



## **Visual Roots Case Study National Media Museum**

### **Project Summary**

The National Media Museum are developing a new permanent online gallery- *The Internet Gallery* – looking at the internet and how it is has changed and continues to change the way we all work and live. The primary audience for the gallery are 12-22 year olds and adults confident in web use. The two young Visual Roots volunteers are playing an active and key part in the Internet Gallery Development Team and in the development of the exhibition.

The project aimed to:

- Develop the young volunteers’ communication, team work and information management skills
- Increase the young people’s knowledge of the internet and museum operation
- Give the young people a positive volunteering experience with accredited outcomes
- Develop the skills and knowledge of museum staff when working with young people in a volunteering capacity
- Gain a greater understanding of how accreditation can fit into a volunteer placement

The project involved two young people with refugee status from a local Technology College. The Museum worked in partnership with the College, to ensure that the placements complimented school work.

### **The context**

#### The organisation

The National Media Museum covers seven floors of a city centre building in Bradford and is part of the NMSI Museums Group (National Museum of Science and Industry), which also includes the Science Museum, and the National Railway Museum. We exist to “engage, inspire and educate by promoting an understanding and appreciation of photography, film, television, radio and the web; using our collection and knowledge to deliver a cultural programme accessibly and authoritatively.”

## The situation

The Museum has worked with young people for a number of years in a number of different programmes. These include a formal education programme and a BSC Course in media production with the University of Bradford. In addition to the Youth Media TV project (which ran for eight years), they have also worked with the local Youth Offending Team to provide workshops and other projects. They also provide work experience placements for local schools and are working in partnership with the organisations developing and delivering the Creative and Media Diplomas locally.

The Museum has been planning a Youth Media Programme – which will actively target 20% of participants from the hard to reach categories. This new programme will involve working with young people over a longer timescale. The Visual Roots project gave the Museum the opportunity to trial some models of working on a smaller scale.

## The Idea

The Museum offers short-term placements (up to two weeks) but had not worked on a longer term basis with young volunteers on placements. The Visual Roots funding offered them the opportunity to try a new way of working with hard to reach young people in a school context and engaging them in the development of a permanent Museum gallery. They also aimed to develop the young people's communication, team working and information management skills; increase their knowledge of the Internet and how museums work; give them a positive volunteering experience with accredited outcomes; develop the skills and knowledge of museum staff when working with young people in a volunteering capacity and gain a greater understanding of how accreditation can fit into a volunteer placement.

## **The project**

### Planning

The planning for the project took a few months and involved conversations with the Technology College to identify potential students. The Museum was also seeking new ways of consulting young people on their Internet Gallery and wanted to involve the volunteers in the consultation process. After approval of the project, meetings were arranged between gallery staff and the young people to ensure that they were happy with the proposed plans. A focus group, visits to the space for the new gallery and presentations on the proposals were also part of the planning process.

There were a large number of people involved in the project, which included: staff and young people at Grange Technology College and staff at the National Media Museum including the Internet Gallery Development Team; Tom Woolley, Curator of New Media and Sarah Crowther, Internet Gallery Content Developer, the Learning

Team: Sarah Mumford, Learning Manager, Mandy Tennant, Audience Development Co-ordinator and Elaine Richmond, Community Learning Programme Co-ordinator, and the Web Team, Richard Claxton, Web Developer

### Delivery

Two young volunteers were invited to take part in the project from Grange Technology College. The school has over 2000 pupils aged 11-18 and 98% are of South Asian Heritage and a small number of pupils are African, Afghan refugees and white British. Both students were in Year 11 studying for their GCSEs. This is the first time that the Museum has worked with the College.

Meetings were conducted with the young people and their Head of Year at School to determine their needs and agree on a work plan. These meetings gave the opportunity to get to know the young people and discuss support packages for the programme. Both of them were keen to be involved and were active Internet users. One of the volunteers was invited to observe a focus group of young 18-25 yr old graduates for the Internet Gallery. The idea was to introduce her to the concept with a view to establishing a focus group of young people at her school. This was followed up by a number of visits where the volunteers worked with the Content Developer for the Internet gallery and the Web Producer. They introduced the volunteers to different communication systems, such as blogs, to be used in the new gallery and ways of creating their own pages. Options for accreditation were also discussed and one volunteer agreed to do a Bronze Arts Awards, while the second volunteer opted to use the placement as part of his BTEC in Art and Design. These sessions were followed up by a number of workshops in early 2009. These included a film-making session with a freelance director to create a film about the museum and a poster design session to advertise the scheme.

The timetable for the project slipped in early 2009 and the attendance of the young people became sporadic. This was partly due to exam commitments and personal circumstances. Communication with the school was also difficult and key information about the students was not conveyed to the Museum until late in the project. This had an impact on the completion of the project and the Museum had to rethink its programme and reschedule activities for a later date.

### **Outcomes**

#### Impact on participants and Accreditation

Both participants found the sessions interesting and challenging and it gave them confidence to start expressing their views more clearly. Unfortunately, the two volunteers were not able to complete the project during the timescale of the project and it has not been possible to measure its impact. However, both participants will re-engage with the Museum during the summer term to continue activities.

### **Lessons learned by staff, school and young people**

- In the future, the Museum will allow for a longer lead in time to build relationship with partners, the young people and their school or setting.
- Timetables need to be carefully agreed between all participants and their support network.
- Lines of communications need to be clearly agreed from the start between partners, to ensure that information is conveyed on time to the host.
- Schools' timetables need to be considered carefully, particularly when working with older students as they have multiple demands. Better times for this type of project are June - mid October, during collapsed timetable weeks, offering the placement as part of work experience weeks in July or working with a different age group. (for example year 12 pupil taking a BTEC qualification)
- School should designate a support person for the young person who is on the placement.
- Schools should assess carefully the young person's timetable to determine the feasibility of a placement.

### **Next steps**

The Museum team have met with the two young people and the teacher and have agreed to finalise the project in June and July 2009. The volunteers will work with the Web Producer to complete the online blog work – to generate feedback from other young people in their age group about the Internet Gallery content. They will also spend time devising ways to recruit for and host an actual real life focus group with 8 other young people from their College.

The Learning Team at the National Media Museum have agreed to issue a 'statement of intent' in partnership with the National Museum of Science and Industry to articulate their aims and position regarding young people for both internal and external audiences. The National Media Museum will continue to maintain and build links Grange Technology College to gather feedback and input on the Internet Gallery developments; to develop, unify and disseminate their offer for young people in the Museum as a whole; to offer media production workshop/skills development activities for hard to reach young people where funding permits; to develop plans to run a Young Person's Film Club Graduate Scheme; to evaluate the existing Young Person's Film Review scheme and establish a Young Person's Focus Group for consulting on major new museum initiatives that might affect them.