Stories of the World
London’s evaluation and case studies 2009-11
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For the past year and a half, 23 museums in London and a further 36 museums across the country have been working together on ‘Stories of the World’. When we answered the invitation from LOCOG and MLA to participate in this programme, the main museum contribution to the Cultural Olympiad, we were excited to be part of the largest cultural celebration in the history of the modern Olympic and Paralympic Movements.

From the very beginning, engaging young people was at the heart of the Stories of the World concept and all the museums involved were keen to build on the work they had been doing with young people and youth groups over recent years. We have long been aware that young people tend to leave museums behind when they leave school, often only returning as regular visitors when they have young children themselves. There have been many projects and initiatives to try to persuade teenagers and young people that museums have something to offer them.

I think what has distinguished Stories of the World is that, as much as we have highlighted what museums have to offer young people, we have also focused on what young people can offer museums.

We were always confident that we would be able to offer creative and inspiring opportunities to engage with our collections - experiences which would build knowledge, skills and self-confidence. It is what we do. But the approach we have adopted for this programme, has put young people in the driving seat, working at the heart of our museums. They have devised, planned and delivered key elements of our interpretation and our programmes.

Reading this report, based on an impressive amount of research and data, I am pleased to see how far that subjective impression is backed up by evidence. The data shows that our confidence that we could deliver a high quality experience for young people was well placed. But you can also see signs of longer term changes to the way museums are working. Many of the museums involved in London are setting up permanent youth panels to advise and feed into their planning and delivery across the board, not just for special one off projects. I think we are seeing a step change in museum practice.

It is far too soon to start talking about legacy – after all we still have a year to go and are yet to see the impact of the final exhibitions that will be the culmination of our work. However I am confident that the experience (for both museums and young people alike) of working together on Stories of the World: London will be one we look back on as important and formative, long after 2012.
**Programme Summary**

**Stories of the World: the national programme**
This report aims to evaluate the impact of the first 12 months of Stories of the World: London, which is one part of the national Stories of the World programme. Stories of the World (SotW) is a major Cultural Olympiad project and the biggest youth engagement programme undertaken by museums throughout the UK. Altogether 59 museums are working in partnership with young people to transform their organisations and the services they provide to the public.

In this first phase of the programme, young people have been involved in all aspects of museums work including curatorial, marketing, event management, exhibition production and strategic planning.

In the second phase museums will continue to work with young people to create a national programme of landmark exhibitions. These will aim to welcome the world to Britain by using museums’ rich collections to tell inspirational stories about the UK’s relationships with the world.

In 2010/11 the national programme was led by the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), in partnership with the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG). From October 2011 the programme will transfer to Arts Council England as part of the transfer of operations arising from the abolition of MLA.

**Stories of the World: London**
The London region’s contribution to the national programme is funded through the Renaissance in the Regions programme and delivered by the London Museums Hub, a consortium of four key regional museums (Museum of London, Geffrye Museum, Horniman Museum and London Transport Museum).

The four lead museums have worked with a further 19 museums across London to deliver youth participation projects which have explored London’s history as a world city under the following themes; Homes, Identity, Journeys and Place. This work will culminate in four exhibitions in 2012 at the Hub museums.

All the participating museums spent 2010/11 recruiting and working intensively with young people aged 14 to 24. The museums were given considerable flexibility to decide which types of young people they worked with (for instance individuals or members of pre-existing groups), how they worked together and what they produced.

The focus of this stage of the programme was on the process of museums and young people working together as much as the things they produced. The idea was to support young participants to get to know the collections and understand how museums work so that they could genuinely lead the programme, make a meaningful contribution to the exhibitions in 2012 and influence the way the museums worked in the longer term.

Young participants were offered training, special access to collections and opportunities to work with a wide variety of different museum specialists. They made contributions to all areas of museum work from collection documentation to marketing.

In addition every museum was required to recruit at least two young volunteers between the ages of 16 – 24 and support them to log their volunteering via the ‘V50’ scheme run by V, the national youth volunteering charity. Museums received access to volunteer management advice and support and they were also supported with training from the National Youth Agency and Collections Trust.
## Museums participating in London

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The project in numbers (2010 – 2011)

- 1,211 young participants
- 23 museums
- 561 public outputs
- 101,000 visitors
- 200 new young volunteers
- 42,000 online visitors
- 144 revised policies and procedures
- 3,994 object records
- 5,500 hours volunteered
This report aims to examine the success of the youth engagement phase of the London programme (2010/11) measured against the following objectives which were agreed at the outset:

- Increase opportunities for young people to enjoy, explore and engage with museums and their collections throughout and beyond the project
- Support the learning, skills and personal development of young people
- Provide opportunities for young people to showcase the positive contributions they make to their communities
- Encourage reflection about London’s identity – past, present and future – as a city shaped by international contact, exchange and influence
- Raise the profile of the non-national museum sector – as an important part of London’s offer as a major cultural capital
- Increase museums’ ability to make their services, collections and knowledge relevant and accessible to young people and their communities in the long term.

These objectives were developed to ensure that the project delivered the legacy aspirations outlined in the selection criteria published at the beginning of the national Stories of the World programme.

We used the following evaluation methods to measure the programme’s progress against its objectives. Sample size is given in brackets:

**Young participants**
- Start of project survey (357) to capture preconceptions and expectations
- End of project survey (237) to capture changes in attitude and skills development
- Free comment cards used throughout the projects at the discretion of the organisation
- Three focus groups with short term participants and four focus groups with long term participants carried out by an independent consultant.

**Visitors**
Visitor survey (288). Museums were asked to leave surveys in SoW exhibitions and where possible an external consultant spent one day in the exhibition or at an event conducting the survey. Each museum was offered one day of the consultant’s time.

**Museums**
Project Lead Survey completed by the main project facilitator at each museum at the end of the project. Sample size is 100% of the total.

### Who did we work with?

**Key Statistics**
- 1,211 participants aged 14-24
- 20% not in education, employment or training
- 48% described themselves as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME)

The project was very successful in attracting new young people to work with the museums. Although virtually all of the young participants (94%) had visited museums or galleries before, 46% had never visited a museum outside of a school trip. Only 13% had volunteered or done work experience in a museum before.

There was no central ‘targeting’ of any particular ethnic or social groups within the age group we aimed to work with but some of the museums decided to work with groups serving young people from deprived backgrounds. As a result the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training on this programme (20%) was slightly higher than the national average in the population as a whole (15.6%) according to the latest Department for Education figures (February 2011).
Increasing opportunities for young people

Our aim

To increase opportunities for young people to enjoy, explore and engage with museums and their collections throughout and beyond the project

Involving and inspiring young people is a key aim of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. One reason why young people are often not ‘involved or inspired’ by museums is a preconception that they are dull and boring places, which do not welcome young people. By bringing young people into direct contact with collections and introducing them to the wide range of activities that take place within museums, we hoped we would begin to challenge these preconceptions.

We also hoped to inspire young people to continue to engage with and contribute to their local museums long after the projects end, helping to build habits of civic engagement which are central to the Legacy Plan for 2012.

What we wanted to find out

Did the project offer new types of engagement with museums for young people?

Key statistics

- 95% said they were given the opportunity to do something different through this project
- 88% feel they have a better understanding of museums and galleries work
- 81% felt they personally made decisions that shaped the project

Increasing opportunities for young people

The programme successfully reached young people who were not regular museum visitors. It was also successful in offering new types of engagement, even for those that were used to visiting museums. Young people were introduced to the “behind the scenes” life of museums and this meant that there was a great deal of scope for them to experience museums and their collections in a completely different way. The projects often involved young people enjoying new experiences and trying out new skills.

However the most important way in which this programme offered a new type of engagement with young people was the extent to which young people were integrated into the museums’ work and were able to make decisions that affected the outcome of the project. All the museums involved made a real effort to support young people so that they had the confidence and capability to drive the projects from start to finish.

As this report will demonstrate, this shift to a deeper engagement, beyond merely participating in museum activities to actually shaping them, was at the heart of many of the successes and impacts that the projects can claim. This approach was certainly understood and appreciated by the young participants.

‘Right from the start I felt I was a valued member of the team. I learnt so much and felt confident to develop and put all of my skills into practice.’

– Focus group participants
Did young people enjoy the experience of engaging with museums and their collections?

Key statistics
- 83% said their expectations of the SotW project had been exceeded and 14% said expectations had been met
- 84% would recommend taking part in a museum or gallery project to a friend

The young people’s satisfaction from taking part in SotW was very high. Their enthusiasm and passion is very clear in all the evaluation results. The fact that the young people were often willing to come to the museums at short notice and at weekends was a testament to their commitment. The drop-out rate was very low and the main reasons for leaving the project were going away to university or getting a part time job.

One of the reasons for the high satisfaction levels was that they worked with the entire organisation, rather than just project staff. As a result they felt the museums appreciated the time and effort they put into their work.

‘The project managers did a fantastic job and we were given all the resources we needed and were treated with respect. Thank you.’

Comment from young participant surveys

Were young people inspired to keep engaging with museums after the project has finished?

Key statistics
- 75% have or intend to keep in touch with the museum or gallery they worked with
- 75% have or intend to take part in other museum and gallery projects
- 76% have or intend to visit more museums or galleries

Taking part in SotW has made young people more open to visiting museums and galleries. Before taking part in a SotW project 46% of young participants had never visited a museum or gallery outside of a school visit. After taking part in the project 76% of the participants had or intended to visit more museums and galleries.

All of the young participants felt that they had a more positive view of museums by the end of the project and appreciated that museums were more than just collections of objects. For some this interest has even inspired a reassessment of their future career plans.

‘I never would have thought I could do what I wanted to do in the museum sector… but now I could sort of combine the two together so it’s opened up what I can do later on.’

– Focus group participant

Did involvement in the programme inspire young people to volunteer?

Key statistics
- Over 5,500 hours volunteered in museums by 200 young volunteers
- 75% have or intend to do more volunteering in the future

Originally the project had a target of attracting 50 new young volunteers to commit 50 hours of their time to the museums. The enthusiasm for the project meant that museums were able to recruit 200 new volunteers aged 16-24.

Research shows that nationally only 32% of people aged 16-25 volunteer regularly but the high response numbers intending to do more volunteering (75%) as a result of SotW suggests that this project has been really successful in motivating young people to volunteer both for this project and in the future.

‘I know that I’ve contributed to a bigger cause, and there’s a sense of achievement that I’ve done something for the good of the community.’

– Focus group participant
Case study: The Courtauld Gallery and The Courtauld Institute of Art

Project name: Look Again…

Project description:
There were two main elements to the project:

1. To work with young people in further education and introduce them to history of art and the life of a working gallery

2. Using their knowledge the young people would take inspiration from a portrait painting in the collection to create their own photographic interpretation of the portrait for display as part of an exhibition with a supporting website.

The project ran for one year, starting with a Youth Council who were an advisory group for the project and mentors to young people in the project group. The project group met on a weekly basis with a one week summer school. The Courtauld Gallery and Institute of Art (The Courtauld) worked with a total of 21 further education students aged between 16 – 21 who were in receipt of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and/or neither parent had attended university. Working with young people who met these criteria was part of the organisation’s Widening Participation aim.

The Courtauld increased opportunities for young people to enjoy, explore and engage with museums and their collections

Many of the young people who took part in The Courtauld project did not feel art history was a subject that could be studied. They understood ‘art’ as art practice, such as painting and drawing. The project group met and worked with experts from The Courtauld to learn what art history is and how it can enhance appreciation of art. The project group were taken on visits to other galleries which built on the knowledge they had begun developing and would help them enjoy and engage with art beyond The Courtauld Gallery. The project group also learnt about the mechanics behind a working gallery; what the different roles are and how they work together. They were given privileged access to departments and staff were impressed by the interest and maturity of the young people.

‘I will be happy to work again with such amazing young people. It was really stimulating. They were super-interested and super-bright and the level of discussion was really encouraging.’
– Curator, The Courtauld Institute of Art

Demystifying the gallery’s work really helped the young people feel confident about visiting and enjoying museums and galleries. The young people are confident enough to share their knowledge and the enjoyment they got from visiting galleries with friends and family by taking them to visit exhibitions.

The young people were given the opportunity to make practical use of their knowledge in reinterpreting a painting from the collection to create a contemporary photographic portrait. They worked with staff to curate their portraits for the ‘Look Again…’ exhibition. The project group took great pride in the trust put in them and the unique opportunity they were given and met the challenge of maintaining The Courtauld’s high standards for exhibitions and accompanying activities. A survey of visitors showed that 70% thought the exhibition was ‘Excellent’ or ‘Very Good’.
‘The fact that they put our artwork in the gallery - and that’s never been done before - shows respect.’
– Young participant

The participants’ engagement and dedication is clear. Even those who left London to attend university during the project returned to take part in the workshops. One of the main reasons the young people were so motivated was that they did not feel patronised during the project. They were treated as work colleagues by gallery staff and enjoyed the challenge of meeting the high standards they could see were required of the staff team. Their understanding of the work staff do in the museums and galleries has given them a lasting appreciation of the sector.

From the success of the project The Courtauld plan to keep running and recruiting to the Youth Council, making it a permanent part of the organisation. Youth Council members are to be given staff passes giving free entry to exhibitions at museums and galleries, an excellent resource to allow them to continue enjoying, exploring and engaging with museums and galleries.

‘They [youth council] definitely want to continue working with us... they are already asking what we’re all going to do next.’
– Head of Public Programmes, The Courtauld Institute of Art
Our aim

To support the learning, skills and personal development of young people

One of the aims outlined for the national Stories of the World programme was that it should result in ‘Training and career development opportunities for young people.’ Museum community engagement projects have a strong track record of unlocking creativity and personal development, but often this has been difficult to capture and quantify. We wanted to ensure that participation in SotW was of real, tangible benefit to the young people involved. In today’s competitive climate, it was important to make sure that the young people giving their time to help museums, not only had something to put on their CV but felt that they really had a chance to develop and learn new skills that will be of use to them in the future.

What we wanted to find out

Did young people develop existing skills and/ or gain new skills?

Key Statistics

- 97% of young people feel that they have developed skills through the project
- 82% of young people have or will further improve the skills they have gained

Skills young people feel they have developed

- 91% creative skills
- 91% team work skills
- 90% communication skills
- 77% organisation and management skills
- 81% other skills

A desire to gain skills with a view to improving employability was the most popular reason for participating in the project. The young people that took part in SotW overwhelmingly felt that they developed existing skills and/ or gained new skills. Skills development was approached in a practical and organic way with young people receiving formal or informal training as and when they needed it to help them make progress with the project.

The depth of the young people’s involvement in SotW projects meant that this method was very effective in developing a wide range of practical skills to quite a high degree. For example, if the young people wanted to make a film they would devise and deliver every aspect of it themselves; so they would gain experience and skills in brainstorming ideas, writing the narrative, appearing in the film, directing, filming and editing.

In some museums young people were also involved in interviewing and appointing the professionals that they worked with, such as film makers, sculptors and artists. This level of input into the project meant that they were learning and practicing skills transferable to a wide range of work environments, not just museums.
Did young people feel they have developed personally through working on the project?

Key Statistics
- 84% felt they had increased their self confidence
- 95% felt they had met new people
- 79% have or will keep in touch with the people they have met on their SotW project

From the positive feedback received from the young people it is evident that they felt they had developed and gained very much from taking part. The young people involved in longer term projects felt they had gained the most. It was not just taking part in the project that allowed the young people to develop, but how the museums structured projects and worked with them that really made taking part in SotW worthwhile.

The museums gave the young people the power to choose the projects they wanted to work on and the freedom to shape them, in a supportive environment. The young people understood the trust and responsibility they were given and this level of responsibility meant that young people enjoyed a real sense of achievement.

‘It put me out of my comfort zone, which was good to learn, it was definitely something new, I’d never done anything like that before, taking you outside of what you normally do.’
- Focus group participant

Many museums recruited individual young people to join the project by advertising in their local area. This meant that they had a mix of young people, many who did not know each other before the project. Meeting and working with other young people who were not in their regular social circle had a great impact on their sense of personal development. They appreciated the fact that they were put in new and different situations but it was a safe and supported environment. Having supportive museum staff to work with meant that it was not only the more confident members of the group who benefited.

‘Coming into contact [with people from] different backgrounds who have different views on life and different ideas.’
‘It was good to hear other people’s opinions because our opinions weren’t always the same as theirs so we had to come to a compromise.’
‘I look back and I just feel like ‘Wow!’ I feel proud. I think [this is] the longest thing I’ve done apart from school and so I’ve got a sense of achievement and I can take it anywhere.’
- Focus group participants

Will young people make use of the skills and experiences they gained?

Key Statistics
- 79% of young people have or want to do more of the activity they enjoyed on their SotW project
- 75% of young people have or want to do more volunteering as a result of their experiences on their SotW projects
- 84% of young people have or will put their SotW experience on their CV

‘It looks good on the CV or UCAS form.’
‘You might need something to write in your personal statement…it might just give you the extra push.’
- Focus groups participants

At the start of the project it was striking how focussed many of the young people who joined the project were on gaining tangible content for their CVs or university applications. When surveyed, 94% of VSO volunteers said that they joined the project with the expectation that they would improve their employability and all said that they felt this expectation had been met. The 26 paid interns employed through the programme had a very clear idea of how this project supported their career development.
Case study: London Transport Museum

Project name: Journeys: Stories of the World at London Transport Museum

Project description: This project has been an organisational change programme at LTM since 2009. During 2010-11 there have been six strands of activity:

- Paid ‘Young Consultants’ to help steer all LTM’s work on SotW
- Young Volunteers developing their skills and experience through working with LTM on specific projects
- The Reinterpretation project: working with community groups to reinterpret and bring new voices to the World City Walk gallery
- The Bus Shelters project: working with youth groups to display their visual art in bus shelters around London
- Cluster partners: LTM are supporting five other London museums in their SotW projects
- Preparation for the 2012 major exhibition which all SotW strands will contribute towards
How has LTM supported the learning, skills and personal development of young people?

The Young Consultant strand was planned as the foundation to all of LTM’s SoW youth participation work. In November 2009 LTM recruited four young people as young consultants, paid a set fee for each day they worked with LTM. The aim was to appeal to a wide range of young people, including those who are not interested in museums and the cultural sector, or able to support themselves financially whilst working on unpaid projects. The skills, experience and training the young people gained were intended to be highly transferrable.

The young consultants have worked with LTM for 18 months, helping bring change to the organisation by embedding youth engagement into the museum’s work. The young consultants initially began working with LTM two days a month at weekends, allowing them to fit this commitment around studying or other work. They were given a full introduction to SoW, to raise their awareness of the programme and what LTM wanted to achieve. This was an essential starting point to ensure the young people were informed, felt comfortable in their role and had the confidence to do their job knowing they would be listened to.

The young consultants began working to raise their profile in the museum by writing an article for the Museum’s Yearbook, planning and delivering a youth focus group for the 2012 exhibition and helping to recruit artists for other areas of the museum’s SoW project. The young consultants had not done this kind of work before and through it were able to build up confidence in their abilities, work with a wide range of people they normally would not have worked with and gain skills and experiences in a real working environment.

After six months the young consultants ‘professionalised’ their learning with Continuing Professional Development plans. This established their interests and ambitions which were matched with projects they could participate in at the museum that would help them develop in ways specific to their goals beyond their time at LTM. The young consultants grew in confidence with each new piece of work. They represented the London region at a national SoW youth summit and supported the LTM Youth Volunteer project. They wrote, produced and directed a short film for Film Nation’s Cultural Olympiad competition, promoting the museum’s progress in working with young people. By working with the young consultants LTM learnt that young people felt most benefit when they developed their skills and experiences working towards something valued and visible to the public. LTM ensured this was an aim for their summer 2010 Young Volunteer project, the FUSE youth arts festival and the approach was a great success.

The young consultants are now working with LTM on developing the ‘Journeys’ legacy programme, which offers young people an opportunity to contribute to museum activity rising through three levels: as Young Volunteers, Peer Mentors and Young Consultants. This programme aims to increase employability skills, experience and confidence at each level. To ensure that Journeys is mainstream to the museum’s work, it is linked to the LTM programme. Young volunteers, supported by peer mentors, will develop and deliver family activities for half term holidays, adding to the museum’s existing offer at the museum’s busiest visitor periods.

The first ‘peer mentors’ are the four SoW Young Consultants. They have received additional training and preparation time to take this significant next step. They say they have never worked so hard, but love the responsibility of thinking differently; encouraging the opinions and learning of the new volunteers as a means to improve their own development. They describe their role as a ‘bridge’ between LTM and other young people.

‘The museum is like the training wheels on a bike: they guide me when needed but when they think I am ready to take responsibility they step back and let me lead.’

– LTM Young Consultant
Our aim

To provide opportunities for young people to showcase the positive contributions they make to their communities.

Inspired by the Olympic values of ‘excellence, respect and friendship’, we wanted both to enable young people to deliver high quality public outputs and encourage people to recognise and respect the positive contribution that young people can make.

Young people are often the subject of negative media stereotypes, and this is particularly the case for young people from certain parts of London. It was important that the wider community understood that young people from their area were making an active and positive contribution through working with their local museum.

Even though at this stage of the programme, the public outputs were still relatively small scale, the projects still gave young people a stage on which to make a positive difference.

What we wanted to find out

What opportunities have museums provided to young people to showcase their work with museums to their local communities and visitors?

Young people have been involved in nearly all areas of museum work, many of them public-facing. Altogether 561 public outputs were created, including:

- Alteration to existing permanent displays
- Creation of new displays
- Public discussions
- Event planning/running
- Exhibitions
- Films/animation
- Learning resources
- Online resources
- Performances
- Photography
- Podcasts
- Publications
- Visual artworks
- Written products such as leaflets
Did the young people feel that their work was appreciated by the public?

Young people did feel they were given opportunities to showcase their work to the public. However, they generally did not think that members of the public would be aware of the full depth of their involvement. They felt that even after visitors had come and perhaps read the background information or seen young people running events, they still would not understand how key they were to the project.

“They might see young people delivering but I don’t know if they would be made aware that they [young people] actually did start from scratch.”

– Focus group participant

Despite this, the young people did appreciate that the museums did their best to communicate the level of involvement that they had through exhibition panels and printed publicity, etc. Young people said that they would have liked more media coverage of SotW to tell people how involved they had been in the work.

Did visitors to SotW outputs know that young people have been involved in producing them and appreciate their work?

Key Statistics

- Over 140,000 people saw/experienced these outputs either in person or online
- 41% of visitors felt the SotW output was excellent with a further 58% saying the output was very good
- 65% of visitors were aware that young people were heavily involved in producing the SotW exhibition/event
- 89% of visitors to SotW outputs felt young people could make a positive contribution to their communities

The vast majority of visitors to SotW events and exhibitions were impressed with the outputs and the majority of visitors said that they were aware that young people had been heavily involved in their production.

We ran an event in September and... we had quite a big number of people come along and there was massive involvement as well because there was a public poetry contest... so that definitely you could see the public involvement.

– Focus group participant

Trying to find ways to interest press and media in covering positive stories about young people is one of the main challenges for the project as it moves towards its climax in 2012 (see Learning Points section). One promising sign is that 92% of visitors to SotW outputs said they would like museums to do more similar work with young people.
Case study: National Trust – 575 Wandsworth Road

Project name:
The Travellers Club, Listening to the House & Moving House

Project description:
A modest and intimate home on a busy South London street, this recent National Trust acquisition is extraordinary for its interior. Every surface has been beautifully decorated with a combination of hand carved wooden fretwork, painting and collections of objects by the original owner, Khadambi Asalache.

The intimacy of 575 Wandsworth Road and the fragility of its interior will limit the number of actual visitors to the house when opened to the public (autumn 2012). As such access will need to be provided through additional routes. This project provided a timely opportunity to explore how young people can contribute to this, through a pilot learning and participation programme.

The pilot consisted of three interconnecting projects (‘The Travellers Club’, ‘Listening to the House’ and ‘Moving House’) where participants produced original poetry, sound art and animations. Their work was showcased on the properties’ website, shared with peers and brought together in a publication and film. Additionally, with the ambition of reaching a wider audience, it was translated (by applied drama students), into a series of events for the public.

575 Wandsworth Road provided opportunities for young people to showcase the positive contributions they make to their communities.

V50 Volunteers – ‘The Creative Interpretation Team’
Recruited from the Applied Drama Course at Goldsmiths University, the three members of the V50 team brought with them knowledge of the local area (as residents) and a commitment to creative engagement.

The V50s collaborated with the project lead artists to devise and facilitate the workshop programmes, sharing their skills and adding new dimensions/opportunities for self expression.

To conclude the projects, the team created and facilitated a series of public events which opened up the work of participants to new audiences.
The Travellers Club
The young men who participated in the first project attended an all boy’s school in Lambeth. The work produced was immensely personal and they displayed great courage, pride and self belief in sharing their poetry through a performance to 120 of their peers. For the school community the young men acted as role models and the book of their poetry is now part of its library being used as a peer education tool.

Listening to the House
The participants in this second project devised and created sensitive soundscapes which drew from the spaces rather than layering on intrusively on top. The feedback from the public events, where audiences were invited to ‘free flow’ through the house and dwell, very tangibly supported the success of the work with people feeling relaxed and immersed in the experience.

Moving House
London College of Communication (local to 575 Wandsworth Road) plays an important role within London’s art education and south London communities. ‘Moving House’ was the Third Year student ‘Live project’ for animation students i.e. a project where students work to the brief of an external client (the National Trust). In the brief the students were positioned as being interpreters of the house for virtual audiences. Universally they valued this opportunity greatly and recognised the importance of their work in opening the house up to new and potentially a very broad based audience. In total 271 people attended events developed through this project. From a sample survey of visitors to an event at the house, 92% rated the experience as excellent.

The young peoples’ work can be seen on the property blogsite: http://575wandsworthroad.tumblr.com/storiesoftheworld2010
Reflections about London’s identity

Our aim
To encourage reflection about London’s identity – past, present and future – as a city shaped by international contact, exchange and influence.

Through this project young people have been considering London’s position as a world city and what this means to them. Their work will underpin the final exhibitions in 2012 which have been informed by the Cultural Olympiad aim of ‘celebrating London and the UK and inviting the world to share the event with us.’

MLA’s Revisiting Collections framework was used to re-examine museum objects and add the young people’s thoughts and views to object records, making this new data available to current and future visitors, fulfilling the national SotW legacy aim of ‘New knowledge and understanding of collections, held within cataloguing systems, exhibition texts and published works.’

What we wanted to find out
How far did young people and visitors feel they learnt more about London as a world city and were they inspired to want to learn more?

Key Statistics

- 83% of young participants felt they had a better understanding of London’s history because of their SotW project
- 82% of young participants felt they had a better understanding of cultures in London
- 52% of visitors to SotW exhibitions or events in 2010 felt that it helped them understand more about London and its population

Although many projects tended to focus on a specific subject (such as the life of explorer Sir Richard Burton in the Orleans House Gallery project) by the end of the projects the young people did feel they had a better understanding of London’s history and cultures. This learning took place via activities such as examining museum collections, interviewing people, making films about the local area or going on trips to sites around London arranged by the museum.

The participants that took part on a long term basis had a stronger sense towards the end of their projects, that they had learnt about London and had a clearer idea of how their work contributed to a better understanding of London past and present.

‘Through Stories of the World I’ve got to know the city a lot better, not only through its history but through being able to meet loads of different young people with really interesting stories and it’s made my experience of London so much more interesting.’

– Focus group participant

‘I’ve got so much knowledge about what London actually is…it kind of made me feel more appreciative that I’m from London and I’m part of it and it just makes me feel like I’m giving back to London.’

– Focus group participant

In contrast, the visitor feedback on whether they felt the project increased their understanding of London was much lower (52%). This may be because the outputs that visitors experienced at this stage of the programme tended to focus as much on the process of involving young people in heritage as they did on explaining what they found out. This is shown by the stronger ratings for appreciation of the involvement of young people in the visitor survey results (65%).

Developing the stories from a world city concept and themes will be the key task for young people and museums as they work towards the final exhibitions in 2012.
To what extent have young people re-examined museum collections and have their views and reflections been captured for future use?

Key Statistics

- **3994 catalogue entries** have been added or modified with input from young people
- **184 display text (panels, captions, leaflets etc)** have been added or modified

The personal object interpretations made by the young people were used as the starting point for many of the project outputs. In addition, where possible, the museums used the Revisiting Museum Collections framework to gather young people’s thoughts and views on their collections. This information was added to object catalogue entries or to the museum’s online collection database if they had one, which can be accessed by the public. This information can be used in future research, exhibitions and other outputs as required.

For some museums, SotW presented an opportunity for objects which they had little information on to be researched and interpreted by their young participants. As a result of this work, these objects were made available to the public to see.

‘The opportunity to work more closely with our Roman collection tied in perfectly with our organisation’s goals of collections review. Since moving locations seven years ago, none of our Roman collection has been on permanent display, and much of it had never been on display at all, so this project allowed us to develop an exhibition highlighting this area.’

– Collections Manager, Greenwich Heritage Centre
Case study: The Geffrye, Museum of the Home

The Geffrye Museum facilitated reflection about London’s identity as a city shaped by international contact, exchange and influence

Through creative projects, participants were able to explore the sometimes hidden cross-cultural connections that objects have and investigate international influences such as design, trade, fashion and materials, all of which can be found in London’s homes past and present. Though many young people were initially drawn to the creative elements of the projects, it became evident that the opportunity to handle objects, investigate and share stories was also very important. Methods used to facilitate this work included didactic group workshops, creative activities, object handling, interviewing curators and research. The Geffrye Museum primarily worked with young people (14 – 24 years) but has also worked with other community groups, especially older people who provided valuable knowledge and insights.

Projects undertaken in 2010/11 included

- Film making and animation projects. Participants chose an object from the museum collection and carried out research, then decided what they wanted to tell people about it. The resulting films and animations provide a new and additional layer of interpretation for all visitors and are included on the museum’s website and in exhibitions.
- Poetry workshops. Participants studied objects from the museum’s collection, and used their research to underpin a creative response to the collection. They worked alongside museum staff, a poet and a film maker to create a digital story: a combination of imagery, sound and words. These stories were included in the ‘Welcome Home’ exhibition, public performances and are now available on the museum website.
- Students from University College London researched the cross-cultural connections found in the plants and flowers in English gardens. They produced an exhibition, web resources, research files, learning resources and organised a range of events.
- Young interns carried out in depth research into the international influences found within the collections, resulting in a series of research papers.
- Reminiscence. A group of older Asian women from Hackney shared their reflections on their homes past and present and their experience of moving to the UK. The interviews have been recorded and will become part of the museum’s archive.
- Time capsules. Participants created poems about their favourite objects from the museum and from home. They also included their thoughts about what homes, furniture and fashion would be like in 100 years time.

Project name: Home

Project description:
As we prepare to welcome the world to London for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Geffrye asks ‘How ‘English’ are our homes’? Many familiar types of furniture, textiles and ornaments arrived in this country after long journeys from across the world and almost all owe at least something to ideas and influences from other cultures.
All outputs were added to the object record files and also displayed in the museum, on the website, social media pages or in publications and can be used in the future as well, for example in the exhibition in 2012.

The topic of international influence has been embraced by young participants. They felt pride when they discovered objects in the museum’s collection reflecting their own cultural backgrounds and immediately gravitated towards these objects. Objects from the earlier periods sometimes captured young people’s imagination more than familiar objects from later periods.

The public response to these opportunities to think about our homes afresh, and explore how other cultures have shaped our personal spaces has been very positive. Over 18,000 people attended public events associated with the projects.

The collaborative approaches to collections interpretation developed during SoW and lessons learnt from the project are seen internally as a model of good practice and will be used to inform future community and audience development projects. Youth participation has also been embedded in the museum’s long-term plans.
Raising the profile of London’s non-national museum sector

Our aim
To raise the profile of the non-national museum sector – an important part of London’s offer as a major cultural capital

One of the attractions of this project was the opportunity for museums to be associated with the profile and excitement of the Olympics and to use this to attract new audiences. The nature of the project with its focus on introducing young people to museums also offered an opportunity to showcase the contribution that museums can make to their communities. In the current funding climate, this type of profile can make a great deal of difference to the long term viability of museums.

What we wanted to find out
Did the project raise the profile of the museums with young people?

Key Statistics
– 53% of young participants had never visited the museum they worked with before this project
– 30% had not even heard of the museum they worked with before this project
– Younger audiences than typical for non-national museums (13% aged 16-24)

As we have seen it is clear that this project did raise the museums’ profiles with young people, the majority of which had never visited the museums involved in this project before (see section 3.1).

It did not stop with the young people who were actively participating in the project. Although most project outputs were targeted at general visitors rather than youth audiences, it does appear that a younger audience was attracted to the museums. On average, only 5% of visitors to regional museums are aged 16-24 (Hub Exit Survey MLA 2010/11). However young people made up 13% of audiences for the Stories of the World exhibitions, film screenings and events etc. This could be attributed to the greater use of social media in promoting the projects and the role of the young people themselves, acting as ambassadors for their projects with their peers.

Did the project raise the profile of museums with general audiences?

Key Statistics
– So far 101,242 people have visited SotW outputs and 42,041 people have seen SotW outputs online
– 53% of visitors to the SotW exhibition/event were first time visitors to the museum

On average only 35% of visitors came specifically to the museums to see a SotW output (although this varied within the project across a range of 0 – 100%). However the public response was very positive and 48% expressed an interest in seeing further SotW outputs and 92% were keen to see museums do more of this kind of work with young people so prospects for the main exhibitions in 2012 are promising.

Did the project raise the profile of museums within their wider community?

The programme also gave the museums an opportunity to work with external community organisations such as youth groups, charities and community organisations. Many of them used this project to strengthen existing relationships with partners they had worked with in the past. But the majority (64%) of the partner organisations had never worked with the museums involved before. 82% of the groups expressed an interest in working with the museums again.
Was the project successful in attracting press and media coverage?

Key Statistics

- 30 pieces of print press coverage
- 21 pieces of online press coverage
- Stories of the World: London Facebook page established which exceeded the target of 300 ‘likes’

From the outset, it was clear that SotW London would be challenging to promote before the final exhibitions are launched in 2012. It is a complex and multi-faceted project involving multiple, relatively small scale public outputs spread over 23 very individual museums. Further complexity was added by the stringent branding and communications requirements inherent in being a part of the Cultural Olympiad and carrying the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic brand.

Nevertheless the project had a strong story to tell of youth engagement with museums on an unprecedented scale and depth. An agency was appointed to bring together the various strands of the programme into one coherent package to aid communication and support press coverage.

The level of press interest was disappointing. Delays to the national programme launch and the need to fit in with LOCOG’s PR calendar held up the delivery of the communication plan. Another problem was widespread disinterest in ‘good news’ about young people. It was hard to place stories when the media agenda was primarily focused on funding cuts and tuition fees.

Despite these difficulties, there were some important positives to take into the next phase of the project. The smaller museums were provided with template press releases, media training and support with social media. Social media in particular proved to be very important in raising the profile of the museums and the project. A Facebook page helped to create a buzz around the project and provided a one-stop-shop for information and updates. Analysis of use of this page showed 65% of users were aged 14-24 and there was a high degree of repeat visiting. A YouTube channel provided a useful place to gather project films.

In addition, a strong London presence on Twitter was created on the national SotW Twitter feed. Some of the most successful publicity work involved young people taking responsibility for creating press releases and pitching stories to press themselves. These were new avenues for many of the museums involved and as a result of SotW, 15 of the 23 museums are planning to make improvements to their marketing strategy to build on what they have learnt during the project.

Did the project raise the museums’ profile with stakeholders?

Involvement with SotW was very helpful in raising the profile of the museums with stakeholders and potential funders. For many museums, the kudos that came from being associated with the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and having permission to use the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic branding elevated the project in the eyes of senior management, directors and trustees. It encouraged stakeholders to take a genuine interest in the project and attend events. This attention is particularly important for museums operating as small parts of large local authority operations.

The young participants became the project’s most powerful advocates and were often called upon to make presentations about the work they had done at events attended by stakeholders. This enabled stakeholders to hear first-hand how the young people felt about the project and how the museum was making a real contribution to important local and national agendas.

‘This [project] puts the museum in a strong position as we are one of the few local organisations to already have a tangible output to showcase as part of the Cultural Olympiad.’

– Exhibitions Officer, Redbridge Museum
Case study: Bruce Castle Museum

Project name: Haringey Potter

Project description:
In the 1960s archaeologist Harvey Sheldon excavated a Roman kiln in Highgate Woods, the oldest found in London. During the summers of 1971 to 1973 he and others constructed replica kilns in Highgate Woods to undertake re-enactments of Roman firings. The SotW project run by Bruce Castle Museum was designed to engage young people and encourage an appreciation of the history of the local area through the recreation of the Roman kiln experiment on the same site. Working closely with the Museum of London, 14 young people from Haringey reconstructed the Roman kiln in Highgate Woods from the London clay under their feet and made pottery from the same material. The young people who run award-winning Exposure magazine documented the project.

The project, the results from the kiln experience and Roman finds from the site formed an exhibition hosted by Bruce Castle Museum. The exhibition and the original Roman kiln will go on permanent display at the Highgate Woods visitor centre.

How has the project raised the profile of Bruce Castle Museum?
The museum worked with Haringey Children and Young People Service to recruit young people to take part in the project. The experience of working together convinced the Service of the value of collaborating with the museum and they have already approached Bruce Castle Museum to host two exhibitions for them. The museum has also strengthened its relationship with Exposure magazine and is working with them on other youth projects. This gives the museum a great channel for reaching local young people.

Visitor figures for the ‘Haringey Potter’ exhibition (on display September 2010 – February 2011) were 15% higher than the same period in the previous year. As the museum is based in the east of Haringey, it has traditionally been difficult to attract visitors from Highgate Woods and the west of the borough. The museum has capitalised on the interest in the kiln to attract residents who were unaware that Bruce Castle Museum even existed.

The profile of the museum was raised locally as MP for Tottenham David Lammy, and Mayor of Haringey, Cllr Eddie Griffith, joined the young people for a day to make and fire a pot in the kiln. The unusual nature of the project meant that BBC Radio London covered it, attracting interest beyond the borough. The project also received media coverage from local press such as The Tottenham Journal.
Working with the Museum of London also helped to raise the profile of Bruce Castle Museum. The fact that the project achieved the same “reduction” process as evident in Roman pottery – something which the original 1970s experiments did not manage – has meant the Museum of London plan to present the project at international archaeological conferences. Bruce Castle Museum will continue to work with the Museum of London on their main SotW exhibition in 2012.

“This project has been a landmark project and has certainly changed perception of the opportunities that can be developed for young people working with heritage in this borough and using the museum.”

– Deputy Curator, Bruce Castle Museum
Making museums relevant and accessible to young people

Our aim
To increase museums’ ability to make their services, collections and knowledge relevant and accessible to young people and their communities over the long term.

The changes that the young people brought to museums are not just for the duration of the project, but are introducing new ways for museums to provide services to their audiences and communities over the long term. The government’s Legacy Plan states ‘The 2012 Games provide a great opportunity to promote community engagement and bring people together over a national event, helping to empower and embolden communities to achieve what they want to do in their area.’

The collaborative, power-sharing approach adopted in this programme aimed to equip young people to make decisions which shaped services, both for themselves, their peers and their wider communities. In turn the museums themselves were committed to learning from the process and making changes to the way they worked.

The collaborative and supportive approach taken amongst the museums supported this learning, in line with the national SoW aim that the programme should build ‘Sustainable partnerships across the heritage and culture sector to share skills and resources and exploit opportunities.’

Greenwich Heritage Centre
What we wanted to find out
What improvements to the services museums provide to young people were made as a result of this programme?

Key Statistics

- 74% of young people on SotW projects feel they have helped improve how museums/galleries work with young people
- 63% of outputs produced with young people will remain available after the projects end

As a result of the young people’s input and advice, museums made concrete changes to the way they devised and delivered many of their activities to attract and engage a young audience. These changes ranged from the way activities were described and structured, how they were promoted and even what hours the museums should open.

‘I went in there thinking we wouldn’t be taken so seriously… so I was quite surprised how seriously they took our opinions… you went back next month and they’d actually done it.’

– Focus group participant

Young people are supported throughout their work with the museum and this encouraged them to make bold suggestions and many of the museums saw their SotW projects develop in ways that they had not anticipated at the start of the programme.

Did museums develop their capabilities to respond to and work with young people in the longer term?
For some of the museums this programme was the first opportunity to work with young people in depth. Even those museums that had specialist learning/outreach staff and had run youth projects before, felt that they enhanced their capability to work with young people. The ways in which museums enhanced their capabilities to work with young people in the longer term can be split into the following categories; enhanced skills, confidence, new ways of working, strategies and policies.

Enhanced skills
The MLA recruited the National Youth Agency (NYA) at the beginning of the programme with the aim of seeking their advice and support to embed working with and involving young people. At the start of the project all participating museums were offered training with the NYA on the importance of working with young people. Informal peer to peer support and development also took place. Lead museums were able to employ project co-ordinators and specialist youth workers and they actively shared their experience and knowledge with their partner museums.

Although many museums already had volunteer policies in place, traditionally museum volunteers tend to be older people. They were therefore offered volunteer management training tailored to working with young volunteers and support of a volunteer management advisor throughout the project.

Confidence
Nearly all (87%) of project leads reported that staff at their museums felt more confident working with young people following participation in this programme.

‘Previously, I feel there was some doubt as to how easy it would be for staff to interact with groups of young people and scepticism that young people would respond positively and enthusiastically to the house and its collections. After the SotW projects, staff and volunteers at the museum are more confident in interacting with young people and have a great deal of confidence in the museum as a resource for young people, given the passion and commitment young people have shown during these projects.’

– Assistant Curator, Dorich House Museum

New ways of working
Because museums were encouraged to see youth engagement as a ‘whole museum’ commitment, many members of staff who would not normally work directly with young people were involved, including curatorial, conservation, programming, marketing and front of house staff. They have welcomed the energy, enthusiasm and curiosity of the young people and felt the benefits of getting a fresh perspective on their work. In many of the museums this process has broken down some of the barriers between different specialists that can occur, particularly in larger institutions.
In many cases trustees, museum directors and senior management made the effort to meet the young people, promoted SotW internally to staff and externally to stakeholders. This top down support and commitment was extremely important to the success of the programme and has greatly increased the likelihood that the changes in practice will ‘stick’ over the longer term.

‘The Head of The Courtauld Gallery took a significant risk in giving the exhibition a central space normally used for the permanent collection. He fully supported the project and was directly involved with the young people. I think it was a real endorsement of the integrity of the work … it wouldn’t have been possible without Stories of the World as a platform.’

– Head of Public Programmes, The Courtauld Institute of Art

Many museums developed a young advisory panel for their SotW project to act as an over-arching steering group for the project, in addition to the input that participants were giving day to day. None of the museums had had young advisory panels before but many are looking into the possibility of continuing their youth advisory panel beyond the end of the project to advise on wider programming.

Strategies and policies
The four lead museums completed the NYA Map and Plan exercise which looked at seven key areas where changes could be made at a strategic level. These plans were considered and approved by the executive committees of all four museums.

The seven areas are:

1. The participation of children and young people is a central commitment of the organisation
2. The strategic plan for active involvement is agreed and in place, with key staff, roles and resources identified for its implementation
3. Children and young people are consulted on and help review structures for their active involvement
4. Recording and evaluation systems are in place to identify and share learning and evidence of change arising from children and young people’s participation
5. Relevant job descriptions specify skills and commitment to active involvement
6. There is capacity building for staff to gain skills for the safe, sound and effective participation of children and young people
7. Key managers and leaders are effective champions for the active involvement of children and young people, with clearly identified responsibilities

This commitment to long term, strategic change was not confined to the lead museums. Altogether 137 strategic policies have been changed or are in the process of being changed due to the SotW project. These include; community engagement, learning and outreach, exhibitions, partnership and marketing policies.

Plans for the future:
– 23 plan to make changes to their Community Engagement strategy
– 23 plan to make changes to their Learning and Outreach strategy
– 19 museums plan to make changes to their exhibition work
– 17 museums plan to make changes to how they work in partnership
– 15 museums plan to make changes to their marketing strategy
How have Guildhall Art Gallery and Roman London’s Amphitheatre increased their ability to make their services, collections and knowledge relevant and accessible to young people and their communities?

Before participating on SotW, the Guildhall and the Amphitheatre did not have a strategic youth programme. There were occasional events and projects with young people but these were not sustained in terms of building relationships with partner organisations. As a result the site was not as well used by people between 14 – 24 years old as it could be. Interpretation and Development staff felt that the most effective way of reaching this ‘missing audience’ would be to consult young people themselves. Taking part in SotW gave them the support to do this and to embed the resulting improvements to the service at a strategic level.

The young people were local to the area and the majority were ‘hard to reach’ young people, such as those attending Pupil Referral Centres. The aim was to encourage young people from all backgrounds to see the site as something that had relevance to them, so they would build a continued relationship with the site.

The young people have reinterpreted the site to make it a more attractive destination for other young people. Working with staff they developed an understanding of the site and explored how a Roman amphitheatre and gallery could be relevant to people today. They translated this knowledge into action, creating guides, audio trails and activities. New workshops and tours devised by the young people are now part of the regular programme, as are youth-friendly out-of-hours workshops. Young people have helped to devise and design items for the shop that would appeal to the new youth audience the site now attracts.

Project name:
– Arena!
– What Stories in the Stones?
– Speaking Spaces
– Speaking to the Future

Project description:
Guildhall Art Gallery and Roman London’s Amphitheatre ran a four phase project using the site and collections as inspiration for creative work. The project started by examining what can be found out about the Romans in London. The projects then worked through to the present day with an opportunity for young people to tell their stories and to think about those who will come here in 2012.

The Guildhall and Amphitheatre worked with a youth panel set up in collaboration with the City of London Integrated Youth Support Service. The youth panel steered the project from the outset. Activities included; photography, capoeira, public speaking and debating, Roman feasts, tours of the gallery and amphitheatre, a trip to the Emirates Stadium, film making, hip-hop poetry and art and design.
There has also been a change in the attitude of staff, especially front of house staff who have developed a positive relationship with the young people that now visit the gallery regularly. At the start of the project, some members of staff were apprehensive about the impact of young people on the life of the gallery. But having experienced the energy and positive changes the young people have brought to the space, they welcome this audience.

The service has also learnt which methods of engagement work well with young people. The project enabled staff to gather evidence that social networking sites are required to run successful youth activities. This led to permission being given to specific members of staff to access these sites to support future work. The outreach team have also learned how to balance the special needs of the gallery and amphitheatre space with working with young people.

Changes have also taken place at operational and strategic levels of the service as a direct result of this project, including:

- Plans for new opening hours to attract more young visitors, including the introduction of a ‘Lates’ programme with special ‘VIP Lates’ for young people
- A young volunteer has developed a feasibility study into screening films and TV dramas for young people in the amphitheatre
- New evaluation techniques have been developed for different users e.g. people who have learning difficulties
- The service’s first ever youth volunteer policy has been created
- Changes made to many existing policies e.g. community engagement, development, marketing and recruitment
- A commitment to look for funding to continue youth work.

’Stories of the World has raised the profile of our youth engagement programme and gained attention and appreciation at a departmental level – it has given us the opportunity to highlight the valuable contribution and far-reaching effect a well run and well funded youth outreach programme can have on an organisation like ours.’

— Interpretation officer
Learning points

These learning points from the first full year of Stories of the World: London come from museum staff and young people involved in the project.

They have been divided into learning points which relate specifically to the next phase of the programme and those which relate more generally to museums seeking to work with young people.

Learning points for the next phase of Stories of the World: London

We need a stronger web presence to act as a One Stop Shop for all SotW: London projects

Although there is a summary of the national programme on the London 2012 website and the London project has a Facebook page, there was a clear desire from staff and especially young people, for a stronger web presence for the London project. This will be a key area of work given the amount of digital work done in the projects.

We need to raise public awareness of SotW and the value of young people’s contribution

One of the challenges faced by the project was that, despite a great deal of effort to promote the positive story of youth engagement, press and media journalists simply did not see this as ‘newsworthy.’ Whilst coverage was achieved for individual pieces of activity, the overall scale and ambition of the project are harder to communicate and this is something that the participating museums will need to work hard on in the run up to 2012.

We need to build on the sense that this is a large project for the young participants

The young participants clearly enjoyed and appreciated the opportunities they had, such as the Horniman Museum’s Youth Conference and the Volunteer Celebration event, to meet other young people working with museums and find out about other projects. When they came together in this way they got a better sense of the wider programme and their place in it.

We need to make the link to the wider London story more explicit

It is clear young people learnt much about the museum’s collections but the young people were less certain whether they had learnt about London and felt the link between London, the collections and the projects needed to be made clearer. Working with the young people to develop a compelling narrative about London as a world city will be the key task in 2011 as we plan for the main exhibitions in 2012.

General Learning Points

A strong relationship with a key individual within the museum is essential to the success of young people’s engagement

Whilst one of the strongest features of the projects was the extent that they reached across many different areas of the museums, it is important for young people to have a named contact within the museum and for that person to mediate the relationship with the rest of the organisation. A good relationship with the museum staff made a noticeable impact on the young people’s enjoyment, dedication and their plans once the project had finished. This involved project leads putting in lots of effort above and beyond running formal sessions at the museum, such as keeping in touch and keeping the young people informed between sessions by email, texting and Facebook. The relationship with the museums as institutions was also important but the relationship with their main contact was key, with many young people praising specific members of staff in their feedback.
Try to work over a longer time frame
All participants gained something by taking part in a SotW project. However the participants who were on longer term engagement projects felt they had benefited in the following ways which they did not feel they would have if they were on intensive short term projects:

– Feeling they had progressed
– They had more time to settle in
– Projects were more flexible and could work around the young people and their other commitments. Any periods of intensive work, such as a one week summer school could be planned ahead making it easier for participants to attend.

Whilst longer term projects obviously have resource implications, where possible museums should consider making a commitment to working with young people over a longer time-frame in order to maximise benefits. Our feedback also showed the need to have short term milestones and quick wins – to keep the momentum and interest in the project.

Ensure participants understand aims, the end vision and timetable
The key feature of SotW was the way the young people developed and shaped the projects. However, as the programme progressed, both museums and participants sometimes felt that projects would have been smoother if the museums had offered a more structured project at the beginning with the flexibility for it to be changed if participants wanted.

Getting the balance right between collaborative decision making and clarity of purpose is always difficult in any community engagement process. Taking the time to run introductory sessions where participants are introduced to the aims of the project and timetable they were working to helps participants see the wider context and enables them to input in decision making in a more meaningful way.

Where possible align project timings with the academic timetable
The official start of the programme was at the beginning of the 2010 – 2011 financial year. Museums had to wait until funding agreements were issued before starting. This meant that they had to recruit young people at a difficult time, especially if they were targeting young people between 16 – 21 years old because they were preparing for exams. Museums felt that it may have been better to recruit young people at the beginning of the summer holidays or at the beginning of the academic year. Young people would then feel they had time to start a project and be more inclined to join.

Funding bodies need to be aware of the need for flexibility with youth led projects
The ethos of SotW was for projects to be led by young people, however the funding body demanded that budget profiles (how much is spent each quarter) be set at the outset of the project and rigidly adhered to. Museums were able to make grant claims and meet milestones but much pressure on staff and participants could have been avoided if the funding body allowed more flexibility in the management of the programme.

Museums should advise young people on how they can continue the interests they have developed
To make the most of the enthusiasm and commitment inspired by the engagement process, museums need to be ready to support young people to take the next step – whether that is further development of skills, wider civic engagement / volunteering or more adventurous cultural and creative activity. This means taking the time to be equipped with sources of useful information and contacts and arranging exit interviews/workshops.

‘Top down’ commitment from senior management is essential for a holistic and long term approach to youth engagement
One of this project’s strengths was the way it involved museum staff at all levels working with young people. However if projects like this are going to have long lasting impact, senior managers and trustees in particular need to commit to changing policies and practices to reflect the input of young people.
Conclusion

At this stage of the programme, in advance of the main public outputs in 2012, we are evaluating the process rather than the product. Whilst over 140,000 people have enjoyed the outputs of the London projects to date, the main public impact will be in 2012 when the final exhibitions are staged at the Museum of London, the Horniman Museum, the Geffrye Museum and London Transport Museum. It is at that stage that we will be able to tell whether all our objectives for the programme have been met.

However it has been very useful to focus on the process of youth engagement because experience tells us that the process of engagement - making new contacts, building relationships and finding ways to work together - is often where the lasting legacy of project work lies. Already the signs are promising for this programme.

As we have hopefully demonstrated in this report, over 1,000 young Londoners have become heavily involved with their local museums. In the process they have gained a host of skills, experiences and self confidence which they feel will stand them in good stead for their future plans (page 10). They have also been inspired to become more regular users of museums, encouraging their friends and family to visit (page 8).

The high level of commitment to do more volunteering (page 7) and desire to refer to this experience on their CVs or UCAS statements suggests that this project will have a lasting impact for the young people who have been involved. We intend to keep in touch with as many of them as we can (given the high mobility of young people) to track how these skills and experiences are utilised and how far intentions carry through into action in the future.

There are also very promising signs for the longer term impact of the programme for the museums involved. The number of new or amended policies arising from this programme may not be the most eye-catching of the statistics in this booklet (page 28) but it is one of the most significant. Museums really are adopting new thinking and new ways of working as a result of this programme. Fundamental policies as wide ranging as marketing and recruitment have been altered in response both to direct input from young people.

However the process of engagement, as valuable as it demonstrably is, is not the end of the story. Museums are public spaces for exploring the world around us and engagement with young people or any other community/audience becomes really powerful and meaningful when it informs and shapes that public role. It is when the process feeds into the end product that the museum really comes into its own.

It is clear from the visitor surveys to date that there are challenges in establishing an awareness that Stories of the World is a youth programme and the intricacies of the youth led process that underpins it, at the same time as telling compelling stories about London and its place in the world. Over the coming months the museums and the young people they work with will need to build on the promising start they have made to ensure that young peoples’ voices and opinions remain very much centre stage.