Summer at the Museums 2014
Evaluation Summary

Summer at the Museums is a programme of events that brings together free and chargeable holiday activities across multiple museums and organisations.

The programme is led by University of Cambridge Museums and Botanic Garden (UCM) in partnership with other organisations within Cambridge and the surrounding county.

20 organisations participated providing a total of 90 events over 6 weeks. 12668 people took part.

AIMS

- To increase participation and attract new visitors
- To develop the experience of existing family visitors, and reinforce the UCM family offer
- To share audiences between organisations
- To support and promote Cambridgeshire museums and develop partnerships

The programme was funded by Arts Council England, via the UCM Major Partner Musem Programme, with support from Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire Museums Advisory Partnership.

Participating museums contributed hands-on activities and trails between 24 July to 3 Sept 2014.

To extend the reach of the programme the UCM delivered a range of community outreach events.

The UCM central office delivered a high profile centralised marketing campaign which complemented and extended individual museum promotion.

The marketing campaign comprised:

- Printed material: What’s On Calendar, activity Scrapbook, posters.
- The Scrapbook: a new resource for 2014 which included tips, games and activities to help families explore museums in different ways; a ‘passport’ to collect stamps at each venue visited; and a feedback postcard.
- County-wide distribution: 11,000 calendars and 8,000 scrapbooks.
- Extensive media coverage in print, online and via radio.
- Social media promotion via UCM Blog, Facebook, and Twitter.

Community engagement comprised:

- The Big Weekend (Parker’s Piece): The University Museums and the Museum of Cambridge ran an activity tent and welcomed over 800 people. Activities linked to Tour de France celebrations included Arts Award ‘Cycle Your Way to Discover’ and a cycle powered cinema screening UCM project films.
- ChyPs sessions: Arts Council England funding enabled more museums to take part in the annual holiday schedule run by Cambridge City Council, substantially developing the museums’ contribution. 6 sessions were delivered over 3 weeks to 747 people.

Volunteering

12 volunteers supported the delivery of outreach sessions, museum based activities, evaluation and stewarding.
PARTICIPATING MUSEUMS

Burwell Museum & Windmill
Cambridge Museum of Technology
Cambridge Science Centre
Cambridge University Botanic Garden
Cromwell Museum
Ely Museum
Farmland Museum & Denny Abbey
Fitzwilliam Museum
Kettle’s Yard
Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology
Museum of Cambridge
Museum of Classical Archaeology
Museum of Zoology
Norris Museum
The Polar Museum
Ramsey Rural Museum
Saffron Walden Museum
Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences
Stained Glass Museum, Ely
Wisbech and Fenland Museum
Whipple Museum of the History of Science

OUTCOMES

Benefits to museums:
• Positive impact of being part of a larger marketing campaign
• Increase in overall visitor figures
• New audiences and first-time visitors
• Breadth of events attracted a wider range of visitors
• Good opportunity to collaborate with other museums
• Scrapbook, including a ‘passport’, worked effectively at encouraging multiple visits across museums

Benefits to visitors:
• Hands-on activities which related directly to collections
• Quality of workshop delivery
• Being able to have fun as a family
• Feeling welcome and supported
• Being introduced to new museums (via the passport system)

“The stamp passport was a particular hit, and it encouraged us to try museums that we otherwise wouldn’t have visited - there was also a bit of mild competition with friends, which was fun!”
Visitor to Norris Museum

“What a wonderful activity for all of us as a family – and to do with friends. Tremendous inspiration and so well organised and carried out. A big thank you!”
Visitor to Fitzwilliam Museum

Increased participation
Feedback from museums points to a number of first-time visitors with increased provision of community outreach impacting this. Families that took part in community engagement events such as ChYpPS sessions and the Big Weekend were seen back at the museums making first-time visits.
For 2015: Develop community engagement and targeted marketing opportunities. Develop an evaluation process to measure this aim.

Sharing audiences
The Passport encouraged families to visit a number of destinations. Some museums also chose to collaborate on events which allowed them to connect with different visitors.
For 2015: more collaborative events.

Positive visitor experience
Feedback suggests that families welcomed the opportunity to try new things and to have fun together as a result of hands-on events. Comments suggest that visitors used the Scrapbook as a means of extending their time in a museum.

Wider promotion of events
Through a joined up approach to marketing, museums were able to promote their activities more widely than if they had been working alone. Museums advised that this was a way of making them feel ‘connected’, less isolated and part of a bigger ‘family’.

For more information and the full report please contact Susan Miller, University of Cambridge Museums sem96@cam.ac.uk or 01223 764406