

LJMU & UoL 2022/23: Inclusive Imaginations

ALN EDI Innovation Fund Project Review

1. Background

We wanted to provide an opportunity for students to engage in a creative and relaxing way with our collections. Through workshops delivered by a local artist, and an exhibition tour guided by the photographer himself, linked to EDI dates through February and March, the workshops aimed to help students to view collections through an EDI lens, prompting further reflection on EDI issues and highlighting the many ways in which collections and objects can be viewed and interpreted.

We were also mindful that we wanted resources from these workshops to be available to be re-used or re-purposed, by both our own staff and others across ALN.

2. Activity overview

We scheduled three activities: one tour and two workshops, to coincide with key dates in February and March and for which we had relevant collections. All activities were based in the [Victoria Gallery & Museum \(VGM\)](#).

Race Equality Week

10th February at 2pm The Descendants Talk, Galleries 6 and 7, Victoria Gallery & Museum

Ean Flanders will provide a tour of his new exhibition explaining the Descendants project and his photographic process. He will provide expert advice for those wanting to take their own photography to the next level and there will be an opportunity to ask Ean questions at the end.

LGBTQ+ History month

21st February, 2pm until 4pm, Stranger Loves: LGBTQ+ Science Fiction Workshop, Leggate Lecture Theatre, Victoria Gallery & Museum

Artist Louise Waller will lead a workshop exploring LGBTQ+ themes and imagery found in Liverpool University's Science Fiction Hub - the largest catalogued collection of science fiction in Europe! Using wooden mannequins that are often used as a drawing tool for art students, attendees will bring to life characters from LGBTQ+ Science Fiction using a range of fabric, decorative materials, and glue.

International Women's Day

7th March, 2pm until 4pm, Femorabilia: The World of Women's Magazines, Leggate Lecture Theatre, Victoria Gallery & Museum

Join artist Louise Waller as she explores the imagery and stories in girls' and women's magazines from Bunty to Spare Rib held in LJMU's Femorabilia collection. During this practical workshop, attendees will have the opportunity to improve a page or bring it up to date using collage and photocopies.

3. Resources and organisation

We decided on Eventbrite for ticketing, as numbers had to be controlled and we could use the VGM account.

University of Liverpool colleagues developed marketing and promotional materials (a series poster, plus one for each event using relevant images from the collections and QR codes to book), which were shared across both institutions and disseminated using a wide variety of channels including email, social media, Student Union, and academic staff contacts. We were particularly keen to engage with Student Union contacts to support their mental health and EDI agendas.

We approached Ean Flanders (photographer) to ask if he was interested in delivering a tour for the programme, and local artist Louise Waller, who had worked with the VGM previously. Both were willing to get involved. We used the ALN grant to pay for Louise's time and materials, and Ean Flanders was paid out of an existing budget.

We invited Louise Waller in to view the collections to help inform her workshops. A short film to introduce the Science Fiction workshop and provide context was requested from the ex-Science Fiction Librarian, but unfortunately this was not produced in time. However, this did not impact on the workshop delivery or quality.

As well as LJMU and Liverpool University staff time taken to plan and promote these events, 2 staff were also present at each of the events to facilitate. For the Femorabilia event, items from the collection were digitised and colour print outs produced for the event. Some duplicate archive materials were also used at the event to show participants the type of materials in the collection. The artist supplied materials such as paper, glue, scissors, and copies of current magazines for comparison with the archive items.

4. Attendee feedback

Informally, attendees at the Femorabilia event seemed to enjoy the activity and learning about the archive.

We aimed to collect formal feedback for all events via a Padlet, accessed via a QR code, asking the following questions:

- Did you learn anything from today's workshop?
- Are you likely to attend another workshop here?
- How did you hear about this workshop?
- Please suggest any other workshops you would like to see.
- Any other comments.

Unfortunately, we received no responses and so this is an aspect which we would need to revisit and ensure was more robustly managed in future.

5. Lessons learned

- Eventbrite was not able to limit bookings to students; however, a decision was taken to open the workshops to all so this was not a problem, but if future workshops are to be aimed at specific groups, it might be better to use a different booking system and to include a question on the booking form
- Attendance was extremely variable. A maximum of 20 places were made available at each event:
 - Ean Flanders tour: 13 booked, 12 attended
 - Science Fiction workshop: 13 booked, 5 attended (2 of those booked, 3 were walk-ins)
 - Femorabilia workshop: 15 booked, 6 attended (2 let us know they could not attend)
- Factors which may have affected attendance include the pause in industrial action, meaning students were back in classes. Tuesday afternoon could have been a factor for the two workshops, and the lack of any follow-up for non-attendance may also have meant people were less motivated to attend after booking.

- A reminder email from Eventbrite was sent, however for the Femorabilia workshop this was more personalised and asked attendees to let us know if they were no longer able to attend. We also targeted communications at feminist/women's societies.
- In future, we may consider sending an email to ask those registered why they did not attend.

6. Looking ahead

We agree that the idea to promote our vast collections through an EDI lens, via creative activities, is a valuable experience for those who attend and enables us to highlight our collections in new ways.

We agree that the programme went well, given the short timescale. It was helpful that we were able to approach an artist UoL have worked with before, and that Eventbrite was already set up.

There are lessons to learn around feedback and promotion, and a longer lead in time would help to ensure these aspects were fully worked through.

The workshops also provided a straightforward way for us to collaborate across institutions and lay the foundations for future collaborative activities. This was the first time we had worked together in this way, and it was an effective way to display highlights of our varied collections.

We are confident we would re-run these workshops in the future and improve engagement, with a longer planning process and a wider team to support promotion and feedback. LJMU will be meeting to discuss events for the 2023/24 academic year over the summer and we will keep the conversation active in the hope we will be able to fund these activities again next year.

Brief films of the two workshops have been posted on the VGM YouTube channel and can be re-used:

<https://youtu.be/GyWcsUbBul4>

<https://youtu.be/-eMKA3aCmp0>

Liverpool John Moores University: Louise Makin, Emily Parsons, Susannah Waters

University of Liverpool: Jane Cooke, Nicola Euston, Lisa Hawksworth

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