



Museum Studies *connect*

THE LEICESTER GRADUATE NETWORK

Welcome

I am very happy to be able to introduce the first edition of the Museum Studies Connect newsletter. Since the School of Museum Studies was first established in the 1960s, its qualifications and the opportunities it has provided for training and development have been carried off around the world by its graduates numbering around 3,900; graduates from our Postgraduate Diploma, Masters and PhD programmes work in museums and galleries, arts and heritage organisations, universities and research centres around the world. Many of the students studying in the School today come to us through recommendation from those friends and colleagues who also studied here.

The School today is a vibrant and internationally recognised hub for teaching and research, a reputation that has been built through a thoughtful and demanding synergy between these two areas of its work. This synergy is maintained because all the researchers in the



Continued on page 3

What's in it for you?

Over the coming months and years Museum Studies Connect will provide members with a full range of membership benefits that will promote professional development



In the first instance you will be able to gain access to other members' professional details that will be shared with their permission. So if, for example you get a new job in a city or country that you are not familiar with, you will be able to request a list of members located in that city or country. Alternatively, you might begin a new project at work and want to get in touch with local members with a specific interest in collections management for example, again these details can be provided. To help support and develop these new network connections, an official MS Connect LinkedIn group has been created for members to make contact with each other and discuss the hot topics of the day, 'University of Leicester School of Museum Studies Alumni' is facilitated by academics from the School. To get a flavour of the cutting edge teaching that takes place on our distance learning programmes a small selection of sample units are available

to you upon request at no charge. The network will also facilitate the connection of members able to offer voluntary work experience and those seeking it. Finally, there will be a warm invitation extended to all members to come back and see us in Leicester at a celebratory occasion to re-connect with staff and old friends.

Future developments are likely to include: the opportunity for members to become official representatives or ambassadors for the School; invitations to contribute to the School's teaching; discounts on conferences and events; a graduate of the year award; career development guidance offered by staff of the School.

Plenty of good reasons to be part of Museum Studies Connect: The Leicester Graduate Network. If you haven't already joined, simply go to www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/forms/MSCConnectRegistration to join now!

Graduate Profile

Nazeea Elahi

In the first of a regular feature in the Museum Studies Connect newsletter, Nazeea Elahi tells us about her career path since graduation.

After completing my MA Museum Studies in September 2010 I worked as a volunteer for a year before getting my first paid job in the sector. During this year I was volunteering in four different museums, building upon my experience and skills. At HMS Belfast I worked with the Education Team, at Epping Forest District Museum I was packing objects for removal to a new storage facility, I was digitising the paper collection for online publication at the Royal Academy of Music Museum and finally, at the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, I was cataloguing the collection.

I was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time when the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum was looking to establish a cataloguing team. I now work there as a cataloguing assistant and my job involves cataloguing, condition reporting, photographing and numbering objects as well as light conservation cleaning, packing objects for storage and helping with contemporary collecting during The Championships. The collection encompasses a wide variety of objects, going beyond the usual tennis rackets and balls to ceramics, costumes, fine art, photographs, posters, toys, medals and jewellery, so I am getting experience working with all different types of objects. I also spend time doing object research since large parts of our collection have known associations with particular players and events. An exciting time of the year is during The Championships when I get to work with the objects we have collected, with the highlight this year being Andy Murray's



Honor Godfrey (left), Nazeea Elahi (centre), Sarah Kirkham (right) all Leicester graduates now working at the All England Club

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outfit that he wore for the final. I have also been able to catalogue Federer's and Nadal's Beijing Olympic medals that were on loan to us for our temporary exhibition during the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Although my interest is in collections I have recently begun to assist the Education Department in giving tours around the grounds. I enjoy engaging with school groups and it is always interesting to see the looks on their faces when I take them into Centre Court or tell them that someone actually has a job that involves counting each and every blade of grass on our tennis courts.

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In terms of the future I want my career to go further in the field of collections management as I really enjoy working with and researching objects. I am currently working towards my AMA (Associateship of the Museums Association) and as a part of that I am concentrating on learning further about my museum's subject, from learning about various players and the history of Wimbledon to visits to tennis museums abroad. I feel that my degree from Leicester has provided me with a strong foundation to build upon for the rest of my career.

In the coming months Museum Studies Connect will feature more graduate profiles, if you would like to contribute one, please e-mail: msconnect@le.ac.uk



Nazeea Elahi at Wimbledon

continued from front page

School of Museum Studies are also its teachers with many researchers undertaking innovative and rigorous research that has informed policy and practice and inspired innovation and experimentation. A crucial role is also played by a wider group of associates, lecturers and tutors, many of whom are graduates, who work with the School in a wide range of roles.

Finally, a culture of collaboration and team working is recognised as absolutely central to the School's activities; all staff recognise that their ability to operate within the School is based on their collaborations and involvement with a range of practitioners.

Museum Studies Connect is a much welcomed next step in these developments and will open up opportunities for graduates to connect with other graduates, as well as to rekindle links with the School and its staff. The aim is that the Network is practical and will offer routes to people, information and opportunities of direct use to Museum Studies alumni and so we look forward to hearing your thoughts on its development and seeing you at future events!

Suzanne MacLeod
Head of School

Torture at the Tower

RCMG – the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, here in the School of Museum Studies – has recently completed a fascinating research project entitled 'Prisoners, Punishment and Torture: Developing new approaches to interpretation at the Tower of London'.



RCMG was commissioned by Historic Royal Palaces to explore how the Tower of London could present emotionally engaging stories to visitors related to the potentially challenging themes of torture and imprisonment, informed by leading edge thinking in museum ethics and interpretive design practice. The project brought together academics within the School of Museum Studies, staff at the Tower, and architect/designer Tom Duncan (from Duncan McCauley) to generate new theoretically and ethically-informed insights and guidance that could help the Tower further develop innovative practice within this area.

Viv's new book

'Museums and Communities: Curators, Collections and Collaboration', edited by the School's Viv Golding and Wayne Modest from the Tropenmuseum, critically engages with contemporary scholarship on museums and their engagement with the communities they purport to serve and represent. Foregrounding new curatorial strategies, it addresses a significant gap in the available literature, exploring some of the complex issues arising from recent approaches to collaboration between museums and their communities.

The book contains a chapter written by a (now completed) PhD student from the School, Serena Iervolino. Commenting on her experiences writing the chapter, Serena says 'Working with Viv and Wayne on this project was a very rewarding experience. Amongst other things, I learnt more about the complex 'business' of academic publishing. I am truly delighted to have contributed to this volume that unpacks taken-for-granted notions in museum scholarship and practice and argues for risk taking, creativity, and the sharing of curatorial authority'.

Students of museum and cultural studies, practitioners and everyone who cares about museums around the world will find this volume essential reading.



Taking Sides?

In August this year I was grateful to have the chance to join the ICOM triennial in Rio de Janeiro and to deliver the Alma S. Wittlin Memorial lecture. My talk – entitled Museum Consequences – explored how the decisions we make in museums (regarding whose stories get told and whose get overlooked and how we engage visitors in relation to these narratives) impact people's lives beyond the museum. Drawing on a range of international examples and recent research carried out here in the School, I argued that museums frame the kinds of conversations that societies have about difference, fairness and equality. This means that museums have responsibilities to ensure that the decisions they make support rather than hinder the development of more progressive ways of seeing and thinking. I concluded that – since there is no neutral position – museums need to take sides and shouldn't be afraid to lend their support for progressive, rights-based thinking. I was pleased with the way this sparked a debate, both in Rio and online and I'd be interested to hear your thoughts. Although museums are places for different voices and perspectives, places for dialogue and exchange, surely there are some issues around which we should be prepared to take sides?

Join the debate on LinkedIn at the official Museum Studies Connect LinkedIn Group, 'University of Leicester School of Museum Studies Alumni'.

Richard Sandell



UNDERSTANDING EVERYDAY PARTICIPATION

ARTICULATING CULTURAL VALUES



'Understanding Everyday Participation- Articulating Cultural Values' is a 5-year, £1.5 million research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council through its Connected Communities funding stream. The School of Museum Studies is taking a major role in this project, which is led by Dr Andrew Miles at the University of Manchester. Museum Studies Director of Research, Dr Lisanne Gibson, leads the work done through Leicester assisted by the project's Leicester-based Research Associate Dr Delyth Edwards and PhD student Sarah Hughes.

This project proposes a radical re-evaluation of the relationship between participation and cultural value. We are used to thinking about the benefits of the arts as a traditional way of understanding culture and its value but what about the meanings and stakes people attach to their hobbies and pastimes? Can we speak of supposedly mundane activities like shopping, taking the dog for a walk, or meeting up with friends as having cultural worth? The project aims to paint a broader picture of how people make their lives through culture and, in particular, how communities are formed and connected through participation. Our approach promises new ways of capturing the contexts and processes of cultural valuation, including the ways in which creative economies are underpinned by local practices and community identities.

Fieldwork research is taking place in villages, towns and cities in England and Scotland. The School of Museum Studies is leading research taking place in Gateshead (2014), Peterborough (2015) and the Western Isles (2016). There will also be a conference focusing on 'Histories of Participation and Cultural Value' taking place at the School of Museum Studies in September 2015 with further details to be announced in due course.

For detail about the project including blogs about work currently underway in Manchester and North Yorkshire see the project website at <http://www.everydayparticipation.org/>

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