at the local college, or those who belong to organisations such as the Scouts, Duke of Edinburgh scheme or other relevant interest groups.

It is certainly more of a challenge working with those who have been excluded from society in some way such as the unemployed, homeless, and those involved with drugs or crime. Working with the excluded requires a knowledge and skills base gained through experience, perhaps with other excluded groups or through a long association of working with young people's clubs or through school. Strong partnerships, time, and funding are also important underpinning elements.

Breaking down barriers of perception

Adolescence and the biological changes that take place in the lead-up to maturity influence young people's cognitive scope, self-perceptions, views on their social environment and personal values. This stage initiates a period of identity-forming, of emotions, and peer pressure. Thus young people want less support from parents and increased responsibility (Morris *et al* 2002). While valuing friendships and often aligning themselves to a particular group, they are also often antagonistic towards institutions. All these factors

influence young people's attitudes to museums and thus how a museum might choose to work with them.

Projects with young people have found that their perceptions of museums are often the biggest barrier to visiting. Young people have commented that they feel museums are not for them and they are often not sure of exactly what is inside. For example, a group the author accompanied as part of a project with Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery visiting the Victoria and Albert Museum in London were surprised to find jewellery and armour there (Pontin 2001). Barriers such as travel and cost are more difficult for museums to address but we can do something about the welcome they offer, the types of exhibition staged, and perhaps over time the attitude young people have towards visiting museums.

Breaking down barriers to young people's perceptions often entails developing specific projects with small groups of young people, and not only offering them something but also taking the opportunity to learn from them about the types of approaches that work best. Below we turn to a number of case studies, to explore the practicalities of undertaking such projects.

The importance of evaluation

Setting suitable objectives helps to refine the project's focus and is also essential to assessing and reporting the full impact of any intervention. Qualitative approaches to evaluation are key to capturing individual experiences and providing a rich picture of what happened. Evaluation needs to address weaker aspects of the project, and to look beyond the short term, which Pontin, in Lang *et al* (2006), says has lacked in many projects in the past. Evaluation needs to be more rigorous and to consider anomalies as well as successes, and, critically, to find out more about the longer-term impact, which although difficult to measure provides a greater understanding of the true impact on audiences, their attitudes and visiting patterns.

For example, through interviews with members of an outreach programme at the Museum of London, 20 per cent of whom were under 25 years old, Information Officer Lucie Fitton found that the long-term impact showed a change in attitude and values as well as skills (personal communication with the author). The young people reported a positive change in attitude towards themselves and others, as well as towards museums, and improved social and communication skills, and confidence. It was apparent that they valued the long-term social impacts of the programme most highly, which illustrates that the less easily evaluated areas were most referenced by the respondents.

Evaluation of projects should where possible consider project management, too. Building relationships with both partners and those participating in projects is important to gather a full picture and to contribute to ideas within the profession about best practice.

What do project evaluations show?

Projects with young people have been undertaken in museums since the late 1990s, one of the earliest being Museum Fever in Salford where participants developed an exhibition and activities for children. Many of these projects have worked with young people who have been in danger of being, or have already been, excluded, from society – those experiencing difficulties at school or behavioural issues. These have operated through the foyer movement (providing secure accommodation and the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills) and youth groups. Other programmes have worked with interest groups such as the Scouts and community centres.

These projects have intended to help turn young people onto learning and to inspire them to enjoy museums. Many have also aimed to build self-esteem, confidence and motivation. The museums have endeavoured to provide positive learning experiences focusing on self-awareness, tolerance, confidence, teamwork, problem solving, communication, decision-making and leadership. The aims and objectives of an inclusion project can thus be wide ranging, adhering to the Generic Learning Outcomes developed through the Inspiring Learning for All (ILfA) framework – knowledge and understanding; skills; attitudes and values; enjoyment, inspiration and creativity; and action, behaviour, progression (see Alec Coles's chapter in this volume for more information).

In an example of one such project, operating in several locations in Southern England and funded by the Campaign for Learning, museums partnered local sheltered accommodation for young people through the Foyer Federation in Swindon, Yeovil, Bath and Bridgewater. The aim was to develop a greater understanding among young people of museums and what they offer, and also to provide an opportunity for them to develop basic skills such as IT and English. Each foyer linked with its local museum to run a project to develop a display or other form of interpretation for the museum. During the project the young people visited a number of museums (such as London's Science Museum), art galleries, a falconry centre, castles and battlefields. They had opportunities to handle objects, try on costumes, and search and research collections. Their responses, gained through a project evaluation, (Pontin, unpublished report for the Campaign for Learning) showed a positive change in their attitudes towards museums. They enjoyed their experience and some felt they would like to visit museums again in the future. The museums involved found the young people's feedback to be invaluable for their future plans, helping them to assess how to change their audience profile.

What Eye See Too, a Young Roots project in Surrey and Sussex (see www.surreymuseums.org.uk), working with a number of small museums, aimed to help young people to be inspired by their local museums through the process of making an exhibition of their own photography. These photos were linked into their local heritage and museum collections. Youth groups based in the towns of Woking, Camberley, Arundel and Littlehampton worked with a project leader who was an experienced photographer. Each programme offered a series of weekly sessions to the young people in their own youth centres within their local community.

Key findings in the unpublished evaluation report highlight that museum staff gained new skills through working with young people and established new and important partnerships. The project was able to run in a variety of different ways (for example through different timetabling or partnerships) depending on the capacity of the museum in terms of staff, resources, timescales, access to collections and the exhibition spaces available. Youth workers were also able to provide essential skilled support. As a result the young people learnt photographic skills, but also a stronger understanding of their own area and its past. Participants also developed an increased sense of self-worth and confidence with much pride being taken in their photographs and the resulting public displays.

An example of a larger project is Represent, at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (and associated local museums including Aston Hall), which worked with one group of young people over a much longer period of time (one year). The coordinator, a young person employed via a government scheme, developed a programme to attract young people from a number of different youth groups who were particularly interested in joining up. The aims were to change their attitudes to museums, improve their skills, and build confidence. Another significant objective was to change the ethos of the museum service, adapt its approaches and management systems and thus improve its services to this young audience and the wider community.

The group, which grew from four to 40, visited a variety of museums in the area and further afield, particularly enjoying some of the exhibitions at the V&A. They also attended a range of workshops on subjects ranging from communication skills to photography, DJ-ing and graffiti art. This culminated in their working on an exhibition and contributed indirectly to museum policy.

Key to Represent's success was a project coordinator with the experience and skills to work with young people. The project evaluation shows that he felt strongly that it was important for him to go out to the young people to explain the project to them rather than expecting them to come to him. This resulted in a true commitment from the young people, who benefited hugely from the programme, gaining a range of skills through the stimulating activities and opportunities they engaged in (Pontin 2001). They were able to work with a range of professionals and artists and felt the social aspect was an important element of the programme. The project coordinator, who was experienced in youth work, was open to the young people taking a lead in the project direction and adapted the approach to suit their interests.

The above projects were successful in providing creative and interesting sessions, which the majority of young participants attended for the whole programme, gaining in both skills and confidence. There is as yet only a small amount of evidence that these young people have continued to use museums. At both Salford and Swindon museums a number of young people continued to volunteer or visit after the projects were over. More importantly perhaps, others among them found new confidence to apply for college courses or began to consider a wider range of options for their future. There is, however, no evidence yet that nationally young people are visiting museums more but this is a more long-term goal.

Most of the projects encountered a number of challenges along the way. These varied but often included finding ways of reminding participants to attend, providing timetables that suited everyone's diaries, and exploring different approaches to make activities exciting. For example, writing text and conducting research were often needed for the exhibitions the participants were organising and these tasks were often seen as boring or hard work. Providing opportunity to research using different sources and creating more IT-focused text writing often helped enthuse those involved. Additional behavioural problems were seen within groups where participants came from more challenging backgrounds and this took time, skill and empathy to deal with.

Work with young people continues, in a wide range of museums. Goole Museum, East Yorkshire, has recruited a team of young people who used the museum and the local studies library to research, write and produce silent films based on Goole's local history. Luton Voices at Wardown Park Museum has worked on an oral history project using young volunteers to collect the oral history from a diverse range of people in the community. Newport Museum and Art Gallery is working with young people from minority ethnic communities to produce, among other things, a display on the Muslim festival of Eid (Group for Education listserv communication, 2009).

Priorities for work with young people

Evaluation of projects like those above shows the need for partner organisations to have agreed aims, take time to share the planning phase and gain joint ownership of the project. Each partner needs to maintain its commitment in terms of staff time, resources and funds. The project should provide enough time to engage with the young people, creating opportunities for them to develop.

Maintaining motivation of the young people, many of whom have low self-esteem, is sometimes difficult. Adapting the programme, responding to need and letting the participants have a say in the planning is central to success. Consulting the young people about their opinions, needs and interests early on in the planning is also essential and enables relationships to be developed. Therefore the group itself needs to be identified early on in the planning.

Having a plan that is flexible provides opportunity for the participants to develop, but maintaining guidance and some control keeps the environment safe with clear boundaries for behaviour, respect and responsibilities. This can be particularly difficult with those young people who feel alienated from society and thus in such cases appropriately skilled partners are required. In practical terms this might mean providing their own space within the museum so they feel comfortable or afternoon starting times for sessions and events, but might also mean adapting sessions so they work in a different way.

Valuing and believing in participants' abilities is essential. The case studies above used dedicated positions to run the projects and work with the young people, alongside other staff or youth workers to give help when more support was needed. For example, the What Eye See Too project that took place in Camberley, Surrey, relied on the support of the partner staff from the school behaviour unit to motivate and support participants.

Realising Potential, a report from the Campaign for Learning and the Foyer Federation (Maxted 1999), adds that at a management level there is a need for clear objectives, sustainability, strong leadership, and good partnerships. Senior management in museums need to prioritise audience development work, making sure funding and staff are available. They need to ensure that museum policy prioritises its commitment to inclusion. Short-term funding often fails to provide such long-term commitment unless it is a planned element within a longer-term development programme. Relying on the commitment of individual staff is not enough.

Planning exit strategies for the end of a project is essential but often forgotten. Will the young people be 'abandoned' after the project finishes? How can they continue to be included even though funding has ended? How are other young people going to be attracted? How does the museum intend to change to make this possible? In Birmingham, Represent started the museum service on a long path of improving its services and attracting wider audiences from communities throughout the city. The recent temporary Hair exhibition held at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, for example, originally developed by a community action panel, has attracted new visitors and in particular a significant number of young people. Recent changes have also been made to staffing and staff structures to support new audience work. It is this longer-term commitment to changing the museum itself that is essential.

Conclusions

Museums, in designing projects for young people, need to work with skilled partners, plan carefully and with consultation, and be flexible and open to new approaches. Crucially, they must have a desire to respect, believe in and enjoy the young people. This takes us back to the philosophy underpinning the museum and its senior management, which needs to become a more central element of policy enabling museums to become better equipped to develop inclusive programmes. Management needs to consider how the museum sees itself within its own community. What is the museum's overall mission? How does attracting new audiences complement the more traditional audience base and how will success be defined? The success of the projects described here did not depend on the size of museum, budget or scale of project but on the commitment of the staff, having realistic goals, and strong partnerships.

Below is a summary of the key factors for success, as suggested here and elsewhere (Rider and Bates 2004):

- Developing partnerships with those who have the skills and experience of working with young people and are interested in participant development using a variety of approaches
- Taking time to recruiting the participants; working with a partner can be very useful. Working with only a small group is likely to be more manageable and productive
- Developing a style of interaction that treats participants like adults and

takes time to get to know them. Their advice on the programme and its development should be sought and adaptations made to suit their needs, whether it is timings of meetings, or the need to stop for regular refreshment breaks

- Working out how to continue contact once the project is over and ensuring it finishes with some kind of celebration or certificate of success
- Making sure the project is a museum priority, with time and money dedicated to making it work.

Those projects that do not follow this approach are likely to find the process harder and more stressful. The young people may not engage as extensively and the long-term goals for the museum may be less reachable. The extent to which the young people participate will also depend on many other more personal factors and these are often much more difficult to control. Using a reflective action research approach to evaluation as the project develops will help make it responsive to the young people's needs and interests.

Whether or not museums are able to successfully build new audiences through offering specially focused project work to young people will not be evidenced for many years to come. In the mean time developing our understanding of what museums can offer, breaking down barriers and understanding best practice through evaluation and research will help us establish a closer relationship with tomorrow's adults. There is a need to work together to make sure future communities still value their heritage and their museums and have a greater role in making sure they continue. Museums will have to become genuinely involved in engaging with the community agenda and offering what they want. Success in working with young people and other groups will depend on whether those that run and work in museums believe that they should be exclusive or inclusive organisations (Lang 2006) and whether museum workers have positive attitudes towards others, finding common interest in a joint heritage.

References

- Drisko J W (1997) 'Strengthening Qualitative studies and reports standards to promote academic integrity', *Journal of Social Work Education*, Vol 33, No 1
- Gardner H (1996) 'Multiple Intelligences' in Durbin G (ed) *Developing Museum Exhibitions for Lifelong Learning* Gillingham, Kent: Group for Education in Museums
- Lang C (2006) 'The Public Access Debate' in Lang C, Reeve J and Woollard V (eds) *The Responsive Museum: Working with audiences in the twenty-first century* Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate
- Maxted P (1999) *Realising Potential, helping homeless and disenfranchised young people back into learning* Campaign for Learning/Foyer Federation
- Morris G, Hargreaves J and McIntyre A (2002) *Start with the Child: The Needs and Motivations of Young People*, lateralthinkers.com
- Pontin K (2001, unpublished) *Represent: An Evaluation report for an inclusion project run by Birmingham Museum Service*, available at www.katepontin.co.uk/REPBRUM.pdf
- Pontin K and Hawthorne E (n.d.) *Museum Fever and Represent, lessons for working with young people in museums*, Resource, West Midlands Regional Museums Council and NWMS

- Rider S and Bates L (eds) (2004) *Opening the Doors, Museums and Young People* Hitchin, Herts: Opening the Doors
- Sandell R (2007) 'Museums and the Combating of Social Inequality: roles, responsibilities, resistance' in Watson S (ed) *Museums and their communities*, Oxford: Routledge
- Woollard V (2006) 'UK Museum and Gallery Visitor Figures', in Lang C, Reeve J and Woollard V (eds) *The Responsive Museum, working with audiences in the twenty-first century* Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate

12. SCIENCE, LEARNING, MUSEUMS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Jean M. Franczyk and Alexandra Burch

'Then there were our trips to the Science Museum in South Kensington. What a wonderful place that was, and still is! Photoelectric cells and calculating machines, pulleys and radio valves – I didn't understand much of it, but I loved it all. It meant excitement and wonder and amazement; it meant the sense that anything was possible, and that the Universe was huge and full of exciting things to discover.' Philip Pullman (2007)²²

We live in challenging times. Climate change, increasing population, and decreasing natural resources are global issues that impact all of us. We need scientists able to address these concerns and a public able to engage in meaningful dialogue about the choices and implications associated with these issues.

Yet, we continue to see students switch their science interest to 'off' as they move from primary to secondary science education (Porter and Parvin 2007). One of the key roles for museums is to maintain that engagement with science that exists in the early years. Museums are a part of the overall learning landscape and this chapter discusses the role science, learning and museums have on young people.

Science and technology: an integral part of society

Science and technology influence directly how we live, work and play: our leisure activities involve MP3 players, video games, and international holidays; our jobs involve local, national, and global partners connected through technology; our lives are supported by access to clean water, to the electricity and fuel that heat our homes and power all the gadgets within them, as well as by gene therapy and antiviral drugs. Science and

22 Excerpt from the introduction to *The Science of Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials*, Gribbin M and Gribbin J (2007, LaurelLeaf Books)

technology have created the lifestyles we enjoy today and they are the tools we will use to address the global problems those lifestyles have created.

Yet at the very time at which there is a great need for scientific literacy among future generations, there remains a drop-off in interest in school science as students move to secondary school and a decrease in the number of students opting to take up science subjects at an advanced level in the UK (The Royal Society 2008). Why is it that young people are disengaging from science when its influence is all around them? It can be argued that all children start out as scientists – testing, observing, and analysing their world – and research suggests that throughout the early primary school years, children express a strong interest in science. However, interest in school science tends to wane towards the end of primary school and then drops off precipitously by secondary school (Porter and Parvin 2007).

There is a range of research documenting this phenomenon, as well as evidence that it is out-of-school experiences, interests and influences that are key determinants in sustaining an interest in science. The highlights of this research, from a variety of sources, show:

- By age 14, student interest in science is largely formed and once interest is lost, is unlikely to be regained.
- Life experiences prior to age 14 are key determinants in a sustained interest in science courses and careers. Among those graduating from science degrees, early interest, typically by age 11, in a career in science was a significant determinant in their choice of study. (Tai *et al* 2006, Porter and Parvin 2007, Osborne 2007)

This declining student interest in science has led government to support and initiate policies that ensure future generations are prepared to make sense of our ever-changing world, create solutions to global challenges such as climate change, and remain competitive in an increasingly interconnected world. For young people, the most significant of these initiatives are the new science curriculum at Key Stage 4, the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) initiative, including Project ENTHUSE (a £30m fund to improve science teaching, a partnership between industry, government and the Wellcome Trust) and the national and regional Science Learning Centres which support teachers' professional development in science.

The above initiatives have been based in the formal education sector. However, research shows that society's attitudes towards science can have a profound influence on young people. For example, the Sjøberg 2006/ROSE (Relevance of Science Education Project) report (Jenkins and Pell 2006) showed that there was a negative correlation between student attitudes to school science and a nation's wealth. Jonathan Osborne (2007), in discussing the implications of the ROSE findings, has argued that attitudes to science are deeply cultural and this must be recognised when addressing declining student interest in science study and STEM careers.

In other research, there is evidence that the attitudes of adults closest to young people also have an influence. For example, we at the Science Museum, London, have generally found that for adults science can be

remote (Science Museum Visitor Research Group 2004), complex and something that they are cynical about. Jarvis and Pell (2005) identified that continued interest in a subject after a school visit to a space science centre was influenced by the accompanying adults on the visit and specifically, Crowley *et al* (2001) found that parents tended to explain more to boys than girls at science-based interactive displays.

Given the influence of the world beyond the classroom, we would argue that the perception of science by society has to be addressed. It is important not only to challenge young people's perceptions but also those of the adults and teachers around them, and to challenge the way that science is conveyed and portrayed. In particular, science museums occupy an awkward place in the cultural sector as the sector's use of the word 'culture' is used almost exclusively to represent the visual and performing arts by the public, by the media and by government. For example, the Government's Find Your Talent initiative with its ambition to provide young people with five hours of culture a week was created with an emphasis on the visual and performing arts and without an explicit reference to science. Among other things, this narrow definition of the word 'culture' pushes science to the fringe of conversations about museums, culture and learning, limiting unnecessarily the opportunities to inspire the next generation of young people to create, invent, explore and express themselves in the ongoing conversation about science. Furthermore, excluding, implicitly or explicitly, 'science' from the understanding of culture makes it difficult to challenge the stereotypical perceptions that people have about science and harder to invite people to actively join the conversation about science and its impacts on society.

What can museums²³ do?

The UK's concern about young people's engagement with and uptake of science is not unique. In response to a similar question in the United States, a team of researchers and practitioners in informal science learning questioned why programmatic, instructional and curriculum improvements had not led to increases in the numbers or diversity of those achieving at high levels and entering careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Jolly *et al* 2004). Led by Eric Jolly, president of the Science Museum of Minnesota, the team identified a trilogy of interdependent factors necessary to supporting young people's successful participation in science: engagement, capacity and continuity.

- **Engagement** refers to interest, motivation, awareness and enjoyment of science. Are young people interested and enthusiastic about science?
- **Capacity** refers to the development of knowledge and the skills needed to advance to increasingly rigorous content and practice. Are young people gaining the capacity to know and do more science?
- **Continuity** refers to the ongoing and progressive institutional and programmatic opportunity, resources and guidance that support advancement to increasingly rigorous content. Do young people have access to ongoing and progressive opportunities that develop both their engagement and capacity?

²³ We use the word 'museum' here to mean a variety of informal science learning environments including museums, science centres, botanic gardens and zoos.

When we talk about young people and science learning we tend to think of school as the primary learning environment. However, Bransford (2006) suggests that 85 per cent of our learning hours are spent outside of formal school environments, even during our most intensive years of schooling. Museums form part of that vast learning landscape that exists outside of school. While school visits to museums are important, they are far from the only way museums welcome young people. In fact, a museum's greatest potential for impact is when young people visit in non-school groups. For example, while the Science Museum, London, annually receives more than 320,000 visitors in booked education groups, this is only 12 per cent of its overall audience of 2.7 million. By far the largest number of young people visit in family²⁴ groups which comprise 47 per cent of the Science Museum's audience (The Science Museum 2008).

In family-type groups the influence of accompanying adults is potentially greater than in school groups, not least because the ratio of adults to children tends to be one-to-one and is rarely greater than one-to-three while it is anywhere between one-to-eight and one-to-fifteen with booked education visitors. Adults in family groups are also more likely to know the children in their charge and are thus more able to connect to the young visitors' prior knowledge and experience. Within these smaller family groups, there is greater opportunity for the adults to scaffold information to children, to reinforce the reflective nature of the museum learning experience, and relate the subject matter to day-to-day life, all of which serves to extend the impact of the experience well beyond the length of the visit. These family learning experiences form an important part of the *Engagement* leg of Jolly's 'Trilogy for Student Success'.

Museums are places where visitors of all ages and backgrounds can engage together with a topic, where they develop interest and motivation to learn more that can be transferred to formal learning environments that build *Capacity* and provide *Continuity*. And while museums have a role to play in *Capacity* and *Continuity*, they perhaps have the greatest role to play in *Engagement*. As seen from the arguments presented above, the attitudes of students to school science can be negative and that of their parents, teachers and carers can have a large influence. Why is it, for instance, that in the recent Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) (Sturman *et al* 2008) researchers found that England's 10- and 14-year-olds' exam performance had improved while their enjoyment of science simultaneously declined?

In addition, teachers find themselves constrained by the framework of the National Curriculum and report not being able to do 'practicals' due to time, health and safety concerns and the emphasis on examination areas (Dillon 2008), and that their students find it hard to relate what is done in the classroom to the outside world (Porter and Parvin 2007). The *Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto* (managed by the CfBT Education Trust on behalf of the Department for Children, Schools and Families) does much to assuage these concerns but it is too early to tell if the Manifesto itself has increased the number of beyond-the-classroom learning experiences available to young people.

24 By family group we mean any intergenerational group comprised of a mix of adults and children, excluding those visiting in booked education groups.

A 2008 Ipsos MORI poll showed that 79 per cent of physics teachers regret the lack of opportunities for children to learn outside the classroom and 51 per cent said there were too few opportunities for hands-on experiments in the classroom. Science museums are unique learning environments which can provide access to real objects and phenomena, and opportunities for self-directed and cooperative learning. They place an emphasis on discovery, exploration and intergenerational learning opportunities, and often provide the motivational hook into a subject that comes before acquisition of advanced knowledge and skill. Therefore they can provide the type of learning experiences that often cannot be provided in school and they can effectively cater for a range of different learning style preferences and outcomes. Science learning with museums therefore complements the formal learning sector and addresses cultural attitudes to science.

A January 2009 report from the US National Research Council (Bell *et al* 2009) supports these findings and concludes that informal environments, including museums, science centres, zoos, aquariums, and environmental centres, promote science learning through experiences that 'kick-start' and sustain long-term interests that involve sophisticated learning for adults and young people. The report indicates that structured non-school science programmes can feed or stimulate the science-specific interests of adults and children and may positively influence academic achievement for students and expand participants' sense of future science career options. It also notes that participation in informal learning experiences can significantly improve outcomes for individuals from groups historically underrepresented in science and further concludes that these experiences can promote informed civic engagement on science-related issues.

At the Science Museum, London, the UK's science collection puts science research, discovery and application into an historical, social, artistic, personal, and scientific context. The application of science and its influence on society is on display in a manner that welcomes audiences of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy science. In enjoying it, we can explore it, aim to understand it, and support its advancement and application for the betterment of people and our planet. In this way, we can show directly the relevance of science for society both through its past impact on people, society and the environment, and through its future potential.

The question then becomes what role does 'enjoyment' of science have in learning science, and, potentially, in addressing national concern about the numbers of young people choosing to pursue advanced science studies and careers? Consider the Science Museum's newly redeveloped Launchpad – the hands-on interactive physics gallery. When we started the project, we knew from previous research that there was a perception of science as remote and something that is done by other people. The intent of the gallery, therefore, was to:

- Make a connection between science and real-world examples
- Provide experience of real-world phenomena that cannot be accessed at home or at school
- Encourage a broad range of young people to engage with physics

- Encourage and support adult interaction with their children's learning
- Encourage visitors to formulate questions and hypotheses
- Encourage self-directed exploration with emphasis on the process of science discovery rather than on getting to 'the right answer'
- Provide an enjoyable and enabling experience of science
- Support different learning styles.

By design, the gallery bridges primary and secondary school audiences, the very transition point at which interest in science declines, and is aimed at 8- to 14-year-olds and their accompanying adults. The new Launchpad, opened in November 2007 by Prime Minister Gordon Brown, is a sophisticated, bright, beautiful and active space and welcomed 1.2 million visitors in its first year. However, it is not just that this gallery is popular. Evaluation by Teixeira and Burch (2007) has shown it to deliver on the objectives above, in particular:

- All visitors – young people, accompanying adults, teachers – felt that it was fun and educational.
- Young people highlighted the difference between experiencing the science in this environment versus science lessons at school, noting particularly the opportunity to try things out for themselves, to formulate questions, to share the experiences, and to learn from making 'mistakes'.
- Both parents and teachers felt that Launchpad provided experiences that their children could not access at home or at school and that this was positive.
- Parents indicated that Launchpad provided them with an opportunity to share in their children's learning as well as the chance to learn something themselves. These are qualities they value and they use them to support their children's learning.
- Teachers felt that Launchpad successfully conveyed the message that science is real, not restricted to the classroom, and that it is relevant. They also felt that Launchpad provided their children with valuable hands-on experiences of science – something they felt they could not always do in their classrooms.
- Visitors felt that the on-gallery staff ('Explainers') provided positive role models in science.

Using the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council's *Generic Learning Outcomes*, there was significant evidence for learning taking place in the gallery. This learning not only included the development of knowledge and understanding but also encompassed:

- **Attitudes and values:** evidence clearly showed that Launchpad challenged visitors' negative perceptions of science and encouraged visitors to consider science as interesting and relevant to 'real-life'.
- **Skills:** evaluation showed that visitors were engaged in experimentation and exploration; that they were making and testing predictions; and that they were challenged to think about the experience and work things out on their own.

- **Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity:** evidence showed that visitors found the Launchpad experience enjoyable and left them feeling that science could be 'fun'. Launchpad fostered visitors' confidence to try things out without fear of getting things wrong, and it was clear that visitors felt a sense of achievement from their interactions with the exhibits.
- **Action, behaviour and progression:** visitors were observed sharing and discussing ideas, questions and experiences. Parents were observed actively supporting their children's interactions and thus helping them to learn.

All of these outcomes are about building an interest in the subject matter. It is clear that provision of this type of experience fulfils the *Engagement* leg of Jolly's 'Trilogy for Student Success'. And it is clear from talking to young people, parents and teachers that this sort of provision is welcomed and wanted. Furthermore, these types of outcomes are not restricted to interactive displays and hands-on experiences. Our evidence shows that similar levels of engagement with difficult science subjects can be achieved through object-rich spaces, such as the Science Museum's 'Challenge of Materials', about chemistry and material science, and 'Who am I?' about biomedical science, and with visitors of all ages.

When developing Launchpad, the Science Museum did not set out to create a gallery that people would leave with a comprehensive knowledge of physics. That is not the purpose of the gallery and it is not the purpose of a museum. The purpose is to engage people with the content, to trigger an interest that has not yet been tapped into and to act as a springboard to motivate visitors to delve deeper into these subjects themselves. Museums' strengths lie in their difference from formal schooling. With that difference they can complement the school experience and strengthen the broader net of cultural support for any subject, but particularly for science. When this is done we have consistently found it appreciated by our audiences: independent adults, teachers, parents and young people. Therefore, while we want policymakers to recognise the power of out-of-school activities like these, they should not seek to make them more school-like.

Conclusions

Museums play an important role in science learning for young people. But for the potential of that role to be realised fully, the following things need to happen:

1. Science needs to be recognised as part of 'culture'. This would bring in science from the fringe, encourage broader engagement with science, challenge the negative stereotypes of science, and open new avenues for engagement, funding and resourcing.
2. The value that museums and informal learning environments have in supporting young people's science learning needs to be recognised and supported by policymakers. This means that they need to think broadly –

not just about school group visits to museums – and ensure that science is a part of major initiatives like Find Your Talent, that support for Learning Outside the Classroom continues, and that young people's participation in informal learning experiences has a recognised value in the eyes of qualification and degree-granting institutions.

3. It is clear that engagement matters and that it is essential for learning. When it comes to science there must be positive engagement at young ages and it is vital that we invest in young people and the activities that will encourage their interest in science – not simply replicate the classroom experience.
4. To make a museum a truly valuable learning experience for young people we must also support the adults who visit with them by understanding and designing intergenerational learning experiences.

Embracing these opportunities of learning beyond the classroom, recognising that they complement, rather than replace, school, and embracing science as part of culture will add great weight to our desire to improve interest in science and science learning that is part of both our national cultural and science learning agendas.

References

- Bell P, Lewenstein B, Shouse AW, and Feder MA (eds) (2009) *Learning Science in Informal Environments: People, Places, and Pursuits* Committee on Learning Science in Informal Environments, National Research Council
- Bransford JD (2006) 'Toward a 21st Century Learning Theory: Some emerging thoughts' Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Association for Research in Science Teaching, San Francisco
- Burch A and Gammon B (2001) *The Summative evaluation of 'who am i?' Gallery* Audience Research and Advocacy Group: Learning, London: Science Museum
- Crowley K, Callanan MA, Tenenbaum HR and Allen E (2001) 'Parents explain more often to boys than to girls during shared scientific thinking' *Psychological Science*, vol. 12
- Dillon J (2008) *A Review of the Research on Practical Work in School Science* London: Kings College
- Gribbin M and Gribbin J (2007) *The science of Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials*, Laurel-Leaf Books
- Ipsos MORI (2008) 'Research with physics teachers (in support of the Launchpad Outreach Programme launch) for the Science Museum and Shell', available at www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/about_us/press_and_media/press_releases/2008/03/science_museum_shell_survey.aspx
- Jarvis T and Pell A (2005) 'Factors Influencing elementary school children's attitudes toward Science before, during, and after a visit to the UK National Space Centre' *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, vol 42
- Jenkins EW and Pell RG (2006) *The relevance of science education project (ROSE) in England: a summary of findings* Leeds: Centre for Studies in Science and Mathematics Education, University of Leeds

- Jolly EJ, Campbell PB and Perlman L (2004) *Engagement, Capacity and Continuity: A Trilogy for Student Success* GE Foundation Report
- Osborne J (2007) *Engaging young people with science: thoughts about future direction of science education*. Paper presented at Linnaeus tercentenary 2007 symposium 'Promoting scientific literacy', Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden
- Porter C and Parvin J (2007) *Learning to love science: Harnessing children's scientific imagination*. York: Chemical Industry Education Centre, University of York
- Royal Society, The (2008) *Science and mathematics education, 14-19. A 'state of the nation' report on the participation and attainment of 14-19 year olds in science and mathematics in the UK, 1996-2007* London: The Royal Society
- Science Museum Visitor Research Group (2004) *Naked Science. Evaluation of 18 months of contemporary science events* London: The Science Museum
- Science Museum, The (2008) *Science Museum Visitor Profile 2007-2008* London: The Science Museum
- Sturman L, Ruddock G, Burge B, Styles B, Lin Y and Vappula H (2008) *England's Achievement in TIMSS 2007: National Report for England* Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research
- Tai RH, Liu CQ, Maltese AV and Fan X (2006) 'Planning early for careers in science' *Science*, vol 312
- Teixeira T and Burch A (2007) *The summative evaluation of 'Launchpad'. Audience Research and Advocacy Group: Learning* London: Science Museum
- TWRResearch (1998) *Summative evaluation of 'Challenge of Materials'* London: Science Museum, London

13. CREATING A LEARNING ADVENTURE

Mick Waters

Museums, libraries and archives offer so many opportunities to bring learning alive for young people. Along with galleries, bird sanctuaries, botanical and zoological gardens, and natural wonders, they offer the learner the chance to engage with collections, to see that the complex world in which they live can be ordered, classified, sub-classified and recorded so that it may be more easily understood in a way that informs the future.

Of course, most parents recognise the value of museums, libraries and archives to their children. To see families enjoying the Science Museum, the Armouries, the Cosford Air Museum or the National Railway Museum is to see the impact of well organised and presented artefacts on the development of people as lifelong family learners, especially as they together make links between the differing experiences over time.

We all know that learning sticks most when it is real. Good schools feed off the real experience: learning today is at the station, the market, the factory, the beach. Our learning next week will be in the forest, the church, the mosque, the synagogue or the temple. It is through direct experience that we stimulate learning so that back in the classroom, the artificial learning environment, we can introduce learners to different people, locations and eras through people, media and books. That is where museums, libraries and archives provide the capacity to enable the teacher to double back on learning. The visit to the forest, the place of worship or the local castle can be further enhanced through the resource that is stored, catalogued and recorded, giving insight and touchstones to take learning further through the focus on the artefact.

Research has shown that for children involved in structured activity in museums and galleries their attainment rises. For example, in Manchester the MAGPIE programme (Museums and Galleries programme in education), demonstrated improvement of 15 to 30 per cent above the norm for involved pupils. This was a programme in which the focus was on pupils' writing at Key Stage 2, and it measured progress over two years. The children

involved developed improved speaking and listening skills, leading to better writing, produced at greater length and with greater enjoyment.

An Ofsted survey inspection report *Learning Outside the Classroom* (2008) highlighted the improved attainment of pupils who experienced educational visits as a natural and coherent part of a planned curriculum experience. Indeed the report pointed out that pupil performance rose even when the visit was relatively poorly planned and managed: whether the highlights for the children were the bus journey, a chance to spend in the museum shop, or the exhibit itself, the test results of the children improved. Of course those schools that tightly plan visits that fit the stage of learning gain more. Key to success is the fit with the planned learning as an introduction or culmination to study, or the ongoing programme of visits as part of an unfolding exploration of a historical period or a controversial issue. This is the bridge between the recreational access to museums, libraries and archives and the structured sense-making that teachers and schools should secure. Good teachers plan and mark experience so that the real learning done elsewhere is taken further in the classroom.

In themselves, museums, archives and libraries, along with the other magnets of interest, are of enormous benefit to society. The excellent report *Culture Shock* demonstrates the way museums can affect mental health (CLMG 2006). They work on emotion and imagination and engage with people across the spectrum to reflect and build creativity, confidence and enjoyment of life. They hold the collective memory of society and the pleasure lies in being; they are not compulsory or judgemental. The report talks of museums as sanctuaries.

Big ideas and Curriculum Dimensions

How does all this fit with learning and what young people have to do in school – the curriculum? The curriculum is more than the National Curriculum, which seeks to set out a minimum entitlement for children. The true curriculum is not what we teach but what children experience; it is the entire planned learning experience. The true curriculum includes the lessons, the events, the routines and what children do outside school. It is the bringing together of these elements in a coherent design that becomes the school's curriculum.

Recent reviews of the primary and secondary National Curriculum in England and elsewhere in the UK have tried to reduce the emphasis on detailed content and instead focus on the 'big ideas' that learners should meet. In England, a conversation about a 'big picture of curriculum' has asked people to think about three key questions: 'What are we trying to achieve for learners?' 'How do we best organise learning?' and 'How well are we achieving our aims?' These could apply nationally, locally, within a school, a department, a key stage, a year group, a class or a lesson or educational visit. The 'big picture' is available on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority website (QCA 2008) with a commentary and animation and would serve as a good conversation starter for a group of colleagues in any museum, archive or libraries team.

A recent development that is of real relevance to the world of museums, libraries and archives is the work on 'Curriculum Dimensions' that reflect the major challenges that face society and have significance for individuals. These dimensions provide powerful unifying themes that give learning relevance and help young people make sense of their world. As identified by QCA, they include:

- Identity and cultural diversity
- Healthy lifestyles
- Community participation
- Enterprise
- Sustainable futures and the global dimension
- Technology and the media
- Creative and critical thinking.

Most young people respond well to learning about these issues. They are interested in themselves, their community, their society and their world. They want to know about the influences that have shaped our world, why we have developed as we have and they want to do something about it. The development of the work on Curriculum Dimensions is an open door for anyone involved in 'out-and-about learning'.

The gauntlet has been taken up by museums, libraries and archives across the country. Bristol Museum, for example, has used the 'big picture' thinking as a basis for planning its new building and is working closely with schools in the area to design valuable, ongoing, structured experiences for schools to exploit.

From hands-on to brains-on

We have seen a move from 'hands-on' being the mantra to a more sophisticated awareness of what makes learning happen. The excitement of turning knobs, pulling levers and flicking switches counts for little if the hands-on experience does not connect with the brain. We need 'brains-on', not just hands-on. There are numerous ways to excite curiosity, build fascination and fire imagination. Of course, doing it and having a go are useful as long as there is some way of bringing the learning out and making it explicit.

The British Library has developed a programme called 'Campaign! Make an Impact'. Through use of archive, teenagers develop a campaign that matters to them while at the same time referencing their work to campaigns that have shaped society as it exists today. Link this to Channel 4 TV's excellent work on 'Battlefront', or work with BBC on its 'School Report' initiative and the true meaning of hands-on learning becomes clear.

Hardly anywhere in the country is far from a good museum where children can be enthralled by the exhibits and their heritage and where the learning can connect with the subjects of learning. The wonder of the first crow's nest at Whitby and the imagination of being the first one to sway to the rhythm of the sea can be revisited in the classroom in Physics and Maths lessons. The insight into the family childhoods at the Bronte Parsonage will kindle a

delight in the make-believe miniature books about the Ashanti tribe further brought to life in the novel by E Nesbit. How many children have made miniature books about their own lives? The National Football Museum at Preston will stoke the imagination of many a child who believes the world of sport awaits. And what child, or adult, enters the Keswick Museum without trying to play a tune on the slate xylophone?

People stand enthralled at the ancient texts and scriptures at the British Library. As they realise that they can request a copy of any book published in England, they start to understand what archiving means. To see the big events reported differently in the newspapers of the day helps young people to see the way information is mediated. Years later, the scholar poring over medieval texts in the Rylands Museum in Manchester has a touchstone for judging authenticity, not just of the manuscript but of the content of the writing.

The excellent publication and exhibition, '1001 Muslim Inventions' (Al-Hassani 2007) provides a travelling museum. The opportunity for people to see, consider and wonder about the way in which cultures have influenced civilisation affects community cohesion, developing respect for identities and diversity. History is comparative as well as narrative. Exhibitions of Egyptian pharaohs, alongside Chinese dynasties and Aztec rulers, show different perspectives on the pace of invention, ritual and social change.

And careers? Underneath it all, we need to constantly emphasise to young people that their learning can lead to something. Being explicit about careers is vital. For too long, teaching has left the link between learning and the world of work to the careers teacher to offer information, advice and guidance. To make explicit to Primary aged children and to teenagers that there is a wealth of jobs behind the world of out-and-about learning is part of the fun of teaching. From marine archaeologist, to photographer, surveyor, cartographer and conservationist, an educational visit offers a chance to dwell on the job being seen. To meet the curator, the tour guide, the administrator is to meet the team behind the scene. A few minutes on where the interest started, what the training was and why the work is fascinating could open a door that a youngster did not know was there.

What of knowledge? In this move to a curriculum that is designed to be coherent for the learner, there is a belief by some that 'knowledge is out'. Knowledge can never be 'out'. We cannot make much progress without knowledge and museums, libraries and archives are built on the resource of accumulated knowledge. It is the way that knowledge is used in learning that is changing.

Learners should see themselves as producers rather than consumers of knowledge. We need to leave behind the 'swallow and spit' outlook to the use of knowledge in learning. Youngsters need to see knowledge being demonstrated and used in many modes, from print to images, sound, photographs, body shape, pictures, websites, charts and models. Museums, galleries, archives and libraries ooze with this multi-modal knowledge. The National Museum of Photography, Film & Television in Bradford, the film archive at the University of East Anglia, the maps of wartime Britain at Disraeli's home, Hughenden Manor, in Buckinghamshire, or the Bletchley Park collection of code cracking by Alan Turing and colleagues are examples

of knowledge in action for a purpose. Equally, the power of the steam engine at Kelham Island Museum in Sheffield gives a glimpse of mechanics in action as a precursor to the study of diagrams, laws and formulae. At Kew Gardens, there is the endless possibility of discovery in the growing and changing artefact of plants.

Children need to learn the relationships, connections and interactions between knowledge systems. How does a geographer use knowledge differently from a historian? What does an archaeologist do that is different from a geologist? What do all these different experts do to promote their knowledge? How do they process, produce and perform? Above all we need to help learners grow a sense of themselves as active knowledge-builders and enable them to delight that their knowledge will never be complete.

In one primary school recently, some 10- and 11-year-old pupils were given copies of the pages from their own parish register from 1840 and 1900 that recorded marriages, and were asked what they noticed. The children soon spotted that everyone in 1840 married someone from their own parish, but by 1900 well over half married someone from another parish. The teacher presented this as their investigation, giving them three days to find out why this was. Some groups consulted that font of wisdom, Google. Some asked the local vicar (whom they saw as in charge of the parish register and old enough to remember anyway!). Another group decided to delve deeper and looked at the developing pattern, putting pins in a map for succeeding decades. They found that the pins moved to a circle of local villages around 1860 and then to a neighbouring town after 1880. By the end of the three days the children had put together all their findings and worked out that the building of the railway to the nearby town and the wider availability of the bicycle gradually enabled more people to visit nearby parishes and beyond. The pins matched the history, and the children checked this by finding out what spare time people would have had in Victorian times and how far they might have ridden.

This piece of work involved a range of learning. Not just about Victorian social life, but skills of investigation, analysis, problem solving, working together in teams and sticking at a job when it seems difficult. In historical terms the children investigated changes within a period and linked technological developments to social change. More importantly, they demonstrated a commitment to finding the information to solve the problem and because it was their own work about their own parish, they had a real sense of ownership. They developed a better sense of who they were in that parish and how things had developed over time. Their knowledge in history went alongside their personal development and in turn they developed new skills.

The vehicle was the archive. Most children love the opportunity to interact with artefacts, to investigate and discover. They want to dress up, to visit castles or air raid shelters and take part in mediaeval feasts or make-believe wartime evacuation.

For most people, there is a natural urge to learn. For children, 'Take me places, show me things, let me ask questions, let me have a go' are natural requests. They want to know who they are, how it works, what they do and 'why?' ... always 'why?' Watch adults around any museum. They ask the

same questions and they make links between what they are seeing and other examples from their previous experience... and they say the same things.

Lifelong learning is about whetted appetites. Through technology, we can take a virtual visit to NASA, go inside an Egyptian pyramid and take part in a tour of the Alhambra. The thousands of people who visit the Great Wall or the Tomb of the Terracotta Warriors are trying to piece together their learning journey through civilisation. Robyn Island teaches about incarceration, determination, and resilience as much as it teaches about Mandela and Apartheid. This interest in museums, libraries and archives, and other out-and-about learning is a worldwide and lifelong endeavour... it is a learning adventure. We want our young to join the club.

References

- Al-Hassani S T S (2007) *1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in Our World*, 2nd Edition, London: FSTC
- CLMG (The Campaign for Learning Through Museums and Galleries) (2006) *Culture Shock: Tolerance, Respect, Understanding...and Museums* Bude: CLMG
- Ofsted (2008) *Learning outside the classroom* London: Ofsted
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2008) 'A big picture of the curriculum', available at www.qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/Big_Picture_2008.pdf

'The past decade has seen a revolution in museum education. Museums have placed learning at the core of their service to the public and have developed extensive learning programmes, establishing their role as vital centres of knowledge in the community alongside schools and universities. Looking forward, we need to ensure that museums and galleries remain at the heart of children's learning and development and continue to innovate to reach out to all young people in their communities.

'Learning to Live: Museums, young people and education was commissioned by the National Museum Directors' Conference in partnership with the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr). It brings together leading figures from the worlds of culture and education to explore what more museums and educators, working with policymakers and delivery bodies such as schools, can and should be doing, both within and beyond the classroom, to inspire learning and creativity among all young people.'

Sir Nicholas Serota, Director, Tate

Carey Oppenheim, Co-Director, ippr



ISBN 9781860303241
£14.95