

AHRC-CRT Project Summaries

Train and Engage: Public Engagement training and funding for postgraduate arts and humanities students

UCL's Public Engagement Unit ran the Train and Engage programme between October 2010-October 2011. Train and Engage piloted an innovative structure to train and support arts and humanities postgraduate students within two higher education institutions (UCL and Birkbeck) to conceive, design, implement and assess effective public engagement projects.

The programme had four stages consisting of:

- 1) training workshops to help students develop their ideas for activities that open up their research and practice to involve people beyond the context of the university;
- 2) a competitive public engagement funding scheme; small grants of £500 were provided to students' to turn their ideas into practice;
- 3) group meetings and one to one support and guidance was provided to students' throughout the life of the projects;
- 4) a public engagement symposium held for UCL and Birkbeck staff and students to share their experiences of public engagement.

Eleven postgraduate students from UCL and Birkbeck were awarded funding under the scheme, the nine successful projects included: the creation of an informal monthly book club for members of the public to read and discuss contemporary Swedish literature in translation; the organisation of three workshops for interest groups on the theme of the representation of the physically disabled body in literature, culture and society; and a participatory art project based in West Bromwich to create an audio walking tour of the town centre which explored the place through the perspectives of people with different relationships to the town.

For more information about the Train and Engage programme follow the link below:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/public-engagement/funding/trainandengage>

The *Sensory Stories* project, University of York

Sensory Stories is an exciting, forward-thinking project that helps postgraduates to communicate with audiences beyond the university by conceiving of their work in terms of a research 'story'. These stories are told using the senses—taste, smell, sound, vision and touch—and through the use of public spaces, performance techniques and object-based interaction. In January 2011 a training day for sixty students from Northern universities was organised by an interdisciplinary team based in the Humanities Research Centre at the University of York. The event combined 'spotlights' from specialists in media communication, storytelling and the heritage sector, with practical workshops that encouraged participants to develop these skills for themselves. Further opportunities to put this training into practice were provided in a second phase of 'Sensory Opportunities'. Here small teams of students collaborated with heritage and community partners to engage different audiences, from a workshop on Norse mythology at a local primary school, to bringing the exhibits of York Art Gallery to life through a range of interactive events and performances. The first year culminated in the 'Sensory Stories Café' in June 2011, which restaged some of our most popular activities as part of the university's 'Festival of Ideas'. As the project enters its second year we are looking to develop further 'Sensory Opportunities' for new researchers and audiences. <http://sensorystories.wordpress.com/>

PEACE – Postgraduate Environmental Archaeology and Community Engagement (Matt Law, Cardiff University)

PEACE was an AHRC Student-Led Initiative (2010-2011) which consisted of a training workshop in community engagement for postgraduate environmental archaeologists, held at Cardiff University on December 1st 2010. In the morning, speakers from the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff University, Young Archaeologists Club and Techniquet spoke about how they have taken their research outside of the academic realm, outlining key learning outcomes from the experience, and offering practical advice in identifying and engaging with new audiences. In the afternoon, the participants designed number of activities for communicating environmental archaeology.

PEACE attendees were subsequently invited to trial the activities at Back to the Future?, an educational stall run by Dr Jacqui Mulville and other Cardiff University archaeologists at the Green Man Festival in August 2011. The stall explored the past interaction between people and animals through art projects, costume and displays. Over the weekend, in excess of 1000 visitors came to the stall.

A handbook of engagement activities derived from the workshop is currently being prepared and will be available as a free download in October 2011.

<http://peacecardiff.tumblr.com/>

Practical Public Engagement

This 'Practical Public Engagement' training programme aims to develop a culture of collaborative public engagement in the Humanities Departments at Sheffield Hallam University, and the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Sheffield. Each semester we organise a programme of speakers from academic and external institutions in Sheffield who discuss their experiences of engaging with the public. These seminars are well attended by both staff and doctoral students from both institutions. In semester two, a smaller number of interested students engage in a 'practical public engagement exercise' by delivering a session on a topic of their choice to Year 6 students in collaboration with Sheffield Local Studies Library. That this model has proved successful is evidenced by the fact that (1) the practical public engagement event generated materials that are now available to Sheffield school teachers (2) a number of doctoral participants from last year have gone to develop their own public engagement activities and (3) at Sheffield University this programme has fed directly into the creation of a Faculty-wide 'External Relations Committee' which is developing further links with Sheffield Hallam. At the same time, we have reflected on our experiences from last year and improved the programme in a number of ways, for example by creating more space in the programme where students can discuss the particular challenges that their own research presents when engaging the public, and by enabling students to propose potential speakers for the second half of the programme.

New Media and Academia

'New Media and Academia' was organised by four AHRC collaborative doctoral award holders brought together by the CDA Network, all keen to explore ways of engaging the public with their research. The project has a focus on new media for arts and humanities postgraduate researchers, and how researchers can raise the profile of their research as well as the museums and archives by which it is inspired. Funded by the AHRC and Northumbria University, the event itself took place at Northumbria University, 10-11 May 2011. Panels of speakers explored issues arising from the dissemination of research through new media and a roundtable discussion of nonacademic institutions NAWA (National Association of Writers in Education), Lithouses, Wellcome Trust, and Tyne and Wear Museums and Archives) provided an insight into new media and collections, and how research can help play a part in the online presence of research and collections. PGRs also

received practical training in creating podcasts, videos and a YouTube channel, as well as in how to present to a non-academic audience. Participants were invited to produce a two-minute video about an aspect of their research and to upload it to the project's [YouTube channel](#), launched at the conference. The final event was a public screening of the clips produced on the day.

Communicating Ancient Greece and Rome

A new two-year public engagement training programme for graduate students entitled 'Communicating Ancient Greece and Rome' (CAGR), run by the APGRD at the University of Oxford, has been awarded funds by the AHRC from its Collaborative Research Training Scheme.

20 doctoral students were selected from CRSN (Classical Reception Studies Network) institutions nationwide through competitive application to participate in the programme. The students travel to venues around the country to learn about and to practise public engagement techniques that enable them to communicate their research to the general public in innovative, exciting and accessible ways.

Sessions cover print, broadcast and digital media, as well as the fostering of partnerships with industries and institutions through public programmes. The participants have the opportunity to explore their ideas further through workshops and continued contact with a team of experts. Over the course of the two-year programme, participants devise and undertake their own public engagement programme with the help of our experts. In the final session, participants present their projects, their processes and results.

ResearcherCurator

Managed by Rebekah Smith-McGloin and Sarah Kerr, Arts Graduate Centre Managers at the University of Nottingham

ResearcherCurator is a two-year programme offering 24 Arts & Humanities postgraduates tailored training and mentoring, as well as practical experience of museum-based public engagement. The project is run in collaboration with Nottingham Trent University and the Galleries of Justice Museum in Nottingham; applications to participate in it were open to PGRS from a consortium of 6 East Midlands Universities

In the first year of the project, participants were asked to draw on their own research interests to develop a creative and engaging new schools resource pack to accompany the Galleries' permanent *Crime & Punishment* exhibition. Four full days of tailored training covered topics including: project management; communication skills; working with young people in schools; museums sector audiences; museum-based delivery and evaluation; and event planning. Participants subsequently used data collected from focus groups with PGCE History students to produce a new secondary schools pack to accompany the *Crime & Punishment* exhibition.

Since then, participants have had an opportunity to devise and bid for seedcorn funding to support public engagement projects of their own, these to be undertaken in collaboration with a different set of partner institutions. Three of these projects have now been funded and will be delivered by the successful groups during the remainder of Year Two. One of these will promote historical interest among children at a local primary school by introducing them to a range of historical artefacts. Another group will work with the Nottingham Contemporary art gallery to produce an online, interdisciplinary 'flash journal'. The third will collaborate with the 1623 Theatre Company in the production of a one-off, publicly-staged reading of John Fletcher's little-known *The Night Walker* (1640), as well as of an interactive public workshop about the play.



PEGS

Public Engagement in Gender & Sexuality Studies

PEGS (Public Engagement in Gender & Sexuality Studies) is an initiative which was led by doctoral students from the University of Exeter, University of Hull, University of Leicester and Newcastle University between October 2010 and July 2011. The initiative was comprised of two parts: the first a two-day training event ('Demystifying Public Engagement, May 2011, Newcastle University), and the second the creation and dissemination of resources resulting from and related to this event via PEGS (www.pegsuk.org), a new online resource for Public Engagement in Gender & Sexuality Studies.

Overall, PEGS seeks to bring together doctoral researchers from across the arts and humanities whose work is connected through a shared interest in gender and sexuality studies. In a time in which Western cultures are increasingly sexualised and traditional gender boundaries challenged as much as subtly reinforced, gender and sexuality studies are an area of research which is of relevance to non-academic and non-specialist audiences as much as it can benefit from the input of such audiences. If '[s]exuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles' (*WHO*, 'Gender & Human Rights', <http://www.who.int>), then the exploration of sexuality and gender and the discourses and language utilised for their analysis are undoubtedly of concern beyond the academy. It is essential to provide postgraduate researchers working on gender and sexuality with training opportunities which introduce and encourage public engagement as a valid and valuable aspect of such research.

The initiative's objective is to 'demystify' public engagement for postgraduate researchers and to extend the discussion of public engagement strategies and issues beyond the established tranches of academia. The training event will create a supportive community for doctoral researchers working with or on gender and sexuality studies. It will also provide them with a toolkit of knowledge and skills which they can utilise to realise the public engagement potentials of their research and to increase the relevance and validity of their work.

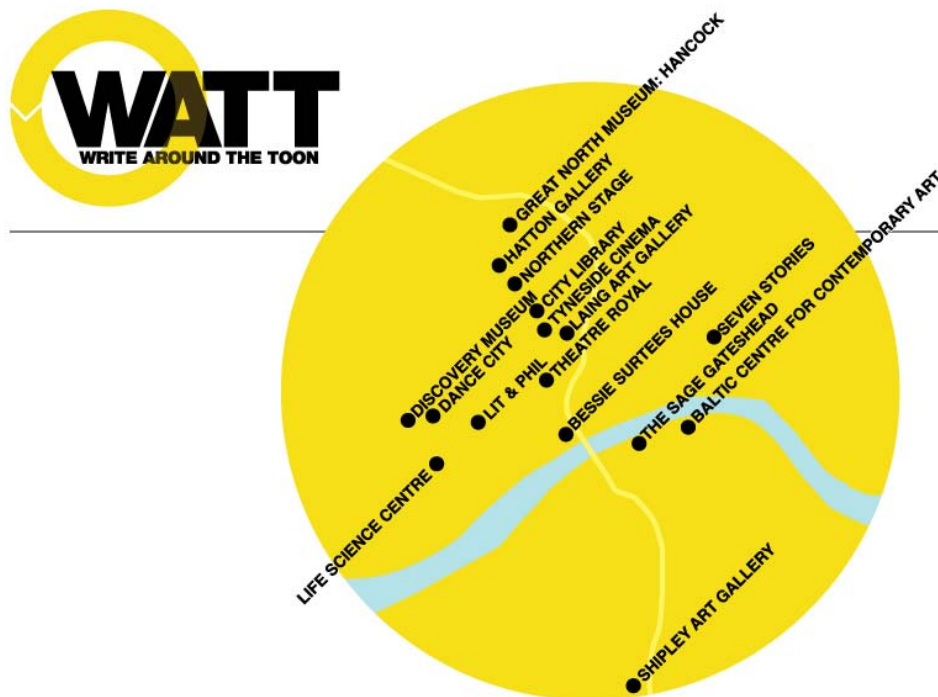
Following the success of the 'Demystifying Public Engaging' event earlier this year, Nadine Muller (University of Hull, n.muller@2009.hull.ac.uk) and Claire O'Callaghan (University of Leicester, cfo3@le.ac.uk) are currently in the process of taking the initiative further by developing the website resource (www.pegsuk.org) and identifying ways and means to expanding PEGS' objectives beyond postgraduate research. For any news about the project, please subscribe to pegs@jisc.ac.uk and for any questions and suggestions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us via email. We would be delighted to hear from you!

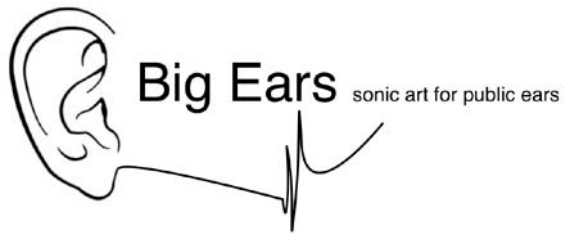
Write Around The Toon

Write Around The Toon (www.writearoundthetoon.co.uk) was run as a training exercise in public engagement for creative writing PhD students at Newcastle and Northumbria Universities, funded and supported by the AHRC and the Newcastle Centre for the Literary Arts (NCLA). Students attended a series of training seminars and were then supported through a short creative writing residency in one of 16 major cultural institutions in Newcastle-Gateshead. Each residency was unique, with activities ranging from an after-hours poetry-tour of a portrait exhibition, to creating 6-word stories about giant Japanese spider crabs with groups of school children. During their residencies, students blogged on the project website and created profiles for their hosts. After the residencies, students submitted a site-specific writing exercise based on the activities and buildings of their host. The exercises were trialled and edited, and turned into a creative-writing tour of Newcastle-Gateshead which was launched at an event at Northern Stage in June 2011. At the launch party photographs, video-narratives, audio-narratives and publications from the residency were displayed alongside large-format posters of the exercises, and students gave readings of creative work-in-progress. The tour is publically available via the project website, and since June the downloadable PDF of the whole tour has had over 1,000 views on Issuu, with the individually downloadable exercises receiving between 50-120 views each. The website remains as a lasting legacy for the project, and plans are underfoot to secure funding for the project to run as an annual training exercise for students, and to maintain the links established with the 16 host venues.

Host institutions include: BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Bessie Surtees House, City Library, Dance City, Discovery Museum, Great North Museum, Hatton Gallery, Laing Art Gallery, Life Science Centre, The Lit & Phil, Northern Stage, Seven Stories, Shipley Art Gallery, The Sage Gateshead, Theatre Royal, and Tyneside Cinema.

Project Partners include: AHRC, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Dance City, English Heritage, Haus Projects, Life Science Centre, Literature & Philosophical Society, NCLA, Newcastle Libraries, Northern Stage, RGB Limited, Seven Stories, Theatre Royal, The Sage Gateshead, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums and Tyneside Cinema.





BIG EARS - Sonic Art for Public Ears

“Big Ears” is a public engagement training tailored to doctoral students with a music background, in particular for those with an interest in new technologies. PhD students, at any stage of their studies, are selected for a travel bursary that enables them to come to the Sonic Arts Research Centre (SARC) at Queen’s University Belfast. At SARC they receive specifically tailored training in communication skills, public engagement and hands-on experiences in linking with a non-specialist audience, facilitated by Northern Ireland’s leading children’s arts organisation, “Young at Art” (www.youngatart.co.uk). The training course receives input from several Queen’s University departments that specialise in public engagement and in work with children, such as the Communications Office, the School of Education, the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work.

The Sonic Arts Research Centre offers expertise in the area of ubiquitous mobile and gaming technologies, and the training benefits from experts in the field of sensor technologies, haptics, instrument design, composition, as well as improvisation and performance practices. A Belfast based iPhone application developer as well as the artistic director of the ‘Young at Art’ organisation also input into the training program.

The final day consists of PhD researchers working closely with around 25 local children to produce sonic art performances or objects, which are showcased in the evening of the same day. The event is staged at SARC, a cutting-edge space, geared towards new technological developments.

The training and overall concept was designed by performer and lecturer Dr Franziska Schroeder from the Sonic Arts Research Centre (Contact: f.schroeder@qub.ac.uk), and is run with the help of artistic director of the former Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL).

AIMS:

- To provide innovative training in public engagement for doctoral students in the performing arts
- To create vital links between the University and a professional arts organisation with invaluable experience in public engagement
- To deliver stimulating ways of teaching communication skills
- To offer skills in designing, managing and planning a project involving a non-specialist public
- To provide hands-on experience in working and designing with a non-specialist public
- To provide opportunities for students to share their research with a wider public
- To provide a collective doctoral student experience



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