

Final Report

International Training Programme



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Supported by the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust

I'm very much privileged to join with 23 museum professionals from different countries for ITP 2019 in the British Museum and to be in the same frame with museum specialists, museum curators, researchers, conservators, museum designers, archaeologists, collection custodians, who are invited from all around the world (Uzbekistan, China, India, Egypt, Myanmar,

Philippines, Sudan, Turkey, Georgia, Iraq, Rumania, Colombia, Palestine & Kurdistan). The British Museum is one of the best museums in the world, and recognised as a very systematic and well organised museum with modern technology. I'm lucky enough to get the best experience from ITP; sharing knowledge, practices and cultural differences. During the ITP I got the opportunity to engage with the British Museum and National Museums in Northern Ireland.

During the ITP programme I covered the following areas both in theory and practically.

- Collections management & (Storage, Libraries & Archives, Documentation)
- Collection care (Security and Risk Management)
- Conservation and science
- Permanent displays at the British Museum
- Loans programmes
- Audiences
- Workshops (the British Museum's future plan, Equality & diversity, Train the Trainer, Cultural heritage and peace building)
- Permanent displays & Temporary exhibitions
- Departmental Time (Department of Asia)
- Subject specialised sessions
- Fellow presentations/participant led time
- Staff talks
- Object in Focus
- Day trips
- Museum project day



The areas which I have undergone during the ITP are more or less similar to the areas which I'm involved in now and I believe the international exposure and that sharing related things with international professionals would be the best things gained. The above mentioned areas which I have studied will be beneficial to me as well as to my home institution.



My ambition and ultimate goal is to become a qualified Museologist and when I'm focusing on this I do believe that it means to understand how to create a visitor and user friendly museum. Participation on the ITP has become a platform for this. I have developed my communication skills, teamwork and leadership skills there too. Furthermore, working and training under the expert professionals of the British Museum was a distinct advantage and the international exposure I have obtained is remarkable.

Institutional Programmes

To share my experiences which I obtained on the ITP, I would like to organise a seminar/workshop for all of my staff members in the department of the National Museum under the theme of "The Knowledge & Experience I gained from ITP." I hope to conduct a seminar, inclusive of presentations, regarding my museum activities; education; storage facilities; cultural activities; museum shops; data bases; video recording and model making which are currently being practiced in the British Museum and the partner museums. I would like to invite other museum staff (from archaeological museums; central cultural fund museums; memorial museums and even private museums) to Sri Lanka for the seminar/workshop too. To share and improve the knowledge among institutional colleagues I'm also planning to conduct a staff talk session.

Staff Talks

I had the opportunity to join the British Museum colleagues at staff talks. In these events the staff reflect on their current projects and programmes. The talks were wide and varied and depending on the subject talk was in a gallery or exhibition space. These kind of talks I can arrange very easily. From next year we will try do 12 staff talks, one each month, with one talk related to the present exhibitions.

Public Programmes

Currently I'm the Coordinating Secretary of the Archaeological Society of Sri Lanka, where activities are directly related to Colombo National Museum. Accordingly I can conduct public speeches in this regard. Our Archaeological Society spreads all around the country and we are conducting lectures and workshops for the general public on the 2nd Sunday of every month at the National Museum Auditorium. I would like to share my experience which I gained in the ITP among our members as well as the public.

During my public programmes I hope to conduct adult programmes, community partnership programmes and young people programmes. I observed the way that public programmes & family events were conducted by the National Museums of Northern Ireland. During my visit to Ireland I had the chance to visit four different museums. I acquired valuable information about the subjects of temporary and permanent exhibitions, museum education, public programs, outside collections, storage, and museum visitor management and collection development. The families, students and youngsters who were coming to the museum were part of the learning programmes. In Ulster Folk Museum they conducted lots of programmes to attract visitors like traditional swing boat rides, guided walking tours of Ballycultra town, carpentry (in the carpenter's workshop), printing, basket marketing, linen work, forge work and the Game of Thrones tapestry.

I'm hoping to improve our public programmes and provide a variety of community research activities. I believe this research will encourage people to use museums more effectively.

During my visit I observed that at both the British Museum and National Museums Northern Ireland the most important factor was the attention paid by each museum to the facilities it offered to children and young people. The work carried out with families, special days, projects, not only in the spaces of the museums but also in the surrounding public spaces and education institutes. I understood the significance of developing an approach which provided services to children, young people and their families. And also I learned how to deal with people from every nation, belief and tradition within the framework of democratic and equal rights and freedoms. I'm looking forward to apply these to my museum.

I would hope to initiate is by conducting the below mentioned programmes in the Colombo National Museum.

Kids' programmes

Presently in my museum there are no kids' activity corner. I would like to start at least one or two kids' activities corners in our museum. And I hope if we would have kids activities at the Museum we will become more attractive to the general public. When I visited The Horniman Museums & Gardens I noticed that it was giving a fantastic experience to the visitors to discover the world cultures together under one roof. It made me to think how we can create attractive programmes for kids. On the day we visited there were two temporary exhibitions. They were:

- *Brick Wonders* - discover wonders of the world in 500,000 LEGO bricks. From an ancient Egyptian pyramid to London Bridge and from the natural wonder of a coral reef to the modern marvel of the international space station. Travel through history and explore over 50 models made using half a million bricks.
- *My Model City* - What might the city of the future look like? And whose ideas, needs and dreams should shape it?
- Horniman Farmers Market
- Family Rave



Accordingly I observed their display methodology which was fully focused on school children, kids and families. This was very attractive - lots of school children, kids and families were enjoying the museum displays and activities. I had a great time there too. I will try to apply these kinds of activities in my museum. Among the kids I can make popular types of kid's activity like stories - making up and listening to stories; interviewing each other about objects; jigsaw puzzles; matching replica objects in a backpack with objects in cases.

Special programme for disabled person

I would like to improve disabled people's facilities. At present we are discussing with the Heritage Ministry in this regard. I would try to exhibit a few objects which visitors can touch and feel in some selected galleries.

In the exhibition area we can improve some of important exhibition captions and pamphlets by translating them into braille. The design and the appearance of the pamphlet should be both beautiful to see and soft and appealing to touch.

I will direct my museum authorities to take necessary steps to improve disabled people's facilities. As I explained earlier, a few hands-on objects which can be displayed in selected galleries will help those communities to feel the curiosity of museum objects. It is hardly seen in society that blind and deaf people are involved in museum programmes so if the department can organise an annual event especially aiming to serve those communities, it will be a great effort.

Art for deaf people

I'm hoping to display videos (in selected galleries) with sign language at my museum. Currently there are no facilities available here.

Experiences at the British Museum, UK Partner Museum and my visits

Department of Asia

On the departmental days, I gained valuable knowledge from Sushma Jansari (Tabor Foundation Curator: South Asia Collections, Asia Department) particularly her specialisation in the Sri Lankan collections, from the Hugh Neville collection. I have seen the Museum's Sri Lankan collections both in display and storage and also the related findings/records. This will be a distinct advantage for my future research publications.



Furthermore I would like to do research on the Sri Lankan (Ceylon) objects at the British Museum. By referencing the website I observed less than 300 objects which can be seen online. In 1974, a book was published by the Sri Lanka National Museum called "A Catalogue of Antiquities and Other Cultural Objects from Sri Lanka (Ceylon) Abroad." In this book it is written that there are more than 3,000 objects in UK Museums which relate to Sri Lanka.

My Visits and Temporary Exhibitions

I'm so lucky that I had opportunity to visit many cities, parks and gardens, museums and archaeological sites which are situated both outside and inside of London. All these trips enabled me to gain experience, knowledge and approaches to various techniques of exhibition and display, exhibition spaces, plans, museum audiences and education as well as information about museum programmes. It was very valuable for me to document all the areas that I visited and gained knowledge and experiences.



I like the way of conducting exhibitions (especially temporary exhibitions) and loan programmes in the UK. I had the chance to participate in temporary exhibitions at the British Museum and National Museums Northern Ireland. Those were:

- Manga and Munch - British Museum
- The Art of Selling Songs and The Troubles - National Museums Northern Ireland

The display techniques they used to attract the public for these were remarkable.



The following are my observations during my visits to these temporary exhibitions:

- The Museum's temporary exhibitions programmes are at the centre of the visitor experience.
- They provide a way of bringing new research to audiences as well as an opportunity to display objects.
- You view collections in a different way, often together with objects borrowed, in a temporary display.
- Exhibitions encourage visitors to return to see a museum's permanent collection. They can heighten a museum's profile and increase its visitors, which are likely to increase, directly or indirectly, a museum's income.
- They help curatorial research, new discoveries and relationships with other institutions.
- The world influences and shapes our temporary exhibition programmes.
- How are objects selected and who decides on the themes and structures? Who plans the layout and design?
- How are the ideas of curators presented to the public?
- How do we address the conflicting demands on museum resources for temporary

exhibitions and permanent galleries?

- What public programming is scheduled around exhibitions and why?
- What drives a museum's temporary exhibition programme? How, why and when are exhibitions scheduled into a museum's diary?



ITP global network

- Sharing knowledge
- Collaboration programmes

I will update the programmes/seminars/symposiums which I conduct or participate in and share them with my ITP Colleagues. This would be effective especially with South Asia and South East Asian countries like India, Myanmar, Philippines, and China. I would like to participate in any collaborative programme with my ITP colleagues and will update them if programmes are scheduled here in Sri Lanka. The relationship build-up through the ITP will help in the realisation of these and future projects. I believe that we can manage to work together, conduct collaborative projects and leave a gift to the world for the future.



Conclusion

I believe that museums can play an important role in education and society. Museums can invite audiences to learn and enjoy through exhibitions. The research and educational programmes which are organised by national museums in collaboration with higher education institutions and other foreign organisations will be good exposure to gain knowledge about world culture.

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Thank You Very Much ITP