

UCL Public Engagement Beacon Bursary: Project Evaluation & Learning Form

The project evaluation and learning form aims to provide a simple way to document what the project has done and achieved. Projects are asked to reflect on their experience, explain any problems they had, summarise what they have learned, and lessons they would pass on to other projects or can be applied elsewhere. Although a template is provided, the nature and scope of the form will depend on the project undertaken.

Projects should submit a complete project evaluation and learning form no later than **one month** after the project end date.

The form will be reviewed by the UCL Public Engagement Unit and summarised to the Steering Group. As we are keen to share experiences of public engagement, completed sections of the form (with approval from the author) will be used to develop UCL public engagement case studies which will be published on the UCL website.

Background:

Name	Wendy Bracewell
Job Title/Course	Reader in Southeast European History
Organisation/Department	SSEES
Project name	Destination London
Total project value (£)	£5400
Beacon funding (£)	£1500
Funding breakdown <i>Please note the project actual spend, broken down into specific costs</i>	<p>Beacon Bursary Speakers' fees: £150 x 6 = £900 Workshop/speaker's fee (combined): £250 Flyers: £100 <u>Travel and accommodation: £250</u> Total: £1500</p> <p>East Looks West project: Book launch/reception: £300 <u>Printing costs: £200</u> Total: £500</p> <p>Widening Participation: Fee for workshop leader: £500 Lunch & refreshments for students & parents: £140 Materials: £60 <u>Assistant: £300</u> Total: £1000</p> <p>Roberts Skills Initiative funding Radio workshop and broadcast: (technicians, post-production, materials): £1200 <u>Postgraduate assistants for Destination London programme: £1200</u> Total: £2400</p>
Location	Various, at UCL & elsewhere
Start and end dates	19 Oct-11 Dec. 2009
Project partners <i>(Please list the partners</i>	Tony White, Leverhulme Writer in Residence, <u>pieceofpaperpress@googlemail.com</u>

<p><i>involved in the project, include names, organisations and contact details where possible).</i></p>	<p>Katy Redfern, UCL Outreach Unit</p> <p>Uta Staiger, Grand Challenge Intercultural Interaction</p> <p>Sarah Nicol-Seldon, Resonance FM, <seznicolseldon@googlemail.com></p> <p>Other partners for specific activities listed as appropriate below.</p>
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Summary of project / activity: What happened?

Destination London was a series of public events structured around the experiences and perceptions of east Europeans who have written about London, intended to explore new approaches to seeing and writing about the city, and marking the completion of the AHRC-funded East Looks West travel writing research project directed by Wendy Bracewell. The events included (in chronological order):

Public engagement workshop (19 October) [Roberts Skills Initiative funding]

- A public engagement skills workshop for SSEES/UCL/CEELBAS postgraduates, built around an Arts and Humanities 'landscaping' session (a panel of people from across the public engagement spectrum, explaining their different platforms – museums or broadcast or writing – and how to get involved with these activities in London, plus question & answer session).

Destination London podcasts

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/news-articles/0910/09101901>

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/news-articles/0911/09110302>

- Audio podcasts featuring a selection of translated extracts from East European writers describing their experiences of London, from the 18th to the 21st century. The extracts were read in English by staff and students from the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, and the podcasts produced by UCL Corporate Communications and broadcast on the UCL News website as well as by Destination London. They were accompanied by full texts and notes for further reading on the Destination London website.

East Looks West launch (Thurs. Oct 22)

- A reception to launch the four books published as a result of 'East Looks West: East European Travel Writing on Europe', an AHRC-funded research project at SSEES. The reception included talks by critic and writer Vesna Goldsworthy (Kingston); poet Alan Brownjohn (London); Robin Aizlewood (SSEES); Wendy Bracewell (SSEES), book sales, and a special free publication, *Where to Go in Europe*, to summarize and advertise the project's findings in an accessible way.

Destination London: Public panel on travel writing (Fri. Oct 23)

- An evening of readings and discussion exploring eastern European perspectives on London and different approaches to writing about the city, with the celebrated London author Iain Sinclair (London), memoirist Kapka Kassabova (Edinburgh and Bulgaria), Bosnian refugee and former SSEES student, Vesna Marić (London and Sarajevo), Borivoj Radaković (Zagreb), Vitali Vitaliev (London and Ukraine), Andrea Pisac (London and Zagreb), chaired by Tony White (SSEES).

Balkanising Bloomsbury writing workshop (Sat. 7 Nov.)

- A short story workshop for members of the public, led by Tony White, using experimental

writing techniques such as cut-ups to create completely new works of fiction reflecting on relationships between the Balkans and London. Completed stories are being published on the SSEES website.

Destination London: a writing workshop for school students, in association with the UCL Outreach team [Widening Participation funding] (Sat. 7 Nov.)

- A one-day writing workshop for schoolchildren from east European communities in London, led by Vesna Marić (writer and memoirist), with web-based follow-up. The best completed stories are being published on the SSEES website.

Clearspot: East Looks West (Resonance FM programme, 11 December) [Roberts Skills Initiative funding]

- Hour-long radio programme including interviews and excerpts of *Destination London* events, particularly book launch and the presentations at the writers' panel, through radio broadcasts on Resonance FM and as podcasts available through the Destination London website. Resonance 104.4fm is the world's first radio art station, established by London Musicians' Collective. The programme was put together by postgraduate students as part of a two-day hands-on workshop on public engagement and broadcasting techniques, and was developed and led by a team from Resonance FM.

Balkanising Bloomsbury launch (Destination London website)

- The launch of ePub editions of three new short stories by author and Leverhulme Trust writer in residence at SSEES, Tony White, reworking the archive of existing texts about the Balkans, from travel writing, the Hague Tribunal transcripts or mass media texts, to create completely new works of fiction which consider the way ideas of European identity are created and perpetuated. These stories were produced as an experiment in electronic editions, produced by Artists' eBooks and designed to be downloaded and read on ebook reading software and devices such as iPhones.

Book sales

- Both the launch and the Destination London panel included book sales, of books published as part of the East Looks West research project, books by the panellists, and books with a theme that echoed those of the programme as a whole.

Who was the audience for this project? Please give details.

The audiences for the different events varied, though for all the *public* events, we aimed at a mix of Londoners interested in the changing character of the city, first of all those with an East European heritage, particularly those who might not have previously taken part in events at UCL, and secondly an arts audience interested in writers and writing about London.

We advertised to the first group through leaflets, distributed through community associations, schools, churches and shops; and to the second through leaflets distributed at a wide variety of arts events, Camden libraries, bookstores and UCL outlets. We also listed the events with listings programmes and publications, used UCL News, various academic newsletters (BAN, the Centre for Transnational History, Intercultural Interactions Grand Challenge, etc), Facebook groups, EventBrite and a dedicated Destination London website. The book launch was also advertised through direct invitations. The data from participants at the book launch showed a mix of academics, former students, and a wide variety of non-UCL attendees, including a high proportion of East Europeans. For the writers' panel, data from EventBrite (for those who registered in advance) suggests that the audience was very heavily of East European origin, judging by surnames (about two-thirds). A statistical breakdown of that audience shows where they heard about this event:

Percentage	Source of info on Destination London	Notes
25.0%	Website/Search Engine	Incl. 3,1 % who learnt through additional sources
23.9%	Email/Newsletter	Incl. 1% who learnt through additional sources
22.9%	Family or Friend	
12.5%	Advertisement/leaflet	Incl. 4, 1% who learnt through additional sources
5.2%	Seminar	
5.2%	Magazine Article	Publication in TimeOut
5.2%	Facebook	Incl. 1% who learnt through additional sources
100.0%	TOTAL	Translates into total of 107 advance registered attendees

The writing workshop for schoolchildren was by its character confined to those from London's East European communities; the Balkanizing Bloomsbury writing workshop was more mixed, though all were recruited through an interest in the Balkans.

The public engagement workshops (both the landscaping session and the Resonance FM workshop), funded by Roberts Skills, were aimed at a general A&H postgraduate audience at UCL & CEELBAS universities. These were attended by postgrads from SSEES (7), Bartlett (7), Slade (5), Geography (4), Wellcome (1), Scandinavian Studies (1), Archaeology (3), CES (1), Anthropology (1), STS (1), English (1), History (3), Hebrew & Jewish Studies (1).

What was the project supposed to accomplish? Please outline the aims and objectives agreed at the start of project, note if they changed during the project and the process and reasons for making those changes.

The initial application stated that the aims were to:

- open up the results of UCL research to wider publics;
- publicize UCL's specialist resources on travel writing, and on London, to interested audiences (both academic and non-academic);
- provide new perspectives on intercultural interaction in London through travel writing;
- target London communities that may not previously have engaged with the university;
- to contribute to widening participation at UCL among young East European Londoners;
- foster network development between creative communities in London and Eastern Europe;
- bring creative writers (and their practices) into the academic environment in an exercise in knowledge exchange;
- explore how new forms of distribution and publishing can be used to extend the impact of UCL research and contemporary writing from outside the mainstream.

The aims changed only slightly in the course of the project, in that Roberts Skills funding made it possible to put on further events (the 'landscaping' session and the Resonance radio workshop) that expanded our target audience to include Arts and Humanities postgraduates and our aims to include helping postgraduates to consider engaging with external audiences, including community organizations, non-profit bodies, government or industry.

Did the project succeed in its aims? How do you know? Specifically, please outline any evaluation and assessment undertaken.

1) *To open up the results of UCL research to wider publics, and to publicize UCL's specialist resources on travel writing, and on London, to interested audiences (both academic and non-academic).* This was addressed through the book launch, podcasts and book sales. A numerical measure of success comes from the numbers of participants at the launch (over 100) and the fact that *all* the books available sold out (with additional back orders). We sold over £1000 worth of books over the course of the programme, even with heavy discounts, to the benefit of authors, publishers *and* purchasers. We also solicited details of the audience, and feedback, through a guest 'traveller's book', using a bibliographic oddity, a travel book (*Hindoo Holiday*) that had been bound up and sold blank by accident. Participants left comments, hints for further reading, congratulations, promises to read the books they had bought and their own brief travel narratives. This event was also used to publicize UCL's involvement in *EuropeanaTravel*, with a leaflet (all of these were taken away).

2) *To provide new perspectives on intercultural interaction in London through travel writing.* It was clear from audience take-up that the popular appeal of travel writing provided a hook that attracted people; the way it was approached in the events was carefully orchestrated to use this, but also to subvert preconceptions and stereotypes. Feedback at the writers' panel was solicited by distributing London postcards (quite kitsch: London buses and Big Ben) and asking for written comments on the event. Specific remarks included: 'Tonight really helped me understand my feelings as an immigrant in London, and as a Londoner back at home in Poland.' 'Pessoa said 'my homeland is the Portuguese language'. I think Danilo Kiš said the same thing (not about Portuguese, though!).' The question and answer session after the readings also opened out into a discussion of travel and intercultural interaction, as well as other matters such as style in travel writing. (Postcard: 'Why do travel writers all write as if we were in the 19th century in terms of style?')

3) *To target London communities that may not previously have engaged with the university; to contribute to widening participation at UCL among young East European Londoners.* Efforts to do this, and data on audiences, have been outlined above. The breakdown suggests the importance of using web-based communications of all sorts (as well as the power of word-of-mouth). In terms of reaching non-traditional audiences with the public events, this was quite successful. (Another postcard: 'This is first time I come to show at university – it was great! Next time I bring my daughter too.')

Feedback after the writers' panel was especially vivid – no one wanted to leave afterwards, and there were many requests for similar events, and queries about joining mailing lists (we had a form ready). Again, nearly all the books on offer were sold, with many people asking where they could go to get other similar works. There was much interest, too, in the UCL *BrainFood* leaflet and in the general info booklets on degrees. We also solicited informal feedback from the writing workshop participants: here too the reactions were uniformly positive, particularly from those who hadn't previously visited UCL on campus. Here long-term success in recruitment terms will depend on the further use of the address lists we compiled (particularly of Saturday Schools).

4) *To foster network development between creative communities in London and Eastern Europe, and to bring creative writers (and their practices) into the academic environment in an exercise in knowledge exchange.* This was addressed through bringing together writers both informally (at dinner the day before the writers' panel, and by invitations to the other events) and on stage. Here we didn't attempt formal assessment, but received feedback in letters from the participants after the event (registering their satisfaction with the way it had gone and the contacts they had made), and indirectly, by requests to share email addresses. This will need to be measured on a

long-term basis, on the basis of future collaboration, but it is worth noting that the very process on putting on these events has already fostered such exchanges, first of all between Wendy Bracewell (academic) and Tony White (writer); and between the organizing team and the writers invited to London. This has been very fruitful in terms of shared ideas and perspectives.

5) *To explore how new forms of distribution and publishing can be used to extend the impact of UCL research and contemporary writing from outside the mainstream.* In addition to the key developments of a dedicated *Destination London* webpage hosted on the UCL SSEES website, we explored the use of web 2.0 tools such as Facebook to grow the profile of the event and publish links and materials relating to the various media, literary and online resources that we aggregated through the series of events. Our Facebook profile currently has around 171 'friends' - and we'll continue to use it to make announcements relating to the legacy of the series.

Other innovative forms of publishing included:

a) With a small amount of dissemination funding from Tony White's Leverhulme grant we worked with James Bridle of booktwo.org and artistsebooks.org to develop new ebook templates for three of the Balkanising Bloomsbury short stories that Tony had written during his residency, and to publish them in the new EPUB format which during the summer 2009 seemed to emerge as a kind of 'VHS' among ebook formats. These titles are now available for free download by users with iphones and other hand-held devices or proprietary ebook reading devices such as the Sony Ebook Reader etc. We used the Destination London webpage as our primary means of distribution, with links to the files and further info also held on Bridle's artistsebooks site. Take-up has been an early measure of success. Downloads of the EPUB formatted Balkanising Bloomsbury ebooks were measured in the hundreds in the week or so following publication, and mentioned on blogs including <http://vernaland.blogspot.com/2009/11/free-ebooks-tony-white-bridled.html> and webzine 3am. Other kinds of evaluation/benchmarking around these publications included uses of appropriate forms of licensing (Creative Commons) and whether the EPUB format ebooks could be 1) tailored to our needs and 2) successfully downloadable by a variety of platforms. This was quite a labour-intensive process and booktwo.org's expertise was essential to achieving a successful product. More data will become available in due course. In addition the EPUB ebooks have created partnerships with the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin and with Las Cienegas Projects, Los Angeles, who were respectively co-commissioners of two of Tony's stories. The opportunity to publish pieces of writing from the writing workshops on the project website was also very attractive, and will offer the chance to develop audiences further and provide means of feedback for new writers.

b) Production of a free booklet, *Where to Go in Europe*, to summarize (and advertise) the East Looks West research. This collection of travellers' accounts of toilet misadventures, east and west, used the public susceptibility to toilet humour to publicize the project and to get across an important point about the ways that difference can be created out of something that is a universal necessity. All copies were distributed and there have been calls for a reprint edition (indeed, Wendy has been approached by a literary agent proposing to turn this into a trade book, thus ensuring her academic reputation will be compromised!).

c) The use of podcasts of readings to disseminate the anthology translations in new ways. Informal comments on the podcasts suggest that they reached a wide and appreciative audience, corroborated by comments on sites such as Diggit and Reddit, as well as on the Destination London Facebook site. There has been good take-up of the downloadable Notes for Further Reading from the Destination London website, triggered by the podcasts.

Also helping us to achieve each of the 5 key aims above, and growing the legacy of these events further, has been the new relationship with Resonance FM - London's community arts radio station - who will be publishing an hour-long programme on Destination London on 11 December

as well as a series of podcasts, all produced by UCL post-graduate students through the two-day radio production workshop developed specifically to our brief by Resonance 104.4 FM and supported with Roberts Skills Initiative Funding.

What things do you think worked well and why? *When filling in this section, please try to think about all aspects of the project (e.g. initial inception, project activities and project outcomes), from a range of perspectives.*

All of it worked well, with one or two minor setbacks (see below). But there were a couple of things that were exceptionally productive.

The first of these was the collaboration with Tony White: his Leverhulme Residency provided the springboard for a whole series of very fruitful exchanges between the academic- and practice-based sides. It was the combination of my academic research into travel writing and his practise-based approach to writing, publishing and intercultural interaction that provided the impetus and the wherewithal to respond to the Beacon Bursary call. It's hard to extrapolate from personal chemistry, but easy enough to draw the conclusion that introducing creative practice into an academic environment has real, tangible benefits.

The second thing that worked really well was the way in which the Beacon Bursary gave us a starting point for a whole range of activities, interest groups and funding applications (Widening Participation, Roberts Skills, Intercultural Interaction, Transnational History, etc), all aimed different audiences and addressing slightly different problems, but all built around the same themes, derived from the East Looks West travel writing project. Seed money is supposed to do this, but it doesn't always work so well. Here I think the snowball effect was partly the result of a theme that was exceptionally appealing to a wide range of people and that links with a variety of intellectual and political agendas, and partly because we could draw on already existing networks that both Tony and I had built in the course of other work. Again, hard to extrapolate a general principle, but thinking beyond the initial Public Engagement brief came naturally because of our other interests.

The final aspect that I think lifts this project above the ordinary was our focus on producing long-lasting outcomes, things that can be used beyond life of the project, and especially a) the Destination London website, which was conceived not just as an advertising vehicle (though it is that, too), but also as a resource for those interested in East European travel writing about London; and b) the tool-kits which we have produced. These include,
--for Widening Participation: lists of East European Saturday schools and regulars schools in the UCL area, with details on contacts, and a template with materials for writing workshops for schoolchildren;
--for Roberts Skills: a set of podcasts on public engagement that can be accessed *ad lib* by postgrads (and a template for putting on similar events), and a workshop format that Resonance FM can use for other similar events;
--for Public Engagement: a set of forms, addresses and contacts for advertising events and connecting with different communities.

What issues emerged during the project and how were they tackled? *Specifically, what barriers did you face and how did you overcome them? Again, please try to think about all aspects of the project, from a range of perspectives.*

The whole project was remarkably problem-free. However, there were a few things that didn't work, or that caused hiccups.

One thing was adjusting our aims to those of collaborators. For the most part this worked very well: nearly all our partners were keen to be involved. But there were others who might have benefited from the exposure through Destination London who were initially interested, but not interested enough to put in the necessary effort (we had hoped to arrange a showing of the *London in Motion* films, for example, but were unable to come to any agreement with the coordinators about timing or venue – both key organizers were largely unavailable). This was a pity, but not a disaster, as we had secured the participation of the key participants early on and had back-ups where they were unavailable.

Communications: we had very helpful meetings with Corporate Communications, where people were very imaginative and supportive. Rachel Lister, especially, was wonderful, turning our material into podcasts and seizing on our ideas for using staff and students as readers, or adding material to the website to extend the usefulness of the site. But we hadn't realized quite how far in advance press releases need to be coordinated, nor what sorts of constraints govern this genre. In the event, we spent a bit of time trying to coordinate this, with fairly limited results. We needed to start much earlier and to phrase our communication in terms of 'findings challenging the dominant paradigm' – not exactly what the research does, though we did think it suggested different ways of seeing London. In the event, I think we reached our target audiences, but perhaps we could have done better with mainstream news organizations. (We were, however, covered in the Polish press!)

Reaching schoolchildren: We had two problems here: first in that we targeted Saturday schools to recruit participants in the writing workshop for East European students – but without realizing that most of these schools only cover the age group up to 12, when our target audience was 14-16 year-olds; secondly in that we asked potential participants to apply themselves with their reasons for wanting to attend (something that sets the bar quite high for kids of this age group). We had to reschedule the event and reduce its scope, but in the event it was actually quite successful, because we were able to work through teachers and parents. The value of the knowledge gained (and the details included in the WP toolkit) off-set the difficulties.

Looking back, what things do you'd wished you had known when the project started? *Please list anything you feel would have been helpful to know at the start which could have made the project easier.*

I know very well from other such initiatives that they can devour a lot of time. What made it possible this time was the fact that I was on leave, and also the possibility of jettisoning activities if they looked as though they weren't going to work without an inordinate investment of my time (a *London in Motion* showing; a planned *EuropeanaTravel* exhibition). Even so, and even with the *extremely* helpful, imaginative and patient support from the public engagement unit and elsewhere in UCL, activities like this depend on having administrative backup in the home department. I made a point of getting extra funding to pay for a postgraduate assistant for administrative support, but I didn't know when applying that SSEES would have lost its main research support person. I ended up having to deal with all the details of finances, which were complicated: accounts, reimbursement, invoices/credit notes, etc. The message: public engagement activities have hidden costs to a department and the individuals involved. Know what they are and take appropriate steps early on.

Also on finances: how UCL finance regulations work is often very unclear to the novice. My budgets would have balanced better, and the people who oversee finances would have torn out

much less hair, if I'd realized that payments to assistants carry on-costs (an additional 12.8%) and that you can give speakers a per diem up to a set amount without any fuss, while 'speakers' fees' have to go through payroll, with on-costs (and with all the extra admin setting up a payroll payment involves – and it's a lot).

Has the project led to any new activity or relationships? *For example has the project led to any changes within the department or any changes in teaching or research? Please give details.*

The various tool-kits that have been generated as a part of the programme are intended to make it easier for others at SSEES to put on public engagement events. These will be available on the SSEES website, and people contemplating public engagement activities will be directed there as a first stop. There is already more interest and activity here.

For my own part, one result was unexpected. Hearing so much from the audiences about their personal experiences, and about contemporary travels of the sort that don't usually get written up as 'literary' travel writing has shifted my own current research plans to include these – and has given me some of the contacts that will make this possible. For me personally, the greatest benefit of the whole programme has been the new and unexpected perspectives I've received on my own research.

Which of the Beacon Aim(s) did it address? *The aims for the Beacon for Public Engagement Programme are as follows:*

Create a culture within HEIs and research institutes and centres where public engagement is formalised and embedded as a valued and recognised activity for staff at all levels and for students	
Build capacity for public engagement within institutions and encourage staff at all levels, postgraduate students, and undergraduates where appropriate, to become involved	x
Ensure HEIs address public engagement within their strategic plans and that this is cascaded to departmental level	x
Create networks within and across institutions, and with external partners, to share good practice, celebrate their work and ensure that those involved in public engagement feel supported and able to draw on shared expertise	
Enable HEIs to test different methods of supporting public engagement and to share learning	x

Specifically, how does the project addresses these aims?

Some of the activities (the postgrad workshop, the toolkits) were directly aimed at building **capacity**. My own experience, and my willingness to share it, will help encourage others, at least at SSEES, to become involved (I've already been recruited as a consultant on Bojan Aleksov's Reveal bid, for example).

Parts of the programme addressed UCL's **strategic aims** (e.g. in Widening Participation, or Intercultural Interaction) directly. More generally, the programme took the aim of public engagement to departmental level across SSEES and other parts of UCL, with some success.

The range of activities allowed us to test (and UCL to support) a variety of different **methods** of engaging with the public, and sharing/exchanging knowledge and learning: web-based, print-

based, through collaborative activities, through public talks, etc.

It's more difficult to assess how far the **culture** of public engagement has been formalised and embedded, or whether these activities will contribute to the participants feeling supported or valued – this will depend very much on how far such activities are really recognized through institutional reward systems such as promotion, for example.

More information: *Please attach photographs of what happened, if you have one. Please also list any titles or links to more information on the project (for example reports, articles, websites).*

Most of the further detail on the programme, links to partners, photos, podcasts, readings and other resources can be found on the Destination London website: <http://www.ssees.ucl.ac.uk/destinationlondon.htm>. NB: This is an on-going project, and there are still further additions to be up-loaded to the website in due course; it is by no means complete as is.