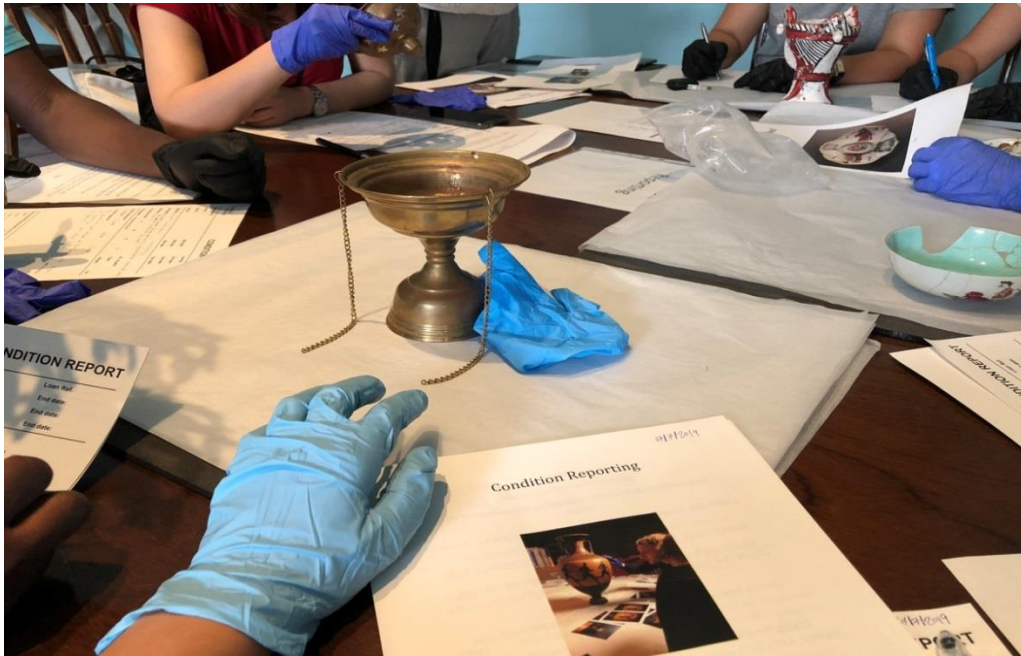


# **International Training Programme: fellowship report**

## **Training and knowledge exchange**

**July 7<sup>th</sup> – August 17<sup>th</sup> 2019**



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### **Project Partners:**

The British Museum (London, UK)

The Altajir Trust (London, UK)

Norfolk Museum Service (Norfolk, UK)

Birzeit University Museum (Birzeit, Palestine)

## Introduction:

The day I received an email from the ITP, confirming that I will be a fellow in this year's training, I couldn't believe it. It was a day full of joy for me. Immediately I started preparing for the Programme, looking at the required documents, the history of the ITP and the responsibilities I would be taking on during my 6 weeks training in the UK. I felt that I'm so lucky; I would be able to meet and work with people from all over the world and I will have the chance to know more about different cultures and professionals with different work backgrounds.

My work experience in museums started through volunteering during my first year of college when I was only 18, and I got attached to this field. Then it started to develop gradually over the next 3 years when I became a part-time office assistant in Birzeit University Museum and also a trainee on the ethnographic collections. When I finished my undergraduate degree, I became an official employee the next day as the Collections Assistant at Birzeit University Museum.

I remembered what my colleagues who went to the ITP from Birzeit University Museum said about the training and how exciting and full of knowledge it was. Taking part of this training was important for me because I saw that it will be a great aid for me in developing my career in this field, creating an international network for myself and my institution. It was also important because it will give me new skills and I'll be able to acquire new knowledge throughout this training from different people and different professionals.

Working at Birzeit University Museum has introduced me into a totally different world and a new community of people who share the same interests and passions as me. The reason why I was eager to take part in this training is that I wanted to develop my working skills and experience, and I also wanted be able to help other people at my institution to get such chances in the future through expanding my knowledge and I wanted to play a role in the process of developing my museum.



ITP fellows on their first day in the UK, in front of Schafer house.

Furthermore, my interest in culture and the arts is a means of self-expression; it's a way of thinking, and being exposed to different perspectives during this training helped in changing a lot of my views towards my surroundings. Through this training I was expecting to get a good experience about the artistic field in different areas that are related to my work and I was in the hope of expanding my experiences through the training. But the ITP did not help me to expand my work skills only, it has also managed to develop my self-esteem.

### **Why the Programme is necessary:**

During this training I was introduced to a global network of fellows from all over the world. I was able to visit a range of museums from different domains in different cities around the UK, which exposed me to a variety of museums with different practices and working methods. Also, visiting a large number of museums helped me in creating a long-term and sustainable relationship with different museums and museum professionals with different backgrounds, which is helpful for me and my home institution, for any further collaborations or requesting future consultation.



During placement days in Gressenhall with Norfolk Museum Service in Norfolk.

This training introduced me to a whole new world of experiences, which are somewhat different from the kind of work I do in Birzeit University Museum. It was also a way of creating global networks that gave me a lot of chances to link with other people in the same field as me but with different mindsets across geographical and cultural boundaries, and to learn about their work, challenges and experiences. Gladly, I was part of the process of fostering an environment that disseminates more practical knowledge and skills exchange. Hence, I had the chance to meet professionals from my field

of specialty and they were more than happy to answer my endless questions and to share some of their experiences with me. For post-training, I'm trying now to implement some of the skills I have learned and transfer the knowledge I acquired to my colleagues and institution.

My experience with Birzeit University Museum gives me the chance to be part of different projects, such as developing inventory records for our collections and participating in the production process of different exhibitions. I have also worked on editing and developing the Museum's archives. Joining an innovative and leading institution like the British Museum in this training enabled me to think and work in a different and creative manner, to 'break the box and think wild'. Moreover, my major responsibilities at work are to work on collections management and this training enhanced my skills in this field a lot. The ITP opened my mind to more practical and different skills in this field. This is important for my home institution since we are currently in the process of creating a permanent exhibition and other projects based on our collections.



Handling Objects; from collections management session, The British Museum.

### **What did I bring to the Training?**

What is also special about my work in Birzeit University Museum is that I work in a museum but within an academic setting, with students and academic staff. Working in this academic background is very challenging yet it helps me in developing my communication skills. During the training I was able to meet people who work in the same field as me; where we discussed and exchanged the advantages and disadvantages of working in this domain, the challenges we encounter, and future opportunities to work together. I was able to share my own experiences with them, and how hard it is to be in this field and I gave some of the people advice on how to deal with these challenges. Through this training I was not only a recipient of knowledge and skills, but also I was able to share my experiences and practical skills with other colleagues and provided them with advice based on our shared knowledge.

### **British Museum Experience:**

Studying English Literature expanded my vision towards art and the history of art; this in turn made me more interested in literature expressed through art. This also has a cultural and a personal significance for me. I was always curious to know more about the literary side of the artworks exhibited in the British Museum, as part of these works were related to previous literary studies that I have experienced during my previous studies.

For most of the training, I spent my time at the Middle East Department, under the supervision of Zeina Klink-Hoppe, Project Curator who happens to be the most professional but also most loving and caring person I worked with. Zeina was my mentor during the training, I asked her about a lot of things and she helped me a lot and shared a lot of her experiences and knowledge with me. But also she was a caring person about me and all the other ITP fellows. She didn't just advise me in my work field but she was also a personal inspiration for me. We discussed challenges we encountered during work, shared some knowledge and Zeina guided me to more readings that could enrich my knowledge and experience.



From our visit to Blyth House in West London with our Mentor, Zeina Klink-Hoppe.

### **Knowledge sharing:**

10 days of our training were spent at a UK partner museum. My placement was in Norfolk Museums Service in Norfolk. First of all, these 10 days away from London gave me the chance to explore the UK outside of London and a new city lifestyle. Norwich was like magic - by its picturesque nature, its tranquility and green colors. After spending my first few weeks in London, 10 days in Norfolk were much needed to get away from the crowded city. The experience in Norfolk was quite different than London, and somehow more exciting, working and training with regional and small museums seemed to be like working in my own museum back home. We shared a lot of similar challenges and

experiences and the situation was very relevant for me. Especially in terms of having very important collections but being limited in terms of resources, we discussed all of these matters and other important discussions. Moreover, the highlight of the ITP was actually during my placement days in Norfolk, they took us one day into a session on the 'deep cleaning' of objects, and it was the best time of my whole training.



During my placement in Norfolk, Deep cleaning sessions in Gressenhall.

During my placement days I learned a lot of new skills about managing collections and dealing with objects. I also felt satisfied because I knew that I already had some of these skills, which boosted my work confidence as well. The staff of Norfolk Museum Service were amazing, they were so loving and welcoming, they were eager to make our visit and experience there helpful on every single level, whether socially or professionally. Our beloved mentor in Norfolk Museum Service, Sarah Gore, was keen to make all of our new experiences unique, special and most importantly relevant to our fields, she was very hospitable and her presence was the main reason for my love towards that city.

Our sessions were focused on learning more about social engagement and collections management, as well as conservation, keeping and storage. We met with a lot of people who work in NMS; we talked and had deep discussions in different matters that were extremely relevant to each fellow's interests. There was also a fun part in this, we visited the seaside, and we went on top of the castle which was a dream that Sarah Gore, our mentor, helped in making it come true!



After an interview with BBC Radio in Norwich; arranged by Sarah Gore.

### **Achievements and outcomes:**

Birzeit University Museum is a small but growing museum, with a lot of potential. It's still going through a long journey of growth, expansion and development on different levels including managing our collections, creating a permanent exhibition, and attracting local and global audiences.

By virtue of this training, I'm now able to play a major role in the process of improving my institution's future by bringing more skills, knowledge and experiences, or by possible future collaborations with the British Museum and Norfolk Museum Service.

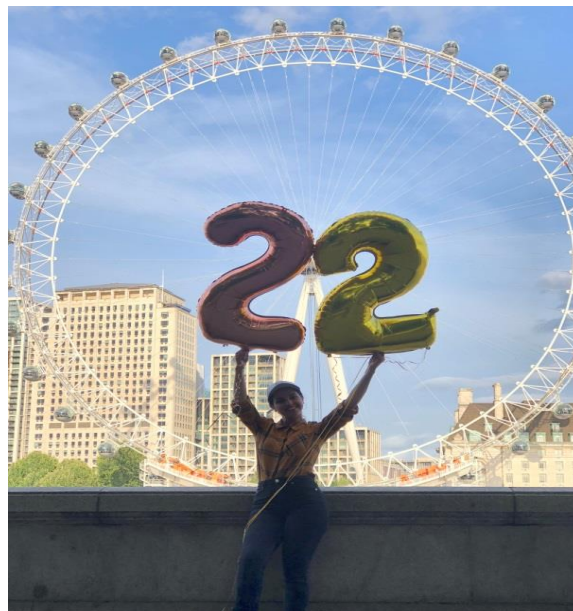
Just recently, I became a member of the academic staff in Birzeit University; I am now a BA Program facilitator, teaching a course about Personal Competencies to undergraduate students. Moreover, I am now working on new projects in my home museum that are to do with managing the collections and social engagement projects, by which we try to attract more audiences from different ages, gender, interests and geographical groups. This wouldn't have been possible to happen without this training.



Exploring the Museum with a new activity for young learners. Birzeit University Museum, Palestine.

### **Personal Experience:**

Attending the training was very important to me not only on the professional level, but also on a personal level. On one hand, I wanted to improve my skills and to bring more experiences to my workplace. But also it was very challenging for me. I had to make big sacrifices to be part of this training, as my family was not very supportive about me going to London for six weeks. But I had the courage to make such a decision of coming to London for 6 weeks without anyone's approval. This was a hard decision to take, but we all know that great things take great risks. It was very important for me to go to this training to have totally different and new experiences in different places with new people as a part of my journey which I've been trying to achieve for the past couple of years now.



Celebrating my 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday in London

This training didn't just improve my professional skills; but it also improved my wellbeing, my mental health and it helped in boosting my self-confidence as well. This is what makes the ITP different and more special than other trainings; that it doesn't just add value to your work skills but it also improves you as an individual. The ITP changed a lot in me; now I am more social, I feel confident about myself and my work.

For me the ITP is not just training; the ITP was a way of expressing my true self without any possible judgments from anyone; the ITP helped me to explore myself, my interests and it helped me seek the best, strongest and most confident version of myself.

### **Supporters:**

Without external support, the ITP would not have been done in such an ideal way, and I would not be able to be part of such an amazing experience without such support. More specifically, I'd like to take the chance to express my deep gratitude to my supporters during this training, the Altajir Trust. On our presentations day, for the *Object in focus* project I got the chance to speak to Mr. Richard Muir, the director of the Altajir Trust. I was so delighted by our talk and the discussion we had.

So, thank you to the Altajir Trust - with your support to the ITP there will be more people who are able to achieve their dreams. I look forward to possible future collaborations with the British Museum and to sharing updates about my career with the ITP Team, because it wouldn't have happened without your generous support.