

South West
Museum
Development
Programme

Small Grant
Big Improvement
2015 – 16
Partnership Projects



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Small Grant Big Improvement 2015 - 16

Museums

The Holburne Museum in partnership with The American Museum in Britain and Bath Preservation Trust

Project

Re-Collection – A Heritage and Health Project for People with Dementia and their Carers

ACE Goal 3.

Resilience

'I very much enjoyed my afternoon and I shall look forward to coming here next week. I'll leave the garden, I'll leave the house. I'll come here, I'll make time for this.'

Beth, wife of Tom who has dementia.

Volunteers involved: 2

Volunteer hours: 42

Grant award: £2,000

Total project value:
£2,107.52



Project Context

In March and May 2014 the Holburne Museum piloted Re-collection, a project for people in the early stages of dementia and their carers over a ten week period. The project was a partnership between the Holburne Museum, Bath Artists' Studios and Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership (AWP). Participants were referred by AWP as part of their treatment plan.

Participants explored the collections in the galleries with two project artists and a member of AWP, followed by a cup of tea and home-made cakes. They learnt or re-learnt different art skills and created objects in response to the collections at the Holburne Museum. Carers took part in all of the activities and were encouraged to consider how they could continue the activities and talk about them when they returned home.

During these sessions participants were not labelled as 'patients' but as individuals who could be united in their creativity and not in their dementia. The sessions provided a place where the focus was not on things 'forgotten' but on social inclusion, creating and maintaining positive relationships and regaining a sense of control and autonomy through the art making.

What were the project aims and how did they address the ACE Goal?

To build on the pilot project and extend the model of good practice to our partner museums (The American Museum in Britain and Bath Preservation Trust) in order to provide more venues and collections for the benefit of the participants. To increase access and enjoyment of Bath museums for people living with dementia and their carers. By working in partnership and sharing project time and space we are in a position to share the work load and make community engagement practical and sustainable for all partners, building a foundation to secure future funding. The aim is that this project will become part of our yearly educational offerings.

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'I very much enjoyed my afternoon and I shall look forward to coming here next week. I'll leave the garden, I'll leave the house. I'll come here, I'll make time for this.'

Beth, wife of Tom who has dementia.

Please describe your project:

The maximum capacity for this project was six participants with their carers. Participants spent four successive weeks in each museum with a common theme linking each session. The sessions were led by artist Paula Tew with psychotherapist Rose Pickett and Dr Alister Gomes of AWP. Each session was supported by a volunteer. Participants visited and talked about part of the collections and worked on creative responses: decorating plates, clay modelling, printing and making personalised maps. Sharing tea and cake was also an important part of each session.

What went well and were there any challenges (any top tips)?

Carers working along side their loved ones and visiting and responding to varied collections worked really well. The nature of dementia makes it a challenge for participants to attend regularly, and the American Museum sessions were more complicated because the learning space is not adjacent to the collection. However, working in Partnership overcame the difficulty for the sites to commit their space for twelve successive weeks, with four weeks being far more realistic.

How has your museum improved as a result of the project?

Our museum has benefitted from the opportunity to manage a project across three museums, establishing a model that we will continue with other community engagement work. The project has enabled us to contribute to the healthy and wellbeing of the local community whilst also building on our partnership. Through this project we have also built on the expertise and awareness of museum staff and volunteers.

Through this project we have connected with a group of individuals who would otherwise not be engaged with the museum at a time when addressing day to day activities is difficult. It provided a diversion and creative opportunity for participants to engage with each other and the collections held in Bath museums. The Holburne Museum is a leader in our community in delivering projects of this kind, and is keen to be in a position to share with our partners for the benefit of the participants, their families and our partner museums.

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Museum

Fashion Museum in partnership with The American Museum in Britain

Project

Fashion Archive on Film

ACE Goal 3. Resilience

'The main thing is that we gained lots of new skills that we never had before—the audio mixing, and using the Ronin, the tracks, the steady cam, all the new equipment.'

**Nojus Bartulis,
Student Volunteer**

Volunteers involved:
23

Volunteer hours: **377**

Grant award: **£5,000**

Total project value:
£6,250

Project Context

Both museums have fashion archive collections that they wanted more members of the public to experience and be inspired by. To achieve this, they proposed to formulate a sustainable way of creating lively and attractive short films that incorporate fashion archive material, which would be shared on digital media. Together, the fashion archives demonstrate 100 years of fashion from the 1840s to the 1940s. Both museums have recently identified the need for information about, and images and interpretation of, archive collections via digital media to enable more people – and more diverse audiences – to enjoy and be inspired by museums.



What were the project aims and how did they address the ACE Goal?

To explore and develop partnership working, predicated on a sharing of expertise and a common interest in fashion archives, and in making short films. The project supported both museums' resilience because it was anchored in shared activities and learning around a common theme (fashion archive collections) with a common output (short films). Digital media was central to the project, enabling the museums to connect with new and diverse audiences, raising awareness, and driving 'traffic' to our websites, increasing our on-line presence, stimulating interactive communication with visitors, and making the museums relevant and engaging.

Please describe your project:

The project included cataloguing and digitising fashion archive items from the *Illustrated London News* (ILN) magazine collection at the Fashion Museum and the Beatrice Pratt archive collection at the American Museum in Britain. Short films were then made incorporating searchable digitised content, which were shared via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the museums' websites. FM delivered and filmed a talk about the ILN archive as part of the Twilight Talk public events programme. At the American Museum in Britain five short films were made by young people exploring Beatrice's role as a 'fashionista' and development has started on a model for working collaboratively with young people.

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'The really lovely thing about this project were the discoveries made, the little fashion anecdotes that were unearthed - Florence Fenwick Miller's distaste of any fur that wasn't Russian, the minute detailing of what Royalty and the Upper classes wore to events, the subtle change in the tone of fashion forecasting and journalism throughout the years as women's roles changed in society.'

Karina Virahsawmy,
Fashion Archives
Curator



What went well and were there any challenges (any top tips)?

The young people who were involved in the project enjoyed working with Create Studios and having access to a range of different equipment and expertise. The cataloguing was also a success; both the transcribers and the contract cataloguers 'liberated' a wealth of untapped information from both fashion archive

collections, enabling it to be shared creatively.

What went well and were there any challenges (any top tips)?

Although the museums are not natural partners, they share 'niche' characteristics and a 'can-do' attitude. These common denominators, plus a light touch approach to the partnership admin made for a good partnership. Timing proved to be a challenge; we were ambitious about what we wanted to achieve, and the students rose to the challenge, but an additional script writing session, and another editing session, would have been helpful for all. We were working right up to the deadline on ironing out glitches in all of the short films; in the future, we would ask for delivery of 'rough cuts' much earlier.

A top-tip would be to give a project time to evolve, as very often progress and what actually happens will be different to an original intention. It is important therefore not to tie yourself down too tightly in an original project plan. We also learnt more about working with volunteer teams. All volunteer teams are made up of individuals, each of whom has different strengths, outlook, attitude, capability, and way of doing things. It is essential to manage the group and ensure that everyone feels that they are a valued member of a team that is performing excellent and much-needed work.

How has your museum improved as a result of the project?

The museums have improved through collaboration and making connections, the museums now have a great knowledge and understanding of each others collections, and we have started reaching new audiences. At AMiB the collections have been rationalised and the museum has successfully engaged with young people. The FM backlog has been reduced.

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Museum

Somerset Heritage Centre in partnership with North Somerset Council and Weston-super-Mare

Project

Improving the Care and Management of the North Somerset Council Museum Collection of Fine Art

ACE Goal 3.

Resilience

Volunteers involved:

4

Volunteer hours: **296**

Grant award: **£2,000**

Total project value:

£3,948



Project Context

The Fine Art collection comprises around 1,100 items including paintings, drawings and prints. Many of these were created locally in North Somerset or feature North Somerset people and places. At present a small percentage of the collection is displayed at the Weston-super-Mare Museum. The majority of the collection is stored at the Somerset Heritage Centre near Taunton where it is accessible to the public by appointment. This makes facilitating public access to the collection difficult and time-consuming.

This project was a priority for the partnership as it was part of Weston-super-Mare Museum's key aim 'To ensure the long term sustainability and resilience of the NSC museum collection' as identified in the Museum's Forward Plan for April 2015-March 2018. The project was also developed in response to specific feedback from users and non-users stating that they would like to see more art in the Museum.

What were the project aims and how did they address the ACE Goal?

We aimed to make our organisations more sustainable, resilient and innovative by improving the care and management of the North Somerset Council museum collection of Fine Art. We aimed to show that good collection care and management are integral to our long-term financial sustainability.

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'...it was invaluable in enabling me to understand in detail how Fine Art is accessioned, stored and made accessible to the public. I particularly enjoyed researching the background of the paintings and drawings in order to write the description for the database so I am pursuing this interest by undertaking a further placement in the archive section of the Heritage Centre. Ultimately I hope this might lead to employment in this area.'

**Elaine Buss,
Volunteer Work
Placement Student,
BA History &
Heritage Studies,
Bath Spa University**

Please describe your project:

We used the funding to purchase specialist picture racking for our framed works of art, acid-free boxes, acid-free cardboard and polyester pockets in which to store works on paper. We improved physical and intellectual access to the collection by undertaking an inventory and photographing each item. Information and images have been added to our internal collections database. These will soon be publically accessible through the Bridgeman Images, Art UK and South West Collections Explorer websites.

What went well and were there any challenges (any top tips)?

Volunteers enjoyed developing their skills and knowledge around digitisation, object handling, collections care and documentation on a short-term project with tangible outcomes. After the project ended the volunteers used their improved skills and knowledge to pursue other voluntary and employment opportunities. Working with several partner organisations to agree contracts with external suppliers took longer than we anticipated. Our top tip would be to allow plenty of time.

How has your museum improved as a result of the project?

The Fine Art collection now meets the Accreditation standard for collection care and is documented to inventory standard as defined in Spectrum. We also have high quality digital images of the entire collection which will soon be accessible to the public through Bridgeman Images, Art UK and South West Collections Explorer. The commercial opportunities offered through Bridgeman and Art UK will generate income which will be used to sustain future collection care, conservation and development. A final benefit was that 21 metres cubed of storage space was freed up through the purchase of picture racking. The project has greatly improved our understanding of the Fine Art collection, enabling staff to respond efficiently to enquiries and facilitate future conservation and research projects that will ensure the collection's long-term sustainability.

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Museum

Torre Abbey and
Torquay Museum

Project

Collections Spotlight

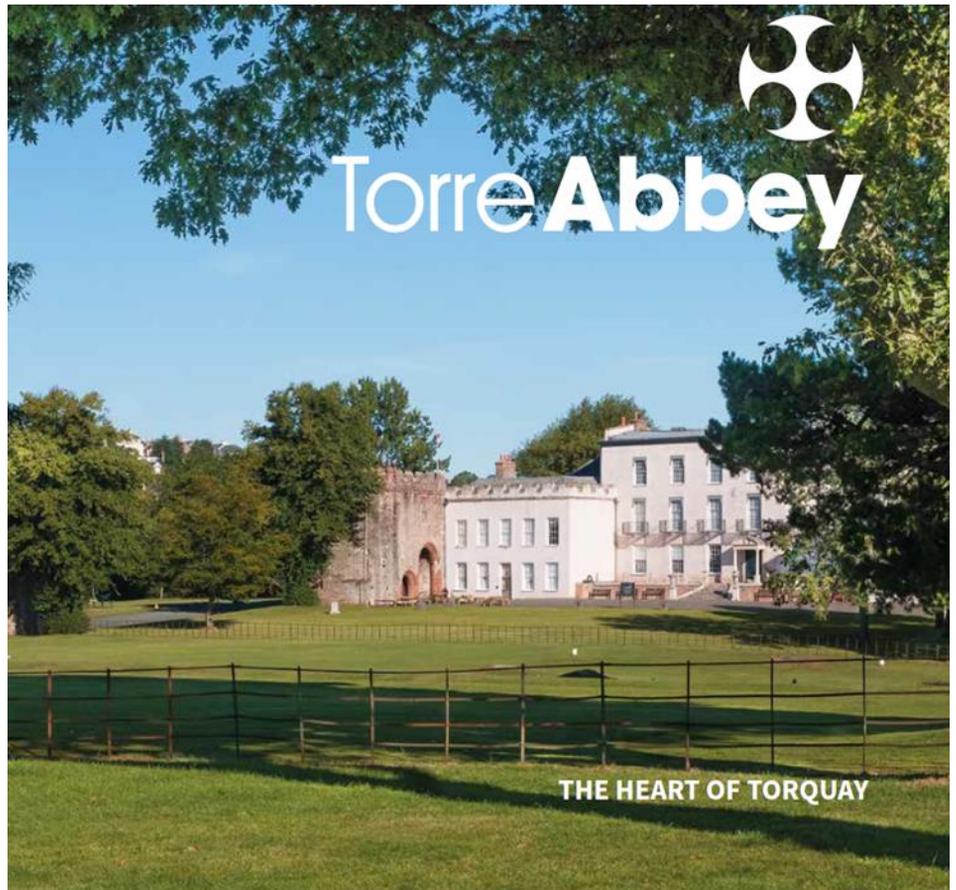
Ace Goal 3

Resilience

Volunteers involved:
15

Volunteer hours: **313.5**

Grant award: **£5,000**



[Section of the Torre Abbey Guidebook Cover]

What were the project aims and how did they address the ACE Goal?

Collections Spotlight aimed to provide a new, sustainable income stream for Torre Abbey & Torquay Museum and new information resources to increase and diversify our audiences. A combined approach comprising printed guides, digital collections-sharing and a volunteer guiding programme aimed to address key objectives across audience development, celebrating collections, and organisational health.

Please describe your project:

The project included three complementary activities:

1. Printed Collections/Heritage Guides for both Torre Abbey and Torquay Museum. The project set income/sales targets for each museum, third-party booksellers and online.
2. 'Spotlight Online', engaging digital volunteers to share collections highlights through creating new web-pages with linked e-news on Creative Torbay, Facebook and Twitter, driving traffic back to museum websites.

3. New teams of volunteer 'Spotlight Guides' trained on the collections and museum sites, with dedicated research time and practical 'tour training'. Volunteer guides went on to deliver free tours for groups, special events and language schools. In-doing-so, they enhanced the museums' interpretation offer and act as excellent advocates for their local heritage.

What went well and were there any challenges (any top tips)?

The 'Spotlight' offer captured the imagination of new volunteers with diverse skills and needs. Positive relationships between volunteers and staff lead to long-term volunteer commitment and unexpected opportunities. The museums invested a substantial amount of time in supporting volunteers, taking a longer-term view than the six-month project duration. The Collection Guide has received excellent feedback from both visitors and stakeholders

The most significant challenge was the project timeline, which set overly ambitious targets during the most pressurised time of the year (summer holidays and autumn 'shoulder'). Target milestones were delayed and audience engagement targets were lower than expected. For digital audiences, although peaks were seen for individual posts/online activity, a more cohesive digital strategy was needed to maintain sustained improvement in numbers of visitors, sessions and session duration.

How has your museum improved as a result of the project?

Collections Guides provided a new, sustainable income stream, improving our fiscal health. Both museums have seen an increase in regular volunteering activity. Spotlight Volunteers have been supported to initiate new projects, across collections, education, digital, visitor services and tours. Feedback from both visiting groups and curatorial staff on the Spotlight Tours has been very good, in terms of delivery, welcome and accuracy/quality of information shared. Both museums have more volunteer-led tours programmed and this a service we plan to evolve further. The museums saw increased traffic to Collections pages over the period, with a significant increase in referrals from Creative Torbay, but we have identified that a more robust digital strategy is required if we are to sustain impact.