

CIPRIAN DOBRA

On

**BRITISH MUSEUM
INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME 2019**

Introduction:

My name is CIPRIAN-MIRCEA DOBRA, I am from Alba Iulia, Romania and I work in the PRINCIPIA MUSEUM, a Roman site museum that was opened in 2015. I come from a small museum, in a small city and with a little experience in museum work. I work in that museum because I am a passionate re-enactor and I like sharing what I know in an entertaining manner.

Expectations:

I attended the ITP because I wanted to learn as much as possible to do my job in the proper manner. In Romania there are no such programmes and being part of something organised by the British Museum is good both for my professional career and for my own self-esteem.

ITP Objectives (from my perspective):

I am sure the ITP team put together a set of objectives that primarily concern themselves and the institution they represent but that is their concern and I am sure that they reached them all in a successful manner.

From my point of view, the general idea of the Programme was to create a network of professionals around the globe that could serve humanity interested in the future.

And also from my point of view the ITP is a perfect construction method, the ITP and the British Museum being good master masons that put us, the bricks coming from all around the world, in the proper place in that construction. I know, it is a plastic description, but I like to keep it simple and I do not mind, actually I am proud to be a “brick”, a small part of this amazing network. All the contacts provided by the Course Book or acquired personally may witness this.



Another objective was to make intercultural exchanges, because the ITP staff moved the working teams around so much that I interacted with everybody, and I liked it. Besides learning from my colleagues' presentations about the beautiful things to be seen around the world, I had the opportunity to talk and work with them, sometimes in a very difficult way, due to the different levels of English that we speak. I want you to know that I am a shy man and speaking to other people was a difficult task and a struggle for me my whole life. But re-enacting and working in the museum helped a lot and the ITP gave me the chance and opportunity to broaden my experience and I thank you so much for it.

Training methods:

The presentation method is a very good method. Hearing all those professionals talking about their work with passion and joy was amazing in the way that I related to their work and since I like hearing that I presented my museum in a passionate manner, I consider that they will also feel appreciated about their presentation. I admire the hard work they put into the presentations, I thank those who also found time to make practical work to reinforce the presented information.



I really enjoyed the tours offered by those who made the presentations and especially the insights offered by Ian Jenkins and Daniel Antoine. I have seen the objects before the guided tours but those things spoke to me but not fully, I could pass by them and not knowing all those subtleties underlined by Ian Jenkins. I can see objects differently now, even if they are not Roman (my personal interest). And seeing the human remains exhibited in the museum and presented in Daniel Antoine's view really got me related because I have the same respectful attitude even towards the stones in my museum. And by hearing the presentations about the Manga and the Islamic Galleries (made by several BM representatives) I could say that I will never look again at an object or artefact in a museum without thinking about the hard work behind the placement of that object or artefact in a display.

Experiences

I also enjoyed and appreciated the fact that ITP is not all about the British Museum and that you gave us the perfect example of networking by engaging us in exchange events to see different approaches and different views.

- Brighton Royal Pavilion with its cold and distant atmosphere (the palace was very limited in my perspective) but having such amazing things in there;
- Horniman Museum and Gardens where I enjoyed the exhibitions very much but mostly the talk with Nick Merriman who showed me their perspective as a community museum;
- The Shard – amazing view and technology;
- Stonehenge (need I say more?!) was an unexpected trip but a beautiful one because it was an experience never to be forgotten since it placed me in some surroundings that I can only find in books (brought back memories from reading Tess of the D'Urbervilles and other novels presenting actions in the Stonehenge area).
- Our personal unguided experience (with Aprille, Jacob and Jasmine) inside the Museum of London Docklands where I found out about the unseen face of London;
- The Phantom of the Opera show at Her Majesty's Theatre was quite an experience due to the scene settings and the amazing performance of the actors.
- The Mary Rose and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard where I really appreciated the tour offered by Ross Thomas inside the Mary Rose Museum and HMS Victory.
- And the last but not least the Bloomberg Mithraeum where I felt right at home in a Roman site Museum. But I also felt a lot of envy (constructive envy) about the amount of artefacts discovered there and the experience offered by the show's special effects in the actual site.

I learned about the trip to the UK partner museum in Newcastle when I met Jackie Bland at the lunch we had together with the rest of the representatives from the partner museums, but the actual experience was beyond my expectations.



Besides the presentations which were brief and very easy to follow, the Newcastle experience surpassed my expectations because they took us around every day showing us as much as possible in that short period of time. I have learned about and visited the Angel of the North. I had the noisy experience of the Discovery Museum (who I considered to be a playground at first but then I wanted to stay more just to learn more and, although I am 41, I wanted to play with everything they have in that museum). I visited the Alnwick Castle and learned about the films that were shot there but I mostly enjoyed the landscape and the Geordie accent of the lady taxi driver who never ceased talking for the entire road to and from the castle. I enjoyed the Hadrian's Wall model and artefacts in the Hancock Museum and, most of all, the visits to Segedunum (many thanks to Geoff Woodward) and Arbeia forts, and the trip to Hadrian's Wall. I do not know about the others, but for me it was the highlight of 2019 and the fact that Jackie Bland and Bill Griffiths surprised me by taking us to Birdoswald (to see the Dacian fort) was amazing. Needless to say I want to return.

Results:

Although I do not need the entire information offered by ITP (our museum does not have an archive of its own, we do not have artefacts of our own so far, and so on) I found everything useful. I hope that with all the knowledge that I accumulated I can make a contribution to the development of my museum and my city. And when the museum will have the things that do not exist at the moment, at least someone in that museum has an idea about how things should be done.



The things that I will make use of at home (as the legislation permits) will be:

- a) Museum membership for the involvement of the community.
- b) Fundraising methods for organising further events and exhibitions.
- c) Learning programmes to complete the educational environment and to involve schools.
- d) Exhibition organising skills (many thanks for the Object in Focus Experience).
- e) The contacts that I have so far from UK and around the world (my first collaboration already started during the ITP by helping my Chinese colleague Jasmine Qiao to translate the Latin and French inscriptions from the coat of arms on some porcelain pieces that will be part of a future exhibition in the Tianjin Museum).
- f) Presentation skills and types of speech that I witness during the presentations (I really liked, enjoyed and appreciated the way Jonathan Williams speaks, emphasising the last part of a sentence to underline the important thing; I have even tried that sometimes with some of the museum visitors and they got the message properly and paid more attention).

- g) The different approaches of the museums that I have visited. That is to say, I will work to make my museum a “window museum” instead of a “mirror museum” (as taught by Ian Jenkins) and to make it seen as a part of Romania in the first place but also a part of the world, of the larger context, of humanity. I will work towards making the museum “an experience” as I have seen in a lot of the visited museums in UK, not only a place with artefacts and ruins. I will work to make my museum seen and liked by the younger generations, to make it more and more interactive in order to respond to the trends and needs of younger generations nowadays.
- h) To offer my knowledge to others areas of work. One of the most appreciated experiences for me was the opportunity offered by Ross Thomas and the Greece and Rome Department in analysing and completing the MI+ records with some artefacts in the storage. I had the chance to touch, put pieces together measure, describe and try to identify the type of blades of these artefacts.
- i) The different way of thinking (as seen in the presentation of the British Museum’s future plan). That is to say to make things not only for the current generation or the next but for all the generations of the future.

I have a lot of ideas, all generated by attending the ITP, and one way or another, these things will be visible in the future and I will make sure that the BM and the ITP staff will now about it.

Thanks

First of all I would like to thank the British Museum for making the ITP possible and for accepting me to the programme in 2019.

And then, in no particular order, I would like to thank ITP staff and everyone involved in this process for their availability, willingness and kindness. Mostly, I thank Claire Messenger for her ever-smiling attitude and good disposition (even when she caught a cold), George Peckham and Emily Shaw for being so responsible and reliable and Mohammed Mokhtar for our talks and friendship.

I definitely feel the need to thank Mrs. Frances Carey and the Mary-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust for sponsoring me to be there. And of course to Mrs. Frances Carey in particular for being such an amazing host.

I would also like to thank my colleagues just for being themselves. I am glad that I met them and worked together and I am sad that we are so far away from each other.

To be frank, I do not think that the dictionary has words to express the gratitude I feel towards **EVERYBODY**. This experience helped me rediscover myself and to discover the world and its people in so many instances. I feel that I am a changed man and I feel rich because of my new friends. Although I will not work in the British Museum, I feel like I am part of the British Museum team and I hope there will be further interactions with the BM and the rest of the ITP network.

You will notice that there is no negative feedback here. I cannot remember anything negative. My personal motto is "There is something to learn from everything!" and if there was something negative it is still positive for me.

THANK YOU!!!!!!