

LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES

INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION POLICY

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. London Metropolitan Archives**
- 1.2. Collections**
- 1.3. Aim of this policy**

2. Interpretation and Education Policy

- 2.1. Mission Statement**
- 2.2. Aims of Interpretation and Education**

3. Interpretation and Education Policy Statements

- 3.1. Interpretation, Education and Learning Practice**
 - 3.1.1. Statement of Objectives
 - 3.1.2. Management of Interpretation and Education
 - 3.1.3. Service Liaison
 - 3.1.4. External Relationships
 - 3.1.5. Staff Training in Interpretation and Education
 - 3.1.6. Learning Environments
 - 3.1.7. Resources Development
 - 3.1.8. Users
 - 3.1.9. Evaluation
- 3.2. Using collections**
 - 3.2.1. Access to Documents and Conservation
 - 3.2.2. Providing Research Tools
 - 3.2.3. Training in Handling and Conservation Skills
 - 3.2.4. Partnerships and Projects
 - 3.2.5. Different Usage
 - 3.2.6. Constraints on Using Collections
 - 3.2.7. Documents as Objects
 - 3.2.8. Using Collections as Inspiration for Diverse Activity
 - 3.2.9. Supporting Document Study
 - 3.2.10. The Work of the Archive
 - 3.2.11. Virtual Documents and Facsimiles

4. Strategy and Forward Planning

- 4.1 Strategic Aims 2001 -2002**
- 4.2 Strategic Objectives 2001-2002**
 - 4.2.1 Policy
 - 4.2.2 Access
 - 4.2.3 Integration
 - 4.2.4 Growth
 - 4.2.5 Quality

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

1. Introduction

1.1. London Metropolitan Archives

The local government holdings of London Metropolitan Archives were brought together after political and administrative restructuring in the 1960's. The London Government Act of 1963 replaced the counties of London and Middlesex with the Greater London Council in 1965 and this new body assumed responsibility for the record offices of London and Middlesex as well as the former Members Library of the London County Council. Together they became the Greater London Record Office and Library (GLRO). In 1982 the GLRO collections were relocated to specially adapted premises in Northampton Road, Clerkenwell and since the abolition of the GLC in 1986 have been administered by the Common Council of the Corporation of London. In 1997 the GLRO became known as London Metropolitan Archives and in 1999 the archive expanded further to incorporate Keats House in Hampstead.

With the addition of Keats House, LMA took on the responsibility of a visitor attraction consisting of an historic house, collections, furnishings and garden. The collections of Keats House include a specialist library, paintings and watercolours, furniture and artefacts.

London Metropolitan Archives receives over 27,000 visitors annually. They come from a wide range of backgrounds with students, architects, professional and family historians, lawyers and social workers representing the key interest groups. The number of visitors to the office has increased rapidly in recent years resulting in LMA being one of the most heavily used record offices in the country.

1.2. Collections

As the archive for Greater London, LMA is the primary source for information on the capital and its citizens. The works of successive local government bodies are represented; from the Middlesex Justices of the Peace in the sixteenth century, and the historic Commissions of Sewers, to the records of the Greater London Council and Inner London Education Authority. Housing, transportation, migration, health, education, crime and architecture are all key themes reflected by the documentary sources. LMA maintains some 36 miles of archive, making it the largest local authority record office in the United Kingdom.

A wide variety of individuals and organisations continue to pass their records to LMA for safekeeping. These include some 800 Church of England parishes in the London area, as well as courts, hospitals, prisons, charities and businesses. The archive holdings at LMA are complemented by the photographic collection which consists of over 2 million images, the reference library of over 100,000 books, a collection of 1,500 artefacts including a large number of architectural models, and the map and print holdings consisting of 10,000 printed maps, 40,000 prints and 1 million plans.

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

1.3 Aim of this policy

The Interpretation and Education Policy document aims to:

- Be accessible to all staff, stakeholders and users of LMA;
- Provide a comprehensive statement of intent regarding the development and delivery of learning opportunities at LMA;
- Define LMA's relationship with its current and potential users;
- Present the aims and objectives for interpretation and education at LMA providing a means of ensuring that exhibitions, displays, activities and publications are relevant, accessible and appealing to current and potential users;
- Identify current learning provision at LMA in order to consolidate and assess user experience;
- Provide a context for decision-making, planning and prioritisation of resources;
- Outline the strategic development of interpretation and education at LMA;
- Provide a flexible structure which strives for continuing improvement, sets out priorities, provides essential benchmarks and shapes future development;
- Raise the profile of learning at LMA, ensuring everyone is aware of their role in maximising learning potential;
- Motivate all staff to contribute new and original ideas which improve quality and efficiency of learning provision and which establish a sense of shared purpose and vision;
- Describe LMA's interpretation and education provision in relation to government policy initiatives;
- Give the means for analysing and evaluating learning experiences at LMA.

2. Interpretation and Education Policy

2.1. Mission statement

London Metropolitan Archives will provide an environment of collaboration, learning and fun in which a rich variety of opportunities exist to inspire and enable users to access and exploit archive and library resources effectively and creatively, on and off site.

2.2. The aims of Interpretation and Education at LMA are:

- To adhere to the highest standards of interpretative and educational practice;
- To provide equal opportunities for all users of the collections through cultural, physical, sensory, attitudinal, financial and intellectual access;
- Actively to encourage and develop a sense of ownership on the part of users;
- To consult with and be responsive to the needs of its users, staff and stakeholders;
- To work in partnership to achieve learning aims;
- To offer unique learning opportunities available through archive collections;
- To facilitate formal and informal learning through participation, a wide range of activities, accurate and accessible information and appropriate guidance;
- To provide learning opportunities which are highly responsive to all London's diverse communities;
- To develop a constantly improving enquiry service which strives to meet user needs;
- To develop and implement interpretation and education policies and practices consistent with the values and goals of the archive;
- To contribute actively to and implement regional and national interpretation and education policies and practices;
- To employ effectively new technologies as learning tools;
- To raise awareness of the relevance and significance of LMA both now and in the future.

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

3. Interpretation and Education Policy Statements

3.1. Interpretation, Education and Learning Practice

3.1.1. Statement of Objectives

LMA is fully committed to the provision of learning opportunities for all through interpretation and educational activities. The objectives of the archive state that LMA will provide an 'environment of collaboration, learning and fun.' The interpretation and education policy will provide the means by which all users can have an enriching learning experience.

3.1.2. Management of Interpretation and Education

LMA has and will continue to support clear lines of responsibility for interpretation and education matters to a senior management level. The Interpretation Officer is responsible for learning management and Interpretation Group meetings involving a wide range of LMA staff are held every four to six weeks, chaired by the Head Archivist. Interpretation and educational activities and skills are shared with other archive staff through induction and training, collaborative projects, sharing of information and the cross-fertilisation of ideas.

3.1.3. Service Liaison

Communication between the interpretation and education staff and the rest of the archive is seen as essential in achieving learning objectives. Ideas that contribute to the user learning experience are actively sought and welcomed. Staff are encouraged to participate in different learning activities, either to assist or as experts. Learning is a central element of the archive's function.

3.1.4. External Relationships

Networking with potential partners and establishing key contacts is an essential and powerful element of LMA's interpretation and education provision. As an archive with distinct local collections LMA actively pursues working with London's diverse communities in stimulating, active and inspiring learning activities. LMA collaborates with and seeks advice from a wide range of regional and national organisations.

3.1.5. Staff Training in Interpretation and Education

LMA actively supports the training of all staff in interpretation and education methods and values the wide range of expertise existing amongst its employees. Staff are supported in attending conferences, professional training courses and to access information which keeps them abreast of new

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

developments in formal and informal learning provision. Staff also exchange expertise through in-house training.

3.1.6. Learning Environments

LMA recognises the vital role of suitable learning environments. LMA aims to provide access, stimulating displays, well-planned room arrangements, modern equipment and comfort for users and participants in activities on or off the premises.

3.1.7. Resources Development

LMA is committed to developing new ways of communicating the collections to current and potential users. Interpretation and education staff are active in creating a wide range of interpretative or educational materials including study packs, exhibitions and website content which support formal and informal learning. These resources are being developed in consultation with users.

3.1.8. Users

LMA identifies its users, seeking out and acting upon their opinions and ideas, and responding to their diverse learning needs. Users are central to the shaping of learning experiences at LMA. Interpretation and Education staff are committed to involving all users in the shaping of policy and evaluation of activity. Current user groups have been identified through market research and include family historians, primary and secondary schools, FE colleges, HE institutions, professional historians, architects, lawyers and social workers. Users are currently invited to contribute through questionnaires, comment sheets and talking to staff.

3.1.9. Evaluation

LMA will use evaluation processes to maintain and improve all aspects of interpretation and education. Front-end, formative and summative evaluation is an integral part of LMA learning experiences, involving visitor surveys, questionnaires and testing resources.

3.2. Using collections

3.2.1. Access to Documents and Conservation

LMA users are free to access available documents to enable and promote learning. Original materials will always be provided where it is appropriate to do so, allowing users to participate in exciting discovery and making contact with primary sources. Users are entitled to make use of their research as they wish within the law of copyright and local restrictions. Information and

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

guidance will be available to support individual learning when and where it is required.

3.2.2. Providing Research Tools

LMA is committed to providing all users with the means of researching and analysing documents. High quality research standards are central to the full and proper historical analysis of documents. Users will be provided with accurate information and guidance in rigorous research methods to enhance their learning experience and enjoyment.

3.2.3. Training in Handling and Conservation Skills

LMA supports training of all staff and users in the correct handling of documents as a central part of conserving the collections for use by others now and in the future Interpretation and education staff involved in document handling sessions will have received training. They will train and supervise users in handling documents in ways which are dynamic, fun and revealing, whilst building skills. They will work closely with Conservation, Reprographics and external support in using alternative media, enabling greater access to documents for all users.

3.2.4. Partnership and Projects

LMA builds partnerships with external organisations as they make a significant contribution to interpretation and education provision. LMA has a history of developing and maintaining successful partnerships with London, UK and Internationally based organisations. Interpretation and education staff will continue to form partnerships with schools, colleges and universities, educational organisations, funding bodies, government departments, advisory groups, users, professional associations, museums, libraries, galleries and archives.

3.2.5. Different Usage

LMA values the importance of different types of user activity. All those who use LMA's resources are valued as participants in historical exploration, regardless of the nature of their research. Interpretation and Education will endeavour to meet the diverse requirements of all LMA's learners.

3.2.6. Constraints on Using Collections

LMA will protect collections which are closed to the public or which are deemed unfit to handle. In a small number of cases, access restrictions are applied in conformity with Data Protection or Public Records legislation. Where material is too fragile to be handled, LMA will strive to provide an

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

alternative medium by which it can be viewed within the existing conservation and reprographics timetables.

3.2.7. Documents as Objects

The importance of art, craft, conservation science and the diverse materials used in the creation of documents is as significant as content. LMA's documents are objects, which tell the physical history of record keeping. They reflect upon the material cultures of the past. The process of making documents is as revealing as the information they contain in words or image and learning opportunities will support this important area of LMA's work.

3.2.8. Using Collections as Inspiration for Diverse Activity

LMA wants its collections to inspire other areas of activity. The documents held by LMA can and do provide rich resources for artists, writers, designers, historians, reminiscence projects, drama activities, literacy, numeracy and family historians. Diversity and imagination fuelled by lateral thinking will broaden the ways in which documents are used, open up unexpected and surprising opportunities and encourage new users to make the most of LMA.

3.2.9 Supporting Document Study

LMA will provide additional assistance to enrich the experience of using documents. LMA provides leaflets, formal talks, exhibitions and access to knowledgeable staff to ensure that users are given a breadth of learning experience, which adds to their enjoyment and enthusiasm.

3.2.10. The Work of the Archive

LMA regards the management of document collections as a central part of the users learning experience. An understanding of the storage and conservation of documents is vital in raising awareness of the significance of LMA's work. Exhibitions and tours of the strong rooms add an extra dimension to the learning experience.

3.2.11. Virtual documents and facsimiles

Access to the collections is of paramount importance. LMA recognises that not all current and potential users can come to the archive. In order to increase access to documents, off-site exhibitions, web-site developments, and learning resource packs are constantly being developed.

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

4. Strategy and forward planning

4.1. Strategic Aims 2001-2002

The first phase of strategic development will be to establish organisational structures that support responsive and efficient service and provide a framework for long term learning goals. *All strategic development is based on a continuing commitment to access, integration, growth and quality.*

- *Access*

To ensure physical, sensory, intellectual, cultural, attitudinal and financial access to the collections for all users;

To encourage participation and strengthen the sense of ownership of LMA among all users.

- *Integration*

To integrate learning opportunities with all LMA events and activities, on or off site;

To integrate LMA's work into the activities of London's diverse communities locally and nationally;

To ensure the relevance of LMA's learning opportunities to other agendas such as employment, social inclusion, economic regeneration and neighbourhood renewal.

- *Growth*

To ensure the continued development and expansion of interpretation and education provision;

To increase significantly the numbers of new users from underrepresented groups;

To offer a wider range of learning opportunities for existing users.

- *Quality*

To provide excellent and inspirational learning experiences for all users through the creative use of materials, environments and activities;

To evaluate all activities.

4.2. Strategic Aims 2001 - 2002

4.2.1. Policy ONGOING

- *LMA will use the policy document as a tool for developing learning experiences.*

Method: Vigorous and creative application of policy in developing interpretation and education practice; ongoing evaluation,

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

updating and expansion of policy in response to all users' experiences and needs; staff experience; the views of stakeholders; new initiatives in the archive, museums, libraries and galleries sector; government legislation and the developing functions and roles of LMA.

4.2.2. Access FEBRUARY 2001 - SEPTEMBER 2002

- *LMA will consult and communicate with users, elected members, staff, owners of collections, heritage professionals and special interest groups about their experiences and use the information to improve access.*

Method: Establish Learning Focus Group; organise Partner Schools Project; provide questionnaires for regular users, and those attending specific events; network with other professionals; visit other settings; observe other practitioners.

- *Underrepresented groups to be actively encouraged to use LMA through activities that appeal directly to individuals' interests and relate to community identity:* Highly developed communication should welcome users, build self-confidence, encourage a sense of ownership and develop an understanding of history.

Method: Identify and target underrepresented groups through visitor analysis; consult with community leaders and representatives to identify learning / access needs to ensure equality of opportunity; set up programmes of activities for groups which may include Black and Asian users, young people 16-25, families, people with special needs; and young people excluded from school e.g. Islington Detached Youth Project;

Make archives contemporary in schools and other settings; raise awareness of material history through handling sessions; create exhibitions on or off site based on users own documents and objects e.g. local photographs; facilitate access by identifying material of particular interest to these groups in the collections.

- *LMA will provide access to expertise to support and advise current and potential users according to their needs*

Method: Ensure high quality staff training in communication; make available a range of materials which meet different levels of need and learning styles.

4.2.3. Integration MAY 2001 - SEPTEMBER 2002

- *Learning is placed at the centre of LMA's work.*

Method: Work closely with other sections on planning events, exhibitions, new materials and talks; build a programme of in-house learning

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

opportunities involving all staff; act on ideas and information offered by users; identify need through consultation with community groups, users and other learning providers.

- *LMA will develop learning partnerships which further learning opportunities through local, regional and national interpretation and education policy and practices.*

Method: Establish a Partner Schools Network to pilot materials and activities in development; run regular professional events e.g. INSET; set up pilot projects already identified in consultation with local representatives - After School Project, Sadler's Wells community performance project, Black History Month Citizenship events, Rediscovering Clerkenwell; run an exhibition / materials loan scheme e.g. Totterdown Fields Centenary.

- *LMA will identify funding partnerships which further learning amongst the diverse London communities served by LMA.*

Method: Consult with potential funders and stakeholders about learning projects; keep abreast of new developments in local and national funding policy.

- *LMA will contribute to high quality learning projects organised by others, locally and nationally which meet the interpretation and education policy of LMA.*

Method: Promote LMA's policy on learning opportunities through established communication networks, leaflets and mail shots, and invite proposals for projects

- *LMA will involve users in learning provision.*

Method: Establish volunteer system, initially working with family historians.

4.2.4. Growth MAY 2001 - SEPTEMBER 2002

- *Invite new users to use LMA by promoting and hosting a range of diverse events on and off site.*

Method: Tour exhibitions to e.g. schools, libraries, pubs, theatres, hospitals; contribute to local and national events e.g. Clerkenwell Festival, the Golden Jubilee, the 1901 Census; host and provide literary, music, science, art and craft based events; run outreach projects at schools, centres for the elderly, youth centres and other appropriate venues; provide talks for special interest groups e.g. Jewish Genealogy Society, Local Historians and Reminiscence Groups; attend conferences, community events and other appropriate gatherings; respond effectively to

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

unexpected learning requests e.g. a school visit, a resource pack or a speaker.

- *Publicise LMA effectively by reviewing and improving promotional materials*

Method: Review content and style of information / publicity leaflets; review distribution of publicity materials; develop website; distribute media releases - papers, radio, community pamphlets etc; make presentations; provide alternative modes of communication for different user groups e.g. tapes or large print; establish links with community leaders.

- *Manage growth effectively to ensure existing and potential users continue to use LMA in the future*

Method: Plan resourcing, funding and staffing of any event, exhibition or project to ensure LMA can meet learning demands with an efficient service, high quality materials and an excellent learning experience.

4.2.5. Quality ONGOING

- *Evaluation will be central to learning at LMA.*

Method: Carry out front-end, summative and formative evaluation through pilot projects with Sadler's Wells Theatre, Partnership Schools and Colleges, Black History Month activities, Family History events, touring exhibitions and attendance at Locating the Victorians Conference and Genealogists Fair;

Create and apply an evaluation framework based on the above research to develop and improve learning experiences; create and apply self-evaluation and performance assessment procedures; provide ample opportunity for informal users to comment upon their experiences;

Invite external evaluation of learning provision from other professionals including The Learning About London Project: Planning a London Learning Support Unit for Museums, Archive and Libraries - London Archives Regional Council, London Museums Agency, London Libraries Development Agency and London's Museums, Archives and Libraries, Society of Archivists Education Group, Greater London Authority and London Website Development Group;

Carry out a regular in-depth evaluation and review of all policy, procedures and practice.

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

- *Skills training to ensure high quality learning provision:*

Method: Raise awareness of learning issues through in-house training and attendance at conferences and professional association meetings, particularly those offered by Group for Education in Museums, Re:source, Society of Archivists Education Group, University education departments and the Museums Association;

Pursue professional excellence through continued training in teaching methods, communication and technology, particularly web and ICT development, materials production and presentation.

- *Research current and new practice in learning provision*

Method: Participate in and observe best practice in a range of formal and informal learning environments including the Public Record Office, Grafton School, Islington, Bishopsgate Institute, Sadler's Wells Theatre; Keats House and the Museum of London; appraising web sites for best practice;

Work closely with partner schools in order to keep abreast with current developments. Broaden creative and imaginative input by a variety of means, including general interest courses or events e.g. 'Writing Family History', and London Local History at Birkbeck College.

- *Market Research will be conducted to establish an accurate profile of current and potential users and their needs.*

Method: Research user experience annually through questionnaires and other appropriate means; encourage users to fill in comment sheets which will be available at all times;

Communicate with and invite response from current and potential users through mail shots, focus groups, articles in journals e.g. Family Tree Magazine, Parent Teacher publications, LMA's newsletters and general leaflets; set up heritage management research project with City University targeting specific projects.

- *Good value should be provided at all times for all users through well planned events and the delivery of high quality user services.*

Method: The giving of adequate time, accurate and well researched information, imaginative and creative presentations appropriate to need; stimulating activities, high quality resources and the undivided attention of those facilitating the event or service;

LMA Interpretation and Education policy

Enable the user, if they wish, to move forward to independent or further directed learning at LMA or elsewhere e.g. schools activities should include a pre-visit, links to ongoing class work and indicate further work which could grow from the individual event;

Gather comment on events or service delivery from users and participants