

Making Heritage Matter: Practical Workshops and an Online Resource

The project brief

“Making Heritage Matter: Practical Workshops and an Online Resource” was designed to support postgraduate and early career researchers in developing their capabilities to engage profitably with external heritage organisations. A programme of short workshops was held in April-June 2012 led by professionals working in the heritage sector. These included representatives from national and regional museums, English Heritage, the National Trust, commercial heritage consultancies and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Key impacts

The project provided information for options beyond academic research, inspiring researchers to think about what else they can do with their skills and in what other fields. The opportunity to meet inspiring people who have succeeded in non-research careers and finding out what is involved in a range of jobs was welcomed by participants as was finding out how research is applied in a range of fields.

Outcomes observed

Evaluation via paper forms was conducted at the end of each workshop. A total of 63 people attended the workshops and a total of 51 completed evaluation forms were received. Participants were asked to rank their enjoyment of the event and whether it met their expectations on a scale from 1 - 5. 57% placed enjoyment of the workshops in the highest rank, 88% in the top two ranks. 53% ranked the workshops in the top for expectations, 84% put the workshops in the top two ranks. Only 2% put the workshops in the bottom rank for enjoyment and 4% in the bottom rank for meeting expectations.

The legacy

The MOLE2 web-based module ‘AAP Making Heritage Matter’ contains notes of each session, edited videos of sessions, audio of follow-up interviews with workshop leaders, links to resources suggested by them including best practice guidelines and case studies, copies of any activities undertaken by participants at workshops and downloads of other materials provided by workshop leaders. The module is maintained by Bob Johnston.

These resources will be integrated into Doctoral Development Programme modules provided by the Faculty of Arts & Humanities (Practical Public Engagement) and the University of Sheffield Enterprise.

Enterprise

A particular example of enterprise came from Susan Cross in, “showing how you can use an entrepreneurial attitude to develop your own heritage business.” Participants engaged with this through the group activities, where they were asked to give examples of what skills they had relevant to developing a heritage interpretation business and how they would sell their skills to a prospective employer.

Innovation

Nick Patrick showed innovative use of new media including podcasting and Google maps to present the results of research for a wider audience.

Quotes and personal experience

Why does heritage matter? - Some examples given by workshop participants include:

“Heritage skills, if we don't learn from past can't use it for future.”

“It's about identity.”

“It tells us how modern world came into being.”

“You can't understand yourself without knowing your upbringing.”

“Media is interested in fresh ideas where we can get a human take on the past. Ideas where people can see, hear, touch the past and put themselves in place of the thing the academic is talking about.”

“If you can generate ideas and bounce them off other people you can create opportunities. Don't concentrate on traditional route of sending CVs, etc. but find ways of meeting people - conferences, student societies, etc.”

“Don't dumb down because the audience isn't dumb, they just don't know as much about the subject as the academic. Trust in the inherent interest of a subject but don't expect people to understand all the terminology.”

To find out more contact

Bill Bevan (w.bevan@sheffield.ac.uk) or Bob Johnston (r.johnston@sheffield.ac.uk)
Faculty of Arts & Humanities