

Behind the Scenes Project Interim Report
Project Leader: Beth Cook, CETLD Project Research Fellow
May 2008

1. Overview of Project

The project is being conducted under the terms agreed with CETLD in the letter of award. Terms and conditions included the following:

- ensuring that there are links between this project and the 'Co-Learning with Museums and Archives' project
- developing further the means and methods of dissemination

I am happy to confirm that the two projects have been working closely together on a joint research strategy in order to maximise the impact of the research.

With regard to the means and methods of dissemination, the V&A team as a whole are working on an integrated dissemination strategy that ensures that all projects are represented, and that dissemination can be targeted at the most appropriate audiences.

2. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives for this project remain the same as in the original project proposal.

3. Targets

The timetable indicated in the original proposal has had to be put back. This is due to issues in recruiting new staff, which meant that the project did not begin in the summer of 2007, but the autumn.

Therefore, the target for finishing the first tranche of qualitative research in autumn 2007 has been put back until the end of spring 2008. I am pleased to confirm that this is now almost complete.

4. Project Outputs

Progress has been made under each of three main research areas in this period.

- 1) Museum research. I have undertaken 11 interviews with staff from the V&A, Manchester Museum, Pitt Rivers Museum, Brighton Museum & Art Gallery and the Geffrye Museum.
- 2) Tutor research. Cynthia Cousens, who is also working on this project, has carried out 4 interviews with tutors from the Faculty of Arts & Architecture in the University of Brighton. There are 2 more interviews to be completed.
- 3) Student Research. Two groups of students (11 students in total) have visited the museum and taken part in research exercises, such as a personal meaning mapping exercise. These events were facilitated by Beth Cook, Rebecca Reynolds, and Cynthia Cousens.

I will begin analysis of this data in May 2008, which will be followed by another round of data collection (under headings 1) and 3)) in October 2008. Museums to be approached for this

second round include the Design Museum, British Museum, Museum of English Rural Life, MIMA (Middlesborough Institute of Modern Art), and the Horniman Museum. Three student visits will be organised in conjunction with University of Brighton tutors.

5. Project Outcomes

The project has so far collected a great deal of data. Conclusions will emerge after analysis of this data, which will start in May 2008. These conclusions will then help to shape the next round of data collection.

I delivered a Design Scholarship Seminar at the University of Brighton in April 2008. This concentrated on the project outline and research methods being used.

This project has worked closely with the Student Placement Project on a joint research strategy which has also informed other areas of CETLD research.

6. Stakeholders

This project has engaged with a number of stakeholders. Key stakeholders include staff and students from the University of Brighton, and staff from the V&A. Others include key personnel from a number of museums (curators and museum education staff).

The project has not yet worked with representatives from the RCA and RIBA, but it is possible that this will be integrated into the second phase of data collection.

7. Risk Analysis

This project has faced two main, and partly interrelated, problems.

The first problem was the delay in the start date for the project. This was due to the unforeseen length of time it took to organise staffing arrangements for the project: specifically the recruitment of a replacement Project Support Officer. This resulted in the timetable of the project shifting back by a term.

The second problem is the issue of student recruitment. This has been a problem in a number of projects that the CETLD have undertaken. Students are highly timetabled and we have faced difficulties in recruiting students to take part in the project. This has been exacerbated by the delay in starting, which has meant that some data collection has had to take part in the summer term, when students are notoriously busy.

It is therefore proposed to carry out further data collection in October 2008 in order to recruit enough students. The role of Cynthia Cousens in this project has been invaluable with regard to student recruitment, and it is proposed to continue working with her in the Autumn term.

This further round of data collection will solve the problem of the lower than expected numbers of students, and the project should also be stronger because of it. This is reinforced by the joint research strategy with the Student Placement Project, which uses a version of grounded theory to identify and reinforce findings through a number of data collection stages. The revised timetable gives more opportunity for the analysis of the first tranche of data which will guide the second phase of data collection.

8. Intellectual Property Rights

This project has not required any third-party rights to be cleared.

9. Project Management

Since the successful recruitment of a Project Support Officer in November 2007, which allowed the project to start, there have been no changes in staff or their roles.

10. Budget

There have been no alterations to the original budget plan. There will be a separate funding bid for extension funding for the project in May 2008, which will mean the project deadline moves from November 2008 to March 2009. This will allow proper analysis of the second phase of data collection.

The majority of funding for this project is designated as wages. This is for the part time Research Fellow (Beth Cook), part time Project Support Officer (Sharla Mann), and the partnership with a University of Brighton tutor (Cynthia Cousens).

The main expenditure otherwise has been on travel (to interviews with museum staff, and to meetings at the University of Brighton) and on the student evaluation event.

12. Dissemination Plan

The timetable changes, and lack of analysed results, means that the dissemination of this project has so far been more low-key than expected.

As previously mentioned, a Design Scholarship Seminar was held at the University of Brighton in April 2008, which concentrated mainly on the project outline and research methods being used.

The museum interviews that have been undertaken have proved a very interesting way of disseminating general information about the project, and the CETLD as a whole, and there is great interest among the participants into the outcome of the project. This is a very positive result.

13. And finally . .

The results of this research, combined with the other research the CETLD has undertaken over the past two years, have the potential to guide a project which will concentrate on creating sustainable, student-focused resources for the V&A. These resources can address the specific student needs the research has identified.