

THE BRITISH MUSEUM
INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME 2019



PARTICIPANT REPORT
JACOB NII MARLEY, GHANA
(JULY 6 – AUGUST 17)

My name is Jacob Nii Marley, a Technical Assistant at the Leventis Digital Resource Centre and MA student in Museum and Heritage Studies. I work with the Museum of Archaeology which is under the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies at the University of Ghana - Legon Campus. As part of my job I design panels, flyers, posters and banners for exhibitions, take photographs, film and edit fieldwork, make 3D models of objects and manage the museum's Facebook page as part of a team. I also assist with curatorial work during exhibitions.

Having the opportunity to participate in this year's International Training Programme (ITP) by The British Museum, I have gained some new knowledge and skills in best practices from various aspects of museum work. My participation in the summer programme meant a lot to me personally. First of all, it was my first time in London and my first time in the United Kingdom. More importantly, it was a rare privilege to experience behind the scenes of prestigious institutions such as the British Museum. From this opportunity, I had the chance to personally engage with curators and other professionals who share similar work descriptions and this was an enlightenment for me.



Networking with other ITP participants

Also, by working with other museum professionals who share different backgrounds, I was exposed to new perspectives which helped me develop a better appreciation for what we do in

the museum. From six weeks of training with other participants, I feel new bonds of friendship have developed among us and hopefully this translates to a strong international network for future collaborative projects. Furthermore, working together and interacting with each other led us to discover and understand that we actually share common challenges as museums. Accordingly, we were able to think together and share ideas on possible solutions that could be explored.

Another benefit of the ITP for me was that I was able to visit different museums and galleries in England and this has inspired me in many ways. A display style I learnt which I am suggesting to my home museum is to develop ideas around single objects as focus for each of our display cases in the gallery. This would be supported by other objects in association with it. I think this style would be effective in my home museum because it would decongest some overcrowded showcases thereby presenting a clearer coherence between objects. It would enable audience to focus more on the displayed objects and have a better understanding. Nevertheless, another activity that inspired me was the Museum Project Day. This was an activity where ITP participants had to visit exhibitions in other museums and share their experiences by way of evaluation, I think this can be similarly adopted in my home museum to conduct self-evaluations.

The Object in Focus activity was also very useful as it equipped me with new knowledge and curatorial skills. Doing this, I had the opportunity to work with a partner who shared a different professional background. It was challenging for both of us at the beginning but with good interpersonal communication we were able to agree on ideas. Also, with support from our mentor Dr. Ian Jenkins – *Senior Curator*, we were able to get the exhibition proposal ready for the Supporters Reception. I must also mention that staff at the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities were very supportive throughout our preparations and presentation and I acknowledge them for the great work. I would also like to thank the Edith Murphy Foundation for supporting me to be on this year's ITP and also for gracing the evening with their presence.



Group photograph from Object in Focus Day

I also feel that the ITP has boosted my confidence level. My experience from the training puts me in a better position to talk about the role of museums as heritage institutions. Through it, I have developed a better understanding of museums practically and this compliments my knowledge from readings. Being an advocate for the integration of audio-visual media in galleries, our discussions and visits to other museums also made me realize some complex issues surrounding the introduction of digital technology and how various institutions are responding to it.

The programme in general was a heavily packed one and I can gladly say that most of my expectations were met. From my experience, the ITP was not only focused on training participants in areas of speciality but was further interested in enriching us with supplementary knowledge, skills and experience from other areas of museum work. There was also a good balance of indoor and outdoor activities and my highlights for places visited include Stonehenge, Her Majesty's Theatre and Hadrian's Wall.

Upon my return home, I am being given an opportunity to share my experiences in a guest lecture with graduate students taking the Museum and Heritage Studies programme in my University. I would be talking about what I learnt with emphasis on collection care, exhibition,

photography and documentation. With respect to photography, I have made a request for lights and some other studio equipment to help with my work and I look forward to these so I can put into practice some of my new skills.

A priority for change that I would like to make in my organization is the introduction of *I see, I notice, I wonder*. This is a self-led visitor programme which I learnt from Vicki Allan - *Learning officer* during my partner museum placement with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM). From a personal experience of the programme, I believe it can help students in the case of my museum to connect better with objects. It is an effective way of arousing their interest in the museum collection and getting them to think deeper about the objects. My appreciation goes to Iain Watson – *Director*, Jackie Bland – *Training and Governance Officer*, Bill Griffiths - *Head of Programmes*, and all at TWAM for the amazing experience during my time in Newcastle.

Also, from my subject specialist session with Nick Harris - *Digital Creative Producer* and Lee Roberts - *Video Producer*, I have developed an idea on what to do with some video recordings of fieldwork. By this, I plan on starting a new series for my museum's collection by focusing on selected objects and getting the archaeologists to talk about them. This is to provide interesting insights on obscure facts about the collection and also a way of promoting Public Archaeology in my country. In Ghana, Archaeology is not a very popular discipline to the general public. People often get to know about it only at the tertiary level of education and I see this to be very limiting. Through this new series, I hope to reach out to the public especially young visitors of the museum such as primary and secondary school students to introduce archaeology to them. With respect to barriers, I would need my director and Faculty to approve of the initiative. Aside that, I do not see any major barriers.

I am very grateful to Claire Messenger and the entire ITP team for having me on the summer programme. The experience was a deep one for me personally and it sets the ground for my future aspiration as a curator and creative director. I also extend my thanks to the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas and all at the British Museum for making my stay a memorable one. Last but not least, I wish to say thank you to all sponsors of the International Training Programme for supporting the vision and contributing generously towards its success.