Section 4

Developing educational activities addressed to adults in museums means changing perspectives, carrying out audience research, consulting with the participants, and addressing new visitors. Throughout this process staff and the museum must be open to change and willing to be challenged by innovative projects. In some new contexts, museum educators working with adult audiences say they often feel like learners themselves because of the significance attached to involving participants, and the high degree of creative thinking and innovation that such initiatives entail.

In this section, we present examples of projects developed by museums and addressed to adults, which demonstrate aspects of good practice in a variety of settings. While no means exhaustive, they offer some insight into the work which can be done with adults in museums, drawing on the expertise of museum practitioners across Europe. We have not been able to include all types of adult learning programmes here, and you may find that a particular interest of yours has not been included. But for further case studies and examples, please see the resources section at the back of this publication, especially the Collect & Share website, which contains case studies searchable by a number of criteria including type of group and country.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE FAMILY LEARNERS TO MUSEUMS?

A survey among the museums of the Dutch province of Gelderland (2002) showed that 25% of the visitors came with children under the age of 12. This was an average – in some museums it was even 30%, 50% and, in one natural history museum, even 74%. One-third of these visitors came from the neighbourhood.

A recent Italian survey provides some useful data. The Fondazione Pizzicaraldo surveyed museum visitors in Lombardy in March 2004 and found that 24.2% of their sample visited with their own children or with nieces and nephews, and a further 11.6% visited with relatives. They estimated that overall, 25 - 30 % of the museum audience in the region of Lombardy consisted of family groups. In some contexts the percentage was even higher. At the Museo della Storia Naturale in Milan, for example, some 40% of visitors arrived in family groups.

At roughly the same time as the Lombardy survey, the Museums
Libraries and Archives Council in Britain asked MORI to do a survey based on a sample of the whole of the UK population, not just museum visitors, looking at among other things their museum visiting habits. Of this sample 32% said they visited museums in families. Those less affluent groups, who do not usually visit museums, were far more likely to visit if they had children or grandchildren, and 45% of those with children said they were interested in science and technology.

These few examples do not of course tell the whole story but they do show that inter-generational groups form around a quarter to a third of museum visitors, in the Netherlands, Italy and the UK. This represents a very important proportion of museum visitors indeed, and is even more significant for museums of science and natural science.

**WHAT ARE THE PARTICULAR NEEDS OF FAMILY GROUPS?**

In the mid 1990s Harris Qualitative was commissioned to investigate the needs and attitudes of children and their accompanying parents when visiting museums and other places of interest. Their work, published in 1997, Children as an audience for Museums and Galeries, is based on qualitative, in-depth focus group discussion with children and their carers.

They found that families usually went out together on holidays and at weekends; sometimes children were motivated by following up school visits, but both adults and children were drawn to big themes or links with television programmes.

To attract families to museums the expectation that the visit will be fun is crucial. The main success factor seems to be the provision of things to do. Tactile experiences, drawing and making things, historical enactment and dramatic performance, computer-based activities, effective interactives and experiments are all cited as important motivating factors that encourage families to visit. Amazing buildings and fascinating objects are great draws and taking home a souvenir is usually part of the pleasure.

**HOW DO FAMILY GROUPS LEARN?**

Surveys such as the MORI in the UK indicate that all parents, from all academic or socio-economic groups, regard museums as important places for children's learning, whether they used them themselves or not.

Family groups go to museums to find things out together, as a way of spending time with each other and doing something educational. This type of learning is often described as social, or collaborative, learning. It cements family relationships and relies on interaction among members. The family members spend time in conversation, sharing what they know and what they find out. They talk about what they already know. The adults have a strong tendency to reinforce past experiences and family history to develop a shared understanding among family members. Their discussion tends to be close and personal, in that they talk about the exhibits and use the labels, even reading them together, sometimes out loud.

Sometimes conversation is less important than observing each other, and modelling each other's behaviour, on the use of an interactive device, for example. Some intergenerational groups, especially those with older children, rely on modelling, splitting up for periods and only coming together to talk occasionally. This demonstrates more independent forms of learning.
What emerges from research is that the adults in the group facilitate the children’s learning. Families have a culture of shared knowledge and the museum visit enriches their store of knowledge. Their conversations and discussion begin with prior knowledge and continue after their visit. The museum becomes an important part of the family learning experience.

It makes sense therefore that when adults feel at home in a museum, and interested in its exhibits, they are more likely to transmit these feelings to the children and the family will learn more as a result. Adults like to be offered activity kits or interactive exhibits and to feel confident in using them. When they do, they appear to facilitate deeper levels of learning.

These emerging findings are important as many museums are now investing in the provision of learning materials, aimed at giving adults visiting with children the means to facilitate group learning.

**WHAT CAN MUSEUMS DO TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN VISITORS IN FAMILY GROUPS?**

Good practice involves:

- Knowing what families would like to learn and taking this into account in the design of exhibitions. Museums can’t afford to ignore the requirements of so many of their visitors.
- Providing special activities and events for family groups, particularly on the weekends and during the school holidays. Family learning in museums is adult-led but child-oriented. Adults must feel able to make use of the available resources to guide and stimulate the interest of their children. No other groups learn in this way and the numbers involved merit special attention and investment.
- Offering families attractive prices for entrance costs, education packs or activity kits, and special events and workshops. Is the restaurant or café family friendly? Does it offer a selection of reasonably-priced food which children will want to eat?
- Becoming more welcoming. Museums should encourage social interaction, be relaxed about noise and provide space to move freely, sit down, and even to eat a packed lunch or feed the baby.
- Providing intelligent and entertaining things to do. Wherever possible, interactive devices should be designed so that people can share the experience, and adults can guide children. Computers are always in demand but activities need to provide enough space for several people to gather round and look together. It is unlikely that family groups will be attracted by rows of glass cases.
- Investing in learning materials for adults to use with children. Kits and packs offer families independence to learn together by suggesting activities, games and tasks, and often doubling as things to take home. Even a simple list of follow-up questions to take home could deepen a family’s learning experience by stimulating further discussion about an exhibition or a series of objects.
- Providing knowledgeable and friendly front-line staff and special demonstrators to interact with families if they choose to partake. But some care is needed here. It may not suit all families to have too many professionals getting in the way of their own social interaction with their children. There are some excellent examples of manned object trolleys, storytelling, and roleplay sessions, whereby skilled museum workers engage young visitors with their cars, but this usually takes the place of parental facilitation. More research is needed to identify the particular needs of families in these types of interactions.
- Providing high quality labelling, with different levels and complexities of information: from the simple to the more in-depth. Leaflets, whereby children can ask questions or find items or objects by reading the label help families and everyone else to enjoy the visit and appreciate the work more – as well as learning together. Labels should be written avoiding the use of museum jargon which only people who work in museums understand or need to know.

**4.2 Young People**

Younger children enjoy visiting museums, both as part of a school group and with families or other adults. However young adults or ‘young people’ (aged between 14 and 25) show a sharp decline in museum-going; they are likely to be the least represented age group in the museum, except where there are programmes particularly addressed to their needs. They often feel that museums are not for them; they think of museums as places for younger or older visitors; and they often feel socially or intellectually intimidated by exhibits or works of art, or even from entering the building in the first place.

**GOOD PRACTICE IN WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE BASED ON THE ENVISION RESEARCH PROJECT**

The Envision research project, co-ordinated by Engage (UK 2002 - present), came about as a result of significant research reports highlighting young people’s lack of involvement in cultural activity, the lack of meaningful opportunities for young people in art museums, the value of such activities in personal, social and educational terms to young people where they did exist in particular to young people experiencing or at risk of social exclusion because of a lack of access to education, training or employment, and the lack of skills, expertise and understanding of young people within the arts, cultural and heritage sector. Envision was set up to support the gallery sector to develop a culture of participation amongst young people outside of the formal education system, in particular benefiting those young people who are believed to be disadvantaged, experiencing or at risk of social exclusion.

Among the questions which the project has addressed are:

- How can museums engage young people aged 14-21 – particularly those outside of formal education?
- What are the challenges and the benefits to the educator and the cultural institution of involving young people – including those from so-called ‘disadvantaged’ backgrounds?

Envision aims to do more than simply run one-off projects or attract new audiences; working with a wide range of young people outside of formal education, the first phase of envision promoted an action-research approach which required project leaders and partners to set out questions which they wished to investigate, and encouraged risk-taking in how they did this. Envision seeks to find sustainable ways of involving young people in organisational review, consultation
and decision-making to embed a ‘youth-friendly’ ethos at the heart of the institution. A distinctive feature of envision is that it sets out to do more than involve young people in creative opportunities, but also to support young people to influence and shape cultural provision, creating genuine benefits and relevance to their lives. The second phase of envision, due to begin in 2007, will focus on training, advice and support for projects in sixteen venues, helping more cultural organisations to work with young people by developing facilities and provision with a ‘youth-friendly’ face, and by reviewing organisational culture to commit to working with young people.

The first phase of the envision research project involved eight art museums working in partnership with youth agencies and professional artists. They collaborated with 150 ‘hard to reach’ young people ages 14-21 from outside of formal mainstream education. The young people were recruited from youth clubs, volunteer agencies, social and health services, sheltered accommodation, local colleges, pupil referral units, school and neighbourhood drop-in centres.

A quick overview of three of the projects will give an idea of the scope of envision:

- **Connect 4** at the Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa, sought to find out how galleries can overcome barriers to participation by young people and build long-term relationships within rural networks. The venue initially planned to develop sustained partnerships with local youth centres, engaging young people in consultation about gallery development leading to a young people’s exhibition which would be toured around local villages in a mobile bus. The final project was re-planned following difficulties in establishing the partnerships which had originally been envisaged. A strong partnership with a local skate club was formed and rather than curate an exhibition to be toured around local villages, the group worked with an artist and designer to create their own website magazine highlighting local cultural places and opportunities for young people, essentially citing the Royal Pump Rooms within young people’s local cultural networks.

- **Sample Arts** at Ikon, Birmingham, was asked to find out how they could work with a partner youth organisation to devise an effective process of working with contemporary visual arts to engage and enhance the lives and skills of young people. A two-phase project was devised: in the first phase a series of training and skill-sharing sessions took place for museum staff (education team and visitor assistants), artists, youth workers and young people enabling everyone to have a voice, communicate on an equal basis and share skills, ideas and understanding of each other’s culture and expertise. Through practical workshops and facilitated discussions, young people, staff and youth workers developed technical, personal and social skills, explored the exhibition programme and also the venue itself. In the second phase the venue plans to create an interactive website targeted at youth workers and young people. The website will aim to be an ongoing tool to disseminate information and share good practice with other young people, cultural organisations and service providers.
Creative Consultants at Manchester Art Gallery investigated how art museums can become more inclusive of young people, not just in the education departments, but also across the whole service. Through 'creative consultancy' young people engaged in an audit of Manchester Art Gallery's work and produced a video report making recommendations to staff. The young people then worked alongside the gallery team across different departments to curate a high-profile exhibition called 'Disguise' aimed at audiences 16-25 years old. A report produced as part of this project has informed future strategy for the inclusion of young people at Manchester Art Gallery, and the Creative Consultants group has continued to grow and has been involved in delivering a wide range of projects and events at venue.

Tackling barriers to young people's participation in museums:

- Identify barriers during the planning stage. For example, is it the image of the organisation, staff skills / attitudes, lack of contact with young people or youth agencies, relevance of the programme or the space available to work with young people? Identifying the barriers will help you devise strategies to overcome these. Some barriers will be relatively easy to overcome (for example basic comfort – refreshments, comfortable working area, welcoming greeting to the participants); some will be more deeply entrenched within the organisation and may take much longer to address.
- Ask and involve young people and also the 'gatekeepers' (those who work with young people or who are within their sphere of influence) at an early stage and throughout the project.
- Ensure that all staff are fully briefed, youth-friendly and do not 'professionalize the project. Remember to involve front of house staff.

Sustainability and legacy – what to do when the project has finished?

- Build legacy and a strategy for sustainability into the planning process, and be ready for new opportunities to occur during the project stage. This might include new organisational policies, increased commitment to young people or a young people's steering / consultation group.
- Dialogue with young people may be sustained via newsletters, website, further partnerships, invitation to museum events / openings, or a volunteer programme.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES
Creating a youth-friendly organisational culture

- Strong management support is crucial, both for organisational learning and change to take place. Build this into project activities, either through direct managerial involvement in the project or through presentations to senior management at key intervals.
- Involve colleagues and partners at all stages of project planning, delivery and follow-up for the widest possible organisational impact. Give staff a role to play – including staff who don't usually come into contact with young people in the course of their work and staff who may have negative ideas about young people.
- Involve staff from across the organisation in training and planning to challenge current practice and develop a shared mission.
• Links with youth agencies made during the project can offer additional opportunities and support to young people after the project has finished.

4.3 Older Learners

In this publication we are defining ‘older’ people as anyone over the age of retirement – depending on which country, this might be 60, 65 or 70 years old. Thus older visitors include both healthy, active and recently retired persons as well as more elderly and possibly more frail members of the community.

Older and more frequent museum visitors are often from well educated social groups. They are likely to be familiar with museums and to feel comfortable in the surroundings. They may need to be pointed in the direction of educational activities aimed at people with more leisure time, which they did not have time for during their working lives. They often become enthusiastic life long learners, even when they are new to museum education.

Older people without the benefits of good education and resources, however, may feel less at home in museums. Some might have mobility problems and feel deterred by crowds and public transport. Museums as institutions may have a negative image, appear tiring, be associated with learned people, seem difficult to reach, feel uninviting, have texts that are difficult to read and high entrance fees. Museums that want to attract older, culturally inexperienced visitors need to devise programmes which take account of their needs.

This means providing enough rest stops, easy access, texts that are easily readable in terms of print size and positioning. Programmes should provide social contact. Successful programmes with older learners have included nostalgia, anecdotes or reminiscence, demonstrations, living history, historic art, ceramics, local history, local costumes, and handicraft. It is important not to stereotype older learners or to assume they will not be interested in projects concerning modern or contemporary themes, as this example from the Irish Museum of Modern Art demonstrates.

WORKING WITH OLDER ADULTS AND CONTEMPORARY ART

Early in 1991, as the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin (IMMA) was preparing to open to the public, a close working relationship was established with the St. Michael’s Parish Active Retirement Association. This was in keeping with the Museum’s intended policy of involving the local community in the life and work of the Museum. It also recognised the potential and role of older people in contemporary visual culture. A group of older residents from the nearby area of Inchicore in Dublin had formed their Association at local level as part of a nationwide network of voluntary groups.

THE PROGRAMME

The work with older learners - as with all the education programmes at IMMA - is an active learning experience, involving three elements of art education: making art; meeting artists and discussing with them the conceptual basis of their work; and looking at and responding to artworks in the museum's temporary exhibitions and permanent collection.
Practical workshops take place in the museum's studios. In the workshops the group involved is able to explore a range of art materials, tools and techniques; explore their own ideas, values and interests to create work themselves; and benefit from the advice and teaching of artists who help them move from an idea to a finished piece of work.

Each element provides a different perspective from which to view and engage with artworks and the world in which art objects are created.

In the early stages of a programme with older adults it is often necessary to introduce basic art making skills, using a broad range of art processes. It is essential to make time for 'learning and un-learning'. Schooling might have been a negative experience for some participants so they need time to build up confidence and develop new skills.

OLDER ADULTS AS CURATORS
In 1998, an invitation was extended to the St. Michael's group to curate an exhibition from the Museum’s Permanent Collection. In preparation for this exhibition, entitled, 'Come to the Edge', the group of older learners worked with museum staff on questions of interpretation.

Every week for three months the group of older learners worked with two artists in a series of practical workshops, exploring artworks from the Museum's permanent collection, using the same principles outlined above. They made their own responses to selected artworks, focusing on responses that the work evoked for them.

Then they worked with the Senior Curator of the Collection and the Educator / Curator to develop an understanding of the curatorial process, i.e. the identification of exhibition themes and the selection of individual works from the Collection to illustrate the chosen themes. They also observed a group of teenagers curating a show from the collection - called 'Somebodies' - and met and exchanged learning with them.

Through a series of weekly meetings, discussions, tours of the exhibitions on display and slide shows of works in storage, the members of the group explored ideas relating to collections and collecting policies, acquisitions and donations, exhibitions and exhibition-making. They then researched, selected and took part in the installation of the exhibition as well as researching and writing the wall texts and catalogue.

OLDER PEOPLE AS MEDIATORS
Older people regularly facilitate tours of both their own work and in the case above of the 'Come to the Edge' exhibition at IMMA. This respects their role as advocates and champions, in ways that help to draw new audiences to the Museum. The group members find the experience interesting and challenging and require the Museum to continue to find ways to support them and keep them involved in such activities.

OLDER PEOPLE AS KEYWORKERS
Older people are also encouraged to become keyworkers or hosts at the Museum in a variety of ways that complement the role of the full time Museum staff. They are encouraged to contribute to conferences, thus developing their role beyond the gallery or studio. And as hosts to other older people's groups visiting the Museum they are a valuable ingredient in a growing network. They also input to the Museum's National Programme which lends artworks from its Collection in co-curated exhibitions throughout Ireland. Education initiatives are programmed in each location.

The key points arising from the work with older learners at IMMA are:

- Projects need to be well structured with plenty of time for development.
- Budgeting needs to be realistic.
- The programme has evolved slowly, always taking its cue from the older people themselves and pacing the new elements in accordance with the participants needs or stated wishes.
- Ongoing evaluation takes place through group discussion at the end of each session when necessary, and always after each period of sessions: i.e. the end of each term.
- Ongoing consultation takes place on an individual basis about individual learning needs and the group's consensus is always sought before any new direction or element is introduced.

OLDER LEARNERS AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM
The University of the Third Age (U3A) is a worldwide network of specialist interests groups which encourage people in their later years to take part in education for its own sake. No qualifications are required to join and no qualifications are awarded. It originated in France in 1972, where it was closely linked to universities, but when it arrived in Britain it became more of a self-help organisation, with most of the teaching supplied voluntarily by its students based on the commitment to co-operative learning.

It remains a voluntary organisation - running an impressive and diverse range of activities including language classes, arts and crafts groups, music appreciation, creative writing, philosophy and bird watching. It has some 153,000 members in the UK, organised across the country and run by the participants themselves.

In 2003 the first British Museums / U3A Shared Learning Project took place. Fifteen older learners, aged from 50 to 95 years, joined up to work with the Lifelong Learning team on a research project which lasted for ten weekly sessions. Each member of the group
researched their own chosen object, using the Museum and the rest of the group as their resource. Their research resulted in a presentation to the rest of the group in the galleries and education centre. The presentations were moving, funny, impressive and quite unique. The museum benefited greatly from the project in that museum staff learned a lot about how older adults learn from objects, an area of research in museum education which is not yet highly developed.

The Shared Learning Project is now an annual event, with a different group taking part each time. The commitment to shared learning continues and is reflected in activities that benefit both the learners and the museum; for example, the production of a trail and exhibition, as well as the evaluation of displays in the galleries and of the British Museum's methods of interpretation.

Shared Learning Projects, involving the USA's network, now happen all over the United Kingdom, including the National Maritime Museum, The Royal Opera House and a regional project concerned with entertainment in Sussex.

WORKING WITH OLDER LEARNERS IN MUSEUMS

- Give plenty of time to the process. Older people tend to move more slowly, spend more time in conversation and enjoy the social aspects of these interactions enormously. Be aware of respecting the dignity of older people and prepare new visitors for their first visit suggesting that they might want to 'dress-up' for the occasion, as older people are more often more formal in relation to visiting public buildings, especially if it is the first visit. Suggest that overcoats are left on the bus if they are being dropped off and collected at the entrance as this will avoid having to make a separate trip to the cloakroom.

- Be aware of the process of ageing. The physical aspects of ageing means that many older adults will need more time to move from one place in the gallery to another, and that adequate, comfortable seating in galleries should be provided. If groups need to be split up to use the lift and/or stairs to access another floor, arrange for a meeting point to reunite the group. They may need studio tools and furniture adapted to make it more comfortable and appropriate. Sight and hearing difficulties accelerate with age. Be sure to speak clearly and have magnifying glasses available.

- Photography or video is recommended as an aide memoire and a visual document, as older people may have difficulty in recalling the visit and linking one event with the next.

- The language and point size used in labels, text panels and gallery guides should take into account the learners' prior knowledge and need for visual clarity. If hand-outs are being provided avoid passing them out in advance of the gallery visit, if individuals are using walking frames as they will need to keep both hands free.

- Lighting and floor surfaces should take into account those with physical difficulties — this is also good practice in working with any audience as there may be people with disabilities in any group.

- Orientation at the beginning of a visit is essential and all housekeeping arrangements should be covered before the content of the visit is outlined; be alert throughout the visit of potential difficulties that may arise with physical access.
4.4 Corporate groups

WHAT IS MEANT BY "CORPORATE GROUPS"?

Corporate groups can be defined as "adult groups linked with business life or the private sector". The relation of these groups to a museum or gallery can be of two different kinds:

- They can belong to companies that are the sponsors or business partners of the museum/gallery.

- They can be independent adult groups from a company that has no official relation to the organisation, but simply want to spend same time in the museum, doing some kind of cultural activity.

The most obvious difference between the two types of group is the economic relationship with the museum: in the case of corporate sponsors or business partners there may be a contractual arrangement requiring the museum to offer some sort of enrichment programme – guided tours, family days, behind the scenes tours, private views – to the employees.

The focus in this section is on the independent corporate groups who do not have a financial or contractual arrangement to be 'provided' with an education activity. Most of the advice, however, can be applied to sponsor groups as well.

Corporate groups, although being a very special audience for museums, are nevertheless an adult audience in their own right, with particular learning requirements and needs. Such groups are not made up exclusively of managers or directors, but can include staff at all levels in the company: people who might not visit the museum if not within the context of a collective activity with colleagues. In this sense, they can also be regarded as new audiences and as adult learners.

WHAT IS DISTINCTIVE ABOUT CORPORATE AUDIENCES?
The Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki has recently been active in developing activities addressed to the business sector. It has also carried out a small piece of research in some European museums, to see how others were working with corporate groups as an adult, learning audience. The results of their enquiries and the direct experiences at Kiasma provide the following information:

- In developing programmes for corporate groups, museums have moved from a reactive to a proactive attitude. From simply responding to requests coming from the private sector, and adjusting existing activities or workshops to the needs of this new audience, museums are now designing, packaging and actively marketing new sets of learning activities and products to the corporate sector.

- Business groups, when visiting a museum on an organised occasion, expect to have a good and relaxing time with colleagues, rather than an 'educational experience'. This doesn't mean, however, that what they regard as a social event cannot have an educational impact, although in an enjoyable and entertaining way. It is just a matter of shaping the event in a way which takes into account the group's specific agenda.

- Being perceived mostly as a social event, the corporate group's visit to the museum usually requires a separate space and the provision of food and
drink. It is popular for corporate groups to organise their own staff meetings or training days in a museum environment and connect it with a visit to the exhibition. This calls for specific meeting rooms and conference equipment, especially audio-visual facilities. As concerts or other performances are also sometimes part of the package, there can be the need for more hosting and staff presence. It is often more convenient to plan such visits after the museum’s opening hours.

AN EXAMPLE FROM KIASMA CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM, HELSINKI

It had become evident that the regular one-hour guided tours or two to three-hour workshop sessions were not meeting the need of the corporate groups that visited Kiasma, and wanted to have a break in their working day or engage with art during their visit. A new form of service was developed for them: an activity tour which combines elements from guided tours and hands-on activities. The tour is flexible and can be used in varying situations and time schedules. The mediator uses a specially designed box which includes the necessary material for the visit. It can be used in the meeting room or in the gallery, and its main purpose is to trigger observation and discussion. The sessions are built around themes which start with the basic questions about contemporary art, for example the everyday materials used in art or contemporary forms of portrait and landscape.

4.5 Intercultural Learning

HERITAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Heritage, it is said, plays a role in making people feel at home, giving them a sense of place, and of belonging to a place. Cultural heritage contains both the material and immaterial remains of history. Monuments, music, artefacts, architecture, archives, landscapes, dance steps, oral histories, photos and recipes are all part of it. Taken together they are part of the ‘cultural luggage’ that migrants carry with them, to be both challenged and changed by what they find in the new countries in which they settle.

What counts as culture is the consequence of a dynamic process. It gives meaning and value to things and ideas. People who have conditions, circumstances and experiences in common create a group culture. At the same time, every individual belongs to several groups. Sometimes a person makes a choice to belong to a certain group, for instance a professional group. One is born into other groups, for example, family, nation, gender, or ethnicity. These aspects – skin colour, race, sex, for example – are fixed. But they are imbued with different meanings in different contexts and shaped according to ideas and values, custom and everyday practice. Individuals might be both female, for example, but they learn their gender role from within their community. In different communities or eras, learned roles can take very different cultural forms or meanings.

Over time all cultures change and develop through contact with other cultures. The characteristics of national cultures, together with national languages and histories are formed in the crucibles of international exchange, trade, war and migration. Some cultures are more powerful than others in this process of exchange and are able to exert greater influence. But history teaches that national fortunes can wax and wane. American culture was not always the most powerful in global terms. The rapid economic transformation of China, and to some extent India, for example, is already beginning to challenge the current pattern of western cultural domination.

Intercultural contacts between people with different cultural backgrounds present experiences that are both common and unique. Common experiences that involve finding shelter, working, social exchange, love and relationships, travelling, making music - all play a role in the life of people anywhere in the world. But the way they are conducted and experienced is everywhere shaped and given meaning by social and cultural difference.

INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

Intercultural learning is a term used in various European countries, including the Netherlands, to describe work with participants from minority racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, whose experiences may include racial discrimination or racial prejudices. It is
sometimes referred to as multi-cultural learning or diversity.

However, just as people from the same ethnic group can belong to different cultural groups or sub-
groups, one could say that every open exchange of knowledge and life experience between two or more
people is intercultural learning.

Intercultural issues, immigration and language learning, intolerance, racism and discrimination, are challenges
faced by all European countries to a greater or lesser extent. As part of a dynamic and complex society,
museums cannot ignore their role in all of these issues, and especially in the work they do with adult audiences.

INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMMES
A good example of intercultural learning is to be found in the
Intercultural (Museum) Programmes (IP), funded by the Dutch Ministry
of Education, Culture and Science in cooperation with the Netherlands
Museums Association between 1998 and 2004. Intercultural
learning according to IP is based on acknowledging and respecting the
differences and similarities between people and groups.

The aim of the project was to
recognise and acknowledge cultural diversity in the heritage sector, while
diversifying both public, staff and
programming of museums and
other heritage institutions. Subjects
such as "Diversity marketing" or
"How to diversify the museum staff"
were brought to the attention of
professionals in the field. In museum
programming this concerns education,
presentation and collections.

Presentations and collections on
the history of migrants, colonialism,
slavery and Islamic heritage were
promoted. An important pilot
project on adult learning concerned
the publication called "History of
our own surroundings: Museum
and Heritage project for Dutch as a
second language."

The project preceded the point at
which a (paid) citizenship course
became compulsory for migrants in
the Netherlands after the events of
that time, as in many other European
countries, was tending to equate
cultural integration with assimilation,
and to place most of the responsibility
on migrants to adapt to the mores and
values of the settled majority.

The project helped to promote the
use of heritage places – museums,
archives, archaeological sites and
monuments – in order to learn more
about the language and history of
the Netherlands. The project
was developed through the close
cooperation between museum and
heritage education workers with
language teachers and learners.

Special learning packages were
produced, each of which consisted
of three lessons: the first and last to
take place in the language school,
the second to inform a site visit to a
museum, archive or heritage site. All
the packages were published, with
separate material for teachers and
learners. For those who wanted to
make their own packages, a short
manual was prepared to help them
do so.

LANGUAGE LEARNING IN
THE MUSEUM

Museums can provide a rich resource
for learning a second language or
developing skills in a first, Objects,
artworks and displays can trigger immediate responses, memories, or cultural reference points to be discussed or shared with another learner, as illustrated by these two brief case studies. Museum educators wishing to develop this type of work should contact local teachers of adult language skills.

Peer to peer learning
A special simple but very effective programme was experimented in the Netherlands House of Parliament's exhibition called Aletta Jacobs and the longing for politics. Aletta Jacobs (1853-1925) was the first female medical doctor with a university degree and a famous suffrage fighter. It was a unique experience, but one that can be adapted by other museums. Two groups of learners were involved: a Dutch women's self-guided learning group that had existed for twenty years and a group of adult immigrant learners of the Dutch language that were trained by a teacher in formal adult education. Both groups arrived at the same moment. The only instruction they received was: go with one person from the other group through the exhibit and talk about anything you see and find interesting using the five 'w's of journalism – who, what, where, when, why'. The participants were encouraged to ask questions such as: Why is this photo there? Do you know what this object is?

Both groups were very enthusiastic about the intercultural encounter that the visit of the exhibit had brought them. The teachers noticed individuals speak who normally would have been quiet in the class. A language learner wrote: I really like the exhibit. It is interesting because for the first time I hear and see something about old habits in the Netherlands. I like the contact with the Dutch ladies, very interesting because I learned new words and another way of speaking.

A first-language Dutch speaker of the women's group said:
It was nice to go with someone. He was really surprised because I told him that in my youth we couldn't wear trousers as women and that married women were under the jurisdiction of their husbands, so that until the law changed in 1956 our signature was invalid after marriage. He was very shocked by the fact that we weren't allowed to live together outside of marriage.

Other comments included:
The form of going together with learners of Dutch as a second language was very special. I look at them as if they don't know so much, but she had done a higher secondary school than me. She could read very well, just not speak.

I have realized how difficult the Dutch language is through her.

This experience clearly shows that integration is and should be a two-sided process.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at the British Museum
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is part of a British government strategy for supporting adults with literacy, language and numeracy difficulties and for whom English is not their mother tongue. Of the estimated seven million adults in the UK who have difficulty with basic skills, about one million of them have a first language other than English. The learners come from settled ethnic communities; some are refugees and asylum seekers; increasingly they are migrant workers from
Europe, with widely different educational backgrounds.

ESOL is an important part of the British Museum’s social inclusion and audience development work. Museum collections are used to promote the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing English. Learners study world cultures, often their own, and are able to learn through objects in a dedicated and stimulating environment.

The Museum organises approximately 45 tours a year for ESOL learners, using the main collections and sometimes special exhibitions. Each session lasts 90 minutes, starting in the Education Centre and then introducing learners to the Enlightenment, Egyptian and Assyrian Galleries. The session concludes in the African galleries with an emphasis on contemporary art and further independent learning for those who are interested to continue. ESOL college tutors are also made welcome and encouraged to make use of the museum with their students.

GOOD PRACTICE FOR MUSEUMS BASED ON THE NETHERLANDS EXPERIENCE

Identity
See learners as complex individuals with significant personal histories in their own right. Avoid focusing on only one aspect of their identity. Remember that identity is multiple and dynamic. The borders between cultures are variable. Be sure that the use of words like ‘we’ and ‘them’, ‘our ancestors’, others’, ‘strangers’ do not exclude your learners. Present yourself as someone who also has a history – with your own share of contradictions and conflicts. Space for your life history gives space and trust for learners to tell about their life histories.

Content
Use heritage as a source of intercultural exchange. Music – such as jazz – is a result of the mixing of diverse musical traditions. Some inventions or discoveries that seem new in some parts of the world, were already known in other parts. The Chinese and Koreans knew the art of printing books, for example, before Gutenberg “discovered” how to do it. New York already had a name before it was called New Amsterdam. Science, algebra and mathematics are inconceivable without the Islamic-Arab world. For European countries with colonial pasts, the shared heritage of slavery and trade, for example, have very different meanings, depending on which side of the exchange your ancestors experienced.

Encounter
Use heritage as a source of exploration of universal themes like housing, work, safety, care, play etc. Traces from the past carry multiple meanings. Show your interest in learners’ perspective and ideas. Respect their opinions. Try to ask open questions. What do you keep, collect or take with you? What do you think this object is? Why do you think this happened? Open questions lead to talking. Try to avoid learners feeling attacked by questions that carry a negative judgement. Create and share knowledge in empowering ways rather than didactic ways.

Surprise
Make space for learners to develop their own interests and to exercise initiative. On visits to cultural sites give learners space and time to explore on their own and plenty of time to think about any questions they might have.

Emotion
Make sure there is a direct connection between what they are looking at or handling, and the original. Let them touch the archive paper, go to the actual site of the monument, make an interview with eye-witnesses.

Diversity
Look for diversity in the photos, film and source materials you are using. Check which images you use. Many will be racist, some will be culturally inappropriate. In time these can become a source of critical examination but not at the first or second meeting. Negotiate and cooperate with migrant and minority learners, through their organisations, on an equal basis. Build strong partnerships with their representatives.

Remember that collections are merely selections of the period in which they were collected, based on the ideas and concerns of the collectors. What is seen as important enough to keep in a collection reveals as much about the authority, influence and power of the collectors as about the merits of the selected objects.

Imagery
Double check any images. Who is speaking? Who is acting? Who takes initiatives? It is quite likely that the historical source will reveal prejudice, racism or anti-semitism. Take time to explore and discuss how this works. Emphasise the contextual, historical and changeable nature of all ideas. Encourage learners to recognise stereotyped ideas and to be critical about them. Try to counterfeit unsubstantiated personal opinion.

Pedagogy
Present learners with clear aims and objectives for the programme. Negotiate what they might want to learn and be clear about what you expect of them. Challenge them to make choices. Try to be concrete. Use different approaches. Recognise the significance of different learning styles. Involve artists, musicians and drama specialists to vary the approach. Encourage experiential and active learning rather than formal instruction. Make use of all five senses.

Language
Pay extra attention to your use of language. Don’t use superfluous jargon. When you ask a question, encourage learners to answer first in their mother tongue and then work together to construct responses in the new language they are learning. Encourage them to keep a record of the new words they are learning.

Legacy
Leave a legacy from the visit in the museum, archive, monument or website. For instance, write a letter to the archive about the visit, make a photographic record, or write in the museum’s visitor book. With the prior permission of learners, invite the press or radio to join you at the monument. Working towards leaving a legacy is rewarding for both learners and teachers.
4.6 Inclusive learning

Inclusive learning is a term used by some museums to reflect their commitment to non-traditional approaches with a wide cross section of audiences and learners. It is intended as a counter to those institutional and educational practices that serve to reinforce exclusion.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Social exclusion takes many forms. It can be direct or indirect and can involve whole groups as well as specific individuals. It is rooted in the economic inequalities of social class, race and gender. But it also has physical dimensions – to do with disability and physical impairment, as well as geographical dimensions – to do with territory, distance and isolation.

The main challenges facing museums with regard to social exclusion are:

- Identifying and removing common institutional barriers – such as entrance fees that disadvantage those on low incomes, restricted opening hours, inappropriate staff attitudes and behaviour, inappropriate rules and regulations, exhibitions that do not reflect the diversity of communities or different learning styles, poor signage so that people cannot easily find their way around, absence of a sense of ownership and involvement by ordinary people, absence of adequate facilities for people with disabilities and physical impairments.

- Sustainability and long-term resource issues. Short term projects may provide some quick gains, but a more significant contribution lies in the development of a long-term social inclusion strategy to extend cultural rights to currently excluded groups and communities.

- The need for cultural change within museums as institutions. Putting social inclusion and equal opportunities at the heart of museum learning, rather than the periphery, means forming alliances with the representatives of excluded groups and challenging some of the more traditional values and practices of museums. Cultural change can be fostered through a combination of staff training, staff development and staff support to raise awareness and improve staff performance in relation to socially excluded communities and visitors.

- Community ownership and community partnerships. If social inclusion policies are to be fully effective, it is vital that individuals and representatives of excluded groups are involved in developing, implementing and evaluating the services provided. Establishing and maintaining these links is time-consuming but every effort should be made to build upon community consultation and partnership.

Responding to the ever-changing ICT environment. The arrival of the ‘information age’ means that museums have an important role to play in developing a socially inclusive information strategy. Museums can be an important conduit for the creation of knowledge and sharing of information at local level, as well as enabling users to be in direct communication with museums across the wider world via the internet.

Integrating the work of museums with those of other services. The social inclusion activities of museums should not be seen in isolation. They will be most effective when they are integrated with the work of other agencies and organisations committed to reducing social exclusion.

- Demonstrating benefits and outcomes. Museums can demonstrate their commitment to widening participation and strengthening social inclusion by:
  - Setting targets for widening participation
  - Identifying social inclusion objectives
  - Creating performance indicators
  - Evaluating, reviewing and monitoring success

From a theoretical viewpoint, it has been influenced by the thinking of Paulo Freire, whose ideas were outlined in section 2.

UNspoken Truths

A good example of Freire’s influence on contemporary museum education is the ‘Unspoken Truths’ project. The project was a collaboration between the artist Albina Murphy, two women’s community development projects, and the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin. Working class women were encouraged to explore aspects of their lives and their experiences of living in inner city Dublin and those of contemporary artists as evident in artwork that they experienced in IMMA’s galleries. The dialogue between the artist and the women involved exploring their individual lives and discussing how artists, writers and poets also work through a similar process to create cultural artefacts. Drawing on radical theories in Community Development and Arts Education, Unspoken Truths also challenged the Museum’s policy on access and engagement.

Taking as its starting point the authority of working class women’s lived experience, the project came to life because of their commitment, willingness and determination to continue. An exhibition emerging from the project was displayed in four different venues across Ireland. The women involved made presentations at international conferences and a book and video documenting the project were both published.

When the project ended, the women continued to be involved in projects and programmes organised by the Irish Museum of Modern Art and through their own networks in Community Development. The artist, Albina Murphy, continued to work with other groups in collaborative projects. And the museum now runs a programme entitled ‘Focus on...’ for community groups which is based on the model created by Unspoken Truths involving, on average, 20 different groups each year.

EXCLUDED AUDIENCES: OFFENDERS OR PRISONERS

Rebibbia Nuovo Complexo

In 2004 the social co-operative Cecilia and Ecom (European Centre for Cultural Organisation and Management) developed a training course, financed by the Province of Rome, for assistants in archaeological excavations. The course was for ten offenders, aged 40 to 61 years old, who were inmates of Rebibbia Nuovo Complexo, the biggest prison in Rome. The training course lasted eleven months and provided 500 hours of training, through three modules: the History of the Ancient World, Methodologies and Techniques of Archaeological Excavations, and Care of the Green Areas within Archaeological Sites. At the end of
The course, participants took an exam and afterwards received a Diploma. In addition Cecilia and Ecom wanted to assess the possibility of creating a labour co-operative, to include offenders, which could possibly manage an archaeological area which had been discovered within the prison grounds.

The prison is situated along the Roman road, Via Tiburtina and the whole area is extremely rich in archaeological sites related to the Roman period. Two years earlier, archaeologists had discovered within Rebbibia a Roman cemetery and a water cistern, both dating from the 3rd centuries A.D. In the cemetery there were 85 tombs containing human skeletons - mainly of young men - and poor objects buried with the dead, such as lamps, ceramics, glass bowls and vases. As part of their course the offenders were able to clean and mark these ancient objects.

The experience of the training stimulated considerable enthusiasm and knowledge among the participants as well as doing wonders for their sense of self esteem and achievement. One of the men decided to continue his formal education in the field of cultural heritage at University; another one - who is a sailor and a diver of great experience - is going to work as a guide for archaeological diving tours all along the Mediterranean coasts.

**The Antiquarium**

A natural evolution of the training course, and of the practical activities undertaken on the site, was suggested by the participants themselves, who wanted to share their knowledge with other offenders and all the people who - for one reason or another - came into the prison. They wanted to tell the story of the objects and of the earliest origins of Rebbibia.

The idea became reality when the group started working at the development of a permanent exhibition of archaeological artefacts within the prison. The display of objects is accompanied by a storytelling process, in which the storytellers - supported by archaeologists, restorers and architects - are the offenders themselves, and the story told is about the history of a living part of Rome.

The offenders have learned technical skills and abilities related to archaeological and museological work, as well as being active in the storytelling process, enabling them to communicate to other people what they have learnt and discovered. In the process of discovering the past, they unearthed fascinating links between the past and present - to do with slavery and migration, poverty and incorporation - which has led to have a deeper consciousness of common roots and shared identity, as well as a better understanding of historical and personal development.

**ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES:**

The Amazing Rembrandt Exhibition at The Amstelkring Museum, Our Lord in the Attic, Amsterdam

A group of adults with learning disabilities visited the Rijksmuseum where they came face to face with Rembrandt's wonderful paintings. The encounter made a great impression. Later, back in the studio, out came the books of Rembrandt reproductions. Pens and brushes were taken up; the results were astounding. The remarkable artists transformed Rembrandt's masterpieces into colourful paintings with a wholly personal slant. Forty-five works were selected for The Amazing Rembrandt, an exhibition at Amsterdam's Amstelkring Museum, also known as Our Lord in the Attic, a house from Rembrandt's own time containing a 'secret' church. The paintings are poignant, touching, intense and surprising.

This project differs from some adult learning projects in that the participants, adults with learning disabilities, were all experienced artists in their own right. They had been trained as artists for many years and had had exhibitions before. This however was their first exhibition in a museum, where both critics and the public considered them as 'real' artists. Therefore the 'inclusion' in this case, was the recognition and inclusion of a group of artists in a museum who had not before been regarded as artists. Another form of inclusion which occurred as a result of this project was the inclusion of the visitors who, through this kind of art, became acquainted with a new form of art they weren't familiar with.
There are several ways to consider the project as an adult learning project:

- The participants, in this case adults with learning disabilities, were so inspired by their visit and guided tour in the Rijksmuseum that they afterwards expressed themselves in their own "language" - art - in such a way that it had museum-quality.
- The artists forged a strong link with the museum, talked to journalists and gave them guided tours. This enriched the experience beyond the initial visit and artistic response.
- By showing, celebrating, and validating the work, the museum brought a totally different audience to the museum, people who never had been to any museum, let alone to an art exhibition. Many of them worked in institutions for people with disabilities, or had learning-disabled family members or had a learning disability themselves. The new audience became acquainted with Rembrandt's work and with the Amsteldiep: Museum, both through the "Amazing Rembrandt" exhibition and in the way the exhibition was set up.

4.7 Case study: adult learning at the British Museum

The British Museum was one of the first UK museums to appoint a Head of Lifelong Learning. The remit was not only to continue the strong tradition of adult education at the museum, but also, as the new title implied, to develop new audiences and new ways of promoting adult learning.

The existing education programme of lectures, study days, gallery talks, etc., was rethought in order to position the Museum as a centre of cultural debate connecting contemporary issues to the historical collections. For example:

- The season of events supporting Forgotten Empire, a major exhibition on Ancient Persia, included a debate in partnership with the Guardian newspaper entitled "The unbroken arc: what ancient Persia tells us about modern Iran".
- A strong programme of cultural events including film, literature, music and poetry makes connections between the collections and the contemporary arts and aims to appeal to a new generation of Londoners who have not traditionally thought of the British Museum as a place to go.

- The course programme for adults was also redeveloped. In partnership with Birbeck University of London a unique set of courses was devised, World Arts and Artefacts, which reflect the global nature of the museum's collections, a recognition of different learning styles and a commitment to learning from objects. Part-time adult students can sign up for one off practical courses such as Indian textiles or Arabic calligraphy. These can be combined with historical and contextual studies of aspects of world arts to build up a portfolio of qualifications leading to a degree.

ADULT LEARNERS' WEEK

Adult Learners Week takes place in several European countries and can function as good catalysts to design and stage new and innovative museum activities addressed to adults during the designated period.

In the UK, Adult Learners' Week is an annual, national festival of adult learning, organised by NIACE (the national organisation for adult learning in England and Wales). It involves hundreds of thousands of learners taking part in different learning activities across the country, as well as events, publications, media coverage, conferences and award ceremonies.

The British Museum's participation in Adult Learners' Week typically starts with an Open University Day at the Museum, inviting people to sign up for part-time programmes, through a varied programme of talks and activities which link Open University courses with specific museum collections. Special family learning activities are also scheduled to take place during Adult Learners' Week, to reflect the significant role that adults play in their children's learning when they visit the museum in family groups. This has included the opportunity to take part in drawing activities, try calligraphy and to watch artists demonstrate their work in the public courtyard of the Museum.

VOLUNTEERS FACILITATING LEARNING: "HANDS ON" AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Every day, in very many of the galleries of the British Museum, eight or so small objects are placed on a handling table in the care of a 'Hands On' volunteer. The purpose is to enable visitors to have a direct and personal experience of the museum through touching and talking about the objects. Touching objects reveals something extra about their qualities which is not evident when they are behind glass - a Palaeolithic hand axe always prompts a strong reaction, for example.

The thumb fits there, your fingers go here and this fits in your palm. It's so personal, you hold it in your hand and you use it...I've got small hands and it fits just there. You imagine you're in touch with the person that made it.

The programme is designed for visitors of all ages, not just children. Object handling is regarded as a tool of critical analysis as well as a sensual and emotional experience.

Holding things used to be for kids; places like this when I was young, guarding tutting at you if you ever went near anything. It's the first time you can see, feel and touch it really brings it home especially when the person says this is 350,000 years old, it brings it alive.

The role of the Hands On volunteer is crucial. As with guiding in the galleries, it is a medium of interpretation which offers social contact, but is more interactive and flexible as the volunteers work with the expansions and reactions of the visitor. The museum sees the training of volunteers (over 300 in total across many aspects of the museum's work) as part of its adult learning mission.

The Hands On training for example is a big commitment from both museum staff and new recruits. It consists of five one day modules, run by the Learning Department and with the participation of curators and visitor services staff.

The Autobiographical Approach

Cradle to Grave:

What's Your Story?
The Gallery of Living and Dying at the British Museum, sponsored by the Wellcome Trust, shows how different cultures, in different historical periods and contexts, have contributed to their own health and wellbeing. Objects on display include a giant Easter Island statue from 1000 AD and a modern sculptural interpretation of the Mexican Day of the Dead.
Down the middle of the gallery is an installation – Cradle to Grave – illustrating the medical journey of one western man and women, who are reckoned to consume about 14,000 pills in the average course of their lifetime. The timelines of the man and woman are illustrated with personal memorabilia, photographs and documents, documenting key moments in their lives. The installation was created by a doctor, a textile artist and a video artist and attracts considerable attention and discussion.

The museum recently invited the two artists to run a workshop called What’s Your Story? Participants worked with the artists to develop their own versions of the journey, inspired by the installation. Those who signed up for the workshop were asked to bring the contents of their medicine cabinet, a selection from their photograph album showing significant life events, and any objects which they thought related to their own health and wellbeing. With the use of video and photography, their creations became part of the museum display.

The small group taking part were recruited through open invitation in the gallery and targeted publicity to health centres, nursing schools and medical museums. The ideas underpinning the project along with the artists, the access manager and curator have developed into an outreach arts project with a group of inmates in Pentonville Prison.

The project was just one example of the many through which the museum’s collections are related to the broad threads of human experience – health, religion, ageing – and the aspirations of adult learners to interpret and re-interpreted their culture and their lives.

It is also exemplary of a now not infrequent autobiographical approach adopted with adults, consisting in using museum objects to trigger reminiscence and encourage the revisiting of one’s own personal story.