
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MUSEUM TRAINING INSTITUTE PROVIDING IN SERVICE TRAINING FOR MUSEUM PERSONNEL.

Margaret Greeves, Head of Training and Information, South Eastern Museums Service, UK

The South Eastern Museums Service is one of ten Area Museums Councils in Great Britain. They are partnerships; membership organizations to which the 2 000 + museums belong. They provide advice, support, technical services, information and training for their members. They are the principal channel of government grant-in-aid to local government, university and independent museums. This funding comes from the Department of National Heritage via the Museums & Galleries Commission. At the South Eastern Museums Service I am responsible for the development and delivery of training for 600 museums in our region and the provision of information about museums and of interest to museums.

This paper explains how we approach in-service training and the value of the definition of national standards for our work. It will pose some questions:

What is training? What is a training need?

and describe a new initiative, the development of training materials and their delivery.

South Eastern Museums Service Training

The South Eastern Museums Service training services are offered in the following ways:

* Annual program of events - about 30 one and two day courses per annum in museum management, collections care, visitor care and basic museum skills.

* Training for groups - a range of topics which can be commissioned

- * Development of training materials
- * Advice on training needs analysis and policy development
- * National Vocational Qualifications and national standards of competence.

This last is a growing area of work where we are closely involved with the Museum Training Institute (MTI) in the promotion of the new qualifications to museums and, at the same time, representing the real needs of museums to the MTI.

National Standards

The basis of the National Vocational Qualifications for museums is expressed in descriptions of competent performance agreed by museum practitioners. For each activity the underpinning knowledge is identified as well as how the task should be carried out. For example, what must be done in order "to allocate project objectives to people" or "to organize the movement of objects".

The Standards for people are reinforced by minimum standards for museums expressed in the national museum *Registration* scheme which was introduced by the Museums & Galleries Commission in 1988. This has two principal aims:

- 1 - to encourage all museums and galleries to achieve approved standards in museum management, collections care and public services;
- 2 - to foster confidence in museums as repositories of our common heritage and managers of public resources.

To meet these standards, to become registered, a museum has to carry out a thorough "health check"; this often identifies training needs.

What is training?

I understand training to mean *enabling people to learn* and managing that process. It is not about courses so much as appropriate *learning opportunities* to achieve defined outcomes. It has to do with the increase of knowledge and the increase of skill, but also with changing attitude and behavior, challenging thought patterns.

Why do people working in museums need continuing training?

At base it is because of the rapid rate of change in museums and in the economic, social (and sometimes political) environment in which they work. They need training to function in their job, to develop in their role, to "recharge their batteries", to advance in their careers, to network with others and to escape "museum think".

Training needs may arise at the corporate, team or individual level; as a result of external change or internal change e.g. in technical demands, processes and projects; from the requirements imposed by funding bodies. They also arise as a response to the needs of the visiting public and potential museum users.

Museum Skills training

Our need to extend the amount of training we can offer to museums has been met in one area through cooperation by Area Museums Councils supported by the Museums & Galleries Commission. Together we have developed packages of training materials planned to cover the basic museum skills essential for the improvement of collections care. For each topic there is a range of flexible training approaches including tutor input, exercises, structured visits, demonstrations, case studies, topics for discussion together with background information and bibliographies for further study. The materials have been referenced to the national standards whenever

possible so that participants can proceed towards national vocational qualifications if they wish.

The topics so far developed are:

Introduction to Museums

- what is a museum?
- the social role of museums
- the uses of collections
- the needs of visitors
- the roles of museums staff etc.

Basic Preventive Conservation

- assessing the building and collections
- knowledge about threats
- environmental monitoring
- planning for conservation needs etc.

Basic Design and Display

- exhibition planning theory and practice
- preparing a brief
- getting the message across
- some practical, low cost techniques

Active Access

exploring the importance of equality of access -intellectual and physical -

to museums and their services for all potential visitors.

Handling, Packing, Lifting and Transporting Objects

Three further topics are in preparation:

Environmental Improvement

Disaster Preparedness Planning

Education in Museums.

Careful development of the materials by training specialists with museum experience working with museum specialists and the referencing of the learning outcomes to national Standards gives assurance as to the quality of the content. The level at which it is pitched can be defined by the tutor/trainer in response to the needs of recipient individuals/groups. The third, more difficult element to control is the standard of training delivery, which is so important for the experience of the participant. This we address by insisting that the training is only delivered by museum professionals who are willing to go through a three day training for trainers course.

To sum up, because we have a framework - Standards - we are able to diagnose needs and design training to meet them, and we deliver it at low cost. We believe we offer training which is :

- * convenient - it can be delivered in the local museum
- * responsive - it starts with the participants' needs
- * flexible - there is a range of materials to select from
- * practical - its purpose is to develop competence in the museum.

It can form part of the preparation for vocational qualifications and we hope will be incorporated in a structure which will articulate post-graduate training, National Vocational Qualifications, categories of membership of our professional body the Museums Association, a system of continuing professional development and win the recognition and support of employers.