

Diversity: the heart of it

Wednesday 30 January 2008, Thinktank, Birmingham

Heritage and arts organisations, archives, libraries, museums and community groups have been involved in a range of 'diversity' projects over the last decade. These have included exhibitions, community websites, outreach projects, contemporary archiving, Slavery 2007 and Black History Month events, oral history programmes, positive action traineeships and continuous professional development for staff. But **do we really know the 'meaning of diversity'?**

This seminar will examine these experiences and their impact, but the day is also designed to **encourage a dialogue about diversity and explore where we might go next**. We have brought together three very experienced speakers who will present their view of diversity and unpick their experiences of working both 'at the coal-face' and at the strategic level.

We will discuss

- what diversity tends to mean and what it could mean
- what an inclusive view of diversity might achieve
- how diverse views might influence the heritage sector at all levels
- how to genuinely open a dialogue with communities
- how organisations can respond, particularly through active engagement and workforce development.

You will leave knowing more about what it means to put diversity at the heart of your organisation. The day will be a mix of speakers and case studies, with time for reflection, discussion and planning ... and it is our aim to make it challenging.

Who should attend?

- Managers, curators, project officers and learning & access professionals from the heritage, archive, arts, museum and library sectors, and associated professions working on community engagement
- Community, public sector and voluntary sector workers involved in (or planning) heritage projects
- Those involved in policy development in the cultural sector in local authorities, the MLA Partnership, Government bodies, the voluntary sector and funding organisations

The detailed programme is shown overleaf, and the latest information about this conference (and booking form) can be found on the GEM website: www.gem.org.uk

How to Book

All delegates should complete a booking form and return it – with payment if possible – to

GEM Office, 131 Trafalgar Street, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 4RP.

Tel/Fax: 01634 853424. Email: gemoffice@btinternet.com

Refreshments and lunch will be provided.

PROGRAMME

09.30 Registration & refreshments

10.00 Welcome to Thinktank

Julia Kingston, *Thinktank Education Manager & GEM Convenor West Midlands*

10.05 Introduction to the aims and style of the day

Ian Blackwell, *GEM Conference Organiser*

SESSION 1

10.15 **Do we really understand diversity?**

Izzy Mohammed, *Outreach & Education Officer, Birmingham Central Library & Archives*

This session will consider whether we completely understand diversity and the fundamental social imperative to engage with it; this will be from the perspective of the ground-breaking *Connecting Histories* project. Izzy has a particular interest in how the heritage sector may play a more prominent, interventionist role in the life of communities.

10.45 Discussion 1 – questions & group work

11.15 Feedback

SESSION 2

11.30 **What does a diverse organisation look & feel like?**

James Friel, *Heritage Access Officer, Black Environment Network*

James will explain how he supports ethnic minority communities to engage with the heritage sector, while working closely with heritage organisations to support them in building the confidence and capacity to work effectively with community groups. His role involves giving policy and practical support to a wide range of groups and organisations wishing to address social inclusion within the heritage sector.

12.00 Discussion 2 – questions & group work

12.30 Feedback

12.45 Lunch

SESSION 3

13.45 **Diversity – then, now & where next?**

Michael Cooke, *Director: Learning and Social Policy, MLA West Midlands*

Michael will examine the current practice of diversity within the context of multi-culturalism and explore its usefulness. He will argue that now, more than before, the sector needs to go beyond prescriptive concepts of diversity and rediscover the ideas of cultural exchange, dialogue and inclusion.

14.15 Discussion 3 – questions & group work

14.45 Feedback

15.00 Refreshments

SESSION 4

15.15 **World Café** – small group activity to explore ideas, network and plan.

This is a focused open space forum facilitated by speakers and specialists where delegates have the opportunity to engage in a number of discussions on a variety of issues in their own way.

16.15 Feedback

16.30 Conference ends