**Day 1: Joseph Wright Inspired Gallery at the Museum & Art Gallery, Derby Museums**

**Keynote – ‘**Social history – the way to the public’s heart.’

**Dr David Fleming**

**Director of National Museums Liverpool**

David Fleming became director of National Museums Liverpool (NML) in 2001. Over the next decade, NML audiences rose from 700,000 to more than 3.4 million per year, and increased hugely in diversity. In the 1980s he worked in museums in Hull, Leeds and York, and in the 1990s he led Tyne and Wear Museums.

David has been responsible for the creation of two innovative and influential museums, the Museum of Liverpool and the International Slavery Museum. David is President of the UK Museums Association and Chairman of the MA’s Ethics Committee, Convener of the Social Justice Alliance of Museums (SJAM), Chairman of ICOM's Finance and Resources Committee, Treasurer and Vice President of the European Museum Forum (EMF) and President of the Federation of International Human Rights Museums (FIHRM). David has lectured worldwide on museum management and leadership, city history museums, social inclusion and social justice, human rights and politics, and museum ethics.

David was born and grew up in Leeds, in a working-class family, and was motivated to work in museums by their capacity to offer enriching cultural experiences to people from low-income and poor educational backgrounds: a capacity which he feels is unfulfilled by many museums.

**I Tweet Dead People**

**Natalie McCaul, York Museums Trust**

The remains of a woman from Eboracum (Roman York) formed part of a major research project investigating migration and identity in 2008. The findings added significantly to an already comprehensive story; highlighting the need to think in an inventive manner to disseminate in-depth, cutting-edge research to the public in an accessible way. Subsequent to introducing Ivory Bangle Lady and the Diaspora research project and its findings, the main theme of this paper will be discussion of how social media (namely Twitter) was used to create an engaging and innovative display aimed at dealing with complex stories and sensitive/contentious issues such as ethnicity.

Initially, the development process of the project will be detailed; including ideas for disseminating Bangle Lady’s story, audience development and identification of appropriate technology, whilst also reflecting on the challenges of installing new interpretation into an existing museum display. The paper will then give an overview of the development of interpretative content alongside consideration of the practical implications of using pervasive media in a museum setting; including working in a listed building, providing Wi-Fi access, budget restraints and the fundamental challenge of getting to grips with new technology.

Time will then be given to discussion of the project pilot day; a crucial exercise in testing out the technology, content and audience reaction, before moving to the final phase of product development. Video footage and images taken throughout the project will be included to provide examples of how interpretation was developed, the trail was integrated into existing displays and the pilot was conducted. It is hoped that through discussion of the stages involved in the development of *I Tweet Dead People* and the issues, problems and successes encountered, other heritage professionals will gain insight into both the challenges and rewards of developing digital projects.

**Natalie McCaul**

Natalie McCaul is Curator of Archaeology at the Yorkshire Museum, York. Having been employed by York Museums Trust in various collections care-related roles since 2008, Natalie has been responsible for the care and development of the archaeology collections for the last 3 years. With research interests in Classical archaeology, the development of museum collections and the archaeology of York; Natalie has spent much time in recent years developing new exhibitions and working with academic, specialist and community groups and sector professionals to re-interpret museum collections in new engaging and inspiring ways.

**Secret Lives of Objects**

**Kitty Ross and Liz Chadwick, Leeds Museums and Galleries**

The “Secret Lives of Objects” blog <http://www.leeds.gov.uk/museumsandgalleries/secretlivesofobjects/Pages/default.aspx> has been running for over 5 years, initially on BlogSpot and now integrated into the Leeds Museums and Galleries website. The content is written by museum staff, but also volunteers, researchers and work placements. It gives a chance to publicise interesting collection items, new acquisitions, glimpses behind-the-scenes at conservation and research projects as well as putting a museum spin on topical events in the outside world.

As part of the move in-house the content was analysed to see which posts had been most popular and this informs our new guidelines. The paper will also look at how the blog integrates with our social media, interpretation and digital strategies. It will include hard-headed analysis as well as amusing anecdotes about the unexpected spin-offs and public engagement resulting from specific posts.

**Kitty Ross and Liz Chadwick**

Kitty Ross, Curator of Leeds History has been employed as the social history curator at Leeds Museums and Galleries for over 17 years and is an avid contributor to the Secret Lives of Objects blog.

Liz Chadwick is the Digital Media Assistant responsible for social media and web development at Leeds Museums and Galleries.

**Doctor Who and Me: 50 Years of Doctor Who Fans**

**Michael Terwey, National Media Museum**

In the autumn of 2013, the popular BBC TV show *Dr Who* celebrated the 50th anniversary of its first broadcast. The National Media Museum, whose mission is to “explore the science, technology and art of the still and moving image”, marked the date with an exhibition which used material culture, oral history and photography to investigate the fans’ relationship with the show.

*Doctor Who and Me: 50 Years of Doctor Who Fans* was an attempt to tell the story of the social impact of television, through its exploration of the fan culture of a popular BBC TV show. It used the methodologies of social history curatorship to examine the role of television, and a particular television show, in the lives of its fans. This included using oral history interviewing techniques to record fan memories, co-curating displays through a public call for fan memorabilia, art, and other collections, and engagement with networks and communities of fans, both digitally and in the ‘real’ world.

The impact of the exhibition was significant. The museum was overwhelmed with enthusiasm of the fans, whose engagement was maintained through events on the opening night of the show and the anniversary weekend itself. The exhibition succeeded in presenting a sympathetic depiction of somewhat eccentric fans, as well as a serious examination of the nature of fandom. As such, it is a good example of how Social History Curators might engage new and different audiences and communities.

**Michael Terwey**

Michael Terwey is Head of Collections and Exhibitions at the National Media Museum, and former Chair of the Social History Curator’s Group. Michael has previously worked at Hull Museums, Tyne and Wear Museums, Historic Scotland and the National Maritime Museum, and has published articles on Contemporary Collecting and Social History Curatorship.

**This is what we do: what does effective advocacy for social history museums look like?**

**Alistair Brown, Museums Association**

**May Redfern, Barnsley Museums Service**

Social history museums are experiencing closures and financial cuts, resulting in loss of public service. Who cares? This practical session will give delegates ideas on how to effectively influence the public and decision makers. How can we best articulate the value of what museums do, regardless of where we might sit within the organisational hierarchy? This session will consider how we might advocate more effectively for our work with social history collections and our users.

Alistair will talk about what makes for good advocacy, using examples from a range of different sectors and examining how they can be adapted to the needs of social history museums and collections. We will discuss the importance of stakeholder mapping and the best ways of making oneself heard.

May will describe how Barnsley Museums Learning department used an advocacy document, ‘This is what we do’ to avoid closure and set up as a separate trading unit, where children and young people are seen as the primary shareholders. This will have a practical focus, sharing ideas and lessons learnt so that delegates can use and adapt May’s experience for their own purposes.

Delegates will take part in a group activity and think together about how their subject specialisms relate to advocacy. What are the stories from your collections that demonstrate good advocacy? And what can you learn from them? They will then present their ideas during a ten-minute feedback session where Alistair and May will act as a sounding board and share further insights with the group.

**Alistair Brown and May Redfern**

Alistair is the Museums Association’s Policy Officer. He is responsible for all aspects of policy development and campaigning on behalf of the museums sector, including the Museums Change Lives campaign and the review of the MA Code of Ethics. Alistair has previously worked for the Scottish Government, the European Commission and in the energy sector.

May has worked in museums for the past twenty years and combines her role as Learning Manager at Barnsley museums with various consultancy projects, where she works with museums on all aspects of audience development: learning, exhibitions, programming, evaluation, activity planning and fundraising.

**Day 2: Millennium Gallery, Museums Sheffield**

**Keynote** – ‘The state of Sheffield – *social history in the 21st century city’*

**Kim Streets**

**CEO: Museums Sheffield**

Kim has over 20 years of experience in collections research and development, exhibitions production, audience engagement and project management acquired through a combination of curatorial and senior management roles in Sheffield.

Kim was appointed to the role of CEO of Museums Sheffield in 2012 and is leading the organisation in its drive to deliver an outstanding museums service and grow audiences in Sheffield, the city region and nationally. She is a member of the Sheffield Culture Consortium; a Board member of Art Sheffield; a Governor of Sheffield College and Keeper of the Collection of the Guild of St George, (The Ruskin Collection).

**125 years of Port Sunlight**

**Katherine Lynch and Stuart Irwin**

**Port Sunlight Museum**

Port Sunlight Museum is an emerging museum, established in 2006. It is part of Port Sunlight Village Trust, founded in 1999, which is responsible for the village’s preservation and promotion. The museum receives approximately 35,000 visitors per year. We secured Accreditation at our first attempt in 2010. The museum itself and our collections are small so we have always had to be very creative in our approach. We see the village as the museum and the heritage assets within it – houses, public buildings, landscape, monuments and memorials - as a collection.

The whole village is a Designated Conservation Area, every house and building is Grade II Listed, and the war memorial was recently re-designated as Grade I Listed. We treat the village as the museum and use the many spaces and places within it to engage residents and visitors. The village receives approximately 300,000 visitors per year and the resident population is approximately 2,500-3,000. We think we are an unusual case study.

Over the last 12 months, we have been developing the concept of ‘the village as the museum’ and the residents as curators of their own properties. The 125th anniversary of the first village tenants in 2014 provided an ideal vehicle for this work and the Heritage department successfully secured a Sustainable Improvement Fund grant from Arts Council/Museum Development North West to test out some ideas. A resident steering group was formed at the outset of the project and together we came up with a list of the themes to be explored and activities to be delivered, this exciting development will be discussed during this presentation.

**Katherine Lynch and Stuart Irwin**

Katherine Lynch has been Heritage Manager at Port Sunlight Museum for 7 years. Previously she has worked as Head of Interpretation & Learning at The Tank Museum, Exhibitions Manager at National Maritime Museum Cornwall, and as Assistant Keeper of Maritime History at Tyne & Wear Museum. She did her postgraduate diploma in Museums Studies at the University of Leicester in 1997/98.

Stuart Irwin has worked for Port Sunlight Museum for 6 and half years. He started as a visitor service assistant before being promoted to Collections & Exhibitions Officer a post he has held for 4 years.

**Birmingham, its collections, its people**

**Nazia Ali**

**Birmingham Museums Trust**

Birmingham is the UK’s second largest city and currently demonstrates some extraordinary demographic statistics: it is the youngest city in Europe (nearly 40% under the age of 25); it will be one of the first cities in the UK to have a majority non-white population (around 42% is currently categorised as non-white); and it has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment. Furthermore, Birmingham is frequently at the centre of many contentious national issues – immigration, social welfare, government ‘austerity’ cuts, religious freedoms and anti-terrorism legislation.

To meet the challenges that this city poses, BMT is making a concerted effort to take a more creative and embedded approach to curating the city’s collections and engaging the public. This is being done in two ways; firstly through an externally funded, three year programme of acquisitions (HLF Collecting Cultures project) and secondly, through an *ActiveCurating* methodology developed through the MA’s Transformers programme.

Birmingham’s Collecting Cultures project will enable the collections to be curated and developed in a new direction, for and with the people of Birmingham. ‘Community collecting’ has previously been undertaken to help diversify the collections and interpretation, but this type of collecting has focused on social history objects. Never before have all the collection areas (arts and sciences) been the focus for diversification and community engagement. This is an exciting opportunity to probe the social history of science and fine art objects and to tie that social history to under-represented, non-visiting Birmingham communities. This project will change the way these collections are curated and interpreted. It will also drive a change in the role of the curator which is emphasised by the *ActiveCurating* methodology. This encourages curators to take a socially responsible approach to interpretation and collections advocacy.

**Nazia Ali**

Nazia Ali is a curator at Birmingham Museums Trust with 15 years of experience in the cultural sector. Her work in museums has been supported by the Museums Association and she has recently been selected to participate in the MA’s Transformers programme which aims to create radical change in museums.

Nazia’s work has also extended beyond the UK and into other museum sectors; The British Council in Pakistan and ICOM (UK and COMCOL European working group).

Nazia is a graduate of The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and a postgraduate of the University of Leicester, Museum Studies department.

**Real Life: Retold**

**Rachael Drew**

**Scarborough Museums Trust**

*Real Life: Retold* is a fantastic example of how an innovative project can reinvigorate the relationship between a community, a venue and their heritage. The project merged theatrical and museological disciplines with great effect, using community writers and actors to present 9 short pieces based on the Bombardment of Scarborough. The pieces were presented in different spaces in the gallery and related to what else was in the space, so audiences were presented with an engaging way to learn about local heritage, see the work of local dramatists and to appreciate the venue itself.

Effective partnership working and increased public engagement through innovation and the completion of a highly successful project, *Real Life: Retold* has benefited the local community and Scarborough Museums Trust. This paper will outline the context of this project, considering where SMT is at currently with dwindling visitor figures, low community involvement and visitation from local people.

It will explore the inspiration for the project, the *Remember Scarborough!* exhibition and the commemoration of WW1. The paper will explain how SMT has worked in partnership with the Stephen Joseph Theatre and Scarborough Library including who was involved, what was written and where the performances took place. The outcomes of the project, the benefits to the participants, and the benefits to organisations, as well as the funding of the project, will also be discussed.

**Rachael Drew**

Rachael Drew is the Community Curator at Scarborough Museums Trust. She has worked across the cultural sector since 2008 and has particular experience of engaging community groups with heritage.

**Mapping and Laughing: Discovering the Social History of 18th-Century York, a partnership project between the Laurence Sterne Trust and Northumbria University**

**Elinor Camille-Wood, Laurence Sterne Trust**

**Dr Helen Williams, Northumbria University**

Two manuscript minute books providing evidence of a hitherto unknown York-based gentleman’s club were recently identified by curator Patrick Wildgust in the archive at Shandy Hall, Coxwold (home of Sterne 1759-67 and now museum) and in York Minster library. The books show that the ‘Good Humour Club’, also known as the ‘Doctors’ Club’, met weekly from 1724 to 1800 for feasting, alcohol, and gambling under the general goal of achieving and celebrating ‘good humour’.

In 2013 the Laurence Sterne Trust, in collaboration with Northumbria University, was granted Heritage Lottery Funding for a heritage research and education project on the club to celebrate the tercentenary of Sterne’s birth. The project comprised an exhibition, the digitisation of the minute book held in the Trust’s collection, the conservation of both codices, a period drama podcast, a series of educational comedy events and a webapp mapping the movements of the Good Humour Club’s members on to John Rocque’s 1750 map of eighteenth-century York.

This presentation reflects on the innovative series of public engagement projects which disseminated research on the club and its membership, analysing the success of university partnerships and the use of comedy as tools promoting engagement with social history collections.

**Elinor Camille-Wood and Dr Helen Williams**

Elinor Camille-Wood has been the Collections and Education Officer at the Laurence Sterne Trust for the past 5 years. She has previously worked for English Heritage and the National Media Museum and is currently working on an Arts Council England funded project in collaboration with York Museums Trust, University of York and Yamanashi Prefectural University, Japan.

Dr Helen Williams is a Lecturer in English at the University of Northumbria. Her research broadly concerns eighteenth-century book history, professional authorship and literary heritage and tourism. Helen teaches across English Literature and Cultural Heritage Management degree programmes. Helen was academic in residence on the Good Humour Club project at Shandy Hall, where she helps organise public engagement events based on eighteenth-century literature and culture.

**Concurrent sessions:**

**Rummaging and the creative potential of not knowing**

**Alexandra Woodall**

**University of Leicester**

This participatory workshop seeks to re-situate the object back into the heart of museum practice. While this may sound contradictory – after all, objects are what make museums – actually in many instances, we neglect the physical materiality of our objects, instead preferring to use them as little more than punctuation marks in telling ‘bigger’ stories, or as little ‘envelopes of knowledge’ to demonstrate particular facts. But what happens if we start with our sensory experiences with the actual object? Or our emotional responses? When it might not matter if we don’t know anything about that object? Or indeed when that object is entirely imagined, unknowable or used as inspiration for both making things and making things up?

This interactive object-based session will explore some of these questions by using the bizarre Object Dialogue Box, created by artists Karl and Kimberley Foster, within the Millennium Galleries. It will also examine some creative ways of engaging with objects through allowing serendipitous ‘rummaging’ in the stores, exemplified through the Mary Greg project, [www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk](http://www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk/) at Manchester Art Gallery. A series of sessions, initially for artists, but later extending to students, saw the opportunity for visitors to open drawers and cabinets, make discoveries for themselves, and use this neglected and forlorn social history collection as inspiration for creative practice. Not knowing what something is leaves a tremendous capacity for imagining what something could be.

Asking theoretical questions about objects as well as exploring practical implications for managing risk and devising strategies for creative use of objects, this workshop not only seeks to give examples of museums pushing the boundaries through innovative public engagement, but it will demonstrate this through a highly creative, fun and discursive session, which has potential to impact upon future professional practice.

**Alex Woodall**

Alex Woodall is completing her PhD at the University of Leicester, exploring sensory engagements with objects. Her university teaching has been recognised through a prestigious award and she is involved in several object-based research projects including in partnership with the National Museum Institute in Delhi. She is an experienced museum learning and interpretation practitioner, and has published widely about creative programmes, artist commissions and ‘rummaging’ behind the scenes, particularly through projects managed at Museums Sheffield and Manchester Art Gallery. As a freelance interpretation consultant, she works with diverse institutions across the country. She is a Trustee and Director for GEM and is an AMA mentor for the Museums Association.

**Hands-on Technology**

**Katherine Lloyd, Newcastle University**

**John Coburn, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums**

**Amelia Knowlson, Independent Researcher**

This interactive workshop aims to encourage participants to critically reflect on the way in which 3D imaging and printing may provide new opportunities for engagement with social history collections. In this workshop we aim to move beyond the ‘novelty factor’ that currently surrounds the adoption of 3D printing in the museum sector and instead provide a space for practitioners to share ideas about how this technology could be used to provide new opportunities to widen the impact of social history collections. Current practice centres on the use of 3D printing to reproduce objects for handling collections. This workshop will draw upon the expertise of participants to think about the ways in which this technology could be used in a more imaginative, and meaningful way.

The workshop draws upon research undertaken by researchers at Newcastle University and Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums as part of the AHRC Connected Communities funded *Co-Curate North East* project. The project, which focused on schools and communities in the North East of England, aimed to explore the way in which digital technology can be used to ‘open up’ museum and archive collections and facilitate the development of ‘citizen researchers’. A key component of the research involved experimental sessions that explored how techniques such as ‘mash ups’ and 3D modelling could be used to both enhance learning and generate new meanings around museum collections.

The workshop will provide a brief hands-on introduction to the technology currently available and critically reflect on innovative practice within both the museum sector and further afield, before moving towards a broader discussion. Existing knowledge of digital/3D technology is not a pre-requisite for participation!

**Dr Katherine Lloyd, John Coburn and Amelia Knowlson**

Dr Katherine Lloyd is a Research and Teaching Associate at the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Newcastle University, specialising in community heritage and co-production.

John Coburn is the Digital Programmes Mananger at Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, developing projects that explore the public value of collections and aim to inspire new audience engagement.

Amelia Knowlson is an Independent Researcher whose MA Dissertation focused on the use of 3D printing as a tool for public engagement. Amelia is currently investigating the associations between a 3D printed museum object and its digital and source artefact.