



Group for Education in Museums Conference 2002

SMC Session

6 September 2002

Standards, sustainability and cross-sectoral working- the way ahead? Developing sustainable museum and gallery education in Scotland

Contribution to Wider Agendas

How can the long term positive effects of volunteering could be measured?

- Hard to measure long term impact on community, often has to be on individual/organisational basis.
- Museums tend to attract longer term volunteers, so can set up their own evaluation mechanisms. The Inspiring Learning Framework addresses this.
- Open Museum tracked former users to measure impact.
- Need to be clear what you are evaluating, especially over many years.
- Issue of volunteers taking over paid posts, particularly as they can be unreliable, poor timekeepers, etc.
- Job descriptions/contracts needed.
- Need to have clear policies on volunteers and how they are employed.

Question regarding difficulties of obtaining ICT funding for a middle sized independent museum, feels that funding is going elsewhere. No money, eg to develop their own website.

- Could try the 'Work With Us' voluntary portal – donations can be given online.
- Could try accessing 'think.com' – potential to build up museum network to access financial information. Balance between local and national provision is problematic.
- People in sector need to think beyond SCRAN.
- Agreement that SCRAN is only partial solution. Further developments in technology will need to be addressed (eg use of mobile phones, individual ICT).

How easy is it for museums to work with SIPs as partners – how receptive are they?

- In Glasgow HLF have close relationship with Culture and Leisure Services. Often one individual can be used as a 'gateway' person.
- Kickstart/SIP clusters – another avenue.
- Do not have to involve SIPs right from the start – can bring in along the way, e.g. 'Have a Blast' project – helping young people to experience museums as neutral spaces, with potential for various activities.
- Edinburgh CC has given small cultural grants to local groups – can make proviso that museums are involved.
- NMS was involved in the Pollok Kist project – they took part in SIP events (e.g. health related), so reciprocal arrangement in place. More difficult to do in a national context.
- ICT can be useful tool with which to approach community – images can be manipulated and effectively 'handled'.

Action Plan for Scotland's Museums

What does 'promoting the Learning Society' mean in practice? Is it a re-badging of what we already do, or is there greater demand for learning? Introducing museums into the equation is difficult.

- In addition is 'social justice' a bit of an amorphous term? Are we doing social work when we are not social workers? Often involves short term funding, finite projects.
- Worries that it can be somewhat patronising – how to sustain the work?
- SIPs should be developing idea of 'pockets' of social exclusion.

A general discussion ensued about funding – are projects money or issue led? How to offer equal opportunities for all, when people do not have equal access? Also problem of competition with other leisure activities, eg shopping. Concluded by saying that how we define visitors/social inclusion is an important issue. Perhaps GEM Scotland could join with SMC to convene a future discussion?



Learning and Access Consultation Meeting

11 November 2002

Scottish Museums Council and GEM Scotland

Group 1

1 Roles and Structures

- Regional networks / agencies (e.g. hubs)
 - are these viable in Scotland?
 - tendency to exclude smaller independent museums?

Have we the resources to be a part of such a scheme?

Particular imbalance in Scotland – different priorities from England

- Perhaps nationals could be sharing skills/resources with less well resourced museums – how would this work in practice?
 - need to avoid 'parachuting in'.
 - have more local knowledge in certain places (ie where their museums are)
- South Lanarkshire have a successful local forum – useful model
- SMC's role – training and advocacy useful
- Different priorities – SMC, Nationals, LAs etc – need more collective thinking, not reinventing the wheel – eg NMS Heritage Education Forum (NMS, NTS, Historic Scotland, SNH, SMC, etc)
- Interpret Scotland – useful group potentially, although focus on environmental interpretation
- Executive – should look at bringing Scotland up to same level as English Museums in terms of resources and output
- Museums – low on LA agendas – Executive should be lobbying for more support
- Museums sector needs to promote itself better in relation to other sectors
- More cohesive way of approaching L & A, eg a network/framework - guidelines for clarity, rather than being prescriptive – partnerships important, not reinventing the wheel
- More devolution of funding/resources on a local level - no equivalent of regional agencies in Scotland – local posts a possibility?
- Need to clarify relationship with Resource
- Where museums are located within LA departments – defines importance / priorities – eg might be Education Dept or Leisure and Tourism – more consistency needed
- Executive should practice what they preach about joined up thinking

2 Funding

- Seems to be far more DCMS funding available for museums than through the Executive - more project funding etc needed
- Dedicated Education funds – did the SCF offer enough? – what else is there?
- Project funding – a start/first step – projects can act as pilot schemes – move on to something more sustained
- Need education fundraisers – very specific language/approach
- SMC – should function as funding advisors – flag up new sources of dedicated funding
- More 100% funding should be available (or at least less match funding required) – independents are particularly disadvantaged
- Sponsorship from private sector – how to find a way in? – often a local solution
- Funders often have different priorities from museums and there are ‘fashions’ in funding – applications have to be slanted to meet criteria, not museums’ own aims
- need more long term strategies
- Training on fundraising and application procedures would be helpful (free places?) – SMC Roadshows mentioned

3 Contribution to Wider Agendas

- Use of Cultural Coordinators – museums and arts often in same LA dept – concern that arts take priority
- Are museums seen as part of the arts? Can be useful route into working within museums (drama, art, dance, etc)
- CCs – influence of local politics – division of departments has an influence
- Why the SAC as administrators – are they representing the interests of all areas of culture?
- Always need to keep visitors in mind – new/existing audiences, tourists, etc
- Marketing often higher profile than Education - assumption of guaranteed audiences
- Marketing can identify audiences – education department can focus on them, but often no communication between the 2
- Assumptions that education = schools – collections often lend themselves better to other audiences
- Use of volunteers in educational role – need specific purpose – can be learning opportunity for *them* as well as visitors
- Can be ‘at mercy’ of volunteers to some extent – have own agenda – (‘loose cannons’) – management issue – are the resources there for this?
- Peer Guides – useful means of attracting certain audiences, eg younger people
- Young volunteers – US models good – less funding in Scotland for such schemes
- Importance of ICT and good quality websites – many museums/museum services have no website – important tool for access
- If no collections catalogue, no proper education resource - can overcome backlog by using specific parts of the collections for learning with ICT
- Use of SCRAN – some cost implications (although limited funding available)
- Does SCRAN have enough education input? – concerns about interpretation issues and proper links with curriculum
- NGFL – useful resource – very comprehensive, but perhaps too much info to navigate?
- Infrastructure – do museum visitors/users (virtual or otherwise) have access to appropriate ICT resources? many museums also poorly equipped
- Integration of Resource’s L & A framework – appropriate in Scotland? SMC pilot mentioned
- Museum education as core of teacher training/CPD – influence trainers as well as trainees

4 Professional Issues

- Role of education in audience development – is it our job? relationship with marketing? – posts dedicated to audience development needed - problem of one sided views/one off solutions
- Encouragement to look outwards/address communities – are staff equipped/trained?
- How can resources be shared/skills be disseminated? methodology should be passed on to other organisations
- Need more shared expertise/information internally – particularly within local authority depts
- Responsibility on individuals to make links/partnerships – somewhat skills/ personality driven
- Core services vs additional – should volunteers only be a part of the latter?
- Volunteers – need proper induction programmes to identify their roles
- ICT skills lacking amongst museum staff – not consistent - dependent on management priorities/interests
- Provision of museum education training – one off modules? targeting freelancers, as well as core staff? partnership with education bodies? potential for accreditation?

Group 2

1 Roles and Structures

General principles:

- The Executive should establish and enforce a Cultural Entitlement which entitles each child and adult in Scotland to a minimum basic level of museum visits and/or learning activities a year
- A good basic level of learning provision should be provided across Scotland's museums. But how should this be achieved? Uneven levels of provision (geographically and institutionally) should be ironed out
- Education work is often intangible and therefore we need to look at clarifying the definitions used
- Learning is at heart of museums – there's no point conserving objects if we don't educate visitors – objects and learning are complimentary
- The methods and channels for delivering learning across the different agencies should be improved
- All museum staff should be part of the learning agenda/activities and this would help to integrate learning and spread these responsibilities
- Learning should be integral to all public/visitor programmes and activities

Specific issues:

- Should educators influence the way collections are built up? – yes education staff should naturally be involved, we should be part of exhibit design
- Museums should be leaders not followers, for instance, we should be represented when the 5-14 curriculum is reformed but currently these opportunities don't exist. We need closer partnerships between museums, other educators and with the government in order to influence what goes into the curriculum – this would increase the status of museum learning
- There are not enough education staff to handle the increased responsibilities placed on museums (education staff get burdened with everything – we need more staff to undertake new tasks/expectations)

2 Funding

General principles:

- The Scottish Executive should recognise the principle/reality of a Nationally Distributed Collection nationally distributed and provide for this accordingly
- The Executive should make a formal commitment to museum life in order to integrate museum learning into the 5-14 curriculum, among other learning outcomes. They should also provide the necessary resources and staff
- Museums need more learning staff

Specific funding:

- We need to demonstrate how museums are a reserve for national pride
- Museum educators currently have to fit learning activities around the funding available rather than around actual learning needs, this should not be the case
- The Executive should encourage a move away from project-based funding towards more long-term support
- Social Inclusion work in particular needs more long term funding
- Museums need dedicated funding for learning which is not too prescriptive
- Funding bodies should ask museums to repeat models of good practice rather than to constantly re-invent the wheel for the sake of 'innovation'

External funding:

- The sector needs to be supported to generate outside revenue – how? Who?
- One suggestion was to ask volunteers (i.e. retired professionals from insurance companies and banks) to do application forms, marketing and to chase venture capital
- Guidance should be given on how to work more systematically with the private sector (e.g. to progress Arts and Business schemes)

3 Contribution to Wider Agendas and Professional Issues

General principles:

- Support was given for devising a National Learning Strategy
- Museums should be secured within the statutory provision agreement:
 - Statutory funding for learning and related services (i.e. access and social inclusion) should be a part of this legislation
- Museums should be recognised as contributing substantially to wider access concerns, for instance by:
 - working with disabled people, the elderly, etc.
 - undertaking cross-generational work
 - contributing to tourism
 - working with after school clubs

this work needs to be measured and promoted more effectively, however, museum educators should not end up acting like social workers

Audiences:

- It is wholly right that museums should target traditional non-attenders. Funding agencies should, however, be realistic about the audiences targeted and focus on 'real' potential audiences
- Museums need to have the opportunity to work long term with particular audiences if audience development work is to be successful
- Opportunities to network with sectors working with other audiences should be promoted
- Social Inclusion costs and museums need more development time to engage with such learners and audiences
- More research is needed on audience preferences and development
- More marketing/press training should be offered on how to target certain communities (i.e. most publicity information is not circulated to pubs and other popular entertainment venues)

Schools visits:

- Attention should be given to devising ways of making it easier for teachers to do outside visits:
- Correspondingly, more support is needed to enable museums to undertake more outreach work:
 - joint packages could be offered to teachers involving training (on how to undertake museum learning) combined with an assisted visit for pupils
 - consideration should be given to devising a National Transport Initiative
 - study trips could be funded

ICT and online learning:

- There is high demand for web resources from the public and learners
- Research is needed to empirically establish levels of need, use, appropriateness and how different people use online resources
- Guidance should be provided on how to use ICT and develop learning resources online
- Training and support are needed

Action Plan for Scotland's Museums

- The Executive should provide the necessary resources for developing online learning through museums:
 - dedicated funding should be considered
- A National ICT Strategy should be developed (building on the draft document produced by SMC):
 - staff could be employed centrally to implement the strategy nationally
- Museums need to link more effectively with the library infrastructure – i.e. the People's Network
- Devising online learning materials and material for web sites is time consuming
- Many museums do not have websites and are not even connected to e-mail
- All local authority museums should be connected to the Internet
- ICT offers the opportunity to deliver substantially more information than can be provided through leaflets, exhibition guides and through displays
- There is a difference between online and face-to-face visits (i.e. face-to-face more readily facilitates personal development) and it online visits should not be regarded as a replacement for face-to-face contact with objects

Volunteering:

- Museums should provide a structured Learning Service across Scotland which supports volunteers, this could involve:
 - new roles for Volunteer Coordinators (working as part of the overall Learning Service) – i.e. one Coordinator for a group of museums
- Current vetting procedures are time-consuming and unsuitable, these should be made more efficient
- The professionalisation of volunteers should be recognised as adding value
- Concerns were expressed about the small number of learning staff, the corresponding reliance on volunteers and the feeling that museum learning is not taken seriously

4 Professional Issues

General principles:

- It was suggested that the Executive could look at providing a one-stop-shop to support all museum learning, access and funding enquiries/guidance needs– advisors could visit museums to help them develop their activities
- Consideration should be given to establishing a National Learning & Access Network (SMC are currently looking into this) which could:
 - set and pursue national learning and access themes
 - provide support for museum educators

Training:

- An Audit of museum learning skills should be conducted
- A commitment should be given to systematically supporting in-service training days for museum educators (similar to those outlined for teachers within the McCrone Report). The point was made that other educators would not be given permission to practice without formal and ongoing training.
- Similarly, the museum sector should be given guidance, training and support to develop a national training programme to teach other educators how to use museums as resource. This should involve:
 - initial training (for teachers, nursery teachers and community and adult educators)
 - Continuous Professional Development (museums should be paid to provide CPD for others)

Action Plan for Scotland's Museums

Cultural Coordinators:

- Efforts should be made to increase the profile of museums in relation to the Cultural Coordinators Scheme:
 - this should be noted in the evaluation of the pilot phase
- The Executive should consider providing funding for the Museum sector to employ learning link officers (similar to the SAC link posts)

