



Film-making projects **A SHORT GUIDE**



UK MEDICAL COLLECTIONS GROUP

1. Introduction

'Medicine at the Movies' was an innovative project which invited adult learners to use medical museums as inspiration to make a series of short films.

Six museums each worked with a different group of learners, most of whom did not typically visit museums. Learners used the museums' collections and spaces to develop their own stories about medicine and health. With the help of a professional film-maker they learnt the skills to make their own films, interpreting the collections in creative, funny, moving and challenging ways. You can watch the films at www.youtube.com/user/UKMCG.

The project demonstrates how museums can be accessible and stimulating learning environments. It also provides evidence that when people are invited to create their own interpretations of museums, the results build stronger community connections and lead to lasting partnerships.

Delivering a film-making project brings challenges and might be a new approach for many museums. This guide provides an outline of how similar projects might run. Although the suggestions are not inexhaustible they will hopefully serve as a useful reference point as well as encouragement to try such a rewarding project. Good luck!

WHY MAKE FILMS?

For learners:

- Film-making will be a new skill for most people, so a project like this can generate interest and excitement.
- Learning a new skill brings increased self esteem and confidence. It also maintains motivation as different aspects of the film-making process are taught throughout the course.
- Learners can gain satisfaction and

enjoyment from developing their creativity. Many adults lack the opportunity to be creative.

- Films are easily shared via the internet so learners' work can be widely celebrated, further enhancing their self-esteem and pride in their work.
- Telling a personal story through film can also be a meaningful experience. Learners can use the film as a lasting resource for friends and family, or bring attention to an issue they feel strongly about.
- Learning new technical skills can increase learners' employability and help them discover new potential career paths.

For organisations

- Films bring collections to life by interpreting them in a new way, revealing 'hidden histories' behind objects.
- Film projects develop the connection between an organisation and its audience by involving learners in creating new interpretations, promoting shared ownership of the collections.
- Films are a lasting resource which can be easily shared within the organisation and with a wider audience via the internet.
- Films in the galleries enhance existing interpretations within the museum, attracting a wider range of visitors.



Filming Ken in a straitjacket in the foyer of Worcestershire Royal Hospital for Ragbag



Drawing specimens at the Hunterian Museum, London

2. Beginning your project

There are several things to think about before you start your project:

- **Aims and objectives:** think about these in terms of your participants as well as your organisation. How will the project benefit learners?
- **Target audience:** Are you aiming to target underrepresented groups? How does this fit in with any other projects and your organisation's overall strategy?
- **Partnership:** We recommend working with community partners, which will help recruit participants and maximise the impact of your project. This could be part of your audience development strategy. Which groups might be interested in partnering you on a film-making project? How can the project help you develop relationships with partners?
- **Legacy of the project:** how will it be sustained? How will the films and other resources be used after the project?
- **Case Studies:** Have other

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Participants at the Edward Jenner Museum learn to use film-making equipment

organisations done similar projects? They can be a good source of advice and support.

- **Branding:** have a name for the project and if possible a logo. This can be particularly effective in partnership projects to create a shared purpose and vision.

FINDING PARTNERS

Here is it a good idea to start early! It will be much easier to recruit participants if you work with a partner organisation, particularly if you want to target specific groups of people. Consider as many groups and organisations as possible that might help to target participants.

Working with one organisation will help to create a cohesive group as the learners may already know each other, but widening your search will help increase take-up. Consult with potential partners at the outset, before you agree your project plan and schedule so that participants can have input into the planning and timeframe. People can't always meet to your schedule and may need time to think about what you're offering. Find out what learners will need to enable them to participate fully in the project: travel expenses, childcare, help with communication or other learning support? What can you or a partner organisation do to help?

Once you have identified some potential

partners, set up a meeting and make personal contact as soon as possible. They will probably want to see a poster or document summarising the project - have this ready, and keep it clear and simple (you can always redraft it taking into account their input).

Once you have agreed to work together, it's a good idea to draw up a partnership agreement outlining what each organisation will contribute. It need not be a legal document (unless you are providing finances or grant funding) but will provide a useful reference point for if you reach confusion or disagreement. The agreement should cover the practical arrangements, and may include the following:

- Who will be the lead point of contact from each partner?
- Who has overall responsibility for project management, including monitoring outputs?
- Who will manage the budget, and any staff or contractors? If you are each contributing finance, be clear on what costs each partner will be responsible for. If your project is externally funded, ensure you agree what documentation (e.g. receipts, invoices, project monitoring data) each partner needs to provide in order to meet the funder's requirements.
- Who will be responsible for internal and external communication?
- How often will you meet to review progress?
- What will you do if either partner becomes dissatisfied with the project?
- Who will be responsible for evaluation?
- How will you collect and store personal data (e.g. participant information) to comply with data protection legislation?
- Who will hold copyright in the creative product?

Case Study:

The British Dental Association Museum wanted to work with adults with learning disabilities as part of the development of its learning programme. The museum was unsure about how to approach this audience, so worked with a local specialist arts organisation, Siren Arts & Advocacy. Siren recruited the participants and provided key workers to support the participants during the film-making workshops.

RECRUITING A FILM-MAKER

The film-making mentor facilitates the process for participants, teaching them the relevant skills and ensuring the process is accessible, engaging and fun! As such they are a key member of your team and it's worth spending time finding the right person.

Start by creating a commissioning document, setting out:

- Overview of project.
- Aims and objectives.
- Background information on your organisation and your project partner.
- Person specification for the role, including qualifications and experience.
- Project timescales, including expected amount of contact time with participants.
- Required outputs.
- Fee (consider whether you want to invite tenders 'up to' a specific amount, or give a range for applicants to pitch within e.g. £4000-£6000.) Be clear about whether the fee includes expenses and VAT.

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- **How to apply:** specify what information you need from potential film-makers, e.g. examples of previous work; details of how they would approach the project; action plan and pricing structure.

Then think about how you will distribute the document. The Thackray Museum publicised the tender for 'Medicine at the Movies' via Screen Yorkshire which promotes the film sector in the region. You could also use personal contacts, ask other organisations for recommendations, and use local artists' networks.

Consider who else you could contact who has film-making expertise. They may be able to help look over the tenders for you, and clarify who you'd like to interview.

Case Study

The Edward Jenner Museum was fortunate to already be working with a professional film-maker as their 'Artist in Residence'. Her local contacts with organisations who worked with ethnic minorities were key. She was also able to advise other museums on finding a suitable film mentor.

Interviews/further contact:

Knowing what you're looking for in a film-maker helps to recruit the right person for the particular style and nature of your project. Here are some things you might want to discuss at interview:

- **Past experience:** has the film-maker worked with this target audience or other similar groups before?
- **Teaching styles:** how will the film-maker motivate learners to try different skills?

- **Staffing:** do they work alone or can they call on other freelancers? If your learners will be working in small groups to make more than one film, they may all want the expertise of the film-maker at the same time. Additional staff can help here.
- **Equipment:** do you have your own equipment, or will you expect to hire theirs? How many professional cameras will they bring? Will small camcorders/flip cameras be used? Again, all learners may get to the stage of needing the professional camera at the same time if they are making more than one film.
- **Timing:** how many sessions do you want to offer, and does this fit in with the needs of your learners, the quality you're looking for in terms of the end result, and your budget? Make sure that the time needed for editing the films at the end of the project fits with your overall schedule.

- **Previous work:** What kinds of styles of film can they help participants make, and how flexible can they be with this? It is useful to view previous examples of work so that you can see if it is the quality and style you're looking for.
- **Evaluation:** how involved do you want them to be in evaluating the project? What experience do they have of evaluating the process and outcomes?
- **Contingency planning:** how will your film-maker deal with unexpected issues e.g. poor attendance and drop-outs? Think about your own contingency plans here, especially in terms of budgets and overall project deadlines.

It's also a good idea to consider:

- **Copyright issues.** Be clear on who will have ownership of and distribution rights for the final product.
- **Training needs:** is training available

to support freelancers if this is a new target group? Your partner organisation will probably be able to help with this.

Contracts with successful candidates should include

- specific outputs expected (e.g. number of workshops, number of finished films to be supplied and the required format).
- contact time outside of the core workshops (e.g. meeting times mid-project, introductory and celebration events).
- supply of equipment (especially for editing).
- legal and health and safety expectations: do they have appropriate insurance (e.g. public liability), a CRB check, and a health and safety policy? You may need to take copies of relevant documentation.



Terry gets into character in a still from *The Fabulous Tale of Mrs Eaton*

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'Making Of' Documentaries

- 'Making Of' Documentaries can be a great way of recording the full project and ensuring that the learning journeys are celebrated as well as the end results. They can also record the outtakes and unexpected moments which make the project memorable! If you expect your film-maker to record the process and/or create a documentary film of the project, ensure this is clear at the outset and written into the contract. Alternatively this may be better done by a different film-maker brought in specifically to fulfil that brief.

Case Study:

The George Marshall Medical Museum struggled initially to find a film-maker with the right qualifications and experience for their project. The project manager opted to delay the start of the project until the right person had been found, even though this created time pressure. In retrospect this was absolutely the right decision. The museum found an experienced film-maker with the right combination of skills and knowledge, resulting in a positive experience and very high quality films.

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

Use your partner contact to find out as much as possible about your target audience. You might want to ask:

- Are this target group likely to be interested in your project?
- What would be the barriers to them getting involved?
- Have your partners ever been involved in something like this before?
- Do partners have any

expertise/experience/contacts who could help you (especially film-making expertise)?

- What questions will your potential recruits have about the project?
- Are there any times/days that they think the participants would(n't) be able to meet? (this avoids clashes with events at the partner organisation).

Publicity posters can be redrafted with the above in mind.

It may be that there are other sources of funding, equipment or expertise which the partner organisation could tap into to support your project - it's always worth asking!

Consider how else you can reach out to your target audience. You could put posters in places where your audience would visit, or advertise in publications they would read. Try contacting associated organisations who can help to spread the word



A still from silent movie *Ancient Aids*, which tells the story of the hearing aid

Case study:

The Thackray Museum was working with CoHearent Vision, a local Deaf centre, but made the regional RNID office and Hearing Dogs for the Deaf aware of the project. These groups then publicised the project on their own websites and sent electronic mailouts to other interested parties, resulting in a high level of interest in the project.

Taster sessions/introductory meetings

These are a great way of developing interest in the project and allowing people to find out more with no commitment.

- **Publicity:** Your partner organisation can help to publicise a taster session, and details can also be added to your website and sent as a press release to local media.
- **Timing:** Make sure they are held at convenient times of the day or evening to suit your target audience.
- **Introductions:** Having your film-maker at the taster helps to build relationships with potential participants straight away. Your film-maker can also begin to film the project so that you have a record from start to finish. Getting people's initial reactions to camera can help with planning your first few sessions.
- **Overview:** Let people know in brief what the project is all about. Keep it clear and simple, and try to predict what people will want to know (typically how much time the project will require, what they will learn, what the end product will be, and what's in it for them!)
- **Taster activity!** Give people a flavour

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of what they will be doing. This could be showing a related film (or clips) to inspire and give ideas, having a speaker (linked to the film industry?) or getting people involved in a low risk/fun short sample activity

- **Refreshments:** show you appreciate their attendance!

Don't forget to make any preparations if your group has special needs – see 'running sessions' below

Signing up to the project

The taster is a good opportunity for people to sign up to the project, so have a sign up sheet ready. Keep it simple but get contact details from everyone who is interested. Email addresses definitely help to maintain informal and regular contact throughout the project. It's also a good idea to ask people to indicate their preferred session days and times, from your suggested list.

Explain when you will be in contact again, and keep this fairly swift to maintain the momentum of the project. Follow up with a letter confirming the times and dates of sessions. Having a tear-off slip with SAE or your contact details makes sure that you have a confirmed list of participants. Finally, give your contact details so that they can ask any questions in the meantime.



A still from the Old Operating Theatre film
The Journey of Blood

3. Running the Sessions

Several things need to be decided in order to make the sessions as successful as possible:

- **Timing and length:** Two hours in the evening might be best if people have been at work; longer sessions might be more appropriate if your group can meet in the daytime.
- **Refreshments:** have these ready as people arrive, and build in time for a break. Buying cakes and biscuits is always money well spent! It creates a positive atmosphere from the start.
- **Location:** check this is appropriate for the needs of your group, with access for those with disabilities, easy to find, close to toilets etc. Have signs to welcome and direct people.
- **Teaching and learning styles:** decide which styles will work best with your group. Will learners appreciate structured sessions, or a more fluid approach? Some skills might need modelling as a group to build confidence, e.g. storyboarding and editing. Other activities can be directed by the learners themselves. Your first session will be helpful in establishing this, in discussion with your film-maker and the participants. A lesson plan will help to ensure that the objectives for each session are met.

Case study:

The Thackray Museum's deaf and hard of hearing group appreciated clear, specific and short instructions. They appreciated knowing what was expected at each stage of the process. Few had IT experience so whole group instruction on editing, followed by individual support worked well. Their increasing

confidence with the technical equipment made longer more independent sessions with the cameras possible.



Gary portrays the isolation and confusion of an ECT patient for Ragbag

- **Film genres:** Be flexible with the type of film learners wish to make – this encourages ownership and enjoyment of the project and makes it more likely that learners will remain involved. At the same time, guidance needs to be given to help shape and develop ideas.
- **Pace and motivation:** Having different activities and sections to the session can help here. Be aware of when pace is lagging – are learners ready to move on, and are they able to do so? Giving 'breathing space' in each session is important, but it's good to keep sessions feeling purposeful. Time between activities can be used for informal evaluations. Learners could also use flip cameras to document their own and each other's progress so far.
- **Facilitation:** ensure you have enough staff on hand to facilitate the process, particularly if learners lack confidence. Good facilitation is essential to ensure that everyone enjoys the process and has the chance to participate fully.

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- **Timing:** Ensure you have a good balance between planning, creative work and editing, and particularly for participants to review and sign off the finished films. Don't underestimate the time needed for editing, particularly if equipment needs to be shared.
- **Reflection:** build in time to review the session at the end - see evaluation section below.
- **Celebrate:** Recognise achievement and build relationships by highlighting 'great performance'. Use humour to nominate 'stars' of each session - or ask for nominations from the group! Set up a projector and show examples of work if possible.



George Marshall Medical Museum participants with their film-making mentor

- **Next steps:** Send people away with a hint of what's coming up next session to maintain motivation and encourage attendance (but don't forget to get the group's input into this to ensure ownership of learning).
- **Workshop log:** keep a diary of the sessions to note what went well, any issues and next steps. This helps with week to week planning as well as final evaluations.

Towards the end of the project:

- **Timescales:** remind the learners so everyone is clear on how much time left for their project.
- **'Rushes':** Agree a date with your film-maker on which you will see these.
- **Pre-screening:** Plan a session where learners see the films after editing. Take feedback and allow time for further editing - by the learners themselves or your film-maker.
- **Credits:** Confirm details on credits/logos/names to go on end of films.

Case Study:

The Hunterian Museum worked with a group of older learners, most of whom were unfamiliar with technology. The project facilitator and film-maker worked hard to find a genre that the participants were comfortable with and that enabled everyone to contribute on an equal basis. Facilitation skills were needed to ensure that more confident learners didn't 'take over' the project. The museum bought user-friendly flip cameras and used drawing as a way of engaging learners with the collection. The resulting film, '10 words to John Hunter', is a thought-provoking collaboration between the 10 learners who worked on the project.

EVALUATING SESSIONS

Your evaluation should be linked to the aims and objectives of your project. Think about how you will use the information you collect, both during and at the end of the project.

It is important not to overburden learners, and to make sure the

evaluation doesn't interrupt the main activities. However, gathering feedback will ensure that learners are actively involved in shaping the project and help you to deal with any issues as they arise.

It's a good idea to use both formal and informal methods, and methods which will gather qualitative as well as quantitative information. Some suggestions are:

- **Use film and technology:** flip cameras can catch quick 'soundbites' and can be used by learners themselves to document each others' views. Using the professional cameras for evaluation with pre-planned questions can give the feedback more status. Some learners however might be wary of speaking to camera and prefer to give more confidential feedback.
- **Digital photos** are also useful for reviewing progress and can be annotated by learners to record views on the project. They also make good end-of-project mementoes and can be used as part of the design of your final DVD cover. A group shot is a good idea!
- **Match to the group:** different methods of evaluation will suit different learners. Quick feedback methods could include stickers on a wall chart, traffic lighting responses, graffiti walls, learners drawing their responses, weekly diaries.....there are lots of ideas.
- **Sharing:** in partnership projects it's useful to share the success and pitfalls of different approaches.

It's important to show that you have acted on feedback. Explaining what you have changed in response to evaluations makes the process meaningful for all. Quantitative data can also be displayed each week, helping to monitor and celebrate progress.

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Case Study:

Evaluation should take a form that participants are comfortable with. With many audiences it is important to keep written feedback to a minimum, particularly if English is not their first language.



Using images to tell the story of surgery in *The Journey of Blood*

The Thackray used a postcard-style evaluation card at the end of every session, with two thermometer pictures inviting learners to rate on a scale of 0-100% their enjoyment of each session and their confidence in making a film. The back of the card provided space for further written comments. Conversely, the Old Operating Theatre Museum worked with a creative writing group. They used the group's enthusiasm for writing, providing notebooks for participants to keep during the project which provided valuable evaluation material.

4. Celebrating the project

Making films lends itself well to a celebration event; small informal screenings or high profile 'red carpet' style premieres are both excellent ways of recognising and sharing the

achievements of the learners. You will need to consider:

- **Timing:** It's a good idea to set a date as soon as possible so that all participants, and partner organisations can attend. Afternoons are good if people need to travel; weekends mean friends and family can attend.
- **Location:** this needs to have easy access for all and with the necessary equipment for a 'big screen' viewing (existing equipment might need to be supplemented with specialist hired-in equipment – you can discuss this with your film-maker).
- **Guest list:** this is a good chance to celebrate the learners' and organisation's work with a wide audience, as well as all groups and individuals who played a part in the project.
- **Invitations:** professionally designed invitations increase the status of the project.
- **Refreshments:** good quality food and drink makes the occasion special.
- **Format:** decide whether you will include presentations from staff and learners. Project partners might also want to be involved. It's also worth allowing some time for Q&A.
- **Other celebrations?** You might want to have a number of celebration events, including screenings at your partner organisation or elsewhere in the community.

Case Study:

The Edward Jenner Museum held a premiere event at the museum and invited learners to bring families, friends, as well as involving the museum's partners and stakeholders. The event helped to raise the museum's profile in the local community as well as giving

participants an opportunity to celebrate their work. The shyest of the group, Grace from Kenya, was even able to stand up and talk about her experiences at the launch party, something she would never have contemplated at the beginning of the project.

5. What next?

Having a single project DVD containing all the films made as part of your project helps with evaluation and future publicity as well as being a souvenir of the project for all who took part. Think about how the films will be collated, (especially in partnership projects) and set aside budget for this finished DVD to be designed and produced. Plan this early: ensure you know what format the DVD producer will require films to be provided in and make sure you have all the logos and names necessary to ensure accurate credits.

Hosting the films on sites such as YouTube and Facebook means wider publicity for your project. The UK Medical Collections Group's YouTube channel is at www.youtube.com/user/UKMCG.

- **Signposting:** What opportunities are there in the local area for people to further develop their film / media skills? Tap into expertise of film-maker and pass on courses/leaflets to learners.
- **Sustaining relationships:** What opportunities are there to continue to be involved with your organisation? Refer back to your plans for the legacy of your project.
- **Moving forward:** What have your learners taught you about your organisation? This might be in terms of access, content, strengths and areas for development. Think about how could these ideas could be put into practice and how your learners could help you.



Watch the films made during Medicine at the Movies at www.youtube.com/user/UKMCG

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