



The Leicester Graduate Network

Museum Studies Connect

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'The Isolated Baronet'

Calke Abbey & RCMG address contemporary isolation and loneliness

Isolation and loneliness – opening up new stories and interpretive experiences is a research project led by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) in collaboration with Calke Abbey, a National Trust property in Derbyshire. Running from October 2017 to March 2018, the project emerged as part of Calke's planning processes and the Calke team's desire to develop interpretation and programmes around the contemporary issue of social isolation and loneliness. This is planned to take place in 2019 in order to mark the 200th anniversary of the death of Henry Harpur Crewe, 7th Baronet of Calke Abbey who was dubbed 'The Isolated Baronet' in his own time.

Questions of isolation and loneliness have often been associated with Calke and the place itself embodies the histories of isolation which have shaped the lives of the people who lived here. As awareness grows of the complex challenge loneliness and social isolation pose to contemporary society, Calke is exploring its own history of isolation and using this work to drive new approaches to interpretation and community engagement.



Recent research suggests that levels of loneliness across all ages are worryingly high, with over 9 million adults in the UK often or always lonely. Loneliness is a natural part of the human condition, with most of us feeling lonely at some point during our lives. However, where it becomes an issue is when it becomes acute; an ongoing, grinding and deeply painful felt experience. In these instances, loneliness can be harmful to both our physical and mental health; for example, being a comparable risk factor for early death to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

With an ambition to make a contribution to discussions and campaigns surrounding the contemporary epidemic of loneliness and potentially to the lives of ordinary people who might be struggling with loneliness, and aware of the need to enter this space from an educated and thoroughly researched perspective, Calke approached RCMG to ask them to 'think with' Calke about the potential opportunities and pitfalls of work in this area. RCMG were also asked to help Calke plan this work in such a way that it would: generate new and ongoing

community relationships; achieve Calke's ambition to deliver high quality and sector leading interpretive practice; result in an exceptional visitor experience and programming for 2019; and leave a legacy of increased expertise, creativity and confidence amongst staff and volunteers to develop this and other work in the future.

For the RCMG team, the project offered an opportunity to expand research it had undertaken at a range of sites exploring

the visitor experience and the role of the physical museum (a building and curated collections or an historic site and its contents) in the various encounters and opportunities for experience, action and expression that visitors might encounter during a cultural visit. Interested in questions of the value of culture and its role in human wellbeing, the project offered an opportunity to ask how cultural organisations might take a conscious role in the fight against loneliness alongside government, public services, business and community groups.

For more information please see the research report – *Isolation and Loneliness – opening up new stories and interpretive experiences at Calke Abbey*.

w: <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/publications/isolation-and-loneliness-2013-opening-up-new-stories-and-interpretive-experiences-at-calke-abbey-rcmg-for-calke-abbey-2018/view>

Graduate Profile: Catherine Sargent: International exhibitions with the V&A

I am currently an Exhibition Manager at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the national museum of art, design and performance. I've been working at the V&A since 2014 when I started as an Exhibition Assistant. The V&A runs a huge programme of exhibitions, both at the museum, and as part of our national and international touring programmes, and it is the responsibility of my team to ensure that they all take place seamlessly.

In my role, I have responsibility for the successful delivery of the international tour of 'You Say You Want a Revolution? Records and Rebels 1966-70'. This exhibition was on at the V&A from September 2016 – February 2017, and since then it has travelled to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and Fabbrica del Vapore in Milan. It is a hugely dynamic exhibition, with a large audiovisual element, and a full sound experience provided by our sound partner, Sennheiser. My role in this project is primarily working with the partner venues hosting the exhibition on the design and delivery of this exciting, multi-media exhibition. Alongside this, I manage the transport to and from the venue, and logistics of installation and subsequent de-installation. When the exhibition arrives at a venue, I lead a team from the V&A to install all of the objects, including the condition checking of all the exciting items on display. In this case, we have a large amount of textiles from the 1960s, including some very special outfits from The Beatles.

Working at the V&A on such a diverse programme of exhibitions gives a huge amount of opportunity to improve my skills and work with colleagues from



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a variety of disciplines. As well as my responsibility on my exhibition project, I have also had the opportunity to support the installation of exhibitions like *Ocean Liners* and *The Future Starts Here* at the V&A, and I have installed exhibitions across the world, including *David Bowie* is at Brooklyn Museum, and the Jameel Prize in Gwangju, South Korea.

Before I worked at the V&A, I interned at the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto as a Collection Assistant, and worked for a year at the V&A Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green in their Collections and Curatorial Department. My role there was a direct result of my placement at

the end of my Masters in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, and it was a great museum to learn a great variety of skills. The University of Leicester gave me the necessary skills to set out on a career in Exhibitions, and the network of people who could support me on my path.

Catherine Sargent
Exhibition Manager V&A
MA Museum Studies 2011-12



Graduate Profile: Anna Rebus: History, consultancy & distance learning

My very first foray into the world of heritage and interpretation occurred way back in 1987 when I volunteered to give tours to dignitaries at the opening of the brand new junior high school I attended. I diligently memorized all the specifications for the new building along with the personal history of the school's namesake. I delivered my tour with enthusiasm but I was quietly devastated when the only question asked of me by the tour group was "where's the toilet?"

Undeterred, my enthusiasm for history and storytelling did not wane. While attending the University of Calgary, Canada, I completed undergraduate degrees in geography (urban studies minor) and archaeology (museum studies minor). I worked as an archaeological assistant for both the University of Calgary and Parks Canada before becoming a museum educator teaching visual literacy at the Nickle Arts Museum. While working as a program officer for the Cantos Music Museum (now National Music Centre) in Calgary, I decided it was time to return to school and I chose to complete an MA in museum studies through the University of Leicester.

Life and love took me to Australia while I was in the middle of my museum studies degree. Within a few weeks of my arrival I found a job as an interpretation officer

with the South Australia Department for Environment and Heritage. This was an exciting opportunity for someone from the Canadian prairies. My job involved writing interpretive materials for national parks and working with park rangers to develop interpretive plans for the state. In addition to exploring national parks throughout South Australia, this position gave me the opportunity to tackle lengthier writing projects including a guidebook for the Yurrebilla Trail, and I co-authored a chapter for a university textbook.

I returned to Alberta in 2007 and found a job as a project historian for the Airdrie Centennial Committee. Working alongside a group of dedicated volunteers, we spent two years completing a multitude of centennial projects for the city of Airdrie including oral history interviews and DVD, historical markers, a 242-page history book, and a school resource kit. This project marked the start of my career as a museums and heritage consultant, which today involves a gratifying mix of archival research, personal interviews, exhibit and publication design, interpretive planning, curation, and writing. I have helped developed exhibits and publications for organizations across Alberta, including the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology, Okotoks Museum and Archives, University

of Calgary Department of Family Medicine, Hungarian Veterans' Association Calgary Chapter, and the CKUA Radio Network.

It was on a 2015 trip to one of America's small but great museum cities, Santa Fe, New Mexico, that I solidified my decision to complete an MA in heritage and interpretation through the University of Leicester. The program allowed me to enhance my existing skill-set while gaining a new understanding of the changing role of museums in the modern world.

Each of my master's degrees has enriched my career at different times in my life. My museum studies master's helped to open doors for me as an emerging professional; my heritage and interpretation master's degree has expanded the depth and breadth of my museum practice as a mid-career professional. I'm delighted and thankful that the University of Leicester and the School of Museum Studies has been part of my lifelong learning journey.

Time for my next project!

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Outside and beyond: 'Deconstructing' a medieval manuscript

As the plethora of books, films, television series and digital games which draw on our medieval past demonstrates, the medieval world continues to hold an enormous popular fascination. *Outside and Beyond* is a PhD research project that sets out to explore if and how visitors make meaning from sensory and physical encounters with manuscript materials. The project, undertaken by Armand De Filippo, investigates whether these encounters prompt strong reactions (arousal), and if they provoke a sense of curiosity and exploration, and if digital theatre inspires imaginings and understandings.

The absence of opportunities for physical and sensory contact with manuscripts within traditional settings necessitated the need to set up a bespoke display to enable tactile, olfactory, auditory, gustatory, as well as visual encounters. The display 'experiment' sought to let people be with material objects and enable spontaneity and unpredictability to play out and open up new and creative approaches to experiences with manuscripts.

Taking a manuscript held by the University of Leicester Library's Special Collections as the focus, a digital object was produced and made available via a touch screen alongside the 'real thing' housed in a conventional glass case. Immediately below the glass case a cabinet housed four drawers containing substances chosen and, or, made in response to the manuscript.



A digital audio-visual installation within the display space was designed, not only to create a sense of scale and immersion, but also to conjure memories, cultural references and influences, and to provide creative inspiration and evoke a sense of the past intended to ignite participants' imaginations.

Each material and virtual substance featured in the display represented a physical feature of the manuscript. None of the objects or materials were accompanied by text labels and participants were asked to focus on the objects and materials and let their senses do the rest. With the help of these stimuli participants were given opportunities to discover their own interpretations of the manuscript.



Full analysis of the data is about to begin but initial findings suggest that participants felt an overwhelming sense of unease and uncertainty when confronted by the freedom to explore without direction. Even equipped with the knowledge that touch was allowed, participants frequently sought reassurance from the researcher. However, once early hesitations were overcome, the inceptive data seems to suggest that, in some instances, the liberty to physically explore provoked heightened sensory engagements and awareness and generated some powerful imaginative responses, empathy with past lives, and deepened individual understandings.

Armand De Filippo
PhD student

School Profile: Dr Nuala Morse



Dr Nuala Morse is a Lecturer in Museum Studies and Programme Director of MA/MSc Museum Studies by Distance Learning.

“Like many of us in the school, I am an interdisciplinary researcher.

I am currently thinking about the idea of ‘care’ in museums. This is about recognising the care full practice of museum workers in community engagement settings and about the role of museums in the care and repair of place.

A related aspect of this work explores the links between museum participation and health, well-being and recovery.

Participation is another key theme in my work. Community engagement is a central term in contemporary museum practice, yet museum practitioners often experience institutions as resistant to this work. My PhD explored this tension to provide an ethnographic account of the organizational life-worlds of museums from which to reconsider the ‘social work’ of museum professionals.

Currently I teach on several MA Museum Studies modules, and I lead the ‘Education’ specialism. I am also the Programme Director for the MA Museum Studies by Distance Learning, where I oversee the programme’s administration and where I am thinking creatively about how we can make great learning experiences online and at a distance.

Before Leicester, I moved around quite a bit. I completed my PhD in the Geography Department at Durham University in 2015. After that I held a number of postdoctoral positions, at UCL and the University of Manchester and the University of Winchester. I also spent 6 months at the Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University as an Endeavour Research Fellow, where I looked at community engagement practice in an Australian context, with a particular focus on Indigenous issues.

Two last things...

My favourite museum is the Museum of Broken Relationships.

My favourite contemporary artist is Susie MacMurray”

School Profile: Dr. Yunci Cai



The School of Museum Studies warmly welcomes new faculty member Dr. Yunci Cai.

“I am delighted to be joining the School of Museum Studies at Leicester. Hailing from the sunny island of Singapore, I specialise in non-western museology, with a focus on Asian museology and indigenous museology. My interest in museology was sparked by a visit to Te Papa – National Museum of New Zealand, while on a student exchange stint in New Zealand in 2003. I was totally blown away by Te Papa’s innovative and interactive approach to museology, and the implications of their bicultural policy on museum practice, that I spent four full days wandering around the galleries of Te Papa. Returning home to Singapore, the national museums in Singapore were also undergoing massive changes, shedding their images as dusty old halls to become new centres of learning and ‘edutainment’. Inspired by the fascinating transformations in the museum landscapes, I came to be very interested in

museology and began to seek out anything relating to museums. I have never looked back. I later spent over seven years working for the National Heritage Board of Singapore in the policy and strategic planning arena, where I was in charge of museum and collection policies for the national museums in Singapore. A few scholarships took me to London to do my MA in Museum Studies, and later, a PhD in Museum and Heritage Studies, both at University College London. Recognising that museums do not just take urban forms, I spent a full year living with the indigenous people in Malaysia to undertake research on four indigenous cultural villages for my PhD. Besides an obsession with museums of different kinds, I enjoy travelling and an occasional hike in the forests.”



Reconnect 2018

Reconnect 2018 brought together many of our alumni, distance learners and campus-based students, in a series of events throughout the afternoon and evening of 14 June. Our guest speakers were Emily Pringle, Head of Learning at Tate and the artist Paul Hill.

Emily's session explored notions of museum research and focused on the ways in which museum professionals can locate themselves as practitioner-researchers.

The session included short presentations by Emily, interspersed with participatory and discursive activities, in which participants worked in small groups to interrogate their perceptions of museum research, drawing on their own experience and testing their ideas in relation to specific theoretical models. Conversations from the session will feed into Emily's AHRC funded Leadership Fellowship, examining how collaborative and practice-based research undertaken by museum professionals can be supported and embedded within the gallery context.

You can follow Emily's research at www.practitionerresearchintheartmuseum.com.

The afternoon concluded with an artist talk from photographer Paul Hill, one of the artists represented in the current AMAGS exhibition 'Expanding Limits', and a drinks reception with a chance to view the exhibition. The group then headed to The Landsdowne, where the conversation and reminiscences continued. If you joined us, it was lovely to catch up – if not, there's always next year!

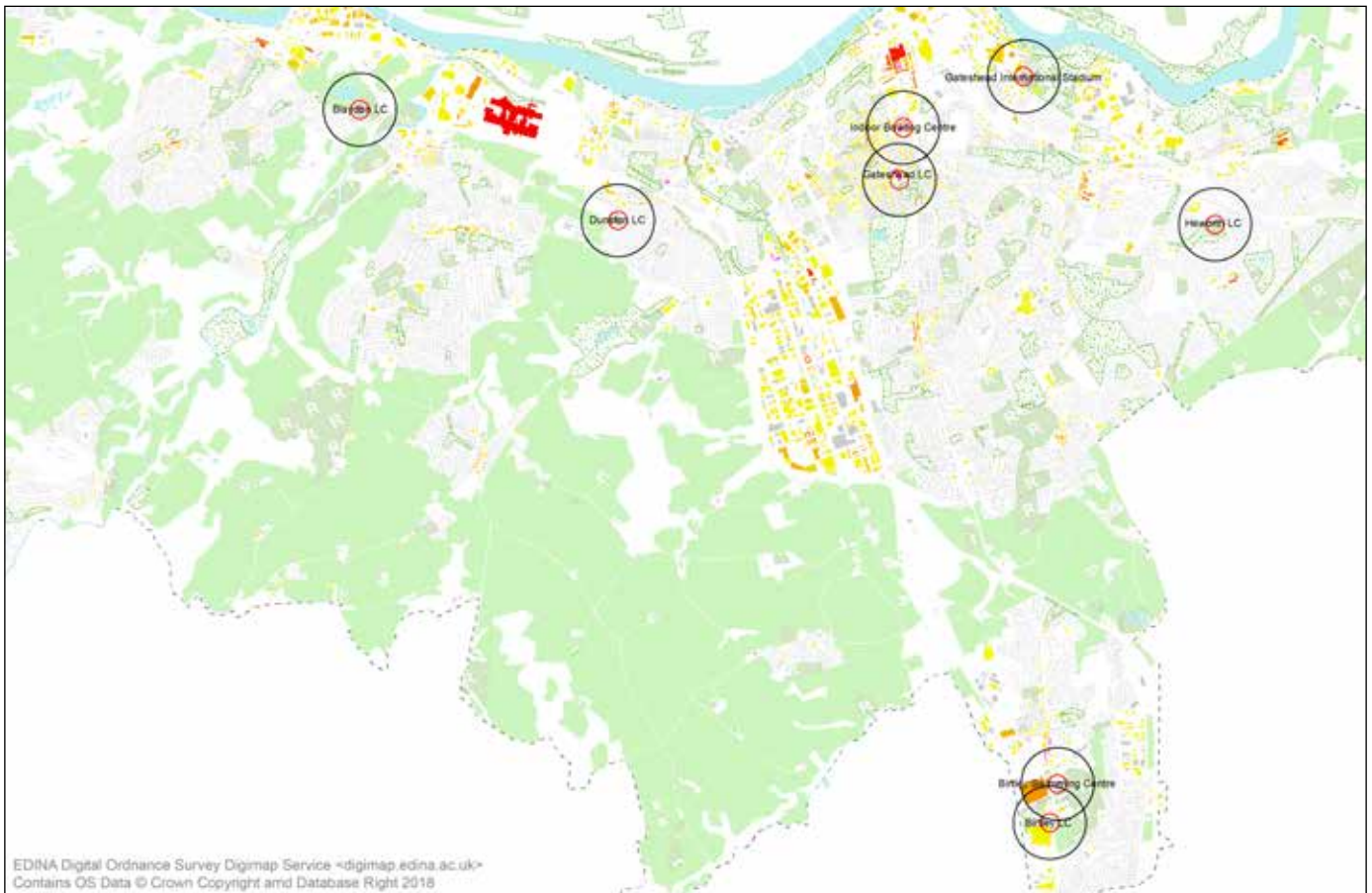


Museum studies by distance learning receives a revamp

The Distance Learning programme has been undergoing some exciting changes over the past year, including a substantial update of its Museum Studies course. With new study materials available and a new online delivery platform, the course feels fresher and more engaging than ever before! New learning outcomes and media content means that the Distance Learning Museum Studies course is more in-sync with the Campus-Based experience, whilst maintaining the flexibility that makes Distance Learning so convenient.

The core modules of the new course are: *The Museum and Change*, *Designing for Creative Lives*, *Objects and Collections: Care, Management, Curation and Engaging Audiences*. In addition, students are able to specialise thanks to improved optionality on the new course, with optional modules including: *Lifelong Learning*, *Heritage*, *Digital*, *Museums and Contemporary Issues* and *Museums and the Natural Environment*.

With PGCert, PGDip and MA/MSC qualifications available, we expect the new course to draw in an even wider variety of Distance Learning students, and we look forward to welcoming them to the School of Museum Studies in the near future.



The effect of place and space

Understanding everyday participation

The research project 'Understanding Everyday Participation – Articulating Cultural Values' (AHRC 2012-2018) explores the ways in which the 'situatedness' or the social/spatial context of participation is an important factor in understanding the socio-political dynamics of cultural participation (Miles and Gibson, 2016). Our report on the geography of library and leisure centre discusses the impact of geography and attractiveness of physical places has on particular kinds of cultural and leisure participation.

Our report proposes that everyday participation can be a part of a 'trip-chain', a pattern of travelling that incorporates multiple visits (between home and work for example), to complete a range of tasks such as shopping, social activities or other personal business. Such participation involves a level of spatial decision-making, weighing up factors relating to the destination(s), and the time and effort of getting there. How much do these factors impact on participation, and are they quantifiable?

In assessing the effect of geography on participation within our two study areas, Gateshead and Manchester, we sought data that would provide us with a pattern of movement between home and a destination-based participatory activity. The use of libraries and leisure centres offers an insight as we know where the member lives and which centre or library they are using. We hypothesised that using libraries and leisure centres could be part of trip-chaining activity, in conjunction with the user visiting other 'everyday places', such as shopping, health care facilities, schools and so forth (Delrieu & Gibson 2017a).

In the report, we conclude:

- Geographic proximity to the home is more important for the users of leisure centres, but a more complex picture emerges for libraries.
- Opportunities for trip-chaining (the practice of undertaking more than one activity while out of the house) are an important factor in the use of many libraries, but not so important for leisure centre use.

- Patterns of use in urban and suburban libraries reflect the impact of relative attractiveness, whereas peri-urban or rural libraries have much more localised usage.
- Neighbourhood perception and personal attachment (e.g. because of cultural identity) are influential factors in determining the use of particular libraries and leisure centres.
- Standalone libraries and leisure centres are as likely to be used as those which are co-located together or with other services such as academies, community hubs or learning centres.

For more information regarding the project, visit the website at www.everydayparticipation.org/

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This issue of Museum Studies Connect is edited by Nigel Cook, Employability and Museum Liaison Administrator, and published by the School of Museum Studies. If you have comments, suggestions or would like to contribute to this publication please e-mail: museum@le.ac.uk



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