

THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM'S UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME



Students are encouraged to examine and handle objects from the Ashmolean's collections

Transcript of interviews

The Ashmolean Museum's University Engagement Programme (UEP) was established in 2012 with funding from the Andrew W Mellon Foundation, to further the partnership between the Ashmolean and the University's faculties and to enhance the impact of cross-disciplinary teaching and learning through objects.

Pegram Harrison, Lecturer, Saïd Business School

I'm interested in the Ashmolean and the University Engagement Programme because it allows me to do my job of teaching business so much better.

I'm a lecturer in the Business School, and I teach MBA students and undergraduates studying management and economics, and also executives who come to visit the University on short courses.

You can learn a lot more about business from the museum than you ever would have thought possible. I always feed back that it was one of the most valuable parts of the programme. We can offer it here in Oxford because of this programme, and most other business schools can't offer anything comparable.

I can do my job in the business school better because the Ashmolean and the University Engagement Programme are here.

Sam Weinberg, MSt History, St Anne's College

On our course there's a seminar, and each week we look at history from a different disciplinary angle. An expert who has studied the period in depth brought us into a room and allowed us to investigate, for ourselves, Aegean pottery, which actually went together really well with a lot of the stuff we were reading in the seminar.

I might be reading about the debasement of the coinage during Henry VIII, and then see these coins laid out in front of me.

Kate Bennett, Lecturer, English Faculty

I teach English undergraduates a series of courses on the 16th to the early 18th century.

A play from the 1630s is going to be absolutely full of references to objects, and that can be intimidating. But what's really exciting about the Ashmolean is that we can open a box and say, 'Would you like to touch one of those objects?' It's very exciting developing courses that say, 'Well, what can we do with these opportunities?'

Things come out of touching objects. Things happen when people are given things they've never seen before. They ask questions that they wouldn't normally ask, and they are prompted to think in very different ways.

You can feel the delicacy of an 18th-century tea cup, but you also feel its specialness and its value, and there's a little moment of respect.

Libraries and the Ashmolean are opening up to readers in a way that's wholly positive.

Claudia Zwar, History and English, Pembroke College

To look at things in a different way, it's not just motivational, but it can revitalise the way you write about things or the way that you think about things.

Going to a handling session and doing something like that shows you that actually all these objects are just like books in the Bodleian Library – they're there for you.

Doing things like this show that this is a truly international, progressive, cutting-edge university.

THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM'S UNIVERSITY
ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME (*continued*)

*Cornelii Bjola, Associate Professor,
International Development*

The course I am teaching deals primarily with the theory and practice of contemporary international diplomacy, and I thought that a historical dimension would be an interesting possibility as well. And this is how I made the connection with this kind of programme at the Ashmolean.

I notice that some of them used some of the examples they got from the museum in one of the practice essays they prepared for class. This kind of interaction, it enhances learning.

*Marika Leino, Senior Lecturer, Oxford Brookes
University*

Having museums like the Ashmolean, which is really a world-class museum, here, makes a massive difference to the Brookes undergraduate courses. We take our students on more or less a weekly basis. I feel that if you're in a place where you don't have access to objects you really don't get that sense of what the objects look like, how they feel.

I always go and wander around, and sometimes prepare for lectures; sometimes I'm just enjoying myself looking at things, other times I'm frantically trying to work out what to say to students. But I just love the tranquillity. If you get lack of inspiration with your own field, you can go and wander around and see all these other beautiful things, and interesting things. Seeing objects in the flesh has a dramatic effect on students' understanding of the work. They just loved the session; they loved all aspects of it.

On-screen concluding slides:

The UEP has achieved an unprecedented number of faculty collaborations since its launch and is now well-established as part of its many course offerings.

Since its launch in 2012, the UEP has welcomed more than 4,000 visits from over 25 departments, and from all 4 academic divisions.