

Oxford University Museums and Collections Discover Arts Award



The People

Oxford University Museums and Collections

The Project

Building on a pilot developed by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge University, the Oxford University Museums (the Ashmolean, the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Museum of Natural History and the Museum of the History of Science) decided to deliver the Discover Arts Award through their *Family Friendly Fun* programme. This enabled the museums to utilise their existing programme of high quality, regular family provision offered through creative drop in sessions at weekends and during the school holidays.

A bespoke logbook was created to act as a mechanism for collecting evidence for the Discover Award. Offering Discover Arts Award via the *Family Friendly Programme* allows families and children the opportunity to validate their learning as part of a wider nationally recognised scheme and qualification, and also offers a structured approach to visiting the museums and taking up their *Family Friendly Fun*

offer. Delivering Arts Award in this way means the museums can continuously facilitate Arts Award Discover without investing in additional provision of workshops or other delivery.

The logbook design and production was coordinated by Miranda Millward (Arts Award Coordinator across the four museums), Chris Parkin (Education Lead – Museum of the History of Science) and each museum's *Family Friendly* representative. As well as developing museum specific content, the logbook had additional pages to offer flexible ways of working. Children recorded the *Family Friendly Fun* sessions they had attended (they had to attend at least one) as well as giving the option of recording their participation with other museums or other arts activities.

The graphic designer (Nick Wood) and illustrator (Sarah Hoyle) really understood the need to create a visually appealing and easy to navigate logbook and just before the logbook went to print it was decided to make it A3 size rather than A4 to give more space for children to be creative and collect evidence.



My children have a particular penchant for one museum, so this provided an excuse for us to go other museums. They really enjoyed the imaginative tasks.

”

A flyer was created to promote the pilot project and between early December 2013 and mid-January 2014 it was displayed in each museum near the Family Resources and at all *Family Friendly Fun* sessions. A number of families were also recruited via word of mouth, with families picking up the flyer then telling other families about the opportunity.

Families signed up via email and were emailed instructions on how and when to collect their logbook. We did not meet the children and families (unless they attended a drop in session) until the celebration event in May.

A short electronic survey was devised and circulated to collect evaluation data from parents towards the end of the pilot and this been really useful for informing the development of this project.

Successes

We were delighted with the high quality original design of the logbook and felt confident that it was clear and would be easy for parents and children to navigate and collect evidence in. With the logbook we provided a further set of instructions and a *Family Friendly Fun* programme.

We were really pleased to recruit 31 children between the ages of five and ten to the pilot, which began on January 18th 2014. By the deadline of March 14th we had received 24 completed logbooks back – a return rate of 77.4%.

A *Family Friendly* representative from each museum, along with the Arts Award Coordinator, met up for a

A lovely way of enabling my daughter to focus on a particular aspect at the museums and think more carefully about what she saw. Educational and thought-provoking.

”

moderation afternoon. All 24 logbooks satisfied the Discover Arts Award Criteria so we had a 100% pass rate! It was really gratifying to look through the logbooks and to see how individual they all were. It was lovely to see how each logbook looked different according to the child's personality and to see which *Family Friendly Fun* sessions they had attended. Parents had gotten involved too, sometimes helping children make notes about what they had seen or experienced and sometimes making small drawings or sketches themselves, or photographing the activities children had been doing.

We held a special celebration event to bring all children and families together. As well as food and music, we had face painting, object handling and craft activities for the families to enjoy. This celebration event acted as a chance to present certificates and return the logbooks to the children – we also wanted to say a 'thank you' for participating in the pilot and spending so much time and effort completing the logbooks. We were delighted that Caroline Bray (Museums Lead from Arts Award) agreed to come and present the certificates, which made the event extra special.

This was a fantastic project, and one that the whole family has been able to get involved with. I would certainly recommend it to others.

”

Challenges

- Owing to funding structures, we had to complete the pilot before the end of the financial year – this meant that the families only had around eight weeks to complete their logbook and make their museum visits, which was quite a tight timeframe. The three families that couldn't complete the logbook by the deadline cited a lack of time being the only factor. Ideally the families needed longer to complete the logbook.
- Developing the content across four museums and then translating this into the logbook design was a challenge. We had a good idea of the style and how we wanted it to look but it was sometimes difficult to imagine how the final design would look.
- The museums were often very busy when families were trying to complete their logbooks – this sometimes made it hard for the children to work directly in their books. Taking photographs to work from later on at home or providing a sturdy folder to lean on might alleviate this.

- Keeping in touch with the pilot families before and during the process was a challenge as this was largely done via email with lots of friendly reminders, instructions and updates. It was hard to know if everyone had received and understood emails as not everyone had the time to reply – ideally it would have been good to have a dedicated webpage for support.
- There was also a worry that families might not fully complete logbooks and hand them in with vital Arts Award criteria incomplete but still expect their Discover Award – luckily this didn't happen, probably because we sent out lots of friendly reminder emails and clear instructions.
- We were lucky to be able to apply internally within the museums to Oxford ASPIRE (funded by the Arts Council England as a Major Partner Museum) and receive an Innovation Fund grant to fund the pilot. Artswork also provided support by part-funding the training of Advisers across the four Oxford University Museums. These subsidies made the pilot possible.

The activities were well chosen. It was much easier to suggest my daughter engage with one exhibit rather than trying to cover a substantial part of the museum.



The layout and illustrations were beautifully done and I quite wanted to complete a logbook for myself!



be tied to the time constraints of the pilot so families can take longer.

- The pilot was free of charge for all families – in the future we will not be able to pay all the costs of the logbook and the certificates so we need to consider how to make it financially viable.
- We need to create website support for families.

We felt that creating a bespoke Discover logbook for families in line with our museums and collections worked really well. We are currently developing designs for a Discover logbook that can be used specifically with schools.

Influence on future approaches

We learnt a huge amount from delivering Family Discover Arts Award. As well as the things we noticed during and after the pilot, we also asked parents to fill in a short electronic evaluation. We are now in the process of developing the pilot so we can roll it out further. The main learning points we will be focusing on are:

- Children worked hard on their logbooks and were sad to hand them in for assessment – we are working on creating a decorative receipt that they will be given in return for their logbook whilst it is temporarily with us for assessment.
- We need to revise some of the content to make it clearer or more appropriate to Arts Award.
- The A3 logbook provided a great space for children to work in but some families found them cumbersome. We are looking at providing a stiff plastic folder with the logbooks to provide protection and give a firm surface to lean on while working.
- We need to allow families more time to complete the logbooks – in the future we won't

Credits

Written by: Miranda Millward, Arts Award Coordinator for Oxford University Museums

Article commissioned by Artswork

Edited by: Laura J. Smith
Artswork
laura@artswork.org.uk

www.artswork.org.uk

