

Skills for Life case studies

1. Imperial War Museum North

Funded by DCMS, DfES and MLA North West

Seven ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students from Greenheys Adult Education Centre attended a session at the museum. It was planned and delivered by one of the museum's interactors who already knew the group as she had been a teacher at the Centre. They were a mixed-sex group of refugee and asylum seekers from Tunisia, Latvia, Somalia, Afghanistan, China and Iraq. The group had a tour of the museum, watched an audio-visual presentation about the experiences of children in war, undertook an object handling session and completed a written worksheet. The group was able to compare their own experiences of war and conflict with that of others in history. Before the visit, the students had some preparatory sessions about the museum.

ESOL is for people who are settling in the UK and is designed to build up cultural awareness as well as proficiency in English. The visit to the museum was ideal from this point of view. The students have direct experience of war and conflict and so the subject matter of the museum was an excellent catalyst for discussion and language development. As a result of this work, the Museum plans to run a bespoke skills for life course for their volunteers with a heritage element built in.

Contact:

Anna Brint

T: 0161 836 4081

E: abrint@iwm.org.uk

2. Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester

Funded by DCMS, DfES and MLA North West

The museum ran two sessions for an ESOL family learning group from Temple Primary School, Cheetham Hill in Manchester. The school has 98% of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. The group is attended by mothers (with origins in South Asia and the Middle East) of children attending the school. The aim of the group is to build up the skills and confidence of the women so that they can help their children learn. Talking and listening skills are particularly encouraged.

The first session was held at the school. The community development officer from the museum took a handling box of materials which illustrate the processes involved in turning raw cotton into finished goods. The vocabulary that the women would encounter in the museum was introduced. The aim of the following session at the museum was to learn about the role of cotton manufacture and trade in Manchester's history. The women were shown around the power hall and did an activity with printed cards aimed at encouraging them

to find out about the different machines. They then went to the textile gallery where an interpreter gave them a demonstration of the processing of raw cotton into textiles. Many of the women compared what they saw in the museum with cotton growing and manufacturing in their countries of origin. The women felt they were made to feel very special because they were given their own tour by museum staff. In discussions following the visit they all said they had talked to their children about their visit.

Contact:
Charlotte Smith
T: 0161 606 0108
E: c.smith@msim.org.uk

3. Manchester Central Reference Library *Funded by DCMS, DfES and MLA North West*

The Library combined the tutoring skills of the Manchester Basic Skills Consortium with the subject knowledge of a local studies librarian to devise a course to introduce skills for life learners to the Library's resources. They worked with a company called Action for Employment which runs courses to help improve people's employability. The local studies collection of photographs was a focus for the two sessions. Students talked about the area of Manchester they lived in and looked at old photographs of the area. They were given single - use cameras to photograph their locality. They brought the photographs to the session the following week and discussed them. They were also introduced to the computerised local image collection and the library's ICT facilitators helped them look at local history websites, in particular the 'Picture Your Street' site.

This was a varied group of people with different needs and abilities. Some of the students did not see the relevance of the visit to their literacy work. But once they started using the computers and looking at the photographs they became interested: "*I didn't want to come but I'm the last to leave*". The session helped some of the students to develop a greater interest in their neighbourhood. Some told their tutor later that they would like to join the library and do some computer sessions with an ICT facilitator.

Contact:
Paula Moorhouse
E: lsu@libraries.manchester.gov.uk

4. The Tyne & Wear Literacy Project

Funded by the Arts Council, Northern Public Libraries and NEMLAC

This project is a partnership between the five library authorities of Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland, and NEMLAC (North East Museums, Libraries and Archives Council), Reading North and the Arts Council England North East. They are producing high quality reading resources that will enhance the reading experiences of adults who have low literacy levels.

The lack of suitable resources is a major barrier to basic skills learning. Three writers have therefore been employed to work with adult groups in each library authority, to assist them in developing their writing, which will then be used to produce reading resources suitable for other adults who have low literacy. The aim is to produce resources which are suitable for the people's own reading habits, giving them more pleasure and confidence in what they read, as well as widening and deepening their reading choices.

To overcome some initial apprehension on the part of some of the tutors of the groups (in particular how it would fit into their curriculum and timetable), the steering group decided that taster sessions should be delivered to all the groups. These sessions provided an opportunity for the tutors to meet the writers and for the learners to begin their involvement – showing them what the project had to offer.

The five projects have produced poems, stories and non-fiction, using local history or places they have been to as a stimulus. For example, one group is focusing on the local history and legends of Washington. The group has taken photographs of the old blacksmith's; the church; Washington Old Hall; Cross Keys pub; and the war memorial. They have then written stories and poems to go along with them featuring, the Washington Highwayman (caught at the blacksmiths); the Pickled Parson (at the church); the chimney sweep (taken to the pub when he died); the Washington Witch (died in the pond by the war memorial); Washington Hall; and the Lambton Worm. Another particularly successful approach has been to use fine art postcards as a stimulus for writing. The idea is to print the stories and poems alongside the pictures that inspired them. In North Tyneside (Killingworth) the tutor was so pleased with the sessions that she will incorporate a long series of them into the normal teaching schedule.

Some feedback from the workshops:

I have learned how to use my imagination and write things down, which I found hard at first but it became easier once I let go.

I felt fearful and shaky but still enjoyed the challenge. This really pushed me. Love the course.

This class has been different, informative and very entertaining, even a little scary – but great fun.

This class encouraged me to write with inspired ideas that left me full of confidence.

Two participants said that when they started writing their pieces they couldn't stop, and kept thinking about them until they were finished: the true passion of the creative writer. And it is not that long since they could only just write their names!

Contact:
Steven Hughes
T: 0191 222 1661
E: steven.hughes@nemlac.co.uk

5. Shropshire County Library Service

Funded by Shropshire County Council Adult Learning Fund

The aims of this project were to research the needs of local students and tutors; to build on existing links with tutors; to identify barriers to using library resources; to review the existing collections and identify suitable resources; and to promote the collections to students and tutors. The project research found that tutors rarely use libraries as resources for teaching and students were unaware of what libraries could offer and felt they didn't have time for reading for pleasure. Library staff were unsure of what was useful or suitable for adult literacy students.

Under the project a reading group in Shrewsbury Prison is supported with books for emergent readers and a new collection of materials to encourage skills for life is being developed in the prison library. Support is provided for a volunteer mentor scheme with a collection of tutor packs that the mentors can borrow free of charge. Two ICT training sessions for mentors has been arranged in the library. Voluntary mentors and the people they support, adult literacy tutors and students can borrow audio visual items and request books from the library free of charge (a fee is normally charged for these services).

Part of the project involved taking literacy students on a spending spree to Waterstones to buy resources for the library. This was thoroughly enjoyed and resulted in a new range of topics including keep-fit, cookery, health, astronomy, gardening and poetry. Some feedback from the project, included:

I enjoyed that – I can't wait to come back again to choose my own books.

We can cope with words as long as they are in small chunks – we can use a dictionary if necessary.

I have never seen them so enthusiastic about books [tutor]

As a result of the project, the library has developed its service to support literacy students and their tutors. Measures include information packs for the tutors; new membership procedures; concessionary tickets for students which allow free loans of CDs, talking books and videos; free requests and reduced fines; and a group ticket for tutors to borrow quantities of books for their classes. The project has also informed the future development of the library collection and staff are now regularly trained in basic skills awareness.

Contact:

Susan White

E: susan.white@shropshire-cc.gov.uk

6. Middlesbrough Court Project

Middlesbrough Central Library, in partnership with Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council, NACRO (crime reduction charity), Middlesbrough Adult Education and North East Museums Library and Archives Council, developed a project enabling clients from the law court to use the library to access training. The project's aim was to introduce clients - in court for the non-payment of fines - to the facilities in the library and to engage them through the ICT resources. Tutors from the Adult Education Service assessed their skills for life needs, before developing and delivering appropriate courses within the library. The library staff supported the delivery of these courses.

7. National Museums Liverpool Skills for Life Maths and English Packs *Funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation*

National Museums Liverpool (NML) worked with Liverpool Community College to develop resource packs for skills for life learners who wish to improve their numeracy and literacy. The packs were written by basic skills tutors at the College and are mapped to the New Adult Core Literacy and Numeracy curriculums. The packs are based on the themes and collections of the Museum of Liverpool Life, HM Customs & Excise Museum and Merseyside Maritime Museum. The packs have been created as pdf files and will be downloadable from NML's website. They have been designed to be a photocopyable resource. The project is currently (summer 2004) being evaluated. The museums are particularly pleased with the strong partnership which has been forged with the College.

Contact:

Kate Johnson

T: 0151 478 4209
E: Kate.Johnson@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

8. National Museums Liverpool ESOL Resource Pack

Funded by DCMS

An ESOL resource pack was developed in order to assist tutors and group leaders to prepare their students for a visit to Merseyside Maritime Museum.

The resources were created by National Museums Liverpool (NML) through the *Engaging Refugees and Asylum Seekers* project, a project funded by the DCMS and led by National Museums Liverpool in partnership with Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Tyne and Wear Museums and Leicester City Museums Service. This was a six month project during which NML explored the contribution museums and galleries could make to support refugees and asylum seekers, through the provision of informal learning opportunities and social activities. NML established and developed links between the museum and local agencies that are working with refugees and asylum seekers and community organisations. The ESOL resource was developed with advice and guidance from Liverpool Community College tutors as a result of a series of ESOL class visits with local refugees and asylum seekers between September 2003 and March 2004.

Contact:

Anna Rahilly

T: 0151 478 4456

E: Anna.rahilly@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

9. Blackburn with Darwen Library and Information Service Books on the Edge

Funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation and corporate sources

Books on the Edge is a two-year partnership of Blackburn with Darwen Library staff working with THOMAS, a drug rehabilitation organisation, Nightsafe, a charity that works with homeless young people, and Blackburn with Darwen Foyer who provide accommodation and training for young people. The aim is to engage with vulnerable young people, involve them in reader-centred activities and help arrest the cycle of poor literacy skills by promoting reading as a fun pastime. The emphasis is on reading for leisure but the young people are also signposted to advice and guidance agencies if required. Barriers to library membership are removed wherever possible. Staff are working with the young people on reading-based activities as opposed to overt reading. These activities include storytelling, group visits to the library, literacy games and community activities such as sports events. As a result of the project the library has re-evaluated its debt (fines) collection policy and is working to make its joining process friendly and client-centred.

Contact:
Geraldine Wilson
T: 1254 587236
E: Geraldine.wilson@blackburn.gov.uk

10. Hampshire Record Office

For people new to using archives, Hampshire Record Office runs regular 'beginners' sessions which provide guidance on using the record office's services. The sessions explore family and local history, using original archival materials and help to develop writing, reading, search and research skills. They attract a wide range of people including a significant number with skills for life needs. It is hoped that this work will demonstrate how archives can help to improve adult literacy. Education Officer David Bond comments "We wouldn't necessarily think that we're teaching basic skills, but in reality we are". He reports that skills for life learners can be inspired by the documents and return to read and write about their family history by searching at the record office. The record office is making links with adult and family learning providers in order to develop this support for adult skills for life learning.

Contact:
David Bond
T: 01962 846154
E: david.bond@hants.gov.uk

11. Nottingham City Libraries The Big Book Share

*Funded by East Midlands Arts, Marks and Spencer, Paul Hamlyn Foundation.
With support from twenty children's publishers.*

This scheme started in 2000 as a partnership between Nottingham City Libraries and Nottingham Prison and has now mushroomed to other prisons and libraries. The aim of the scheme is to enable parents in prisons to contribute to the development of their children's reading. Secondly, to build closer links between prisoners' families and the library service. There are three key activities. Awareness sessions are held for prison staff and prisoners about libraries and children's books. Prisoners tape stories which are then given to their children (prisoners who have difficulty reading can make up their own stories to tell on tape, or ask staff or fellow prisoners to read a story which they choose, and preface this with a message to their children). Special family visits to the prison are held where prisoners share books and story activities with their children. The scheme offers the potential of reducing incidents of re-offending since family bonds are strengthened.

It let me give my kids some books and that makes me feel a lot better, and they love to read the books... (prisoner)

12 Westminster Archives

Westminster Archives have run many imaginative projects working in partnership with other organizations, for example, Chelsea Football Club. During one project, in partnership with the Imperial War Museum and Adult Education, Westminster Archives ran a weekly reminiscence group for older women using Second World War archives to encourage the women to write their own stories and make postcards based on the period. They learnt how to use computers and scanned their own pictures. This project has now developed into dance and reminiscence sessions thanks to a grant from the Health Service.

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/libraries/archives/index.cfm>

13. Salford City Council, Libraries and Information Service

Memories of Little Hulton

Funded by Salford City Council

The aim of this project is to involve older people in creating an interesting and easy to read library display about the history of Little Hulton. It has developed from a previous project, *Stories of Salford*, and skills for life work. Old photographs and stories about the area are used as starting points. The participants – young and old – have learnt new skills (ICT and skills for life where necessary) and how to use a library. A website, a display and a booklet will be produced.

I haven't seen J for 20 years. If I hadn't come here today I would have just been sitting at home alone.

It is good to create something for young people to read, so that they know that we had an interesting life too.

This would be a great thing to do at every library if only we had the capacity.

Contact:

Janet Swan

T: 0161 707 9612

E: janet.swan@salford.gov.uk

W: www.littlehultonmemories.colsal.org.uk

14. Cumbria Library Service
Libraries and family literacy

Funded by a Local Public Service Agreement between Cumbria County Council and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

The purpose of the project is to encourage increased membership and use of the library by under-19s and to encourage parents and carers to take part in skills for life and family literacy courses in libraries. The project employs three community development workers who work in the community promoting libraries and reading to families and under-19s. They also work in close partnership with Cumbria Adult Education Service to run skills for life and family literacy courses. A totally new accredited course on storytelling was devised and run jointly. Ten-hour National Literacy Test preparation courses have also been run. A programme of additional courses will run from January 2005.

The partnerships developed in this project have worked particularly well. Many learners commented on the “friendly atmosphere” in the libraries.

Contact:

Sue Cochrane

T: 01228 607307

E: Susan.cochrane@cumbriacc.gov.uk

15. Canadian Museums Association
Reading the Museum

Reading the Museum is a programme of the Canadian Museums Association to encourage literacy in and through museums delivered through demonstration projects. It began in 1993 and is supported primarily by the National Literacy Secretariat of the Government of Canada. The projects involve museums and literacy programmes working in partnership to encourage learning and skills development in novel and imaginative ways.

W: www.museums.ca

Some examples of this programme:

Edmonton Art Gallery
Blue Ink in My Pen

Edmonton Art Gallery and Prospects Literacy Association collaborated on a creative writing project. The Art Gallery was an intimidating place for many of the learners so initial sessions were held at Prospects using reproductions in books. Once confidence had developed, they moved to the gallery where they used the work on display to start writing stories. The group produced a catalogue of their work with illustrations of the artworks. The students were able to develop their

literacy skills but they also gained the confidence to use the gallery for their own purposes.

***The McCord Museum of Canadian History
Literacy through photography***

The museum's collection of photograph albums was the inspiration for workshops held at the Carrefour d'éducation populaire de Pointe St-Charles in Montreal which has taught reading and writing for over 30 years. Each participant had a laser copy of an album which was studied and discussed in the workshop. This offered opportunities for developing vocabulary and spelling. Disposable cameras were then used to take pictures which were assembled into the learner's own album and captions were written.

***Centre national exposition, Quebec
26 Works, 26 Letters***

The Centre national exposition in Quebec, in partnership with the ALPHA literacy center, ran a literacy programme where learners combined discovering about artworks and artists with practising reading and writing. The programme involved language games, reading texts, presentation and art workshops. Learners worked through the alphabet identifying works and artists beginning with a particular letter. They also visited sites and met with contemporary artists. An exhibition was mounted at the end of the programme showing what the learners had learned and created.