

CASE STUDY: MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL VISITORS' EXPERIENCE

SUMMARY PAGE

Organisation	Debra Kelly Professor of French and Francophone Studies Department of Modern Languages School of Social Sciences, Languages and Humanities University of Westminster	Eilidh Macdonald Business Development & Commercialisation Executive WestmARC University of Westminster
Summary	<p>Museums and Galleries and The International Visitors' Experience project started in late 2005, when Debra Kelly, Professor of French and Intercultural Studies of University of Westminster became interested in improving the quality of culturally sensitive information provided for foreign visitors.</p> <p>The unique idea and close collaboration with the university's enterprise department has made the project successful: currently Debra Kelly with her colleagues is working with six leading London museums and galleries to redesign their leaflets. The project has a huge growth potential: besides expanding the geographical boundaries to cover museums and galleries across the UK, the initial contacts with national tourism bodies has shown there is a great demand for culturally sensitive consultancy services in various tourism sectors.</p>	
Project Start Date	Autumn 2005	
Evaluation Date	July 2007	
Primary motivators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to improve the quality of culturally sensitive info available for foreign visitors • Lack of culturally sensitive translation and consultancy service 	
Objectives	The objective is to improve museum and gallery visitors' experience	
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WestmARC (University of Westminster' Applied Research and Consultancy Dept.) • Academics' enthusiasm 	
Tensions/Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating a project is challenging and requires determination as the initial stage means a great amount of extra work beyond normal working hours 	
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple partnerships with London museums and galleries • Helping the sector change their mindsets: showing the importance of cultural awareness • Funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) • New impetus for the Department of Modern Languages 	
Lessons Learnt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time needed to develop the project idea 	
Next Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To work with museums and galleries across the country 2) To write a scholarly article of the project 3) To identify new sectors, i.e. potential customers 4) To explore the opportunity to set up a consultancy service 5) To link with other projects 6) Developing curriculum 	
Classification	Languages/Museums/Galleries	
Author	Anne Raudaskoski, University of Westminster	
Project profile		

CASE STUDY: MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL VISITORS' EXPERIENCE

1. SUMMARY

This case study illustrates how an academic's unique idea and collaboration with a university's enterprise department leads to a successful project and engagement with numerous prominent partners. Museums and Galleries and The International Visitors' Experience project started in late 2005, when Debra Kelly, Professor of French and Intercultural Studies of University of Westminster became interested in improving the quality of culturally sensitive information provided for foreign visitors at museums and galleries. Currently Debra Kelly with her colleagues is working with six leading London museums and galleries to redesign their leaflets. In less than two years the project has evolved greatly and it has huge growth potential: besides expanding the geographical boundaries to cover museums and galleries across the UK, the initial contacts with national tourism bodies has indicated that there is a huge demand for a culturally sensitive consultancy service in various tourism sectors.

2. BACKGROUND/ CONTEXT

The starting point for the project was the realisation that museums' and galleries' leaflets were of inadequate quality and lack cultural sensitivity.

2.1 Primary motivators: Need and Demand

Need

The need is to utilise the expertise of the Department of Modern Languages to collaborate with external partners, which ultimately 1) positions the department well within the university 2) feeds back into research and curriculum 3) creates useful relationships for the university which also enhance students' employability.

Demand

Museums and galleries have largely been unaware of the impact lack of cultural sensitivity can have. Debra Kelly has been able to educate the sector, and by doing so she has stimulated the demand for the project.

2.2 Objectives

The aim is to improve museum and gallery visitors' experience including non-native speakers living in the UK.

3. PROCESS

3.1 Foresight Enabling Skill

Westminster's Applied Research and Consultancy Department (WestmARC) organised a training event for academics in 2005. The project idea was introduced to WestmARC's business advisors who were interested in taking the project forward. WestmARC funded the pilot research, which was conducted in the summer 2006 with the aim to get feedback from native speakers on Tate Britain's leaflet. Academics from the Department of Modern Languages set up focus groups in six different countries - France, Spain, Germany, Russia, The Gulf (Bahrain) and Hong Kong (three different groups of Chinese speakers) - to examine the leaflet. The research produced a report with two main findings: 1) the level of most translations was inadequate 2) simply translating from English to a foreign language is not enough; it does not take into account cultural differences. For this report, on-line research was carried out by on museums' annual reports (available on their websites) and on the Visit Britain website. A recent survey conducted by Visit Britain (a national tourism agency) shows that the country has a low visitor satisfaction rating compared to other European countries. Having the findings from the three-faceted study, Debra Kelly decided to contact museums to present the discoveries to them. A round table discussion was organised in November 2006 gathering Heads of Marketing and Communication Departments from six different London museums: Tate Britain, National Gallery, Victoria & Albert, Westminster Abbey Museum, National Portrait Gallery and British Museum. All the participants were very receptive to hear the findings and willing to improve the quality

of their leaflets. Discussion also generated other areas of improvement, for instance the organisations have also become aware through our work that even their English-language leaflets for British visitors need re-thinking, and have seen ways in which their websites could be developed. Suggestions for future work, such as developing a tool kit for best practice in a translation and leaflet design process were also presented.

After the round table discussion a successful bid to Arts and Humanities Research Council was written to conduct further research, i.e. to run a series of workshops with the institution partners. The purpose of these workshops (organised between July - December -07) is to redesign partner museums'/galleries' leaflets. Each institution works with an academic from the modern languages department and with a native speaker to produce a culturally sensitive leaflet in one language (Arabic/Spanish/French/German/Chinese/Russian). During the course of the workshops the project will expand UK wide: representatives across the country will be invited to the last workshop. The process will also produce an initial model for the translation tool kit which will be developed at the next stage.

As part of the project's management system a Steering Group of four representatives (Debra Kelly, Nigel Semmens of the National Gallery, Jillian Marsh of British Museum and Jane Rosier of Victoria & Albert) has been established to discuss the project's development and exchange viewpoints.

In less than two years the project has spiralled enormously expanding to cover the tourism sector more widely: Debra Kelly has given a presentation at ALVA, a national Association for Leading Visitors Attractions, who are interested in starting collaboration with Debra and the languages department, one example being The Pump Rooms at Bath Spa. Furthermore, links have been established with the UK Inbound (the national association covering all UK tour operators), who are also interested in improving visitors' experience and would like to develop a working relationship with Debra and her colleagues.

3.2 Individual Performance

Debra Kelly's management of the project has been successful: the project idea was novel and she has advocated it in a way that has generated interest within the museum and gallery sector. Wider interest from the national tourism organisations is

clear evidence of her effective performance. In addition, working outside academia has developed Debra Kelly's commercial awareness and shown her the commercial potential of her linguistic and cultural expertise.

On the whole, the learning curve for all the academics involved in the project has meant applying one's skills and knowledge in a new context: "...until now...they have thought of themselves only as lecturers...so this is all new to them as well. They found that this knowledge that they have can be used in a completely different way...". It has also provided them an opportunity to learn more about the field of museums and galleries.

3.3 Social Networking Intelligence

From the very beginning the project has been a partnership between the Department of Modern Languages and WestmARC. Since the pilot project, the collaboration has grown to include Tate Britain and six other leading museums and galleries in the London area: National Gallery, Victoria & Albert, Westminster Abbey Museum, National Portrait Gallery and British Museum.

On a national level the working relationships with ALVA and UK Inbound have been established.

3.4 Academic Business Acumen

Initial funding for the pilot project came from WestARC. Funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council has enabled Debra Kelly to organise the workshops and being the national funding council in the field of humanities it has also given a "stamp of credibility" for the project. Another stream of funding was won from HEFCE to contribute and advise on the potential contribution of HE Departments of Modern Languages to high profile international and sporting events.

One of the project's aims is to establish an intercultural communication consultancy; WestmARC's Business Development and Commercialisation Executive Eilidh Macdonald manages the business planning and with funding from WestFocus¹ she is currently in the process of recruiting a consultant to conduct a feasibility study.

¹ WestFocus is partnership and Knowledge Exchange between higher education, small and medium sized businesses and community groups. Seven partner universities based in South/West London and

The project has also produced new initiatives: Tate Britain, for instance, is looking at new ways of widening collaboration between Tate and the university.

4. ENABLERS

WestmARC

WestmARC's support has been invaluable and, WestmARC has, in fact, guided the project from the very beginning.

Academics' enthusiasm

Academics' love and passion for their respective subject has been one of the enablers: they have been willing to work outside their already demanding and full timetables, and given their time for very little recompense.

5. TENSIONS/CHALLENGES

It is challenging to initiate a project since academics have many "competing pressures" regarding their time and, as Debra Kelly remarks, "you need a lot of determination and you've really got to be prepared to go the extra mile because otherwise it [the project] just won't happen".

6. OUTPUTS

Multiple partnerships with London museums and galleries

The project is still in its early stage, but has already created a cluster of new partnerships with London museums and galleries and other tourism bodies.

Funding from HEFCE and AHRC

The project has been very successful in winning funding from two national councils, HEFCE and AHRC.

Helping museums and galleries to change their mindsets

The current leaflets have been written from a British cultural perspective, and directly translated into a foreign language. This approach does not take into account visitors' cultural expectancies and can, in fact, be even offensive. One example of this might be issues around the question of donations rather than the payment of an entrance fee, which many visitors find confusing, especially when placed amongst the first items of information on the museum leaflet. Linked to this is the above discussed national survey which shows that the UK has low visitor welcome satisfaction ratings. The project has moved the cultural sensitivity and communication issue up in the partner institutions' priority list and the feedback from the pilot project has shown the importance of cultural awareness; if the information provided is accurate and culturally sensitive, people feel more comfortable, enjoy themselves and the overall experience is more positive.

New impetus for the Department of Modern Languages

The university's language department is one of many departments across the country having to face the same reality: a decrease in the number of students studying Modern Languages in recent years (although these have now stabilised and are increasing in some institutions), due to which some language courses have been forced to close down. The project, however, has shown the great capacity of the department, it has given new impetus for the lecturers, it will feed into student experience and, it will also benefit students enhancing their employability.

7. LESSONS LEARNT

More time needed to develop the project idea

Ideally, it would be useful to have more time at the beginning to plan the project carefully. For instance, there was no time to brief people properly before the workshop, but because there is a mutual trust between people, everything has worked out successfully. From a critical point of view Debra Kelly states; "...that [lack of briefing] could have been a problem and one thing that I need to learn is to brief people better".

8. NEXT STEPS

There are at least six next steps to be taken in the future:

- 1) To work with museums and galleries across the country.
- 2) To write a scholarly article to reach academic audiences. This would also lend academic credibility to the project (an important issue regarding future funding streams).
- 3) As the interest from ALVA and UK Inbound has shown there are numerous sectors that would benefit from the service. Therefore, the next step is to identify those sectors and develop services for them.
- 4) One of the aims is to set up a consultancy service to generate some income for the Department of Modern Languages. Beyond this, aims include the development of the profile of the Department as a provider of intercultural education, and the enhancement of student employability strategies.
- 5) To link with other projects: there is a huge potential, for example, to contribute to the Olympics in terms of improving visitor experience. The department has also got funding from the university's Centre for Excellence in Professional Learning from the Workplace (CEPLW) to enhance language students' employability and the current project with its multiple partnerships will have an important role in creating new projects and work placements.
- 6) Developing curriculum on two levels: a) the department has started to redesign their intercultural communication degrees and b) as academics get new experience along the project it feeds back into their teaching and research practices.

9. SUPPORTING MATERIAL

UPBEAT Evaluatory Matrix: Museums and Galleries and the International Visitors' Experience					
6					Global Stewardship Acting with the highest integrity and mutual respect- cited world authority.
5					Creative Leadership Inspiring and driving excellence for 'real improvement'- Nationally recognised.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of workshops: teams produce a leaflet and an initial model for a translation tool kit The project focus broadens to include British minorities and institutions' websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project leader becoming a skilled project manager; being able to generate national interest through her effective performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiating working relationships with UK Inbound and ALVA* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding from AHRC** and HEFCE Market research 	Mastery Confidence, ease & elegance in handling complexity and the unexpected- typically with Regional recognition.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A round table discussion to present findings; further development of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project leader developing her commercial awareness Academics applying their existing skills in a new context: working outside academia Learning about the museum and gallery sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with six London museums and galleries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding from WestFocus Developing management systems: establishment of a Steering Group WestmARC's Business Development and Commercialisation Executive working on the project 	Focused Professional Competence Relevant capabilities achieved for efficient & effective enterprise operation.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> R& D: a pilot project with focus groups examining a foreign section of one museum's leaflet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determination and necessary skills to develop the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academics from the Dept. of Modern Languages working for the project; the establishment of focus groups in different countries Working with Tate Britain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding from WestmARC 	Capability Building Developing necessary skills & structures for a workable enterprise.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition of museum leaflets' inadequate quality Recognition of lack of culturally sensitive information provided for foreign visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having a project idea; willingness to develop it into a project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing the idea with WestmARC's business advisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WestmARC training event: the idea is introduced and taken onboard 	Recognition & Initiation – Awareness of the basic requirements for university Reach-out to Business & the Community.
	Foresight Enabling Skill The skill of repositioning imaginative research concepts into a successful working reality.	Individual Performance Self development with a view to becoming 'best in practice'.	Social Networking Intelligence Teams utilising joint strengths to energise enhanced change.	Academic Business Acumen Academics having sufficient understanding of business language to ensure success when working with external partners.	

*ALVA= Association of Leading Visitors Attractions

**AHRC= Arts and Humanities Research Council