



Viva Volunteers!

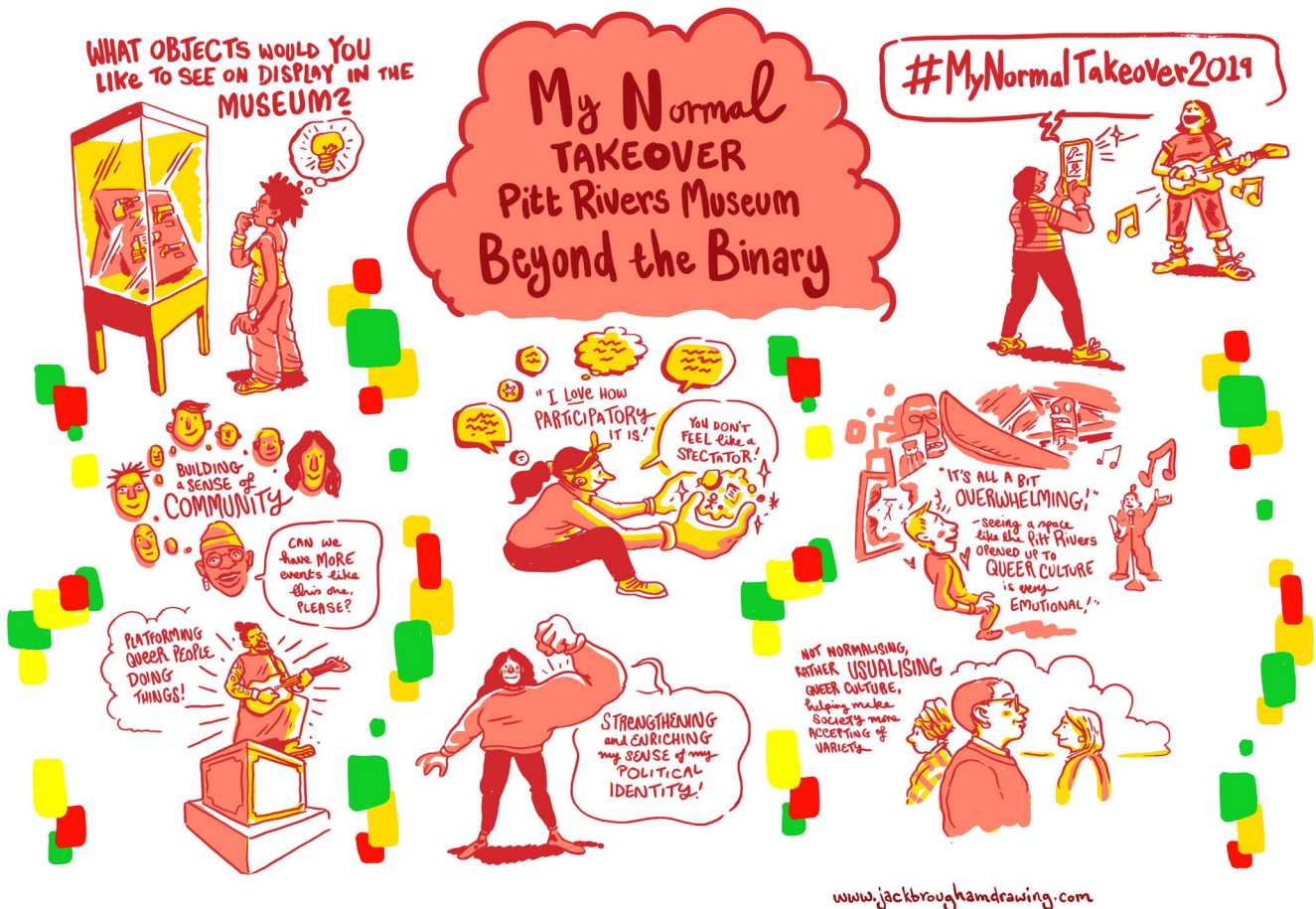
Oxford University Museums Volunteer Service

January - March 2019



UNIVERSITY OF
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Beyond the Binary

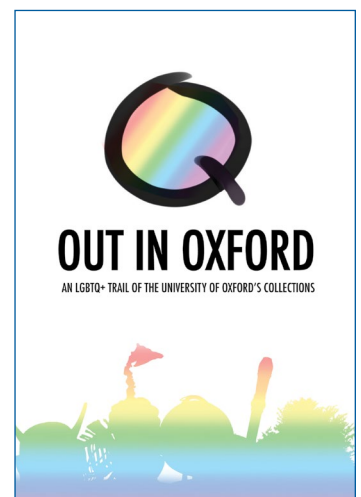


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February saw the launch of the Pitt Rivers Museum's new project, 'Beyond the Binary: Queering and Questioning Collections and Displays'. The project kicked off with the 'My Normal Takeover Event', run by a local LGBTQIA+ Youth Group and supported on the night by museum volunteers. Project staff look forward to working with more volunteers over the coming months, as the project is all about co-production, and there will be opportunities to get involved in lots of different ways, including event planning, research, exhibition curation, and object collecting.

To find out more, visit the project [website](#). Plus, keep an eye out for upcoming volunteering opportunities, as well as information about imminent, relevant changes to our volunteer registration form and diversity monitoring and reporting.

And, finally, this seems like an ideal opportunity to remind everyone about the 2017 'Out in Oxford' booklet, an LGBTQ+ trail of the University's collections, in which volunteers who identify as LGBTQ+ or allies use objects to highlight their personal perspectives and experiences. The booklet is available to download free [here](#). There is also a free web app featuring audio description for blind and partially sighted users, as well as BBC Oxford interviews with some of the volunteers, available to download [here](#).



Out of the Deep

To accompany the new 'Out of the Deep' display at the Museum of Natural History, members of staff from Front of House, Public Engagement, Earth Collections, and the Volunteer Service worked together to set up a new object handling activity, which has been running 11am - 1pm on alternate Saturdays since December. The sessions are led by an enthusiastic team of nine volunteers, whose aim is to encourage visitors to engage with local marine fossils and learn about Plesiosaur life in the Jurassic seas. There is a range of objects for visitors to look at, including ammonite, belemnite, and plesiosaur models, 3D prints of Plesiosaur vertebrae, and a selection of fossils from the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. So far, over 1,000 visitors have been engaged in the activity! In fact, although the sessions were originally due to finish at the end of May, their popularity means that they will now continue every Saturday, June through September, and we are currently recruiting a few extra volunteers to top up the team.



A chance for volunteers to write about objects significant to their volunteering...

'My Favourite Object...' No.13

Your name: Sue

Your chosen object: Pipistrelle Bat

The museum the object is in: Museum of Natural History

What connection the object has to your volunteering: volunteering at the Halloween half term activity 2017 'Bats, Cats, Witches & Charms'

Why you've chosen the object: I had no idea the Pipistrelle was so tiny until I emailed Carly Smith-Higgins to clarify her Creepy Critter notes on specimen handling at the event. I've made my own bat hat and lucky bat amulet that fitted in a matchbox.



Welcome Back... and Still Here...

Caroline returned from maternity leave at the beginning of March, and is now working 4 days a week (off on Wednesdays). Thanks to some extra funding, we have been able to keep her maternity cover, Hayleigh, on for a bit longer - through July. Whilst Hayleigh continues to run the day-to-day service, coordinating the 'Activity and Event' volunteers and responding to general enquiries, Caroline is focussing on reviewing the volunteer policy and staff guidance documents and on working with staff across the museums to shape new volunteer roles. She is particularly pleased to be working with Rana Ibrahim at the History of Science Museum on a new Multaka object handling opportunity - more on that in a future newsletter...

We are also glad to still have Michalina Szymanska working two days a week in the office, helping with volunteer admin, Better Impact enquiries, and data analysis and reporting.

Two Dates for the Diary

Now that Caroline is back, we will be running our 'Volunteer Management 101' training again. The (tweaked and updated!) training not only covers the ins and outs of the Museums' Volunteer Policy but also addresses the ethics of volunteering and best practice in volunteer management. All staff tasked with thinking about and/or acting upon volunteer issues are strongly encouraged to attend. The next session will be 1 - 4 pm on Monday 17th June, at the Museum of Natural History. Get in touch if you would like to attend.

Also: advance notice of the annual Volunteers' Summer Party, which will be 5 - 7 pm on Wednesday 5th June, at the Museum of Natural History. This falls within [Volunteers' Week](#) (1st - 7th June), when we are hoping to offer volunteers a variety of staff-led tours as a way to say thank you for all of their enthusiasm and support.

@GLAMVols

The Volunteer Service now has its own Twitter account and a very adorable mascot, 'The Vole-unteer', courtesy of and thanks to [Miruku](#). Please remember to tag @GLAMVols whenever you tweet about what volunteers have been doing. We love to see and hear what everyone has been up to, and it's a great way to celebrate volunteer achievements.



In Other News...

- Hayleigh and Michalina have had a busy quarter. Between January and March they inducted 24 new volunteers at seven Public Engagement inductions. They also worked their way through six very full filing cabinet drawers of volunteer records, 'cleansing' old folders and re-ordering the system. They have also been continuing to get to grips with the new volunteer database and sharing their knowledge with staff and volunteers alike at drop-in and one-to-one sessions.

- And on the subject of the database, a reminder that the staff side of it is called 'Better Impact', whilst the volunteer side of it is called 'MyVolunteerPage' or 'MyImpactPage'. There seems to have been some occasional confusion about this, so just to reassure everyone that we are all talking about the same thing but that different people will know it by different titles. If in doubt, just call it the volunteer database! :-)

- On 25th February, BOBVol (our regional [Heritage Volunteering Group](#) network) met at the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre to discuss 'involving volunteers in planning' as a main topic. Joy is currently Secretary to the group and has also been attending National HVG events, including a recent conference at the Museum of London.

- On 25th March, Joy, Caroline, and Hayleigh attended 'Boundaries and Empowerment' training, delivered by Refugee Resource as part of the Multaka-Oxford project. The training focussed on working with people who have been forced to leave their home countries, but had much wider relevance and application, including to generally working with volunteers. It explored why boundaries are important and how they can, in fact, be empowering, and we hope to incorporate certain aspects into our updated 101 training.

We hope you've enjoyed this edition of the quarterly volunteer newsletter!
If you have any volunteer news you would like us to share in our next issue (April - June 2019), then please get in touch - we'd love to hear from you and share your volunteer news.

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