

City of Westminster Archives Centre

Education Policy

February 2016



City of Westminster

WESTMINSTER CITY ARCHIVES

EDUCATION POLICY

Introduction

The City of Westminster Archives Centre (COWAC) is part of the Libraries & Culture division at Westminster City Council. In accordance with the City for All (2014) agenda, COWAC is committed to making the City of Westminster a learning borough. COWAC is committed to developing a sustainable programme of outreach and educational activity to enable new users to access our collections and professional expertise.

In particular we aim to engage the young and the elderly who are often under-represented among our most frequent users. COWAC's education programme will be responsive to the changing demands of the National Curriculum, the growing demand for lifelong learning and policies of social inclusion and the needs of our users, both current and potential. Recent programmes have been developed to address the need for schools to meet the government's initiatives on British Values.

Aims

The education service aims to support lifelong learning by:

- Raising awareness of the rich cultural and historical heritage of the City of Westminster
- Providing access to and promoting the use of the wide range of primary and secondary sources of historical evidence
- To work in partnership with libraries, museums and other archives to provide educational activities
- To work in co-operation with other education providers such as schools, colleges, universities and adult education centres

Objectives

- To provide opportunities for teachers, students and learners of all ages to visit the Archives Centre and to examine and use a range of primary and secondary sources of historical information.
- To create accessible learning resources based on primary and secondary sources held in the Archives collection which meet curriculum and user demands.
- To support the development of historical interpretation and enquiry skills enabling pupils to assess and evaluate historical sources of information in an appropriate context.

- To provide training for teachers in how to use sources and develop them for classroom use
- To ensure that teachers and students are able to exploit fully the Archives and Local Studies collections through an effective programme of user education.
- To provide adult learning opportunities through the development of a programme of courses, workshops and other events
- To promote greater understanding of and interest in the heritage of the City through talks, walks and visits to community groups
- To meet the Council's commitment to its local armed forces through developing programmes that meet the objectives of the Community Covenant.

Methodology

Class visits and workshops for schools and colleges using archival resources can be accommodated at the Archives Centre. Schools can also request intergenerational sessions with members of the Westminster Community Reminiscence and Archive Group (WCRA), such as question and answer sessions linked to Westminster in World War Two.

Training and advice sessions for teachers

INSET training for teachers is a high priority. The Education & Interpretation Officer visits schools to conduct training sessions as well as running specialist courses linked to the various new initiatives undertaken through funding programmes. A large proportion of the education work undertaken is now through outreach linked to specific projects funded through grant applications. Schools engaging in these programmes participate in specific training.

Support for students

The Education and Interpretation Officer can provide individual advice to students of all ages by telephone, letter, email and in person, usually in the initial stages of their research. This service is of particular value to A-level students undertaking personal studies in History and Geography, helping them to identify suitable topics and appropriate sources. We also respond to individual requests for work experience as part of the Year 11 programmes at Key Stage 3.

Encouraging volunteering is very important for ensuring that we comply with the ethos of the Heritage Lottery Fund, one of the main funders of our education programme. Consequently, the Education and Interpretation Officer encourages university students from home and abroad to apply for unpaid internships, facilitating the education programmes run here. A regular placement scheme is run in partnership with the CAPA programme (Centers for Academic

Programmes Abroad). We also have regular visits from Westminster University history students and make them aware of the internship opportunities we have available here. For five years we have recruited volunteers to work on our West End at War website (www.westendatwar.org.uk) researching World War Two bomb incidents linked to our bomb map and scanning and uploading primary source documents from our Civil Defence archive so that the public can access them through the website.

Resource packs

Resource packs linked to our funded programmes are provided free of charge to participating Westminster schools. These are linked to project specific websites we have developed, for example 'Ita Ekpenyon: Experiences of an African Air Raid Warden' is linked to our West End at War website. We run regular workshops based around the book 'Billy the Kid' that explores the story of a local boy in World War Two with author-illustrator Michael Foreman. These sessions aim to stimulate creative writing for children at Key Stage 2. For older children in Key Stage 3 our 'Cholera and the Thames' project allows local schools to explore the story of how Dr John Snow discovered the source of cholera in Soho. This is achieved through a unique computer game developed for us by students of Westminster University and support materials for looking at primary source material via free downloads from our website,; www.choleraandthethames.co.uk.

Handling collections

A small handling collection can be taken into school via outreach sessions. It is particularly designed to meet the needs of pupils for immediate and visual resources relating to homes and people's lives. These cover Victorians and World Wars One and Two. Items in the handling collection have come from the Archives collection and additional resources purchased via funding bids. The handling collection was developed in response to requests from schools in Westminster, where there is no local museum available to meet these needs.

Online access to sources

We aim to put pdf files of education packs we produce for specific projects online, copyright permitting.

Publications

To increase access to information about the local area, as well as highlighting sources in the collection, the education service includes a publishing programme. Publications include postcards, books of old photographs, local histories, guides to researching family history and house history. Partnerships have also been established with local community groups, including the St Marylebone Society,

who have collaborated on joint publishing of 'The Diary of William Tayler, Footman, 1837', and 'St Marylebone Workhouse and Institution, 1730-1965'.

Engaging with community groups

The Westminster Community Reminiscence and Archive Group was set up in 2003 with the aim of encouraging intergenerational projects. In recent years the group has funded intergenerational music hall style events at the Parker Morris Hall, Abbey Community Centre. We have also organised events and talks in partnership with the Covent Garden Community Association.

Special interest groups, family history societies, arts and heritage associations, and adult education colleges can be offered a variety of talks, both at the Archives Centre and at external venues. Sessions at the Centre usually last for one and a half to two hours with a talk based on an aspect of the local area, illustrated by sources in the collection, followed by a behind-the-scenes tour. They visit the Searchroom, where they are introduced to finding aids, the Conservation Room where they see the Conservator at work and discuss issues relating to preservation, and the Strong Rooms where they can see original documents in a variety of formats and how they are stored.

Monitoring and evaluation

Regular performance monitoring includes statistics of the number of teachers and students using the education service at all levels, the number and range of resource packs supplied, the number of talks and visits, and topics requested. These statistics are included in monthly reports to the Archives Manager.

To ensure the high quality of the service is maintained, feedback is obtained from users through evaluation sheets issued at the end of each project. This is also needed to provide feedback for the funders of our projects such as Heritage Lottery Fund.