



OUTCOMES OF SSN FUNDING 2016 - 2018

AMOT – The Army Museums Network



Background

In 2016, AMOT conducted a wide-ranging scoping project which established that there was a significant developmental need across the army museums sector in the UK. The report outlined a series of recommendations for short, medium and long-term growth to enhance the sectors resilience and with a focus on supporting collections care, management and access, whilst increasing opportunities for more stream-lined, diverse and fit-for-purpose governance structures, staffing and volunteering approaches.

As a result, AMOT were delighted to be successful in receiving a major funding award from Arts Council England to begin to put into place activity which would start to deliver against these recommendations. The Subject Specialist Network grant aimed to support the army museums sector develop key networking and marketing activities to support increased engagement, opportunities for sharing best-practice, skills and knowledge, and provide both on-line and physical advice and guidance. Funding began in November 2016 and was to complete on March 31st 2018. The total funding available was in excess of £75,000

The programme was entitled *Army Museums into the Future* and the following report outlines the activities we undertook, and the outcomes delivered as a result.

Army Museums into the Future



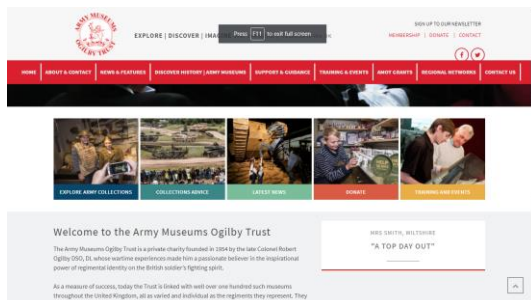
Delivery strands – What we did

The following demonstrates the key outcomes and outputs against the agreed programmes of work, the learning which took place as a result, and the unexpected outcomes we experienced.

1. Training Coordinator

Our training coordinator was appointed after a recruitment process which saw over 8 applicants apply and 3 short-listed. The successful candidate has vast experience and knowledge of working with and supporting museums in the South, as well as being on the executive board of the Sussex Museums Group. This meant that she brought a unique set of skills and understanding to the role. The coordinator has built trust and partnerships with the sector as a direct result of this project and thankfully, AMOT are able to build much of this work as an ongoing programme into their core activities.

2. Website development



Although AMOT already had a website, it was not focused on providing advice and guidance to the sector and this inhibited our ability to properly support the development of the sector. One of our key aims of this project was to redesign and develop our website to ensure by the end of the March 2018 we had a fully functioning, sustainable, one-stop-shop for the sector to access everything needed concerning army museums.

Over the summer, the project team worked hard with new web designers who had been commissioned because of their knowledge within the communications sector specifically related to AMOTs work and collections needs. The end result is a reactive, sector facing site, which is powered by Wordpress technology and allows the AMOT team themselves to change and update the website should they need to. They also provide tech and maintenance support as standard and have been pivotal in developing and supporting a number of army museums to increase their social media and comms activity through providing free advice and guidance at our events. The key elements created as part of this project, in addition to the user-friendly portal and ability to adapt are the sections which focus on:

- Regional network activity – for the first time these growing networks now have a space to share their work, draw further organisation in to their activity and meetings, and increase their profile locally.
- Advice and guidance resources, tool-kits, and signposting – AMOT have a plan in place to continue to develop these resources and guidance and already we are seeing the sector access these to support their ongoing development – the majority are not available to view through youtube links and the remaining resources will be upload imminently
- A training and advice section – this is the first time that a training programme page has been included anywhere with direct relevance to the army museums sector. It is able to draw in relevant events for army museum specific activity, wider museum and cultural activity, and external training support.

3. Training programme

The training sessions engaged staff at all levels of museum operation across the sector from directors to volunteers and proved to be a useful forum to bring together staff to discuss common issues in a safe and supportive space. The sessions were geographically spread reflecting the membership of the network.

The first session which focused on caring for medals, was run in partnership with the Money & Medals SSN, and hosted by York Army Museum. The session had 23 attendees and was well received. Feedback from the session was taken on board (for example attendees wanted to wear name badges and have more of a practical element to the day) and used to inform the following sessions.



The second session which focused on making interpretation relevant and accessible to audiences was hosted by the Royal Hospital Chelsea. The session had 19 attendees and again was well received. Positive comments included, ‘good debates by those present – lots of ideas shared’, ‘a great balance of practical work and learning best practice with colleagues from a range of museums’.

The third session which will focus on the research and interpretation of colonial collections was planned for April, however slippage in partner availability meant that the event had to be postponed and repositioned outside of the funding programme. AMOT will now run this as part of its 2018 / 9 programme.

We also delivered a programme of MODES training in partnership with the NAM as a forerunner of our longer-term partner activity. This engaged 20 delegates and was extremely popular.

Finally we delivered a programme of bursaries which allowed many new army museum members, volunteers and professionals to attend events and take part in wide reaching training.

4. Resources and top tips

The scoping survey and our baseline survey identified that many of those working in the sector wanted to access advice and guidance online in the form of top-tips, downloadable resources, and tool-kits to effect practice. Consequently, we planned in a strand of activity to meet these needs. We originally planned to deliver 10 top-tip films and associated resources, however the quality of the film and the knowledge and support of the film team, has meant we have actually been able to produce 15 films.

The videos produced have been uploaded on to an AMOT YouTube Channel so that we can direct visitors to it from our website, social media posts, and monthly eshots. The videos include introduction too and top tips on areas including:

Top Tips Videos

- Financial Management
- Business Planning
- Social Media
- Fundraising
- Being Resilient
- Volunteering

- Management
- Accessibility
- Researching Medals
- Storing and Documenting Medals
- Engaging Young People
- Identifying Medals
- Displaying your medals

Introduction Videos

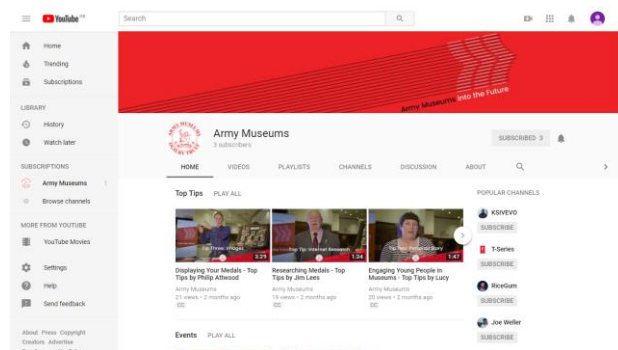
- Interpretation and Accessibility
- Money and Medals

Event Videos

- October Festival
- Building Resilience Showcase

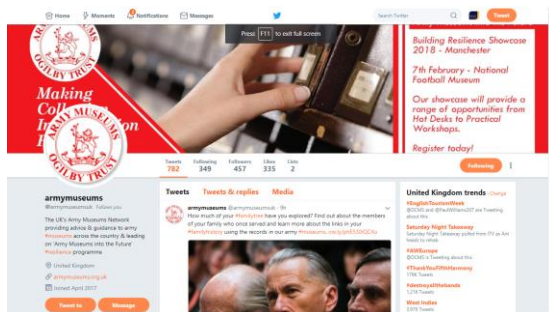
In addition to the videos, we will also be uploading a range of downloadable resources – whether templates, top tips, toolkits on key museum specific and organisational resilience areas that visitors can access and benefit from.

All of the above resources will align and compliment the work undertaken by the project team over the past 12 months and highlight key areas for development and support within the sector.



5. Communications strand

In 2017, AMOT commissioned Mantra Media to deliver communications support in the form of newsletters, social media, and web delivery, initially as part of the funded project, but this is now something AMOT have embedded as core activity going forward. As a direct result of the project, we set up Twitter and Facebook feeds and an electronic newsletter which goes out monthly for the first time.



The change in comms has revolutionised the way that AMOT engages with the sector and this has been a difficult and worth-while process. To have achieved this such a short project has been understandably difficult at times, but nonetheless rewarding as a result.

We share the outcomes and outputs of the programme as part of our regular activity and we will use the following routes to share information across the sector:

- Our monthly newsletter
- Our social media feeds

In addition, we will look to present the outcomes at relevant conferences and seminars, including our own in October 2018. We will also work with our partners to share the lessons learnt and work to continue partnership programming and activity into the future.

Achieved objectives and outcomes

ACE Goal 4: The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled

Planned Outcomes and Outputs	Unplanned Outcomes and Outputs	Quantifiable Outputs	Wider Benefits
Delivery of a training package of events and resources to support the increased knowledge, understanding and skills of the sector	<p>An ongoing training programme informed by the findings of the programme and financed by AMOT</p> <p>Withdrawal of funding for our final event because it's timing had to slip into April</p>	<p>3 training events delivered for 62 delegates including bursaries</p> <p>Delivery of 15 online downloadable resources, top tips, and advice sections</p>	<p>An increased understanding of key sector specific knowledge and skills in the long-term</p> <p>Online access to support ongoing information and guidance support</p>
Delivery of a one-stop-shop portal which will draw together all information, advice and guidance in the long-term for the army museums sector	<p>Ability to include regional network activity had not been planned but was warmly welcomed</p> <p>Ability to ensure the website was reactive in the longer-term working with partners and the sector had not been planned</p>	1 one-stop-shop portal created and now managed by AMOT	Long-term support for everyone working with an army or military collection
Delivery of a a communications and marketing programme	<p>AMOT had not originally thought that this route would be of interested to the sector, but many army museums were already actively engaged in social media and this has supported a real term engagement programme</p> <p>AMOT now have a professional and skilled marketing and comms team to work with in the longer-term</p>	<p>Twitter feed established and growing numbers daily</p> <p>Facebook page created</p> <p>Monthly online newsletter developed and delivered, and increasing subscription numbers</p>	<p>The sector is more easily marketed, and partners are engaged more readily</p> <p>AMOT are able to communicate with the sector and wider partners easily and reliably</p>