SHARE Museums East

Co-creating Community Projects

an introductory guide

SHARE Museums East
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NORFOLK Museums & Archaeology Service
Supporting excellence, resilience and cooperative working in museums in the East of England.

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Introduction

Museums of all sizes know that engaging communities, whether they be local, distant, young, old or specialist, is central to their role. Museums also know that audiences can be engaged in different ways. A museum can focus on developing innovative permanent displays aimed engaging all visitors. Museums can also work more directly with their audiences, providing handling collections or offering sessions to various groups of people, such as school children. Museums can take their collections out to communities; this might include taking collections into health-care settings and providing reminiscence sessions. Alternatively, it might involve taking handling boxes out to schools. There are numerous ways to engage audiences and although museums are very good at reaching different groups, working with a community can be a daunting task and it can be difficult to know where to start.

More recently, there has been an emphasis on working with communities in a collaborative manner. This has in part been driven by the desire of funding bodies to see increased audience participation in the development and delivery of heritage projects. As a result, terms such as co-creation and co-curation are becoming more common; however, quite what these terms mean and how to go about developing a co-created or co-curated project are not always clear. In response to the current prominence on developing projects in collaboration with audiences, the SHARE Museums East Museum Development team has commissioned the following introductory guide. This guide provides an overview of what co-creation is or could be, drawing on a number of case studies. It provides information on issues that museums might need to consider when exploring the practice of co-creation, and through the case studies, it provides examples of good practice designed to inspire museums to work with their audiences in new ways.

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This report was researched and written by Zelda Baveystock following a brief from Share Museums East.

Natasha Hutcheson
Regional Museums Development Manager
East of England

Part I: Definitions and issues

1.1 What is co-creation?

Co-creation is the practice of involving people in the making of anything a museum can produce: object interpretation, displays and exhibitions, educational resources, artworks, websites, tours, events, festivals – you name it, it can be co-created. The people involved might be individuals, or they might belong to a community group or to another organisation, but critically they are not part of the museum's staff or governing structure.

There are differences of opinion over who should initiate a co-created project. Some people believe for co-creation to be significant and genuinely meaningful, that it is the participants who should define the project's goals, and not the museum. This guide takes a more pragmatic approach, and defines co-creation as any participative work undertaken with the community for the mutual benefit of all involved.

Co-creation is sometimes referred to as co-curation, when talking specifically about exhibitions or programmes. For the purposes of this guide, the terms are used interchangeably.

Case study 1: 'Swaffham: Within Living Memory' project at Swaffham Museum

Swaffham: Within Living Memory is a classic example of a co-created project which will be familiar to many museums even if the terminology of co-creation isn't. With funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Swaffham Museum recruited more than 30 new volunteers to collect oral history interviews from across the local community about their lives in the locality. The volunteers were trained in interview and documentation techniques, and each has sourced and undertaken at least three interviews from their own contacts and from contacts supplied by the museum. So far, more than 70 interviews have been recorded, with more on the way.

The memories collected are being used in a variety of ways: on the website, in new exhibitions, in new early years, KS1 and KS2 education resources, and in an audio guide for a walking trail around the town. Some of this work has been shaped and undertaken by the volunteers, although the museum's two paid staff maintained the strategic lead. The museum has also introduced a popular monthly 'mardle' or coffee morning run by volunteers, where people drop in to share memories and photographs in a social setting.

Swaffham: Within Living Memory was undertaken in response to evaluations which commented on the disappointing lack of 20th century local history in the museum. The museum's core audience is mainly touristic, so connecting with local people and showcasing their personal stories is part of a longer-term move to broaden the museum's appeal to local residents. The project has literally brought new voices into the museum, diversifying and strengthening its relationship with a wider range of local people, and getting them actively involved.

1.2 Why is co-creation considered important?

Co-creation can most bluntly been seen as a necessary strategy for survival: by listening to people's needs and by involving them in active participation the museum remains relevant to existing and potential audiences.

The Museum Association's Code of Ethics stresses this need for a fundamental focus on public service. The museum should "seek the views of communities, users and supporters and value the contributions they make ... [and] actively involve them in developing policy". By working in partnership with others in the community, the museum promotes a shared sense of ownership.

There is also a strong sense that audience expectations in a digital age are changing. People expect less and less to act as passive consumers, but rather want to interact and contribute something. Co-creation is one way that people can participate.

But the value of co-creation can also be more than audiences and ownership. Involving a wider range of people in the museum's outputs develops the notion of the 'democratic museum', where the museum is conceived as a space for debate (the 'forum' rather than the 'temple'). Co-creative practice can help people develop new skills, confidence and self-esteem, strengthening the museum's potential to act as an agent of social change.

Case Study 2: The History Wall at The Bridewell Museum

As part of its recent re-fit, the Bridewell Museum in Norwich wanted to find a strong, visual statement for the new entrance which would set the tone for the museum. Using Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and a dedicated website, it invited local people to contribute their photographs of Norwich to be used for a giant photo mosaic.

More than 9,000 separate images were contributed, including images from the collections and from the Picture Norfolk archive. Local photographer Nick Stone created two street scenes, each made up of photographs of Norwich's most iconic and recognisable buildings 'stitched' together. A specialist company, Pollytiles, then turned the street scenes into mosaics made up of the thousands of contributed photographs using specialist software. These were made into two substantial back-lit panels to hang in the museum's entrance.

This project shows the power of social media to involve large numbers of people, and the desire for people to contribute something. Although the level of participation was basic, the end result has produced a stunning display which communicates pictorially that the museum is about Norwich's people and their relationship to the city, and that the whole is made up of thousands of tiny parts. The Facebook and Twitter sites continue to be used, and are providing effective communication tools for promoting museum events. The photographs have brought new people to visit the museum, looking to find their contribution, and have even re-united two family members who had lost contact with each other. Co-creation doesn't always need to be complicated to be effective!

1.3 Issues of power, authority and control

Much of the debate around co-creation centres on the degree to which control is handed over to participants. Some people wouldn't consider the Bridewell project (see case study 2) to be truly co-creative, as participants had little say in the final outcome. There is either an implicit or explicit sense from many writers on the subject that the more the museum yields power, the more valuable co-creative work can be.

This debate can be off-putting if you are just starting out on the road of participation. Nina Simon makes a strong case not for valuing one type of work over another, but rather for having thought through the implications of your decisions. Her influential book, *The Participatory Museum*, stresses that what is important is that you have a strong understanding of what you are asking people to be involved in, and are able to express this clearly to your partners and stakeholders.

You might find it useful to consider the way Simon categorises participatory work as operating on one of four levels. She classifies projects as being:

- Contributory: here the relationship is mainly at the level of consultation. Participants might make a limited contribution e.g. lending a treasured object to an exhibition curated by the museum, but have no decision-making capacity.
- Collaborative: here the museum works with others to produce something, but staff make many of the critical decisions and remain in overall control. Most of the case studies in this guide fall roughly into this category.
- Co-creative: here the community defines the goals of the project from outset, working with the museum to implement them. The museum may facilitate skills development to help participants, or input expert advice on collections care, exhibition design etc., but the community is supported to make all critical decisions to meet their needs first and foremost. The relationship between the museum and participants is driven by core ideals of equality and reciprocity.
- Hosted: here the museum wholesale hands over a space or resources to a group to implement their own work in. This guide does not discuss this type of work.

Case study 3: 'Remembering the English Trader' at RNLI Henry Blogg Museum

This project shows how the boundaries between collaborative and co-creative projects as defined above can often be blurry, with different approaches being adopted at different times to meet the various needs of all involved.

The RNLI Henry Blogg Museum celebrates the life and achievements of Coxswain Henry Blogg, the RNLI's most decorated lifeboatman. A key exhibit is a lifeboat, the HF Bailey, from which Blogg led one of his most notorious rescues in 1941 of the merchant vessel, the English Trader. Five lives were lost during the rescue, including one lifeboatman, but their extreme bravery in high seas saved 44 crew.

The museum initiated a project to re-interpret this story for its 70th anniversary with a local secondary school, gaining funding from the HLF. A pre-existing team of volunteers researched the rescue thoroughly; HLF resources enabled them to go deeper than their normal approach to research, and to learn new skills. The research was fed to the school's Drama Group, who wrote a play about the rescue under the guidance of a teacher. A draft of the script was commented on by the research team for accuracy, and the museum gave guidance on how to handle the sensitivities of portraying an event that is both in living memory, and has surviving relatives of those who died living locally. But otherwise the Drama Group were given free rein to shape the project as they wanted. The two resulting performances took place actually on the lifeboat in the museum, literally 'bringing the object to life' for the audience. DVDs of the performance were distributed to all those involved, including relatives of the original crew tracked down through the research process. The results of the research will also be used to produce Key Stage 2 educational resources, which are being put together by freelance consultants.

Although initiated by the museum, this case study shows how successful outcomes can be reached by giving others the scope to shape a project as they think fit. This process is not without its complexities. Originally the museum had hoped pupils would get involved in the research process as well, but this proved impractical. The volunteer research team wanted the drama production to be longer and in more depth (to reflect the detail of their research), but this wasn't suitable for the Drama Group's needs or abilities. Similarly, ideas for a parallel art project with a local Junior School never came to fruition. Co-creation requires both flexibility, and an openness to adapt your ideas to meet the needs of others.

1.4 Issues of sustainability

One of the greatest challenges of co-creation is maintaining the relationships you have developed with the people you have been working with. The theory is that individuals and groups forge a stronger relationship with the museum as an institution by having a say and getting involved in its practices. But in reality, the relationship often remains on a personal level with an individual member of staff, which may quickly fade away if they leave or change role. The institution remains as remote or disconnected as before.

There is no simple, quick-fix solution to this conundrum. Participatory practice needs to be embedded throughout the institution at all levels, ensuring that it is not isolated as a 'special project' to be run by one or two staff. It is an institutional ethos, to be communicated and practiced by everyone and to be a core focus of all activities.

There are very few museum services which have achieved this in reality, and this is why claims for co-production and community engagement have been criticised. But this should not undermine the very good work that has been done, or deter you from trying something new. It is helpful to think of co-creation as an on-going process that may never be fully achieved, but that can bring significant results along the way.

Case Study 4: The Cardiff Story

The Cardiff Story is a new museum which opened in 2011. The impetus for its creation was from the Council, who initially wanted a space to showcase the history of Cardiff as part of Cardiff's wider regeneration and tourism strategies. The project started completely from scratch, with no collections, no displays and no relationships with the people of Cardiff.

The project team realised very early on that for the museum to become embedded in the life of Cardiff, it would need to connect to residents and provide them with something that they would want to visit and get involved with. Extensive consultations with an enormous range of individuals and groups were carried out, firstly on the broad question of what Cardiff history meant to them, then how it should be displayed, and then what themes should be covered.

From these consultations, the museum started to form more lasting relationships. Three specific Advisory Panels were formed (an Access Panel, a Learning Panel, and an Academic Panel) which were made up of people with particular knowledge who were willing to give advice and guidance throughout the development of the project and beyond. A programme of temporary exhibitions was started, which helped continue the process of dialogue, and also developed relationships with people willing to lend objects. As word spread, more and more people came forward with stories to share, offers of material, and opinions on what should be done.

After several years' hard work, the museum is now fully up-and-running, featuring two main galleries of permanent displays. It is rich with objects lent or donated by people from across the city, and tells many different aspects of Cardiff's long history. The museum also has a dedicated a space for temporary community-led exhibitions. These are co-created by different groups with the assistance of a Community Curator. They are so popular that the space is currently fully booked with requests for exhibitions until 2015.

This approach to museum-building, embedding community input at every step, shows that co-creation can be as much a mind-set as method of work. The museum is now planning for its next phase of development and is fully committed to working with more groups to create the next set of displays.

1.5 Issues of authorship

Whilst some people may feel that involving people external to the museum in interpretation practice is challenging the museum's authority, most now accept that it is an excellent way of recognising that there are a number of opinions and responses to collections, all of which are all equally valid. By valuing different types of knowledge alongside traditional museum expertise, the museum becomes more open and democratic: a place for dialogue not monologue.

But there is evidence to suggest that for some visitors at least this is a challenging idea: they still expect the museum to be the voice of authority. For example, the Manchester Museum's 2008 exhibition on Lindow Man was

strongly criticised by local press and members of the public for presenting not a single story about this Iron Age man in his environment, but rather showcasing a range of different modern perspectives. These were based on the opinions of a scientist, an archaeologist, local community members, curators and a pagan, all of whom had been involved in earlier consultations about the exhibition. (Sitch, 2010)

To counter the criticisms, the Manchester Museum ended up introducing a graphic panel to the start of the exhibition to explain their approach. It is worth considering how explicit you make the process behind making exhibitions to the visiting public, whether they are co-created or not. For example, do you routinely tell visitors who has written exhibition texts, or only when people outside the museum have been involved? The same principles can be said to apply to any of the museum's outputs.

The Cardiff Story (see case study 4) makes it explicit whose point of view is being represented by naming contributors on all object labels. Some objects are interpreted with quotes from oral history interviews with people who used or owned similar items, or for whom the object has sparked a memorable story. For older objects, or for objects where no oral history could be sourced, the interpretation is explicitly named as having been written by an 'expert', whether from within the museum or by academics and professional archaeologists. Crucially, the museum makes it clear when the 'voice' of the museum is that of a member of staff, and when it is that of someone else.

1.6 Issues of quality

Co-creation is sometimes criticised for producing poor quality products for the general visitor who has not been involved. This is because the emphasis in co-creative projects is normally placed on the underlying processes rather than the end product, with resources allocated accordingly. For example, exhibition budgets for community-produced exhibitions are often far lower than those for permanent displays or high-profile curator-led exhibitions, with less input from professional designers into the layout, graphics, lighting and so on. There is no reason for this to be the case. It is important in funding applications not to put a lesser cost against the making of a co-created product than you would do normally.

Of course, quality experiences are not just about production values. As with the issues of authorship, it is worth keeping the general audience in mind in all your discussions with participants, reminding them that the work that they produce will be viewed or used by others. Sharing your expertise in what different audiences need and like is an important part of the process. Co-created work still needs to be interpreted in much the same way as any other museum product.

Part 2: Co-creation in practice

2.1 So where do we start?

Most museums have engaged with some level of participatory practice at some time or another over the last decade. Museums run predominantly by volunteers, for example, will be well versed in making things happen using the skills of the local community. A useful starting point is to take a step back and re-consider all the ways in which people have been involved in recent years – who, how and with what result.

From here, consider who from your local community has potentially been excluded from your museum – as a visitor or a volunteer, or representationally in the stories on display. Working co-creatively might help you to rectify these exclusions and omissions.

2.2 Understanding 'community'

'Community' is a word that is used ubiquitously and uncritically in museums, cropping up in mission statements, policy initiatives, funding applications and everyday conversation around the work that we do. It is useful shorthand to describe any number of things – from the residents that live in a particular area, to people with a specific ethnic background, to any group which has a shared common interest.

Whilst considering who might be excluded from your museum, spend some time unpicking the ways in which you use the word 'community', to get a better understanding of what it is you are aiming to do, and what the hidden assumptions are. If you decide to target explicitly one type of community, make sure you have researched it thoroughly first. Getting a sense of the nuances and differences within a community will help you understand where potential conflict or differences of opinion might occur and will better prepare you for the work ahead.

Case Study 5: 'Out in the Open' project at Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service

'Out in the Open' was an umbrella title for a series of projects working with people who had experienced homelessness. The museum service aimed to increase public awareness of accommodation issues, to combat negative perceptions and stereotypes, and to create a greater sense of ownership of the museum by local people who had experienced accommodation issues. The museum collections had few objects relating to homelessness so another focus of the project was collecting objects, oral histories and photographs which represented the issues as well as individual's stories. The project was funded by the Esmée Fairburn Foundation.

A first step was to understand what 'the community' of homeless people meant in the local context. It is not a homogenous group, but rather encompasses a wide variety of people who are experiencing accommodation difficulties, whether in temporary accommodation, hostels, refuges, sleeping rough, or "sofa surfing" - sleeping on friends' sofas. There are a number of different services offering support and assistance in the two towns: churches, drop-in centres, enterprises which administer the Big Issue, sheltered housing, night shelters and health care facilities. Being homeless thus encompasses a wide diversity of experiences and touches people from all walks of life. Understanding this diversity became key to the project, and key to the aim of challenging people's stereotypes.

Museums usually focus on telling people's stories through objects but as homeless people often have few material possessions creative approaches were essential to enable people to share their experiences in different ways. Each project worked with at least one key partner as a means of reaching participants, and most used artists as facilitators and trainers. In 'Life's Rich Tapestry' women associated with the Colchester and Tendring Women's Refuge worked with artist Alison Stockmarr to create a textile artwork. This wove together personal experiences and photographs provided by the

participants. In 'Belongings' the photographer Anthony Luvera worked with people associated with Beacon House (a health care facility), to create assisted self-portraits and photographs of things that were important to them. 'Street Angels' worked with two artists and five different organisations to create a book about the people who provide homeless support services.

An essential element of all the projects was building trust. This enabled participants to share their experiences openly and feel confident that the information would be used responsibly and in accordance with their wishes. The process of building successful relationships naturally takes both time and strong people-skills. It might need you to challenge your own preconceptions about people and what they are capable of. If you can remain open to possibilities, you are more likely to get the most unexpected and successful outcomes.

2.3 Understanding your institution

As well as understanding the people you want to work with, it is equally necessary to understand the institutional context you are coming from. Co-creation is unlikely to work if practised by a 'lone wolf', but rather needs to have been thought through as a part of the museum's overall mission. You need to be able to articulate why you are adopting participatory practices, and what their value is to your museum.

There is as strong a need for frank and open discussions within the museum as there is with the partners you are working with. What are the institutional barriers to 'letting go', what are people's concerns? Where are there differences of opinion? For example, a Trustee may think that participatory work will produce results that are of poor quality, a conservator may have concerns over the public handling certain collections, a curator may have concerns over accuracy or authenticity, a marketing officer may feel that community-based work is not what the wider public want to see, a volunteer may feel that others are getting to do work that they would like to do themselves, or that their contribution to the museum is being under-valued. All these concerns need to be recognised and addressed, in order to start to work towards a unified vision of what it is you are seeking to achieve.

Nina Simon has published a highly useful table of questions to ask yourself during this period of self-examination which will help you define what level of community engagement activity you are aiming for. See:

http://www.museumtwo.com/publications/Participatory_Museum_chart.pdf

2.4 Understanding the needs of staff

Working on co-creation projects can be challenging for some staff, especially if they are used to making the decisions or have strong opinions on how things should be done. More often, though, staff enjoy and value participatory work, but find the logistics and timescales of projects a challenge. Published programmes of exhibitions and events can create stressful deadlines which may not match well with community groups' needs! If co-creation is a new way of working for your museum, consider what additional support or training your staff might need at the outset, and how the museum's normal planning procedures can be adapted to better accommodate uncertainty and more flexible ways of working.

Some of the staff interviewed for the case studies in this guide have offered the following pieces of advice for making co-creative practice successful:

- Support from the top of the organisation is critical. The whole organisation needs to be signed up to participative models of working, with a clear idea of why you are doing what you are doing, and what you hope to achieve by it.

- Don't let anxieties about 'getting it wrong' with people hinder you from starting out. If in doubt about etiquette or cultural sensitivities, just ask the people you want to work with what they prefer. People are normally more than happy to explain what their preferences are over, for example, terminology to be used, or to explain their cultural practices.

- Don't underestimate how long it can take to build up a relationship with people, or how time consuming the basic administration of getting people together can be.

- Take it in small steps: if you have never worked in partnership before, start with small-scale consultations to build your confidence and listening skills. You might be surprised at how happy people are to be asked!

- Equally, don't be put off if some people say 'no'. For every successful piece of work, there are often several false starts, or aspects which fall by the wayside for practical reasons. It is not unusual in groups for people to drop in and out of projects, or for some people to play a more active role than others; not everyone will be able to be as 100% committed as you might like.

- Above all else, expect the unexpected. There's no one path to take which is 'correct'.

2.5 Understanding the needs of communities

Every group and every individual within a group is different. An essential part of the relationship-building phase of any project is therefore to find out what the needs and expectations are of the people you are working with. Things to consider include:

Values and philosophies

- What are the interests of the people you are working with? If they are a formally constituted group, what are their aims and motivations? How can working with you help them to meet their aims? It is absolutely critical to have a clear (and preferably documented) understanding of this as problems can arise if participants' goals are not aligned with institutional goals, or if staff are not aware of partners' and participants' goals at the outset. Don't jump too quickly into the 'how' of a piece of work before fully understanding the 'why'.

- What are the attitudes towards museums of the people you are working with? Are there misconceptions that need to be addressed?

- Do the people you are working with have any particular concerns or fears about the project?

- Where might there be differences of opinion between the people you are working with? Any projects interpreting contentious or difficult histories will need to be especially mindful of the range of viewpoints that might be encountered at the outset.

- Mutual respect of each other's goals and interests is essential.

Practicalities

- What days and times are best to meet? What logistical issues might prevent people from getting involved? (transport, child care or other care duties, work commitments, regular appointments, faith practices etc.). Can anything be done to reduce or work around these constraints?

- Where is it best to meet? For people unfamiliar with museums, your venue might appear intimidating or make them ill at ease. It is best not to put people immediately out of their comfort zone, especially if you might be challenging them to learn new skills or to input creative ideas. Visits to the museum might be built in further down the line of a project for these groups, once a relationship of mutual trust has been established. For others, getting behind-the-scenes or out-of-hours access to a museum is a privilege in its own right, and can provide fantastic creative stimulus.

- What level of time commitment are people able and willing to give? Some projects may take years to come to fruition; others might be better achieved in a short, intense period of time.

- Providing refreshments appropriate to the group and time of day is always welcome.

Limitations

- Every project will have its limitations - financial, political, spatial or temporal. These need to be shared and explained in an open and honest manner as possible, so that creative solutions can be found. For example, don't encourage people to think big about a grand exhibition if all you really have to offer is one display case in a side room. Equally, don't let the one display case limit creative ideas unduly at the outset.

  Maintaining the balance between managing expectations whilst remaining open to new ideas, approaches and creative responses is one of the greatest skills of participatory work.

- Be aware that some groups, especially those representing ethnic minority interests, can experience 'consultation fatigue', and may have had negative experiences in the past about being asked to input into projects which didn't ultimately benefit them, or didn't adequately listen to them. You will need to work extra hard with these groups to build trust and to prove that you will both listen to them, and actually deliver what they require. If you work in a local authority setting, you may also have to counter negative perceptions about "the Council" on a whole range of issues.

2.6 Dealing with potential conflict

Even if all the steps above are followed, co-creation can sometimes lead to conflict, whether between individual participants, or between participants and the museum, or between the museum and another external organisation. This might be minor differences of opinion or something more fundamental and potentially damaging to the museum and its relationships. Given that co-creation is all about working with people to express their ideas, opinions and creativity, it is entirely to be expected that not everyone will agree with each other or with you all of the time.

There is not scope here for a detailed examination of the types of conflict that can occur, or how to resolve them. The important message is that working co-creatively requires sensitivity and a genuinely open approach to problem-solving. Both listening and negotiation skills are at the heart of co-creative practice.

Case study 6: 'Fen Lives and Land' project by the Greater Fens Museums Partnership

The Greater Fens Museums Partnership is a loose federation of 20 local authority and independent museums which has adopted co-creative practices at the heart of its work. It is currently working towards 5 community exhibitions which will tour around the Fenlands. Each exhibition is being co-curated by 'clusters' of museums working with community groups and local organisations. The Partnership has 2 members of staff funded by the HLF and Arts Council England to oversee and help facilitate the complex network of relationships.

The 'Fen Lives and Land' project has an over-arching theme of the relationship between people and their environment, but each cluster has developed its own 'take' on this theme through a process of community consultation. Although the project is still in the early stages of planning, the exhibition outputs will be highly varied according to the desires and ideas of each co-ordinating cluster, including a sensory exhibition and a film.

At this stage of the project, one of the particular challenges is how to encourage openness and creativity whilst remaining within the confines of the original concept as described in the HLF funding application. As the exhibitions will tour, it is also important that each one will contain content which is relevant to a wide range of different local audiences, whilst also having the capacity to include site specific material. As there are around 20 community groups and 20 museums, the demands on 'squaring this circle' are complex. The project staff encourages the groups to make their own decisions, but also play an important role in keeping the project on track, reminding participants of the wider project parameters to help maintain an overall coherency. This requires strong listening and negotiation skills. Having a well-defined set of 'ground rules' agreed by all at the outset has also helped to prevent individual projects from going off track during the organic process of exhibition development.

Finding out more

This introductory guide has only touched on the key issues around co-creation. There are many publications and resources which can help you to develop a fuller understanding of current ideas around participation and best practice.

The best starting place is Nina Simon's book, *The Participatory Museum*. The full text is available on-line at:

http://www.participatorymuseum.org/

Although you can buy a hard copy, the on-line version has many useful links to other resources, and you can read other museums professionals' comments and debates on each chapter, or contribute to the debates yourself.

Museums Practice dedicated its July 2010 issue to 'Co-production, co-creation and co-curation'. This provides a useful overview of the core issues illustrated with case studies, although you need to be a member of the Museums Association to be able to access it on-line.

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation has been particularly interested in recent years in how co-production can be more successfully embedded in institutions. Their research is highly critical of some areas of current practice, and should be read to understand the common pitfalls. See:

Bernadette Lynch, *Whose Cake is it Anyway? A collaborative investigation into engagement and participation in 12 museums and galleries in the UK*. Summary report for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

This report is downloadable from the Publications section of **www.phf.org.uk**

Another interesting report was produced by Louise Govier as part of a Clore Leadership Programme Fellowship in 2009. Govier has some useful comparisons to make between participatory practice in museums and other art forms like theatre and opera:

Louise Govier (2009) *Leaders in co-creation? Why and how museums could develop their co-creative practice with the public, building on ideas from the performing arts and other non-museum organisations.*

Downloadable from:
http://cloreleadership.org/library.php?cat=fellowship_research_projects

Digging deeper

There is a vast body of academic literature on community engagement and co-creation in museums, which is well worth investigating for a more sophisticated understanding of the issues. A few of the key texts are listed below. All of them are available through Amazon or other online booksellers.

Adair, B., Filene, B., and Koloski, L. (eds) (2011) *Letting go? Sharing historical authority in a user generated world*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press

- This book intersperses case studies of participatory history projects in America with interesting discussions between practitioners and provocative 'thought pieces'.

Black, G. (2005) *The Engaging Museum. Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement*. London: Routledge

Crooke, E. (2008) *Museums and Community, Ideas, Issues and Challenges*. London: Routledge.

- Crooke includes a detailed analysis of the different relationships between museums and communities, using many interesting examples of work undertaken in Northern Ireland, South Africa and North America.

MuseumsEtc. (2010) *The New Museum Community. Audiences, Challenges, Benefits. A Collection of Essays*. London: MuseumsEtc.

- This collection of essays includes one by Bryan Sitch on the Lindow Man exhibition at the Manchester Museum, where a consultative approach and a multi-vocal interpretation led to public controversy.

Sandell, R. (ed) (2002) *Museums, Society, Inequality*. London and New York: Routledge.

Waterton, E. and Watson, S. (2010) *Heritage and community engagement: collaboration or contestation?* London: Routledge

Watson, S. (ed.) (2007) *Museums and Their Communities*. London: Leicester Readers in Museum Studies.

- Watson's introduction is particularly helpful if you are thinking about the different ways in which museums use the term 'community'.