

Inspiring Skills for Life Learners through
museums, libraries and archives
Evaluation report



Abi Hackett
April 2006

For Life

The 16th of March in a Merchant's Hall where it started
Friendships and alliance but from their coats they're not parted
With high beamed ceiling –
bowing floorboards creaking –
Delegates surfing, coffee steaming
Crackling microphones – twinned screening for all
Speakers and delegates at the YMLAC ball
There's a jargon in the air –
a passion to be aware
and it's not what you say
It's the way that you say it
that's what gets things done
There's a chitter and a chatter
a healthy natter and a patter
There's a language scrummage
a conference rummage
About literacy, language and lifelong learning
Torches are lit, and the bonfire's burning
there's a need a demand, a spark that is glowing
Juices for what could be set the imaginations flowing
There's an earnest intent to give people a choice
to fulfil their potential and be given a voice

Terry Caffrey
March 06

Inspiring Skills for Life Learners through museums, libraries and archives

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Background

This one day conference brought together museum, library and archive professionals and adult education practitioners across the north of England to showcase and explore how museum, library and archive learning can contribute to the national Skills for Life agenda.

Skills for Life refers to the national strategy to improve adult literacy and numeracy skills; with an average of one in five adults needing help to improve their skills, this agenda is extremely significant to museum, library and archives' aspirations to appeal to a wide audience and to be accessible to everyone.

Partners

The partners involved in the management and delivery of the conference were:

- MLA North West
- MLA North East
- NIACE
- MLA Yorkshire

Aim of the day

The aim of this conference was to raise awareness of the potential learning opportunities in museums libraries and archive that directly support the Skills for Life agenda.

Objectives of the day

- To raise and strengthen awareness of the role of museums, libraries and archives in Skills for Life provision
- To showcase resources and promote opportunities available in museums, libraries and archives
- To showcase regional museum, library and archive agency work: NEMLAC, MLA North West and YMLAC
- To demonstrate alignment of activity in museums, libraries and archives with government targets and objectives
- To encourage cross sectoral partnership working and collaboration
- To encourage a positive attitude towards the key role of museums, libraries and archives in addressing the Skills for Life agenda

Date and Location

The conference took place on 16th March 2006 at the Merchant Adventurers' Hall in York.

Attendance

The target audience for the event was strategic bodies, funders and policy makers working on the Skills for Life agenda.

A total of 115 delegates attended, which was the maximum possible within the venue. The conference was over-subscribed, becoming fully booked over a month before the event.

Attendance was well balanced between museum, library and archive representatives and skills for life representatives, and across the three regions involved in the event. Organisations represented included Learning and Skills Council, Regional Development Agencies and Heads of Service from regional

Adult Education Colleges and Museums, Libraries and Archives from across the North.

Format of the day

The conference focussed on both policy and practice around supporting Skills for Life learners, with keynote presentations from Natasha Innocent of MLA, and Jan Eldred of NIACE.

Delegates were entertained and inspired by Terry Caffrey, a performance poet, tutor and Reading Champion, who gave interactive poetry readings at three points during the day. As one respondent commented,

“The poetry demonstrated that fun is the essence of learning.”



Terry Caffrey

Terry has also written two reflective poems inspired by the conference. These are included on pages 2 and 16 of this report.

The program of the day seemed to be fast moving and switching between policy and practice may have helped delegates to see the links between the two. As Jan Eldred of NIACE later commented,

"I thought it was an excellent model of how to combine national, regional and local information, have active delegates/learners, hear from a poet and be 'edutained' as well as how to model some creative approaches, and use a venue to optimum advantage and network."



Jan Eldred

The day also included more practical activities; delegates took part in a Skills for Life trail around the Merchant Adventurers' Hall, which demonstrated ways to use the 14th century building to deliver literacy, numeracy, pre entry and ESOL citizenship activities. Copies of these activities can be found on pages 11 - 15 of this report. Ten partnership projects from around the North of England also presented case studies to small informal groups, with ample opportunity for discussion and feedback.

Evaluation of the day

Attendees were asked to complete a pre-prepared evaluation form at the end of the conference. The purpose of the evaluation form was to measure and explore the Generic Learning Outcomes of the event.

Knowledge and Understanding

Feedback suggested that the conference significantly increased the awareness delegates had of the role of museums, libraries and archives in skills for life provision. In particular, the presentations, examples, case studies and speakers seemed to be most important in developing this awareness.

Delegates also stated that they had discovered a range of new things during the day. The list included contacts, information, what is happening in each of the three regions, information on case studies, about the Open Doors project and website, the range of support available and the focus that MLA has on Skills for Life.



Attitudes and Values

The evaluation form asked delegates to complete the sentence “*Collaborative working across sectors as well as cross domains is important in developing skills for life because...*” and the responses from this question showed a very strong commitment to collaborative Skills for Life work. Responses included:

- We are dealing with the same audiences and issues
- The impetus will be stronger and have greater effect on all parties involved – particularly the learners.
- It is vital to pool skills, knowledge and resources and offer service users more of a one-stop shop and get rid of barriers which may exist between the public and venues etc.
- We can help more people to access learning and we can access project funding with partners.
- We all have different, but complementary skills.
- It provides stimulus to non-traditional learners through appealing to a wide range of learning style preferences. It puts SfL into context.
- It provides learners with the opportunity to expand horizons and broaden perspectives.
- You can't do it on your own as well as you can do it together.
- We each have a unique offer, but none of us can offer it all.
- Together we can do more

In particular, many delegates noted the potential for the museum, library and archive and Skills for Life sectors to complement each other very effectively, and add value to what each was trying to achieve. Reflecting on the day, Jo Ward of MLA North West commented,

“One thing that struck me was the commonality between sectors- that we need education people and they need us, it is that common ground and seed bed that we all felt was there but became very apparent by the close of the day.”

Enjoyment, Inspiration and Creativity

Feedback shows that delegates found inspiration from a number of areas of the day. Popular responses when asked to complete the sentence “*I was inspired by...*” included Terry Caffrey’s poetry readings, the practical case studies, the speakers, the venue, the growing support available for mla work with adult learners and chance to discuss ideas with colleague from both sectors.

In particular, respondents found the opportunity to work with colleagues useful, both from an inspiring and a knowledge-gathering point of view; to swap ideas and information and hear things from a different perspective.

Behaviour and Progression

Delegates were asked about any future plans following the event. Responses included a range of practical steps included seeking partnerships, staff training, sharing information with others, and developing ideas and resources. The range of answers and the practical nature of many of the answers suggest that the conference may have a real impact on practice in the future.

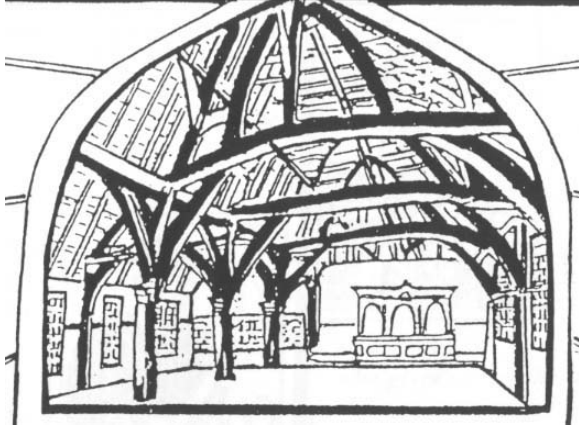
Conclusion

- 1) There is a great deal of demand for events of this sort, and a wide range of organisations from both sectors were represented on the day, which is very positive.
- 2) Delegates seemed to feel fired up and inspired after the conference, with practical suggestions for what they wanted to do back at their own organisations. Delegates also gained a great deal of factual information and contact details from the event, which highlights the need for opportunities to share information across both sectors.
- 3) Using the venue itself to showcase museum, library and archive learning worked very well.
- 4) Delegates made a number of suggestions for specific resources they would find helpful, including contact details for those attending, copies of resource packs, powerpoint notes from the presentations, case studies and a central repository for the information from today. It is intended that the Open Doors website will cover many of these needs, including providing a selection of case studies, a Learning Resources Library and a specific page providing a copy of this report and all associated information. The address is www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk.
- 5) The potential for museum, library and archive sector and Skills for Life sector to work together and compliment each other became more and more clear during the day, and is perhaps the strongest message of the event.
- 6) Support mechanisms such as partnerships, opportunities to network, and sources of information and contacts, such as the regional MLA agencies and the Open Doors website are likely to be important in moving this work forward.

Merchant Adventurer's Hall Skills for Life Trail

Delegates took part in this trail using the following activity sheets, which were a change to demonstrate some examples of how museums, libraries and archives can be used with Skills for Life learners.

These activities were created by Jan Novitzky of NIACE and Abi Hackett of MLA Yorkshire specifically for this conference and are mapped to the Adult Core Curriculum.



1. The Great Hall was built in 1361. Roughly how many years ago is this?

350 650 1000

2. The Great Hall measures 12 metres wide. How many metres long would you estimate it to be?

15m 27m 40m

- 3a. 1 metre = 3 ft 3 inches. If the great Hall is 12 metres wide, estimate how many feet wide this is.

Answer:

- 3b. Use your mobile phone (applications/converter) or calculator to check your answer.

4. Can you find a set of roman numerals (VIII) carved into the posts inside the great hall by the entrance door from reception? Do you think this is:
- medieval graffiti
 - a medieval form of pre-assembly kit
 - proof that Italians worked on constructing the building

5. In the year 1575, oak panelling was added to the far end of the hall. The area to be covered was 18 panels across and 4 panels high. How many panels were needed altogether?

Answer:

6. The angle of the floor to the walls is not 90 degrees, and yet the building is not about to fall down. Do you think this is because:
- the types of wooden joints used allow a high degree of movement
 - the Hall is built on a slope which compensates for the inside angles
 - the building is propped up from outside

Merchant Adventurers Hall, York: Upstairs rooms	ESOL citizenship
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In 2s discuss

True or False?

a) When the Hall was built (1357-61), York was the second largest and wealthiest city in England.	
b) Today, the second largest city in England is Leeds.	
c) When the hall was built, Elizabeth was the Queen of England.	
d) Today, Elizabeth is the Queen of England	
e) When the hall was built, York's wealth came from wool.	
f) Today, York's main industry is fishing.	
g) The chests in these rooms were used to keep money safe and to protect from fire.	
h) In summer, the Merchant Adventurers' Hall is open 5 days a week.	

How will you find out the answers you are not sure about?

What do you like most in these upstairs rooms? Talk to 2 other people in the room to find out what they like and why.

Which other museums in York would you like to visit? Which museums are free?

1. Can you find these four banners?



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2. Discuss with someone else in your group what jobs you think these banners represent. Write your ideas in the spaces provided. Can you find the signs that tell you what jobs these banners represent?

3. These banners are very old signs. There are also some modern signs in this room. Can you find these signs? Write the correct meaning of each sign next to the picture.







	No smoking
	Fire exit
	Audio guide

4. People made these banners to tell others about themselves and what they do. What would you put on a banner about yourself?

For examples, what are your hobbies? What is your favourite colour? Are there any animals you love?

Draw or write your ideas on the banner below.



Beautified

Museum Libraries and Archives and all

Freezing on seats on the beautified Hall

Delegates to inspire by the comments and data

York;

not the races – but the shopping comes later

Cheesecake and pasta –

even the salmon was cold

But on empowering others the conference was sold

Beautified wood and rushed away floors

hot piping coffee and un-even doors

Delegates to be inspired by the comments and data

hot water bottles in the break, to come later

Beautified people on legs made for flying

without guidance and support there's a community dying

Policies, jargon, ambition and data

Too cold for the horses, meet in the market place later

New friends and faces – dark undercroft places

Presentations and promises, old rafters galore

Sharing ideas and a reach for the sky

Its mid afternoon and we're starting to thaw

So

Its ideas, commitments, regulatory data

Attempts to change the world –

But head off for the train

The hard work comes later

Terry Caffrey

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