



Public History in UK Higher Education

Edited by M. H. Beals



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Introduction

An accurate yet comprehensive definition of “Public History” is not easily available. A general impression of it is simple enough: an exploration or presentation of history that is readily available to the public. However, what precisely falls into this category is less clear. Museums, perhaps, are the most easily accepted, along with heritage sites and other exhibitions. Oral and visual communication, through public lectures, radio broadcasts, television and film are also usually placed underneath this broad heading.

But, alas, we are no closer to delineating where public history lies along the continuum between peer-reviewed, scholarly academic research and history-reminiscent entertainment. Indeed, it is perhaps impossible for either academics or the general public to determine fairly where the line should be drawn on either side. In truth, public history is perhaps best defined as the transmission of historical research, whether it has been done by academic historians and archaeologists, professional archivists and curators or enthusiastic and diligent amateurs, to the public in any of a variety of formats.

As for public history in higher education, we are left with an equally pressing concern; as calls for impact and interaction between universities and the wider community grow ever louder, in which ways can, and have, lecturers and students best brought their love of history into public view? What follows here is a short collection of case studies that demonstrate how *Public History* has been interpreted by a variety of lecturers and universities and how they have engaged their students with it.

First, John Martin offers two examples of partnerships with local archives and museums that demonstrate the value of on-going collaborations to staff and student research. Martin Doherty and June Balshaw, on the other hand, offer a view of independent, hands-on public history with their descriptions of archival internships and oral history projects undertaken by undergraduate students at their universities.

Among those embedding public history partnerships within their teaching are Alys Levene, Jane Stevens Crawshaw, Fiona Williamson and Christopher Bonfield, who offer case studies which describe their past and future work with public history institutions and their use of excursions of field trips to these sites. Finally, Anna Whitelock discusses Royal Holloway’s MA in Public History, now in its second year.

We hope that this short guide will inspire lecturers to think critically about module and course design and help bring higher education and public history ever closer. If you would like to submit an additional case study or suggest additional reading for future editions of this guide, please contact Melodee Beals at m.beals@warwick.ac.uk.

Case Studies in Public History Education

Enhancing Research Skills for Undergraduates:

The contribution of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland

Dr John Martin, De Montfort University

History students at De Montfort University who pursue my Year 2 module the Development of Modern Britain undertake a series of organised visits to the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, which is located at Wigston about 6 miles away from the main campus. These visits are designed to acquaint the students with the extensive archival local history sources that are available for undertaking the primary source-based research project, which is an integral part of the module. Prior to the first visit, the students are provided with a list of appropriate research topics that includes not only a list of secondary sources, which should be consulted, but also a list of the relevant archival sources that can be accessed at the Record Office. From this list, the students have the opportunity to specify those they consider the most interesting so that these records are discussed in detail as part of the talk that accompanies the visit.

The list of possible topics is not intended to be definitive, but merely to provide an indication of what is possible. Students are actively encouraged to identify their own areas of research, and to use the visits to evaluate the viability of these suggestions for the 3000-word research project. This research project is also intended to provide a means of preparing them for the third year dissertation, which is an integral component of the programme for not only De Montfort University students, but virtually all other undergraduate history programmes. As with the Year 2 dissertations, students receive a list of possible topics, including local history topics that can be undertaken using the material at the Local Records Office.

These visits also provide an opportunity to show my ongoing research into local history, which, in conjunction with Professor Gurharpal Singh, has led to publications such as *Asian Leicester* (Sutton Publishing 2002). In addition to further publications on this subject, other projects utilising the Local Records Office include a forthcoming exhibition on the way previous periods of inclement weather, such as the 1947 winter and 1975-6 drought, have adversely affected the locality. In an era of potential global warming, such an exhibition presents an opportunity to illustrate the way in which the county coped with the challenges.

The visits to the Record Office also provide an opportunity for the students to see the research projects and exhibitions that have been completed in conjunction with the staff at the Record office and myself. These, for example, include an exhibition dealing with the impact of the Second World War on Leicestershire agriculture and the countryside, including the mobilisation and role of the Women's Land Army and Prisoners of War in the food production campaign. Leicestershire is an ideal county to study as it not only bore the brunt of the wartime ploughing up campaign, but it also had the highest proportion of POWs working on the land.

Contacts between myself and the Record Office have been further cemented by my recent election to the position of chair person of the Friends of the Record Office. This group consists of volunteers who assist in fund raising and indexing the records

Overall these links with the Record Office have significantly enhanced the research experience of the history undergraduates. This is reflected not only in the positive feedback provided by the students, but also the marks achieved and their continued interest in the research topics they have encountered at the Record Office. Encouraging undergraduates to research such topics has been, in a number of instances, successful in encouraging them to undertake post graduate research into allied issues as in the case of a student who was awarded a place at Cambridge University to pursue a PhD.

Food, Farming and the Countryside Research: The Contribution of the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading

Dr John Martin, De Montfort University

This account explores the informal and formal links which exist between myself, a Reader in Agrarian History at De Montfort University, and the Museum of English Rural Life. The latter, which houses Britain's most comprehensive national collection of objects, books and archives relating to the history of food, farming and the countryside, is an invaluable asset in both my teaching and research. MERL's premier position reflects the quality and scope of the library, archives and object collections. These have designated status ensuring that their importance is recognised nationally and internationally. As a University Museum and founder member of the Rural Museums Network, MERL has built up a reputation as the leading authority in its field and as a centre of excellence in teaching and learning.

The archival resources at MERL have played a vitally important role in developing the research skills of the undergraduate students pursuing my Year 2 module *The Development of Modern Britain Since 1939*, and my Year 3 module *The Transformation of Rural Britain since 1939*. The Year 2 students are provided with a list of possible research topics for their 3000-word research project, which constitutes a key assessment component of the module. The aim of the project is to develop research skills in preparation for the Year 3 dissertation. My Year 3 students also have the opportunity to undertake a research project that uses archival material obtained from MERL.

Student feedback from Year 2 students suggests that identifying a viable research topic that is sufficiently well focused is a challenging exercise, a problem compounded by the need to locate and use relevant and appropriate primary sources. In order to refine their research skills, Year 2 students are encouraged to investigate the viability of a number of possible research topics. As part of this exercise they are required not only to consider possible essay structures and the key issues to be investigated, but also to identify a list of the primary sources to be consulted if the project is to be successfully completed. In order to acquaint them with the wide variety of primary sources available, use is made of the A2A (Access to Archives: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/>) website and a select range of the contents of certain research institutes, in particular MERL and the Leicestershire Record Office.

In addition, Year 2 students receive a list of possible topics including a selection of relevant primary sources that are available at specified Record Offices or archival centres. They are also provided with extracts from the farming press, diaries and reports, which have been gleaned from the MERL archives. Relevant topics from MERL's extensive archives dealing with the Second World War include the role of the Women's Land Army, the mobilisation of Prisoners of War for work on the land and the impact of the wartime food production campaign on individual counties. This exercise has been particularly useful in encouraging undergraduates to pursue topics relevant to MERL's archives not only for their final year dissertations, but also in a number of cases higher degrees at both DMU and other universities.

The lack of research into the crucially important watershed of the Second World War has led to publications including 'British Agricultural Records in the Second World War: Lying Fallow' *Archives: Journal of the British Records Association* (2000), which was reprinted in J. Black, *The Second World War* (Ashgate, 2007) and *The Frontline of Freedom* (2007), jointly edited with Professor Brian Short and Professor Charles Watkins.

MERL has also been invaluable in facilitating my own research. When I was a postgraduate student working on my PhD on a part-time basis, my supervisor was Professor E. J. T. Collins, head of MERL. My subsequent research into the impact of government policies on the agricultural sector since the outbreak of the Second World War, with MERL's assistance, led to several publications which include *The Development of Modern Agriculture: British Farming Since 1931* (2000). In addition, many of my fifty-four articles in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2004) on agriculturists are based on research into the MERL archives. My articles, which include 'George Odum, The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Hudson' *Agricultural History Review* (2007) and 'The Commercialisation of British Turkey Production', *Rural History* (2009), also owe a great deal to the material available at MERL.

More recently, I have been awarded a Research Fellowship by the Museum to investigate 'The Impact of the Weather on the Agricultural Sector: Case Studies of, the Drought of 1975-76, Winter 1963 and the Bleak Midwinter 1947'. By focusing on particular periods of inclement weather, the aim of the research is to evaluate the extent and ways in which the agricultural sector was affected by the weather. It is anticipated that it will challenge the conventional wisdom that, since the Second World War, improved plant varieties and fertilisers and adequate harvesting equipment have assumed ascendancy over the weather.

The links between me and MERL have resulted in a range of initiatives that have benefited students on the programmes I teach and produced course material which is used in other countries. For example, in 2002, my book *The Development of British Agriculture* was translated into Japanese and is used as the main account of the subject in that country. One can only hope that these links are robust enough and valued sufficiently to cope with the challenges of impending financial cutbacks.

Practical Work in Historical Archives

Dr Martin Doherty, University of Westminster

Since 1999, the History Subject Area at the University of Westminster has offered an optional level 6 module entitled *1HIS660 Practical Work in Historical Archives (History Internships)*. The intention behind the module was to give practical form for History students to Westminster's commitment to educating for professional life. The module is a fully-accredited part of the undergraduate History degree, and students who successfully complete the module gain fifteen credits. The module thus is equivalent in credit terms to an 'ordinary' taught level 6 module. While the module was being designed and validated we sent drafts to several public history institutions in London to ask their opinion on the practicality and appropriateness of the scheme we had envisaged. We received several encouraging and helpful responses from such institutions as the then Public Record Office (PRO), the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), the Hulton Getty Picture Collection and the National Maritime Museum. Our first students undertook their internships in spring 1999 and since then a total of seventy-nine students have successfully completed the module.

It is a key feature of the module that students arrange their own placement. We advise them about institutions which have previously offered internships to our students, such as some of those mentioned above. But it is our view that the student's ability to organise his or her own placement is an excellent test and demonstration of their motivation and resourcefulness. Of course, universities in the London area are very fortunate in the vast array of national and local public history institutions which are based in the capital, many of which are happy to offer internships to well-motivated students. Westminster is fortunate also in possessing its own very substantial archive, tracing its history back to its origins in the Royal Polytechnic Institution, and a number of our students have benefitted from placements 'at home'.

Nevertheless, we have been agreeably surprised at the resourcefulness and innovative skills demonstrated by several of our students in organising internships at local, sometimes small-scale public history institutions, much to their mutual benefit. The range of institutions which has offered placements include some very prominent organisations as the LMA, PRO and Imperial War Museum, but also such organisations as the Bruce Castle Museum in Haringey, Harrow School, the Metropolitan Police, the Benjamin Franklin House, the Royal London Hospital, the Museum of the Royal Engineers, the Guards' Museum, the East Grinstead Museum, the RAF Museum, the Museum of English Rural Studies, the National Codes Centre at Bletchley Park, and many, many more.

The scheme works as follows: students make the initial contact with the institution and organize an internships interview. They go equipped with an 'internships agreement' form, which sets out what work the student will do for the institution and in turn, what support, training and guidance they will be given. An internships mentor must be named on the form as a contact point for us. The agreement must be formally approved by the Module Leader before the student can commence work. This is important, as we need to ensure that the internship will be of serious benefit to the student, and that he or she will not spend three weeks photocopying or making coffee. We specify that the internship must last a minimum of 72 hours and a maximum of 108. However we have found that some institutions require a minimum of 120 hours for placements and if such a commitment will not negatively impact upon a student's other studies, we are happy to permit this. The timing of the internship is also a matter for the student and the institution. We imagined that students would regard placements as part-time or weekend work, and would attend for one or two days a week, over a semester. However, this has rarely proven to be the case, and students and institutions prefer to undertake the placement over a concentrated period of three or four weeks. The flexibility provided by a modular system, means that students can undertake a placement in vacation time, for example, in the summer at the end of year two, but then submit their assessed work for grading in semester one of the following year. Students find this flexibility to be of great value, so that they can balance their other study and paid-work commitments. Once the internship commences, student complete a daily time sheet, signed off by their mentor. This is submitted with their assessed work.

Assessment on the module consists of three elements: a daily diary, an internship report and a mentor's report. The diary (20% of the total marks) is just that: a log of the activities undertaken, problems encountered, solutions found. The internship report (60%) is a more substantial, evaluative piece of work on the value of public history institutions to the historian, a description of the institution where the placement has taken place - its holdings, importance, future plans etc. and ends with a reflective evaluation of how and how much the student has gained from the placement. Finally, the mentor is asked to comment in confidence on the level of commitment, enthusiasm and skill with which the student has undertaken the internship. Twenty percent of the marks are awarded for this element of the assessment.

A very wide variety of tasks is undertaken by our students. Very often students are asked to catalogue deposits of hitherto unexamined private or institutional papers. This can often be a daunting task for the inexperienced, but the level of commitment, enthusiasm and - in the end - satisfaction in a job well done, very clearly comes across in diaries and reports. Other students are asked to help with visitor and research enquiries, or school visits or even to conduct tours. It was gratifying to read recently of one very shy student who was amazed at her own ability to conduct guided tours for groups of visiting US tourists. Other students will undertake small-scale research projects or help with the creation of temporary or permanent exhibitions. The list of tasks undertaken is as large as the variety of institutions in which our students chose to work.

As yet, only a minority of Westminster History students undertake a work placement, although in 2009/10, fourteen of a final-year cohort of thirty-four did so. These students are clearly among the best-motivated and committed, and the type of student who realises the importance of relevant work experience in the pursuit of their own careers. In the overwhelming majority of cases, placements have been extremely successful, both for the student and the institution. The mentor is asked whether or not the institution would be prepared to offer another placement to a Westminster student, and the answer has never been 'no'. On the contrary, mentors are normally very complimentary about students' work, and greatly value the contribution they make to their institutions. Student feedback on their experiences is also extremely positive. Such comments as these are typical: 'I have gained many important skills and the experiences I had will surely benefit me in the future'; 'it was a very rewarding experience and I found it to be very enjoyable ... I intend to continue volunteering at the archive'. Students are increasingly aware that in today's highly competitive job market, a good degree is no longer enough to secure a 'graduate' job. Experience counts, and we've found that this module repays big dividends in that regard, for a very small investment of staff time.

Memories of War and Public History at the University of Greenwich

Dr June Balshaw, University of Greenwich

History students at the University of Greenwich are incredibly fortunate to be located at the Old Royal Naval College, a World Heritage Site and home to buildings designed by Sir Christopher Wren. It is also the birthplace of Henry VIII and his daughters Mary and Elizabeth. However, the University is a tenant and the custodian of these illustrious buildings is the Greenwich Foundation which manages the site. Developing a good relationship with the Foundation has, therefore, been crucial in terms of collaborative work. History students now have the opportunity to work with the Foundation in a number of ways. The Discover Greenwich Visitor Centre provides volunteering and work placement opportunities where students can gain hands-on experience as guides and working with local schools on educational visits. There are also opportunities to help create the Greenwich Foundation archive, a repository housing many items including digital and hard copies of maps, illustrations and Greenwich Hospital pensioners' records.

The history work placements offered at level 6 provide an opportunity for students to explore the ways history can be practically applied in the public sphere through placements in museums, archives and schools. In addition to a minimum of 150 hours spent on site, students undertake a project and keep a reflective log for the duration of the placement. Close collaboration with six London borough Local History Archives (Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark) has meant that students undertaking work placements in local archives have been able to gain invaluable archival experience as well as 'testing the water' to see if it is a career path they wish to pursue. Students have the opportunity to produce interesting and original projects utilising local archival material which is of mutual benefit. Examples include; creating exhibitions telling the history of a forgotten community and the story of the evacuation of a local school during the Second World War. Students can also undertake work placements in museums and examples of recent placements include the National Maritime Museum (opposite the University), Museum in Docklands, Charles Dickens Museum, Firepower Royal Artillery Museum, Museum of Childhood, Benjamin Franklin House and Hall Place. For those considering a career in teaching, the History department has developed good links with a number of local schools. Students are able to create Teaching and Learning Materials (TLRs) using local and national archives to introduce and present a particular event or topic as well as getting useful teaching experience which is crucial to the PGCE application.

The History department at Greenwich offers its students various opportunities to work with the general public and make use of the knowledge and skills acquired whilst studying for their degree. The experience of being involved in public history encourages students to further explore the practice of history and examine ways in which the discipline is utilised and presented.

Memories of War, a social history project exploring new narratives and untold stories of the Second World War has provided an excellent opportunity for students undertaking a work placement to explore the cultural and social history of the war through close collaboration with the local community. With a focus on the personal narratives of the war, the first phase of the project focused on recording the untold stories of those who experienced the conflict. Working with students and volunteers, the project has recorded and collected the stories of the hundreds of people who came forward to share their memories. The oral history training provided by members of the History department encouraged the students and volunteers to consider the use of oral history as a discipline and the ways in which oral testimony can be gathered and presented in the digital age. Students undertaking the level 5 course, Family and Community History were involved in interviews with the Eastbourne Women's Land Army group.

Memories of War is, essentially, a community based project. Exploring personal narratives and untold stories of war the project has created links between generations as well as with local history institutes. The culmination of the first phase of the project, the Memories of War exhibition and accompanying book, created a public space for the personal histories recorded. The exhibition proved a success in creating a common ground for the contributors of the project, both storytellers and volunteers, and many made new contacts through the history on display. The creation of the exhibition was dependent on successful collaboration with local archives as well as local museums. Whereas the London Metropolitan Police Collection provided much material connected to civil defence, Hall Place and Gardens supplied a Canadian Red Cross quilt and two panels focusing on evacuation were created in cooperation with Bexley Local Studies and Archive.

Part of the Memories of War exhibition focused on the London Blitz and attracted attention from local schools who were studying World War Two as part of the year six curriculum. Additionally, the Race and Equality project - collaboration between Greenwich Council and Charlton Athletic Football Club – sought the help of the History department in training a group of 16-18 year olds to conduct oral history interviews with elders in their community. The Memories of War project has also provided opportunities to work with students from other disciplines. Poetry and creative writing students who observed the interviews and open days have produced work based on their experience and it is intended that Drama students will put on a production based on some of the interviews. The Memories of War project is ongoing and eventually (funding permitting) we hope to create an online archive in collaboration with other local archives.

Further collaboration with local archives has also been encouraged through numerous other projects initiated by the History department. The Ideal Homes website: <http://www.ideal-homes.org.uk> is a joint project of the London Boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark and the University of Greenwich and explores the origins and significance of suburbia as revealed through the history of South East London. The collaboration allows academics, local historians and the general public to examine suburban development through a wealth of photographs, maps and historic documents.

We encourage the use of public history resources in all our History courses and visits to local and National Archives and other repositories are embedded into the curriculum. Whilst we are proud of the success of our History Work Placement initiative, the level of work involved needs to be acknowledged. Developing and maintaining contacts in archives, museums and so on is time consuming as is the wealth of paperwork required covering health and safety as well as the more academic aspects of the placement. Nonetheless, the rewards far outweigh the challenges. History students (and staff) have clearly benefitted from engaging with public history during the last few years and the History Programme team are now working with other institutions to consider additional community based courses.

Children in Sickness and Health

Drs Alysa Levene and Jane Stevens Crawshaw, Oxford Brookes University

The module 'Children in Sickness and Health' is unusual within our wider curriculum for being driven by themes. We seek to develop an appreciation in our students of the ways that childhood has been framed and experienced over a period of 200 years, and to encourage them to develop personal interests in the topics they select to write about in their coursework. One of the overarching themes we have been developing this semester is that of confinement; in particular asking students to put together presentations on spaces, which are linked to weekly topics (for example, schools, asylums and workplaces). These presentations are assessed during the sessions and by way of a write-up based on primary sources. The focus of the module is closely allied with our departmental policy of research-led teaching for final-year students, which forms a further layer of engagement with the themes as topics of active investigation. This field trip was designed to promote this sense of active engagement, by showing the students two contrasting spaces connected to the history of childhood. We had already spent time in seminars discussing the fact that childhood is a subjective and social construction and, by taking the students out of the classroom and into the spaces used and inhabited by children in the past, we hoped to reinforce this. We were able to call upon Dr Levene's prior contacts with the archivists at Great Ormond Street and the Education Officer at the Museum of Childhood to arrange privileged access to historical artefacts and spaces which are not normally accessible to the general public.

The two spaces we visited on this field trip were deliberately chosen to contrast with each other in a number of ways. First, they connected to different topics within the module: the hospital with children's health, and the museum with children's leisure and child-rearing. Second, they are very different spaces: the hospital constructed on a cramped site in central London, and the museum occupying an original Victorian exhibition space where objects are displayed in large cases. Further, the Hospital's archive is housed in one of the original Victorian buildings which further reinforced the type of space inhabited by the children admitted there, while the museum was originally a place where children went with their families as part of their leisure time (a function which it fulfills to an even greater degree in its current form). Third, they are in different parts of London, giving the students a further impression of the variety of children's spaces in one city.

We began the day at Great Ormond Street, where the archivist, Mr Nick Baldwin, gave us a tour, which included the original nineteenth-century chapel. The tour illustrated the changing use of space for the care of sick children, and the specificity of care (for example, in the use of artwork, and the small scale of the chapel with its child-size pews and 'choir' of teddies in memorial to ex-patients). This was followed up with a visit to the archive's small exhibition on the history of the hospital, and the opportunity to see some original handwritten case notes. We then moved on to the Museum of Childhood at Bethnal Green, where we had a handling session with the

Education Officer, looking at articles of children's clothing. The students then spent some time looking around the main exhibition area.

The field trip was planned carefully in relation to our wider pedagogy, but we were mindful to present it to the students in neutral terms. We did not discuss what themes we would develop in advance, and nor did we set any particular questions or reading for the students to do. This was because we wanted them form their own judgments of the spaces and artefacts they saw, and to take away their own conclusions which we would follow up in subsequent seminars and coursework activities. We did, however, deliberately select the spaces we visited to fit in with two of the themes we would go on to develop in coursework.

We thus developed our pedagogical aims in follow-up sessions after the field trip. In the subsequent week, we used the theme of child leisure to ask the students to reflect on the following questions in small groups:

- What did the museum's collections suggest to you about the principal characteristics of children's toys?
- What does this suggest to you about the way that children played in the past?
- Were you struck more by continuities or change?

This enabled them to think through the meanings of the objects they had seen at the Museum, and relate them to ideas about childhood. We also used the trip to prepare the students for one of their pieces of assessed coursework, which was a popular article or museum guide to an object or building connected with the history of childhood. Seeing such a variety of objects at the Bethnal Green Museum and having thought about their meanings, gave this workshop (and the subsequent pieces of work) greater meaning and depth.

We developed their experiences of the Hospital visit in a subsequent week on child health. Again, students were asked to reflect on their reactions to the hospital as a space in seminar discussion, and we built on this further by leading a workshop based on the online Historic Hospitals Admission Project which includes the records of Great Ormond Street Hospital. We asked students to select a group of patients based on period or disease type, and then discussed their experiences of disease and treatment via what we had seen of the objects and spaces at the Hospital.

The field trip had valuable outcomes and benefits for the students. We both felt that they had gained a real appreciation of how spaces and objects were used and experienced by children in the past, and how these could vary. The trip also gave the students much more confidence in approaching their assessed coursework, and they expressed a greater degree of empathy with their selected topics. It also helped the students to grapple with the key themes of the module; one student, for example, commented directly on the impact of the contrasting architecture of

the two sites. Feedback indicated that they found the experience to have been valuable, interesting and enjoyable. Comments recorded anonymously after the trip included:

'It made what we had learned feel so much more real'

'It put childhood from the past into perspective and I was able to see how experiences of childhood have changed/stayed the same'

'It has helped in preparation for assessed work because we were able to explore a range of children's lives not just a specific group'

We both felt that the trip had been a great success in provoking individual reactions in our students which they were then able to relate to the wider themes of the module. We had planned the use of time carefully in advance, and our only improvement in this respect would be to request a longer handling session. This was also something requested in student feedback. However, there is a charge for this, and so this is dependent on funds being available. We would also request that the handling session be more directly based around children's toys, and the Education Officer has indicated that she would be very happy to do this another time. The day was enjoyable and instructive in itself, but it gained much greater weight by being followed up specifically in seminar discussions and assessed work. This was further enhanced by the fact that the student selected their own topics for their popular article/museum guide, which allowed them to develop their personal reactions to objects and places they had seen during the trip. The non-assessed activity using the records of Great Ormond Street Hospital was also lent much greater weight and 'reality' by having seen the very small space where these children would have been treated. The process of sickness, confinement and treatment was thus brought to life considerably.

While this trip was built on the specific themes of this module, it is something which could easily be developed by other lecturers. Our principal aim was to identify key themes which could be developed in selected locations, and this is entirely transferable given the range of museums and historic places across the country. Our location in Oxford gave us ready access to London, but similar ideas could be developed by visiting historic houses or local museums, many of which contain objects connected with social and medical history.

History, Heritage and Public Engagement: How Can Universities and Communities Work Together?

Drs Fiona Williamson and Christopher Bonfield, University of East Anglia

This case study aims to lay out the plans for a new third-year module which will develop a working dialogue between the university, local heritage partners and archive centre in order to facilitate knowledge and skills transfer and to strengthen partnerships in mutually beneficial projects. The new module will improve teaching and learning for students by equipping them with modern, practical and transferable skills and help them to gain valuable workplace experience as well as develop new models of engagement between university and region.

The module, entitled 'History, Heritage and New Media' will be created and designed with three aims: First, to teach modern practical and transferable skills in history and heritage for students about to graduate. Second, to develop closer links between the UEA and local heritage partners, including Norfolk Historic Churches Trust, Norfolk Museums Service and the Norfolk Record Office. Finally, to facilitate the public engagement potential of the School and to increase dialogues between the university and the local community. The end result will be the completion of a best practice model for public engagement, and the production of high-quality student projects with a practical application for the wider community, as well as our heritage partners.

This module will give students the opportunity to create public-facing projects intended to engage the public; this is something that is not currently available in the School. Although students do produce projects and dissertations, these are strictly academic and are not designed to have 'impact' or engage a wide audience. Consequently, projects created for this module will require students to liaise with organizations outside of UEA and communicate their ideas to a wide audience. Students will also be required to evaluate their projects and think about their impact in the wider community. It will also be the only such coursework/project based module we currently run with this focus, and if successful will provide a model for other modules.

The course will be taught by two academic members of staff and, at least initially, enrolment has been fixed at a maximum of 15-20 students because of the off-site working component.

Learning Outcomes:

- Knowledge of the heritage industry
- Understanding of the application and variety of new media in history and heritage (including film making and the internet)
- Familiarity with electronic, archival and other forms of historical sources
- Trips to local heritage sites
- Chance to meet and talk to local experts
- Experience of engaging the public and 'selling' ideas
- Practical project management skills
- Advanced skills in the written and oral presentation of findings
- Transferable skills, such as how to write for the public and basic IT skills

Modules of Assessment

- One essay (c. 2500 words) 40%
- Oral Project Presentation 30%
- Written Project Report 30%

Teaching Method (3 hours per week)

- One combined lecture and seminar per week for weeks 1-6, which will include guest lectures and trips to heritage sites
- One seminar per week for weeks 8-10, which may be off or on-site depending on the nature of student projects
- One assessed project presentation in week 11

Module Outline

Week 1: Introduction

Lecture: Brief Introduction to the Module

The lecture will examine the importance of history and heritage, and the practical application of new media in the heritage industry followed by a general discussion of course, organisation of seminars and expectations. Question and answer session.

Week 2: History and Heritage: Theory and Practice

Venue—Dragon Hall, King Street, Norwich, 27 January 2-5pm

Lecture: History and Heritage in practice-Sarah Power- Museum Interpreter

This lecture is about the practical aspects of working in heritage-job roles, creating exhibitions, working with the public, pitfalls, conservation and handling, the essential tasks of locating, accessing and analysing historical evidence in a variety of forms, as well as the best ways of writing and presenting findings. A talk from an expert at Dragon Hall and a tour will be followed by a group discussion. This will also act as preparation for the group projects.

Week 3: History and Public Engagement by a guest lecturer

Venue—Norfolk Record Office, County Hall, Norwich, 3 February 2-5 pm

Lecture: Archives and Heritage Management-NRO project manager.

This week we will have a tour of the archives centre and hear from an exhibitions expert about their work and how an exhibition is put together. We will discuss the work of the archivists behind the scenes, practical problems of preservation and public handling, and the pressure on archives in the 21st century from funding to accessibility. This will be followed by a question and answer session and group discussion.

Week 4: Heritage and the media:

Venue—The Forum, Norwich, 10 February 1-5pm

Lecture: Ways of working with Heritage: CueEast and the BBC

In January 2008, UEA was one of six universities nationally who were awarded prestigious 'Beacons for Public Engagement' status. Known generally as CUE East, the project is based at the Forum. This visit will give you an overview of what facilities are available to you through our partnerships at the Forum, and also what resources you may be able to access both in the design and undertaking of a wide range of public and community engagement activities off campus, both at the Forum and elsewhere in the region. There will also be a practical 'hands-on' session with the BBC where students get to make their own short promotional video at St Andrews Hall.

Week 5: Stuck in the Past?: Museums and the Modern World

Venue—Norwich Castle

Lecture: Stuck in the Past?: Museums and the Modern World.

The talks will examine the relationships between museums and their visitors. It reviews the changing role of museums, and current trends in museum practice in response to changing social and cultural environments. The visit will include a tour of the Castle Museum. Students will meet an interpretation officer, and learn how to present history to the public and how you can make history fun.

Week 6: New Media

Venue – University of East Anglia, 24 February 2-5pm

Lecture: New Media-Chris Bonfield and John Williams

This lecture will showcase history recourses on the Web, and new ways of presenting academic research to the public. It will introduce students to the work of Virtual Past, and demonstrate how historians go about writing web content. It will also focus on essential web skills such as digitalisation, uploading content and how to go about writing a website.

Seminar

This seminar will introduce students to how you can upload material and manage documents online, and edit online content. It will also show students which websites to avoid! Note: the seminar will be practical and no previous knowledge (or interest!) in IT or technical skills are required.

Week 7: Reading week

Students are expected to start planning their projects.

Aims: Each group or individual will choose their own heritage site. This will either be in a museum, church or archive in Norwich. Projects might include writing a brief history of building or site. Students will be asked to consider current effectiveness of the site at presenting its history (as well as the content) to the general public. How effectively does the site engage the public and different social or ethnic groups? The project will conclude with a Public Engagement Plan for the building or site, and offer the groups' practical suggestions as how things might be improved. Other ideas might involve contributing to an exhibition run by Norfolk Museums or the Norfolk Record Office. Students will be encouraged to explore the use of new media in presenting their work, such as podcasts, blogs, wiki pages and video presentations (Sponsored by CUE East).

Student projects take the form of a Public Engagement Plan and could include:

- A poster advertising the site to the public
- A survey of the public's reaction to the site
- An internet blog of the student's reaction to the heritage (this could also include a video blog)
- A TV advert or short programme aimed at the general public (the Forum has a free BBC recording studio)
- A basic guide written for the general public
- A plan on how academic research might better inform the public's knowledge and understanding.

Week 8: Thinking Ahead

Venue – University of East Anglia, 10 March 2-5pm

This will be a group session involving presentations. Each student needs to present their proposal and work so far to the rest of the group (15mins). This is an ideal time to raise problems and issues and the rest of the group are invited to comment and discuss.

Weeks 9 & 10: Preparation for Group Project

These weeks will involve supervised planning and implementation of the group project. Hands-on advice will be offered about how to best present research to a public audience, and any technical expertise will be provided.

Week 11: Group presentation and assessment

UEA staff, local heritage partners, students and members of the public will be invited to attend.

Week 12: Reflection and Evaluation

Students will be asked to reflect on their experiences. They will also be asked to discuss what they have learnt during the course and how they might implement that in future research or the workplace.

Implementation

Developing and organizing the module has been challenging, but rewarding. It signals a break from traditional methods of teaching and learning in our department, so has required a quick learning curve, but one which has yielded positive results. Once the initial stages have been set-up, the module is easy to implement and replicate. It is hoped that this pilot will set an example for other Schools and Departments to roll out.

The biggest surprise to date has been the level of interest this module has generated. This is in large part due to the mutually beneficial aspects of working in partnership for all bodies involved, and the genuine interest in developing teaching and learning. The main obstacle has been financial. In order for this project to be successful as a pilot and demonstrate its potential, student projects need funding. In the current economic situation, spare monies are hard to come by for both universities and heritage partners. Although much of the project work can be completed with the help of existing expertise, projects need to be professional in order to be of value. It has been well worth approaching non-academic bodies to seek external funding. For this year we have been awarded a grant of £3000 from the UEA's Annual Fund, but if this pilot is successful, we may be able to seek future help from CUE East, one of six higher education national Beacons for Public Engagement, set up to assist staff and students to engage with the public.

Impact

The impact of the module is yet to be seen, but the aims of the module are to develop projects run by the students which will be of real practical use to our local heritage partners, will help both UEA, students, and heritage sites engage with the public, and will improve student skills of communication and presentation. The first part of the module is 'academic' and students will receive a series of lectures by locally-based experts in the field. The latter part is all project work. Each student has a choice of projects initiated by local heritage partners in line with their current needs. Once decided, students work for 6-8 weeks on their projects guided by the heritage partner and with help feedback and advice from the module organizers. The end result will be a tangible product; for example, a marketing survey, guide-book, plan, display, or short-film produced for use at the heritage site. Students will present their projects to all participants, including representatives from the heritage sites, the university and the public at the module close.

It is hoped that a successful run of this pilot will result in future funding, increased awareness of the history school's work in the region, excellent work experience for student's CV's, and a tangible product for museums and archives to use, and/or display to the public.

MA in Public History at Royal Holloway, University of London

Dr Anna Whitelock, Royal Holloway, University of London

Introduced in September 2009, the MA in Public History offered by Royal Holloway provides a vocational qualification for history-related employment in the media, including film, television and print journalism, museums and heritage sites. The MA is the first in the country to make a deliberate project of engaging postgraduates in the core ideas, debates and best practices in the field of public history conceived in the broadest possible sense. The course, run over one year (two part-time) is composed of modules covering historical research, popular writing, public presentations of history and oral history. A further module allows students to pursue an independent research project, often culminating in an exhibition, piece of oral history, publishable article or radio programme.

In designing the course the needs of potential employers - English Heritage, National Trust, Historic Royal Palaces – were engaged with, and the construction of the various modules drew on their insights and expertise. The course aims to produce people capable of communicating ideas about the past in a range of public spaces and media. As Justin Champion (the initiator of the MA) has described, ‘Public history draws on all the skills of a historian: original research among dusty papers, piecing together the story, placing it in the context of the past, interpreting it for the present. But public history also makes a special effort to bring history alive for an audience, which may well combine interest with sketchy historical knowledge and barely conscious historical preconceptions or even prejudices. Many historians don’t even think about these groups.’

The inaugural run of the degree (2009-2010) enrolled 30 students.

During the course students take six modules. History Past and Present is a core methodology course exploring the development of history as a discipline within Humanities and Social sciences. Themes include Narrative, Memory and Archive and at the end of the course students are required to submit a 5000 word essay. Studying and Communicating the Past introduces students to the range of skills and resources that they need to understand and deploy as historians. Some classes are entirely skills-based and some combine a reflection on conceptual issues with practical workshops and visiting speakers who are specialists and practitioners. The Public Communication and Understanding of History provides students with a practical skills set which enables them to plan, record and produce a variety of aural and written projects which are informative and accurate whilst being entertaining and engaging. The course requires students to produce a short radio programme or a rough cut of a YouTube style video to be aimed at a specific audience and then to make an oral pitch to a panel of potential commissioners. The Voice of the Public: Oral History in Public History introduces students to the theory and practice of oral history in the wider context of public history. Students conduct and

record an audio oral history interview to current broadcast and archive standards as well as being required to complete a 2500 word essay on the use of oral history in public history.

Throughout the year the students also follow the Pathways to the Past course which introduces them to ideas about Public History in the UK and other parts of the world and engages with ongoing debates about the relationship between academic historians, local and national communities and the function of cultural memory. Sessions cover specific historical topics alongside visits to relevant archives and museums such as Hampton Court, Benjamin Franklin's house in London and the Geffreye Museum. External speakers from the National Trust, the British Council for Archaeology, from commercial companies such as ancestry.co.uk and from national and local production companies delivers practical advice on the challenges of taking historical research into different public spaces. The course also draws very much on 'in house' expertise within the department and the many members of staff who actively participate in bringing their expertise in various aspects of the past to address issues of current concern, or to provide new perspectives and insights. Whether in the medium of broadcasting, print journalism, or political briefings, or by working alongside colleagues in museums and archives, Royal Holloway historians continue to have a considerable impact on the public understanding of the past and it is upon this range of experiences that the MA is founded. At the end of the Pathways course, students are required to submit a 12500 word essay which discusses and critiques public history dissemination in the various institutions they have been introduced to.

The main project assignment which is submitted at the end of the degree builds on the core courses. Students are required to produce something of publishable/professional standard whether this is journalism, an exhibition, an audio guide or other mode of public dissemination. The challenge is to communicate historical material without compromising evidence or reasoned argument. Students have proved incredibly ambitious and external institutions incredibly accommodating in the development of these projects. A number of individuals have secured placements at the BBC and other commercial television companies, others in museums or heritage properties or in archives. One student worked with Historic Royal Palaces and produced a dramatic monologue of Nell Gwyn which was delivered by a professional actor at a gala evening at Banqueting House; another developed an iphone app for Kensington Palace, and another produced teaching material on the holocaust for use in schools. Other students produced websites or audio guides for various heritage sites. All of the students convey a palpable sense of excitement at doing something different from 'ordinary history'. They also show impressive initiative in identifying suitable topics in the public realm, not only for the dissertation but for some of the taught modules. The external 'mentors' are extremely impressed by the professional standard of the students work and their insightful contributions. The students themselves clearly thrive in this environment. One comment by a recent graduate of the course is typical 'for me the masters degree in public history is an examples of the direction history is taking and is almost vocational training. It will help me develop the skills I need to communicate ideas such as how to create radio programmes and put on museum

exhibitions. I would like to be a museum curator and the course allows me to pursue that. The MA gives me the opportunity to be creative. I like the department's links with outside bodies and the chance to do work placements. You're also encouraged to go out and make links for yourself.' The vast majority of our recent graduates have already gained employment in related fields and this is the ultimate measure of the success of the course.

For more information, please visit: www.rhul.ac.uk/history/postgrad/grad_MA_public.html

Developing an MA Pathway in Public History at the University of Bristol

Dr Tim Cole, History, School of Humanities, University of Bristol

Teaching public history to MA students at the University of Bristol has developed organically over the last ten or so years. From humble beginnings – a single session working with the Bristol-based British, Empire and Commonwealth Museum on an MA core unit - the theme of public history has grown into a discrete unit and now a popular pathway on our raft of MA history programmes. Such a strategy of building from the bottom-up reflects the approach of a programme that is dependent on a wide range of contacts developed over the last ten years with public history partners in Bristol and the South West region.

One key milestone in developing the teaching of public history teaching at Bristol was the creation of what was originally an optional MA unit in 'Public History in Theory and Practice' (and more recently a core unit on the Public History pathway). Co-taught by Peter Coates and myself along with a number of external partners, this unit aims to introduce students to both the theoretical debates over aspects of public history and heritage in the critical academic literature as well as the day-to-day challenges and opportunities facing 'public historians'. Central to the success of this unit has been developing links with a range of talented and enthusiastic professionals from across the heritage industry. Over the years, we've worked with the Bristol-based documentary film makers Icon Films, local museums ranging from the SS Great Britain to the newly developed M-Shed Museum of Bristol, the Bristol-produced BBC History Magazine, BBC Radio 4 factual programming and the National Trust. In any given year, 4 or 5 partners from these organizations speak to the students about the specifics of their particular sector of public history. Sometimes partners come into the university to teach, other times they host in their offices or museum. Alongside these practitioner-led teaching sessions, academic, staff-led seminars draw on relevant academic literatures and a range of national and international case-studies beyond Bristol. The unit seeks to span the local and the global, the theoretical and the practical.

Core to this merging of theory and practice has been the developing of assessment tasks that relate to both. Students write a 3000 word critical review essay of a museum exhibit or documentary film (such as you might find in the pages of the leading US journal *The Public Historian*) or a 3000 word essay that engages with aspects of the critical academic literature on public history and one or more British-based or international case studies. Alongside this, students also work up a documentary TV proposal (2000 words or equivalent) in the format that a commissioning editor at a TV channel would expect. Here the expertise of our long-standing partners at Icon Films is crucial. They not only introduce students to the art of writing documentary proposals, but also offer detailed feedback to students on their proposals. Some of these TV proposals have shown such promise that Icon have invited students to spend a few weeks work experience with them, working with their R&D team to flesh the proposal out and submit it to a commissioning editor.

Other opportunities for student internships have developed over the course of the last few years. In particular, the relationship with the new museum of history in Bristol, the M-Shed, has been a productive space for first one, then two students to develop internships in the second teaching block of the MA which formed the basis for a Supervised Individual Study (an MA unit that generally takes the form of a one-on-one supervised essay). Building on the success of these ad hoc internships, we have developed a second teaching block unit – ‘Making Histories Public’ – which forms the core (alongside the ‘Public History in Theory and Practice’ unit) of a new MA pathway in Public History. In ‘Making Histories Public,’ students undertake 10 days (generally one day per week) work experience in the second teaching block with an external partner or an academic in the department. In this academic year students are working with the National Trust (writing an exhibition brochure for the anniversary of the opening of Dyrham Park and undertaking archival research into the historical landholdings of the Dyrham Park estate), Glastonbury Abbey (developing educational resources), Icon Films (developing TV proposals) and a Bristol academic (translating their research into educational resources for use in local primary schools as part of the department’s widening participation initiatives). In some cases students are working as teams on larger projects.

As well as one-on-one supervision within the department and mentorship from the external partner, students also take part in fortnightly seminars discussing the broader issues that they are encountering in their placement in response to selected readings. Assessment, as with the ‘Public History in Theory and Practice’ unit seeks to mix the practical and the theoretical. Alongside submitting the report/resource pack/brochure/TV proposal etc. that they have worked on during the internship, students also submit a 3000 word reflective essay that draws on their own experiences in the light of a relevant secondary literature.

What has perhaps been most exciting about developing teaching in public history over the last decade has been the genuine synergy between teaching and research. In many ways, the teaching first emerged from Peter Coates and my own research interests – we’ve both written for example on representation in museums. But developing a range of links with external partners has also fed in to more recent research grant applications. For example in a recently completed AHRC Landscape and Environment Research project into ‘Militarized Landscapes in Britain, France and the United States’ (with Coates as PI and Cole as CI) Icon Films was one of two external partners written into the grant. One output of the research was a short-TV documentary piece for the BBC1 One Show on the reintroduction of the Great Bustard to Salisbury Plain as a case study reflecting the research project’s wider aims of investigating the claims of military environmentalism. In the context of the ‘Impact’ agenda, public history is not only an increasingly important subject to engage with in teaching, but also in research.

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