

THE BRITISH MUSEUM INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME 2022
ITP 2022 REPORT BY BEATRICE ADEOLA BAMIGBADE, NIGERIA
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Introduction

My name is Beatrice Adeola Bamigbade, a museum professional in the service of National Museum of Unity, (NCMM) Ibadan. I am a Conservator, saddled with the responsibility of preserving museum collections. I have previously had the opportunity of attending a Museum Textile Conservation workshop organized by The British Museum in collaboration with National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) in Nigeria.

The ITP is top notch, I must confess! It wasn't restricted to my field alone. It sharpened my Conservation skills, educated me on best museum practice and fellows exchanged knowledge and skills.

Benefit of the ITP

The ITP made me a better museum professional, it brought me out of the confines of being a Conservator. It went above and beyond, educated me about the different departments in the British Museum, what each department does and how each decision makes an impact on the Museum as a whole.



ITP Fellows day out at Frances Carey's house

Knowing fully well that museum professionals are storytellers, the programme goes beyond information about provenance and uses of an artefact; I learnt how objects could be used to address prevailing situations in the world by passing relevant information to the museum community and its audience.

A walk in the botanical garden at the Horniman Museum, winner of the Art Fund 'Museum of the Year', in South London further enlightened me that museums are not about Artefacts alone. They could focus on the history of collections of flowers and healthy herbs; educating people on their importance, thereby improving the health and wellbeing of its audience, creating an environment for relaxation and meditation.

I wouldn't forget in a hurry the Object in focus project. I learnt how to create museum trails around museum collections. Linking objects in the galleries together, irrespective of their origins. It helps audiences relate with collections within the shortest possible time and makes tourist focus while on a visit. This knowledge will be shared with my colleagues and together we will create trails around our collections. This will help audiences to relate well with our collections, enjoy their time in our museum space and increase our audience. This is a quick win that can be achieved within the shortest possible time with the help of the management of my museum giving the go ahead to start.

I learnt a lot from the British Museum staff and my ITP colleagues at each stage. We shared our skills, ideas and experiences at the sessions and I got to know how things are done in the British Museum and fellows shared knowledge about their home museums as well.

A session with the Head of Preventive Conservation, Tatiana Marasco, educated me on modern preventive conservative techniques. This will improve our preventive conservative techniques and further preserve our collections for posterity. These current practices are cost effective and are of great advantage to my museum, too. I also learned about restoration work with the ceramic and glass conservation team at the British Museum. This is of great benefit to our pottery collections at the Unity Museum and I will pass this knowledge to colleagues in my museum through an organized session, with the help of management.

A large collection of woven narrow strips (aso-oke) which a donor gave to my museum have benefited from my time spent with the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, with Helen Anderson and Julie Hudson. Julie advised on digitizing these collections of narrow strips, getting detailed information on how each was acquired and seeking support from conservators around the world. My curator at the Museum of Unity was happy and has set out modalities on working on these collections, showcasing them to the world at large.

My UK Partner placement at the Tyne & Wear Archives and Museum and visits to smaller museums in London highlighted the same level of professionalism, work ethic and approaches as the British Museum, though, the audiences differ.

I learnt new methods of display techniques, the control of lighting in an exhibition space, the use of metal showcases instead of using wooden ones that “off gas” and can cause a reaction with objects on display. I also learnt about the use of contemporary work to tell the story of the past by displaying contemporary art and historical artefacts in the same space, which is a take home for me. I will educate colleagues in my Exhibition Department of the importance of using metal showcases and metal storage systems, though this will be a long-term project.

Impact of the UK Partner Museum

A visit to Newcastle for my UK Partnership gave me an overview of local government museum administration. Museums in Newcastle are all inclusive; they engage the local communities around them. Unlike the British Museum, which is a National Museum and engages a variety of audiences, seventy percent of visitors in Newcastle museums are from Newcastle.

Museums in Newcastle are dedicated to telling stories about the local history, discoveries, inventions and development of the town.



Remains of Hadrian's Wall at Segedunum



Newcastle Castle, where the story started

These museums organize programmes that minister to the needs of the community using museum collections. The museum takes the collections to various communities and groups of people that might not want to visit the museum for some reason. At local government level, I realized museums can be used as a therapy for the physically challenged, it helps them to recuperate. My experience at the UK Partner will help improve the Community Programmes in my museum.

ITP Global Network

Fond memories of the ITP will forever remain in my heart. It was emotional leaving after the four weeks of onsite training, but a network of professionals and friendship was born too. The ITP has not ended either, it is just the beginning of an online network opportunity. The ITP is a network of professionals who will keep learning from each other to better equip us for our future careers.

The ITP newsletters and social media platforms will help me to stay in touch and continue learning best museum practices, share skills, experiences and my wins.

With the help of the ITP, I had the privilege of meeting new professionals from diverse cultural heritages, from twelve different countries. We shared our ideas, knowledge and expertise together. We exchanged views about different cultures; for example, I got to know that Egyptians don't drink water whilst eating, water comes last during each meal.

I am glad all of the museum professionals I met at the British Museum are open to questions and I can always get in touch with them if the need arises in the course of discharging my duties at my museum. We exchanged emails for future collaboration.

Appreciation

Many thanks to The Edith Murphy Foundation for sponsoring my trip and stay in the United Kingdom. All I gained and learnt wouldn't have been possible without my sponsor. My stay and accommodation was hassle free and I didn't have to bother myself about everyday life in the UK – rather, I was focused on the Programme. I say a big thank you!

I do appreciate all supporters of the International Training Programme for believing in this vision and supporting its cause.

I wouldn't forget the efforts of Bill Griffiths, the Head of Programme and Collections Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums, and his team of museum professionals; thank you for making my time at the UK Partner Museum a memorable one.

All thanks to the ITP team, Claire, Anna and George, you made the ITP memorable and resourceful. Neither will I forget Roshan, the Senior ITP Fellow; thank you Roshan!