



Queen Mary
University of London

Research on Display A Guide to Collaborative Exhibitions for Academics

Edited by Laura Humphreys





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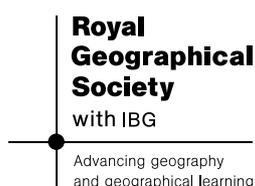
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Sincere thanks are also due to the 75 delegates who attended the *Research on Display* workshops, and contributed valuable insight and perspective to the discussion of collaborative exhibitions.



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Thanks to all the participants at the Research on Display workshops for their input © Laura Humphreys

Introduction

To most Academics, ‘Collaboration’ is currently a very familiar word. Looking beyond our own projects, departments, and universities is now increasingly common, and encouraged from the outset of an academic career. In the 2013-14 academic year, there were over 350 active Collaborative Doctoral Students funded by the Arts and Humanities and Economic and Social Research Councils alone.

Many museums and heritage organisations are also now looking to collaborate with academics. In addition to the research that goes on day-to-day in museum collections, whether undertaken by staff, volunteers, or visiting researchers, many are now formalising their research aims as part of their master plans, and new partnerships between museums and universities are being formed. One of the many ways in which academics can collaborate is through exhibitions. Whether temporary or permanent, touring or online, exhibitions provide an outlet for research that has the potential to reach a large and diverse audience, and engage the public with new and emerging research.

Collaborative exhibitions are not only a great opportunity for academics; researchers also bring much needed skills and expertise to museums and galleries. At large or national museums and galleries, there is great potential for training, new research partnerships, and taking part in large projects that might not otherwise be available to PhD students and Early-Career Researchers. In the case of small museums, volunteer-run institutions or local action groups, an early career academic can have a real impact on the future of the organisation. By working together on an exhibition, both parties can pick up valuable skills in research, funding, and project management.

This guide came about after the AHRC-funded ‘Research on Display’ workshops at the Geffrye Museum of the Home and the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). The events saw a number of speakers from the museum and academic worlds give valuable guidance on collaborative exhibitions, drawn from a wide variety of experience. Both workshops were fully-booked, with 75 attendees from a range of science and humanities subjects, with many interesting questions and opinions. This guide is designed to make available the topics discussed over the two days, and to make the process of collaborative exhibition making more accessible to academics with no museum background.

In Part 1: Exhibition Practicalities, this publication aims to offer a “beginners’ guide” to working in museums. As a Research Manager for Glasgow Museums, Helen Watkins has a foot in both museum and academic camps, and offers a starting point for any researcher considering working on an exhibition. Michael Murray and Benedetta Tiana explore funding issues and introduce the Heritage Lottery Fund, a funding stream not normally relevant to academics, but essential in the heritage and museum world. Kristin Hussey provides a working guide to



Kristin Hussey speaking at the RGS-IBG © Laura Humphreys

Collections Information, and Emily Yates introduces the basics of Preventive Conservation for display. Ellie Miles talks about how to approach digital collaborations, and in closing I consider the lifespan and legacy issues of exhibitions. These topics provide a broad overview of the everyday realities of museum work and exhibition development, with the aim of encouraging well-informed collaborative proposals.

In Part 2: Case Studies, we have accounts from the front line of collaborative exhibitions by a number of academics, covering everything from Archaeology to Particle Physics, and from PhD students to Professors. Caron Lipman provides an honest reflection on her first collaborative exhibition, and shares the lessons she learned from it. Rhianedd Smith describes the process of taking a temporary exhibition on tour as part of her Collaborative Doctoral Studentship, and Felix Driver discusses being a Principal Investigator on a wider project that included an exhibition. Finally, in an unusual example, Harry Cliff talks about working on a multi-million pound project as his first collaboration with a museum. From the small to the (extremely) large in scale, these Case Studies provide an honest account of the collaborative exhibition process, and offer advice on how to make it effective and fruitful for all concerned.

What has been consistent throughout the Research on Display workshops, and all the contributions to this guide, is that collaboration is an approach, not an end-goal. Approaching museums as early in your project as possible with informal and developing ideas allows for truly collaborative exhibition development, and gives the greatest chance of a productive and successful partnership. Be creative in your approach, enthusiastic in your ideas, and willing to get involved in the whole exhibition process; there is much to be gained, both professionally and personally, from collaborating on exhibition projects.

Collaborative Exhibitions and the Geffrye Museum of the Home

Eleanor John

The exhibitions programme at the Geffrye Museum is greatly enhanced by academic collaborations, which provide a sustainable way of delivering an exciting and wide-ranging programme. All the forthcoming scheduled major shows at the Geffrye will be the fruits of working alongside academics as co-curators of the exhibitions and such an ambitious programme of 'home grown' exhibitions tailored to the Geffrye's needs would be unachievable without academic collaborations.

Co-curation at the Geffrye means that the academic partners are actively involved in selecting material from their research, framing the story they want to tell, selecting and sourcing exhibits, developing 3-D and graphic design for the exhibition with the curators and exhibition designers, helping to shape the juxtaposition of objects and interpretation, selecting audio, visual and interactive material and writing texts. They are guided and supported by curators at the museum with whom content and target audiences are agreed; the curators project manage the exhibition delivery, make loan applications, liaise with the designers, edit text and manage the production and installation of the exhibition.

The exhibition programme at the Geffrye provides the opportunity to explore aspects of home beyond the social and geographical boundaries of the material presented in the permanent galleries and in more depth. Working with academics brings knowledge and expertise into the sector both extending the reach of academic research to audiences beyond the Academy and providing content for rich and in-depth exhibitions engaging with new research in a wide range of subjects far beyond the immediate expertise of staff. This has led at the Geffrye to a broad, engaging and sustainable exhibition programme addressing subjects as diverse as contemporary urban Japanese homes to the experience of homeless people seeking shelter in Victorian London.

The collaborations have come about both through direct approaches by academics to the museum and vice-versa and a number are outputs from AHRC- and ESRC-funded research projects that the Geffrye runs through the Centre for Studies of Home, a research partnership with Queen Mary, University of London. In this introduction I will focus on one particularly successful collaborative exhibition - At Home in Japan – which grew from a direct approach from the academic involved.



Geffrye Museum, London:
Photograph by Jayne Lloyd

Installation representing a Japanese middle-class urban apartment, visitors could sit at the table, touch all the objects and investigate cupboards and drawers. Susan Andrews' photograph of the view into the garden in one of the participant's apartments is mounted on a light-box enhancing the atmosphere of the installation and providing a sense of outdoor space.



Geffrye Museum, London: Photograph by Jayne Lloyd

The bathroom in the installation representing a Japanese middle-class urban apartment, sound recordings of washing recorded in participants' homes were played in the space; Susan Andrews' photograph of a participant's bathroom provides an interplay between the photographic representation of the space and the 3-dimensional installation.

At Home in Japan was a collaboration between the Geffrye and two academics, Inge Daniels, University of Oxford, a social anthropologist and Susan Andrews, London Metropolitan University, a photographer, who were already working together when Daniels approached the museum with her exhibition proposal. The proposal was based on significant ethnographic research – Daniels' PhD and post-doctoral research into contemporary urban middle-class Japanese homes. What made Daniels' research highly suitable for an exhibition was that she had revisited

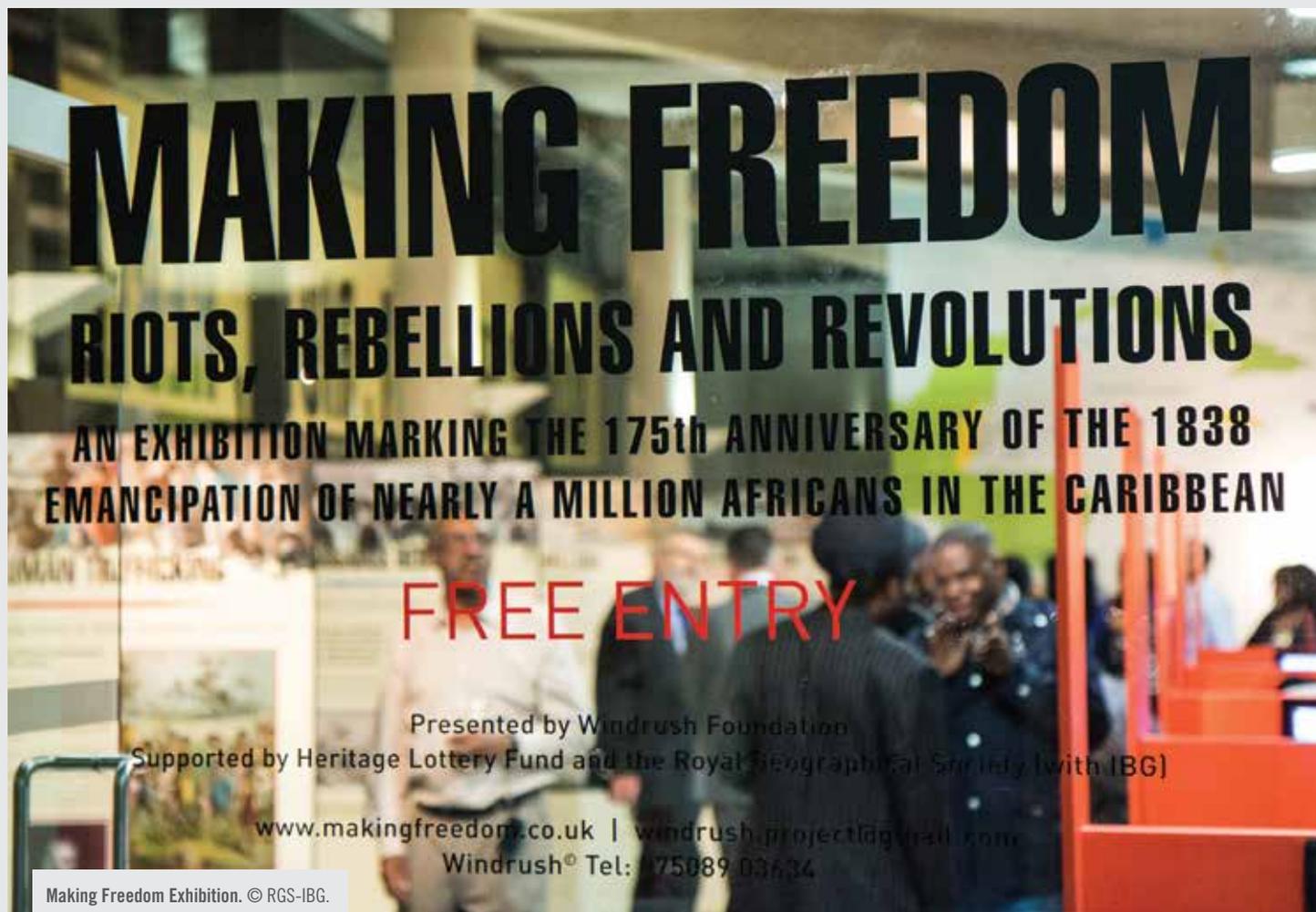
the participants in her research, collaborating with Susan Andrews to photograph their homes using a mode of photography that allowed whole wall views of rooms, or items of furniture to be reproduced life-size; Daniels had also collected domestic items from her participants and recorded the sounds of daily domestic life and was fully committed to the three-dimensional and multi-sensory expression of her research.

The exhibition was very positively received by our visitors offering a multi-layered experiential approach to exploring domestic space and practice which was engaging and innovative. A representation of a contemporary, urban middle-class Japanese apartment was created within the exhibition space, which used a mixture of built walls, photography, sound and objects, most of which visitors could touch, to recreate a sense of a typical Japanese apartment. As well as bringing the benefit of rich content for our visitors to explore, such as closely observed domestic life, marking cultural connections and differences, the collaboration developed innovative models for the representation and display of domestic space enhancing curatorial practice, providing the opportunity to test and develop techniques that will inform our future work. These developments included the interplay of actual objects and life-size blow-ups of rooms, and the presentation of windows through applying photographs of these to light boxes to represent the windows of the apartment effectively conveying a sense of light and the space beyond (see illustrations).

This was a particularly successful collaboration partly because there was an acute awareness on the part of Daniels and Andrews that an exhibition needs to engage the visitors in various ways – that it needs to make the most of the experiential opportunities it offers, which make it so different from an academic text. It is worth bearing in mind that visitors tend to read relatively little in exhibitions and that their reading age is reduced in the gallery environment. More than 80 words on a text panel, for example, and the text is likely to remain unread. It is key therefore when thinking of putting research on display that the whole gamut of display techniques and content that might express the research is considered - objects, images, film, soundscapes, immersive environments, graphic representation. While admittedly exhibitions are time-consuming to produce, museum and academic collaborations offer exciting opportunities which allow both sectors to achieve much more with their resources, and more creatively, for the public benefit, than they can working alone.

Collaboration and the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

Catherine Souch and Alasdair MacLeod



As part of initiatives to “open up” the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) to new visitors and audiences, the Society has actively developed a programme of exhibitions to share new knowledge. These exhibitions have been hosted in the new, purpose-built Pavilion, often with an online presence and travelling versions suitable for display in local libraries, schools and other community spaces. The exhibitions represent a mix of those led by the Society and developed and delivered in collaboration with external partners (community groups, academics and researchers, artists and photographers). The Pavilion is also a space others can hire.

Each year the exhibition programme is planned and considered as a whole; with careful attention to the balance of topics and perspectives, recognising the breadth of interests of those who visit the space and the strategic priorities of the Society. The planning and delivery is collaborative, across

the collections, enterprise, research and public engagement divisions. External consultants and designers support delivery and curation. The focus of recent exhibitions has ranged from sustainable architecture, to travel photography, to contemporary reinterpretations of the Society’s historic collections (see two examples presented in the two images here).

The catalyst for this programme was the ‘Unlocking the Archives’ project. This involved both building work and community partnerships to reinterpret the Society’s historic Collections, generously supported by the HLF and Arts Council amongst others. The building work led to a new entrance on the busy Exhibition Road, the purpose-built exhibition space, the Pavilion, and new climate-controlled stores for the Society’s historic Collections. These geographical collections contain over two million maps, photographs, books, artwork, artefacts and documents

and tell the story of 500 years of geographical discovery and research. A key pillar of the initiative was the Crossing Continents: Connecting Communities programme, launched to increase access for communities to whom the Collections have a direct relevance. In its first phase this involved Afghan, Chinese, East African and Punjabi communities in the UK reinterpreting historic materials in terms of their community histories, around themes that include diaspora, migration and home. This led to exhibitions and workshops and educational resources for school students. More recently external projects led by community groups, with Society support, have followed similar methodologies to hold workshops and develop exhibitions, examples include 'Making Freedom' and 'Making Home'. A comprehensive evaluation of this work and potential new avenues is the topic of a new AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award at the Society.

Exhibitions can also be very time consuming to develop, expensive and have a limited life. To enhance the reach and life of many of the Society's exhibitions, they have been linked to a broader programme of public engagement – lectures, in London and as part of the Society's regional network; articles in popular magazines such as Geographical; online slide shows, sometimes featured by the BBC; Collections based displays, workshops and talks; and educational resources, with curriculum relevant activities for students at all ages.

Collaborative exhibitions are one of many ways of sharing the findings from a research project, particularly effective at engaging wider audiences beyond the academy. Delivered well they can be hugely successful.



Part 1: Exhibition Practicalities



Ten Tips for Embarking on Exhibitions Great and Small

Helen Watkins

In this chapter I offer some tips about exhibitions and collaborations, picked up on my own journey from being an academic to working in a museum. I am writing from the context of a large local authority museum service and the advice is aimed primarily at PhD students and Early Career researchers. I focus here on object-based exhibitions; however, I also emphasise that exhibitions are just one of the many things that museums do, and suggest that you consider other collaborative possibilities too.

1. Understand the business of museums

I mean this in two senses. First, it is useful to be aware of what museums do and how they go about their business. I was struck by how diverse a range of activities are undertaken in and by museums. They are rich and multi-layered beasts with much more to them than the exhibitions and galleries with which visitors may be most familiar.

But I also mean ‘business’ in the sense that museums increasingly have to function on a business model, one that meets targets, generates income, supports civic objectives, delivers social, cultural and educational services and demonstrates value for money. An appreciation of their priorities and constraints can help you propose the kind of project that a museum has the capacity to support.

2. Talk to us

Get in touch at an early stage to discuss your ideas informally. Your proposal will be stronger if you have some understanding of our collections, our exhibition and learning programmes and the kind of research and engagement activity we would find beneficial.



'Visual Eyes' visual impairment handling kit.
© Glasgow Museums.

Ten Tips for Embarking on Exhibitions Great and Small

Helen Watkins

A conversation with someone inside the organisation can help you tailor your proposal to fit with our strategic objectives, and they may be able to champion your idea internally. Equally, if your project is unlikely to gain support, it is better to find that out before you invest too much time in developing a proposal.

And please, please, please do not apply for grants saying you plan to do an exhibition with us without checking with us first! This is not the route to a happy collaboration.

3. Think carefully about what you want and need out of the collaboration and what you can offer

We like researchers. We particularly like researchers bringing exciting ideas we think will engage our audiences, make connections with our collections and help us take forward one or more of our strategic objectives.

A collaboration is an investment – and a risk – for both parties. First and foremost you are building a relationship, out of which may come an exhibition or other output. How can this be mutually beneficial? What can you do that we can't? Do you have specialist skills, knowledge, money or time? Can you broker access to hard-to-reach groups? Can you help us better understand our objects, our audiences or our impacts on people's lives?

For a positive working relationship you also need to be clear about what you are seeking e.g. wider exposure for your findings, opportunities to demonstrate 'impact' to funders, museum experience for your career development. Clarifying this helps keep roles and expectations clear.

4. Know your audience

I mean this both in relation to the institutional audience receiving your pitch, and also the exhibition audience(s) you are targeting. It pays to understand your demographic because different approaches suit different audiences.

Successful collaboration on an exhibition involves a shared understanding of who it is intended for. Check whether the museum has an audience development plan with specific targets for venues or aspirations for the kind of groups it wants to reach. If a museum is trying to increase visits from family groups, for example, it is good to know that when developing exhibition ideas.

5. Start from the objects

Think about what the objects can say or show. Make them work hard to carry the story i.e. the objects should be the key ingredients rather than just 'illustrations' to the texts accompanying them.

Could you tell your story without them? If so, you need to think carefully about whether an exhibition is the most appropriate medium for communicating your research.

6. Clarify your key message

What do you want to communicate, to whom, and why? Just as you would develop a central argument in an article, so you need to define a key message for an exhibition. Focus on stripping away to the essence of what you want to say. If a visitor were to remember only one thing from the exhibition, what is the main point you would want them to take away?

7. Less is more. Don't put a book on a wall.

Providing some interpretation is important, but you won't have much text to play with. Audience research repeatedly shows us there is a limit to how much people will read in a gallery.

It can be galling to learn that your object labels can only be 80, 50 or even just 30 words long. Writing concisely using clear and simple language is hard but it is an invaluable skill to master. This is not the place for all the detail you painstakingly researched. Let a lot of that go and the exhibition will be stronger for it.

8. Fewer can be 'more' too!

Putting on exhibitions is an expensive and time-consuming business. It is a bit like redecorating your house, demolishing and rebuilding various walls, and replacing all your furniture, every six months! We need to consider carefully before investing this kind of time and money and be confident that the exhibition will be high quality and attract visitors.

That said, exhibitions don't need to be big and elaborate to be successful. There is a lot you can do with a few objects and a couple of thousand pounds, or even a few hundred if you are really resourceful. Think creatively about smaller displays – perhaps just a case or two, or travelling exhibits that can reach different groups in different spaces, or even closely focused single object 'exhibitions' with multi-layered interpretation.

9. Don't underestimate the time involved

Lead-in times for an exhibition can be a number of years to allow for research, fundraising, negotiating loans from other institutions, conservation of objects etc. This means exhibition schedules may be set many years in advance, limiting opportunities for involvement for early career researchers, simply because the planning and preparation time can be longer than PhD programmes or post-doc contracts.



Canals Handling Kit. © Glasgow Museums



Handling Kits in the Museum Store. © Glasgow Museums.

When collaborating on an exhibition, do expect lots of meetings and don't expect things to move quickly. There are various tiers of decision-making and a large number of departments involved. Bear in mind too that teams are generally working on a number of projects simultaneously.



Fig. 1 The teams typically involved in an exhibition

10. Think small. Think inside the box!

Museums are in the business of much more than exhibitions e.g. promoting curiosity, learning, engagement with ideas, skills development and social connectedness. The point here is that exhibitions are not the only, and not always the most appropriate, way to achieve these. The list below gives examples of 20 different activities and outputs. I'd encourage researchers not to overlook the other 19 as potential collaborative projects.

Museum activities and outputs

- Exhibitions
- Displays
- Scholarly catalogues
- Publications
- Gallery talks/store tours
- Trails
- Workshops
- Handling kits
- Study days
- Conferences
- Digital interpretation
- Virtual exhibitions
- Object conservation
- Technical object analysis
- Object research
- Oral histories
- Improved database entries
- Enhanced object files

To illustrate just one example, I close with a very particular kind of box: the 70+ themed handling and reminiscence kits developed by Glasgow Museums' Open Museum, some in collaboration with community groups. Though small in size they strike me as one of the museum's most innovative and powerful tools, a portable collection-in-a-box that takes objects out of traditional museum spaces and puts them into users' hands, imaginations and shared conversations.

Exhibition Funding and Project Development

Michael Murray and Benedetta Tiana



London and Slavery Exhibition at the Museum of London Docklands. © HLF.

London has witnessed a heritage renaissance since lottery money began flowing into new and restored gallery spaces, resulting in interesting and innovative exhibitions. Notwithstanding the critical importance of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in supporting the ambitious re-developments of entire wings of national galleries, or small community based heritage projects, funding for exhibitions continues to be drawn from a range of sources. Funding organisations such as the HLF and the Arts Council England, the Wellcome and Monument trusts, and the Arts and Humanities Research Council have invested millions of pounds in exhibitions that allow audiences to learn about and engage with heritage. In addition, private companies and philanthropists seeking to associate themselves with high profile exhibitions have contributed significantly to the rich cultural calendar in London. Young heritage professionals planning gallery re-developments or exhibitions on specific heritage topics need to consider a mix of key partners in their funding strategy. Here, we aim to highlight some of the most important considerations when budgeting and funding a project.

Planning your exhibition

Interpretation falls half way between capital works and activities. Although it has a physical outcome and legacy, which fits within the capital budget section of the funding application, its fundamental outcome is a “soft” one, as it is measured in the quality of people’s engagement with heritage. Interpretation is about exciting people, encouraging volunteers and people outside

the museum’s inner circle to participate in research, plan content, develop interpretation for graphic and digital media (both fixed and mobile), and even help curate an exhibition. This process of engagement is sometimes referred to, in museum planning terms, as “the rule of the 3 Cs”. To plan a successful exhibition, there are three steps which offer three levels of engagement: Consultation (people give their opinions and feedback); Collaboration (people contribute content, their own stories and insights); Co-curation (people become the museum’s delivery partners at a deeper level, thinking strategically about the exhibition and helping take risk related decisions). This is an often uneasy mix of requirements because it relies on input from a range of professionals - as well as the museum teams - including activity planners, interpretation specialists, 3D designers, app and website developers, graphic designers, etc. It is important to have an experienced team in place to ensure that the exhibition is designed and delivered on time and in budget, and to a high quality, while encouraging the public engagement that funder values.

For people new to the process of exhibition design, it is advisable to approach someone quite senior who has developed a funded, successful exhibition - someone whose aims and objectives in terms of audience engagement and content delivery might be similar to yours. All major museums have immense expertise, and they will see things from the curator’s point of view, as well as allowing you to test concepts before approaching potential funders. Bigger projects will often have managing roles such as

Project Leaders and Directors of Development, who can offer interesting insights related to exhibition development. Do not worry about approaching them, mostly people are very helpful if they understand exactly what you want to get out of them. Leave enough time, however, to consult with mentors at key points in the process so that you can nurture the relationship. Some mentors will help read a draft application, others will help you shape the main exhibition idea.

Get your designers on-board early in the capital programme so that interpretation budgets are ring fenced from potential structural cost over runs, otherwise your entire development phase for the project will go in costing capital works without the exhibition design elements. Architects, Conservators, Project Managers, and even Quantity Surveyors who are not specific exhibition experts often lack the expertise in costing elements of exhibition planning, as they are unaware of how to cost “soft” items such as scripting, audio-visual production, image research and copyright, showcasing, interactive displays, etc. Professionals who are expert in architectural development do not know how the interpretation process works. They will cost per unit of space rather than by layers of content: a square metre of something solid is a much more easily quantifiable item than a five minute original film that describes a landscape and includes expert interviews and archival still imagery.

Target audiences

Know exactly who your target audiences are, and what their learning behaviours are – and ensure that you are explicit with your design team that you need to cater for these groups.

Continue to remind your designers throughout the process; keep re-reading your aims (e.g. ensure young families have hands-on activities that can be led by the toddlers, surprise specialist audiences, ensure older people can read all graphics easily) and stick to them in terms of audiences as participants, and audiences as learners. Create or commission an audience development plan, share it and use it as part of your design brief, so that activity planning and interpretation can support it.

Interpretation for target audiences is an art, and it is not the same as marketing or audience segmentation, although it absorbs much useful information from both of these.

Everything in public engagement and interpretation is bespoke, a response to the collections and the needs of the audience it is intended for. You need to understand your audiences as “leisure learners” and engaged participants rather than market segments. If projects assume a percentage of works, say 80% on capital works and 20% on activities (including interpretation), remember that the impact of the activity work is often much higher than the capital in terms of audience development. The lower financial commitment to activities actually produces higher impact, visibility, awareness and legacy. Also, the complexity of the process is very high, again, proportionally to cost.

Exhibition planning is a creative process, and because planners / designers are often involved only as late as the development stage, when budgets have been allocated and ideas costed without a creative brief in place, sometimes the process impedes finding creative solutions. Unsuccessful exhibitions occur when they are bolted down (in terms of design and budgets) very



Visitors to “Touching the Book: Embossed literature for blind people in the nineteenth century” at Birkbeck, University of London. © HLF.

Exhibition Funding and Project Development

Michael Murray and Benedetta Tiana

early on, and without audience and specialist input. However, do make sure you lead! You need to respond creatively to your designers, but also know what you want and what you are aiming for. Visit exhibitions with your design team; ask your designers to find solutions that work for you, keep briefing them, learn their language and understand what they need. You need them to understand exactly what you want, so they can provide options for you; they need to find in you a partner that can be as helpful to them as possible. Ultimately, a design team needs to satisfy your expectations, and when they are very good and the collaboration is strong, they will exceed them. It is a continuous conversation; don't be worried about asking contractors to cost things as they are developed. Keep track of the sign-off requirements, build in exactly how you want contractors to modify their process to what suits you, and be clear from the start.

Corporate Partnerships

Blockbuster exhibitions have become a key part of the heritage calendar, and a significant income earner for museums. High-profile, high-earning exhibitions are often sponsored by commercial partners. Large commercial exhibitions can earn significant income from ticket sales and merchandising, so are not generally considered to offer good value for money for trust or lottery funders. In HLF terms, value for money establishes reach and breadth for exhibitions: is the exhibition engaging different people at a deeper level; is it attracting a broader demographic; is it embedding the heritage story into the local community so they take ownership of it; and, is it helping the organisation to be more sustainable? Heritage organisations often underestimate the importance of their audiences to corporate sponsors. This process needs very careful management, in order to protect the trust relationship the public have with the institution. However, there is a lot that can be done with the right partner. The British Museum was sponsored by British Petroleum on Vikings, while the Victoria and Albert Museum worked with Gucci on David Bowie Is. So when looking for match funding for a ticketed exhibition, Curators and Museum Development Teams should consider seeking funding from companies with strong Corporate Social Responsibility goals linked to the arts.

Keep the end in mind. Exhibition design and project development is often a frustrating, elongated, and sometimes energy sucking process, but it is absolutely remarkable.



Visitors at the Valentines Mansion Museum. © HLF.

Case Study 1: HQS Wellington

The Convoy exhibition told the story of the Battle of the Atlantic with a particular focus on the Merchant Navy and the role of the HQS Wellington. It used Oral Histories, a film and graphics to trace the development of the Battle from its earliest days, immediately after the outbreak of war in 1939, until the final surrender of surviving German U-boats in 1945.

The project received a grant of £74,300, which included £12,140 in professional fees, £30,880 in exhibition display equipment, and £7040 for a website and film to support the activity programme.

www.thewellingtontrust.com

Case Study 2: The William Morris Gallery

In 2007, the museum was nearly closed by the local authority, with visitor numbers under 20,000 per year and a display that was viewed as too academic rather than linked to local community needs. There was no temporary exhibition programme, poor education facilities and poor physical access to the building from the surrounding parkland.

The project was awarded a grant of £1.6 million grant from the HLF, which included £732,000 for the refit of existing galleries and new exhibitions. Match funding for the HLF grant was provided by Waltham Forest Council (£1.5 million), the Monument Trust (£500,000) and the Foyle Foundation (£150,000). Since its re-opening in 2012, the museum won the Museum of the Year award in 2013, with Arts Fund judges commenting that "its extraordinary collections, beautifully presented, draw the visitor engagingly through Morris's life and work and through the building itself. Setting the highest standards of curatorship, and reaching out impressively to its local community." Visitor figures for the first year were 120,000.

With nearly 50% more works being shown, galleries over the two floors are focused on William Morris across all aspects of his character and activity, such as politics, the environment, poetry, literature, and craft and design. A temporary exhibition space was created, with an arts-focused programme or activity to maintain interest and appeal to new and wider audiences.

Learning to Speak Museum: Collections Information for Exhibitions

Kristin Hussey

Within the exhibition team, registrars serve the practical purpose of ensuring all items get to their appointed place safely. Museums have an established protocol they follow to deliver exhibitions, which is guided by industry-standard paperwork. The most important of these documents are the Standard Facilities Report (SFR) and the institution's loan agreement. An SFR is a document prepared by the UK Registrars' Group which museums use to ensure that their objects will be safe while on loan to a given venue. A borrowing institution will need to provide information about environmental and security conditions for the lender's consideration. A loan agreement is the legal document signed between parties that specifies the terms and conditions for the lending of objects for exhibition. These terms usually refer to the provision of insurance or indemnity, logistical requirements, conservation needs as well as photography agreements and copyright issues. Being familiar with these legal documents will assist the exhibition team to create their plan of work. For example, most museums require a formal loan request to be submitted at least six months in advance of the exhibition. Understanding the formal process of the movement of objects can assist exhibition teams to set realistic deadlines.

For collaborators, the different acronyms, paperwork, and regulations around object movement and display can often seem confusing. The need for best practice and legal restrictions in exhibition development stems from the core mission of a museum to protect its collections for the benefit of future generations. This protective role often falls to the registrar within an exhibition team, to ensure that all objects are being looked after in their journey from storage to display. The creativity of the curatorial process and the pragmatism of logistics and object care can sometimes cause friction during a collaborative project. The key to overcoming any misunderstanding between researchers and professional museum staff often lies in learning to speak museum. Taking the time to be familiar with paperwork and protocol will allow an exhibition team to work more closely together and deliver the best quality exhibition possible.

Top tips:

- Be familiar with museum paperwork and standards – this is essential whether you are working with experienced registrars or volunteers in a small museum
- Request loans well in advance (6+ months)
- Be aware of legal considerations (copyright, insurance, and hazards)
- Use object numbers to refer to objects – often objects look very similar to one another and not using their numbers can cause mistakes and misunderstandings



Off-site storage of the Horniman Museum and Gardens. © Kristin Hussey/Horniman Museum.



On-site storage of the Odontological Collection at the Hunterian Museum. © Kristin Hussey/Hunterian Museum.

Careful, Now! Conservation for Exhibitions

Emily Yates

Conservation is about ensuring the preservation and continued survival of artefacts. It aims to ensure that all objects we have last for as long as possible, so that everyone can use them, both now and in the future. This includes protecting them whilst on display in exhibitions. Contrary to common assumption, most museums do not have all of their collections on display at once. In fact, most museums have a vast majority – usually around 90% - in storage, much like archives. In storage, it is easy to control the conditions in which objects are kept. However, when objects go into exhibitions, a balance between accessibility and conservation is necessary.

Conservation is divided into two main approaches; Interventive and Preventive. Interventive conservation involves physical interaction with objects to remove or stabilise the cause and effects of degradation (e.g. cleaning, structural repairs). Preventive conservation works to create a stable and safe environment that will reduce the need for Interventive treatment. Although some objects will need Interventive attention before they go into an exhibition, the key thing to be aware of when planning an exhibition is how to build Preventive measures into your exhibition displays.

There are six main deterioration factors to consider when using historic objects and putting them on display:

HAZARDS: When working with museum collections (especially historic ones) you should recognise potential hazards that put staff or visitors at risk of harm. Museums will have plans for dealing with these hazards, but you should be aware of them when planning an exhibition, as they can have strict storage, transport, and display restrictions. Look out for Asbestos, Radioactive Materials, Human Remains, Lead, Mercury, Chemicals, Poisons, and others.



Hazardous items will often require personal protective equipment to be worn, like Tyvek suits, goggles, and dust masks. © Science Museum.

Light

It may seem obvious, but high light levels fade and damage objects. Some materials are highly sensitive to light damage, whereas others are not affected at all. It is important to note that both UV and visible light have detrimental effects, with ideally all UV light being excluded. If you wish to display highly light sensitive objects you will need to reduce light levels. Ensuring a careful balance between sufficient light to see and low levels to protect objects can be difficult. Basic methods of controlling light include, having timers on lamps, objects in pull out drawers or with covers and dimming the lamps.

Vulnerable Examples: Art, Images, Textiles, Plastics, Paper, Ivory, Organic Materials

Relative humidity

Relative humidity (RH) is a measurement of the amount of moisture in the air. This is important because moisture can have a very rapid negative effect upon sensitive materials. Most materials can cope with a reasonable variation in humidity, but the most harmful effects occur when there are rapid changes in humidity levels. If the moisture content of an object suddenly changes, the structure will react causing the object to swell or contract, leading to damage. Display cases can have voids where silica gel or dehumidifiers can be used to maintain appropriate humidity levels.

Vulnerable Examples: Ivory, Organic Materials, Plastics, Archaeological Metals

Temperature

Temperature in a display space is limited by human comfort levels; no one wants to visit a cold gallery. Maintaining a stable temperature without rapid changes is important as it has a direct influence on RH. As temperature increases, humidity decreases, and as the temperature decreases, humidity increases. If you are trying to maintain a specific humidity level it is also wise to maintain some control of temperature too. Generally objects are kept at a cool temperature as it reduces the speed of degradation processes. Controlling your temperature levels can be as simple as switching off a radiator or changing the thermostat in the gallery.

Vulnerable Examples: Plastics, Wax, Organic Materials, Photographs

Careful, Now! Conservation for Exhibitions

Emily Yates



Conserving large objects, such as this birthing chair, can take weeks or even months, depending on the materials they are made of, their state of (dis)repair, and the exhibition they are going to. © Science Museum.



Small and delicate objects, like this boat sculpted from bone, require specialist attention and can be as time consuming as large objects to prepare for display. © Science Museum.

Top Tips for Exhibition Conservation:

- Conservators plan their timetables months in advance, and a single object can take days, weeks, or months to prepare; you must give as much notice as possible of an exhibition so they can assess what work needs to be done and when.
- Conservation is time-consuming and costly, especially if you have to hire a conservator in. It needs to be in your budget and timetable from the beginning.
- Beware transporting and dangerous or unusual objects. Things like Ivory, Asbestos, and Human Remains are strictly regulated, and you find these things in objects you would never expect! Be thorough in investigating your chosen exhibition objects.
- No matter how careful you are, sometimes objects break! Tell someone if you break something or see it broken – chances are a conservator can fix it.

Contaminants

Particulates such as dust are often brought into a display space by the visitors. If something is on open display, you need to make sure that it is not sensitive to the build-up of dust on the surface, or a visitor with dirty fingers. Building materials used in exhibition construction such as MDF and paints, can 'off gas', i.e. release harmful organic acids. These can cause objects to tarnish and discolour.

Vulnerable Examples: Silver, Lead, Plastics, Metals

Pests

Pests, like carpet beetles, moths, and rodents, are unfortunately common, and infestations can have a rapid and often devastating effect on museum collections. It is vital to monitor and control pests in gallery spaces. Basic maintenance of the display area, like keeping it clean and dry, will reduce pest risks. Objects themselves can be risk factors, especially loans or new acquisitions, as they may be infested before they reach your exhibition. Making sure objects are checked in a quarantine area will prevent any infestations reaching other objects.

Vulnerable Examples: Textiles, Paper, Wood, Organic Materials

Physical damage

Physical damage is the most visible harmful change to museum objects. A common cause of damage comes from inappropriate mounts while on display. A well designed mount should hold and support an object, and not place stress or strain on it. Common sense is the best weapon against accidental damage: wear gloves, hold objects at their base, make sure your path is clear, never move large objects alone, and just be as careful as possible.

Vulnerable Examples: Awkward Objects, Heavy Objects, Glass, Ceramics

In exhibition design, these factors can all be mitigated early on simply by being aware of conservation limitations. For example, while having an object on open display may be visually stunning, it leaves the object vulnerable to theft, accidental damage, and the environmental factors listed above. Open display is only appropriate for the hardest of objects. However, similar results can be achieved with carefully designed display cases that are secure and made environmentally stable with features like UV filters, dehumidifiers, temperature controls, etc. Because cases take time to build and cost money, it is essential that you consider conservation from the proposal stage, and consult with conservators early on.

It is very unlikely that you would have to deal with these conservation issues without help from an experienced curator or conservator. However, being aware of these factors from the beginning of the process will make you a better exhibition designer, and will hugely increase your popularity in the conservation department!

Emily Yates is an Object Conservator at the Science Museum.

Digital Collaborations: Students Working with Museums

Ellie Miles

Collaborating with museums on digital projects has huge scope and can be an exciting, rewarding process. I have collaborated on students' digital museum projects from a range of positions: as a PhD student hoping to create a resource for on-site terminals; whilst a PhD student on a museum's digitization project; and as a curator, working with a group of students producing a digital resource. Some of the things I have learned are obvious in retrospect, but may be helpful if you are considering collaborating on your own digital project with a museum.

The most successful projects I have worked with have treated collaboration as a method, not an outcome. Testing and iteration can be useful ways of developing a digital project and this reflexive attitude can be useful when managing collaboration. When you approach museums be clear about why you want to work with them, and how you expect the collaboration could work. Collaboration takes time, and museums will want to know about your expectations and aims, as well as why you think they are the best museum for you to work with.

Think carefully about the skills it is most useful for each partner to share. You will often find that museum staff themselves are researchers. It may be your time, your interest in the collection, your technical experience or your research skills that are the most attractive to the museum. You may need the museum to provide collection expertise, visitor insight, interpretation skills, accessibility advice, outreach networks, software training, technical support, or project management.

Just as your project should make the most of the skills available, digital projects should make the most of the affordances of the medium. Although it might be tempting to try to cram an entire unfulfilled exhibition proposal into your digital project, a more interesting project will have its own focus. Focus on your audience and think about the scope a digital project allows, and work from there.

It's essential to discuss the technical requirements of your project early on. Ascertain what you can offer, and what you can realistically beg or borrow. Be clear about what you and the museum will each deliver, and how you'll be able to resource this. This might mean the museum will host and maintain your microsite for a year; you might provide daily comment moderation for six months; or you might produce a film that the museum will show at an event or in an exhibition. If the museum is unable to provide training for its specialist software explore whether there are ways to work around it: a digitisation project might produce a spreadsheet of object information that can be imported into the museum's collections management system, for example.

Working out how your project will end is important, and requires thought and planning. One-off applications may have limited sustainability, so think about what you want the long-term benefits of your project to be, and how best to achieve these. Agree the ownership of intellectual property and licencing of copyright for any material produced during the project before it ends. Museum space is internally contested, and museums' digital work is too.

Finally – approach museums early with your ideas, build a collaborative relationship, and start talking about what it is realistic to achieve. There will be different gatekeepers and lead-in times for different projects in different museums. Some museums are more experimental than others, and which places these are might surprise you! Relationships are key to collaboration, and a good relationship can be a sign of an effective project. The museum will probably have different metrics and methods from the ones you usually work with, but with a good relationship this needn't be a problem. Be clear about your own aims for the project, and communicate these to the museum. Make sure these are compatible with the museum's aims for the project. Museum work can sometimes be serendipitous, and if you sustain a good relationship it can lead to more outcomes to your original project should a new opportunity arise.

- Be clear about why you want to collaborate with a particular museum
- Make the most of your skills and the museum's expertise – outside experts are expensive
- Don't treat your project as a substitute for an exhibition
- Consider the project's technical requirements carefully
- Be prepared to negotiate: digital museum space is contested



Considering the Lifespan of Exhibitions

Laura Humphreys



The previous chapters have focused on getting a collaborative exhibition up and running. The build-up to an exhibition is a busy and stressful period, and getting the exhibition open on time is everyone's primary focus. However, it is important to consider what will happen to an exhibition when it comes to the end of its life, as all exhibitions (even permanent ones) eventually will. These are some of the important practical, legal, and ethical issues that must be taken into account from the planning stages to avoid future headaches, and to preserve a legacy for your work.

Exhibition Breakdown

When an exhibition comes to the end of its life, the space it has been housed in will almost certainly need to be cleared for its next purpose. For a small-scale display this may take only a matter of hours, but for large-scale or permanent exhibitions, the process can take several years and cost millions of pounds.

When working on an exhibition in collaboration with a museum, gallery, or any public space, it is important that no assumptions are made about whose responsibility decanting an exhibition is and roles should be agreed during the earliest planning stages. Specialised assistance from conservators, curators, and collections professionals (sometimes including external specialists) will be as essential to the decant process as it was to the installation.

As an academic collaborator, you should factor the exhibition breakdown process in to your own timetable; if you were involved in installing the exhibition, you should probably be involved in decanting it. As well as showing a professional awareness of exhibition practicalities, being a part of the less glamorous end of an exhibition (or sometimes just offering to be) will foster a good working relationship going forward.

Returning Borrowed Objects

Returning borrowed objects can be one of the most labour-intensive parts of an exhibition decant, as all the legal processes and paperwork that were needed to borrow objects in the first place are now necessary in reverse.

In terms of transit, object returns can be costly, and need to be factored into exhibition budgets. After the paperwork is taken care of, the object needs to be carefully re-packed (and possibly dismantled) for transit. Many objects will need a courier to do this, i.e. a Conservator or Curator from its parent institution to accompany it for insurance purposes. This may be someone taking a taxi across town with an object, or it may be two business class seats on a transatlantic flight.

In the case of long-term exhibitions, even though an exhibition decant may be many years away, the future return of loans must be considered. Making sure you have left clear and thorough records of lenders is essential, so that even decades into the future, items can be returned to their rightful owners. Some large national museums have whole teams of Historic Loans Registrars, whose role is to trace the original owners of borrowed objects – very often descendants or parent companies that are extremely hard to trace. Try to think about the information they will need in the future; don't just record a lender's name and address, but include as much information as possible on them, their business, and their relationship to the object.

Legacy Issues

The closure of a physical exhibition does not necessarily mean the end of a project. It may be possible for the exhibition to go on tour, to be archived online, or to lead on to other future projects.

If an exhibition is to become a touring exhibition, then plans will need to be made in advance for its storage and transit. A new home may also need new graphics, new text and new display cases, as well as updated copyright permissions and loan agreements. This is all costly, but touring exhibitions can be an important source of revenue, as many organisations 'buy in' touring exhibitions.

Websites, Online exhibitions or Archived exhibitions have some specific legacy issues. Far from being the 'easy' option, they take time and resources to maintain, especially if visitors are able to interact with it, and leave comments/ make contributions; these will need to be moderated and answered for the site's lifetime. You should agree whose responsibility managing an online asset will be, where it will be hosted, and for how long (See Ellie Miles). If this proves difficult, it may be best to archive the website rather than leave it online to deteriorate - nobody wants an unmaintained and out-of-date website featuring in their search results.

Especially with small exhibitions, you might be able to repurpose them creatively. For example, if the objects or images in the exhibition are not being accessioned, then it may be possible to turn them into a handling collection (See Helen Watkins on this). Alternatively, easily portable

elements have the potential to be re-purposed for outreach or educational exercises for the museum, or perhaps as a focal point for an Oral History Reminiscence session. This kind of creative re-use of materials can lead to whole new projects and continuity of research.

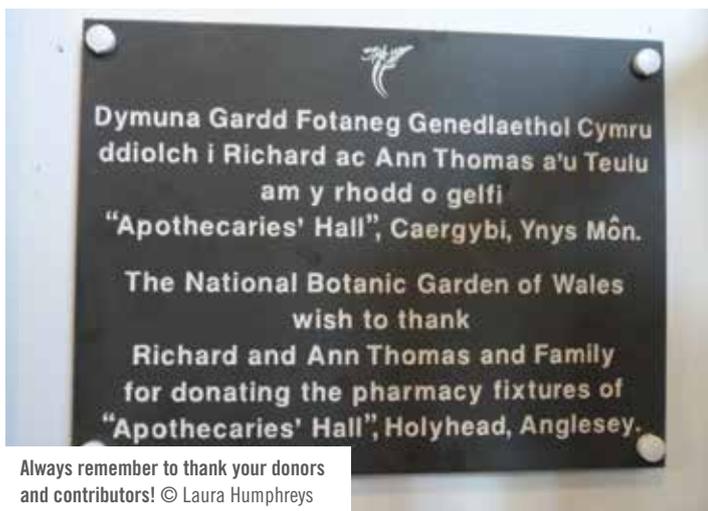
Evaluations

Evaluating an exhibition is something that is usually planned in the early stages, but recording and reflecting on this data when it closes can often be forgotten. Visitor surveys, interviews, and focus groups are the principal ways in which feedback is gathered.

Check if the museum you are working with has a process in place for evaluating their exhibitions, or if you will need to design a new one. If the museum already has a visitor survey in place, for example, find out if you can add some specific questions about exhibition content, or if you would be able to collect visitor details for a future online questionnaire. Evaluations not only help museums understand their visitor profile, but also help collaborating academics understand how well their research was applied and communicated. Getting to grips with the problems of your past exhibitions can have a great impact on your future projects.

Feeding Back about your Experience

When an exhibition is over, it's a good time to provide feedback to your colleagues, contributors, and supporters. There are a variety of stakeholders in exhibitions, and it is good practice to acknowledge their contributions, although perhaps made months or years earlier. The feedback you provide is up to you, but you may wish to include exhibition data such as visitor numbers, press clippings, visitor comments, and evaluation breakdowns. It is also good practice to include exhibition literature: leaflets, event programmes, exhibition books, etc. Remember to keep a set for yourself – not only as a memento, but as valuable evidence of the skills and experience you have gained in the process.



Always remember to thank your donors and contributors! © Laura Humphreys

Some of the stakeholders you may wish to send your final feedback to include: academic colleagues, supervisors, research assistants, interns, museum volunteers, project specialists, sponsors, and anyone who has worked on the exhibition. Some funding bodies have a requirement for project feedback, but not all do. It is wise to provide it, however, to thank them for their support. It's always good to show that you spent their money wisely – you may need more in the future!



Preparing a 1930s Cambridge rowing eight for transport out of the Science Museum's Shipping Gallery. The Shipping Gallery was decanted after over 50 years to make way for the new Information Age Gallery, which opened in 2014. © James Fenner/ Science Museum.

Top Tips for exhibition Breakdowns:

- Identify loaned objects that need to be returned. Deal with these first.
- Before you unpack an object to install it, take photos of how it was packed for transit. If it is large or awkward, take photos of installing it to make decanting it easier.
- Make a note of the storage location of any custom-built transport packaging.
- If a display case is difficult to open, write down instructions and affix them to the back/ base of the case.
- Will you need to close a gallery, a building, or even a road to decant an exhibition? Can you get around this by working at night to minimise disruption?
- Take photographs of the exhibition before it is broken down, and store these digitally with relevant object records. You could also send these photos with your feedback.

Part 2: Case Studies



Who Once Lived in My House: One Researcher's Reflections on Collaboration

Caron Lipman



I'm going to reflect on a collaboration to create a small exhibition at the Geffrye Museum of the Home. The exhibition, titled *Who once lived in my house*, was part of the impact activities connected a contemporary qualitative research project funded by the AHRC, *Living with the past at home: domestic prehabitation and inheritance*, exploring people's relationship to their home's history – what they have inherited materially as well as their knowledge of or response to previous inhabitants. The exhibition ran from September 2013 to early March 2014 and utilised the temporary exhibition space at the Geffrye Museum, consisting of eleven wall display panels.

The exhibition was co-curated in a collaborative effort involving two people from Queen Mary, University of London's School of Geography and two from the Geffrye Museum: myself as PDRA, Catherine Nash, the project's Principal Investigator, Eleanor John, the museum's Head of Collections and Exhibitions and Curator, Alex Goddard. A freelance designer was also employed.

In thinking back at the exhibition from my point of view, the viewpoint of the researcher, two questions seem important: that of the relationship between academic research and exhibitions, and – perhaps a little more contentious – that of who gains (or doesn't gain) from undertaking such a project.

I want to start by making perhaps a rather obvious point. And that is that collaboration – whatever its focus – is about individuals bringing different skills and experiences to the

table to create something which, with any luck, is greater than the sum of its parts. Catherine and I felt very lucky to be working with Alex and Eleanor; it was a very enjoyable process – and that's not always the case: collaboration can be challenging. We brought the idea for the project to the museum right from the start, asking if they felt it was relevant in terms of its potential to add value to the museum's activities, asking them to draw up a list of useful outcomes – of which the exhibition was one. So we didn't impose the idea of these activities, but worked collaboratively from the start.

In all honesty, I didn't give the exhibition much thought beyond the application stage. My focus was on the research design, on recruiting participants, on its aims and questions. As the collaboration process started – just under a year before the exhibition launch – I needed to accept that we were stepping into Alex and Eleanor's territory. This is what they do year in, year out – they are experts at putting on exhibitions. So we needed to take a steer from them in presenting material, particularly in relation to the ultimate aim of such exhibitions – to offer an interesting and well-designed visitor experience.

In the spirit of honesty I have to say that my heart sank when I was told that exhibitions need to be accessible for a 12 year old child and that no section of text should be longer than 50, or perhaps 80, words. This approach seemed completely at odds with that of the wider research, where the devil is in the details. I felt that the exhibition would be a poor relation to

Who Once Lived in My House: One Researcher's Reflections on Collaboration

Caron Lipman

the main research, and I felt an attendant protectiveness, an anxiety, towards participants, worrying about doing justice to them.

That was my initial response. But I realised that I was trying to apply my researcher head to something that didn't fit that mould. Exhibitions are different animals, not only in the presentation and the aims but also in terms of what they can do with the research material. I had to see this as separate and judge it on its own terms.

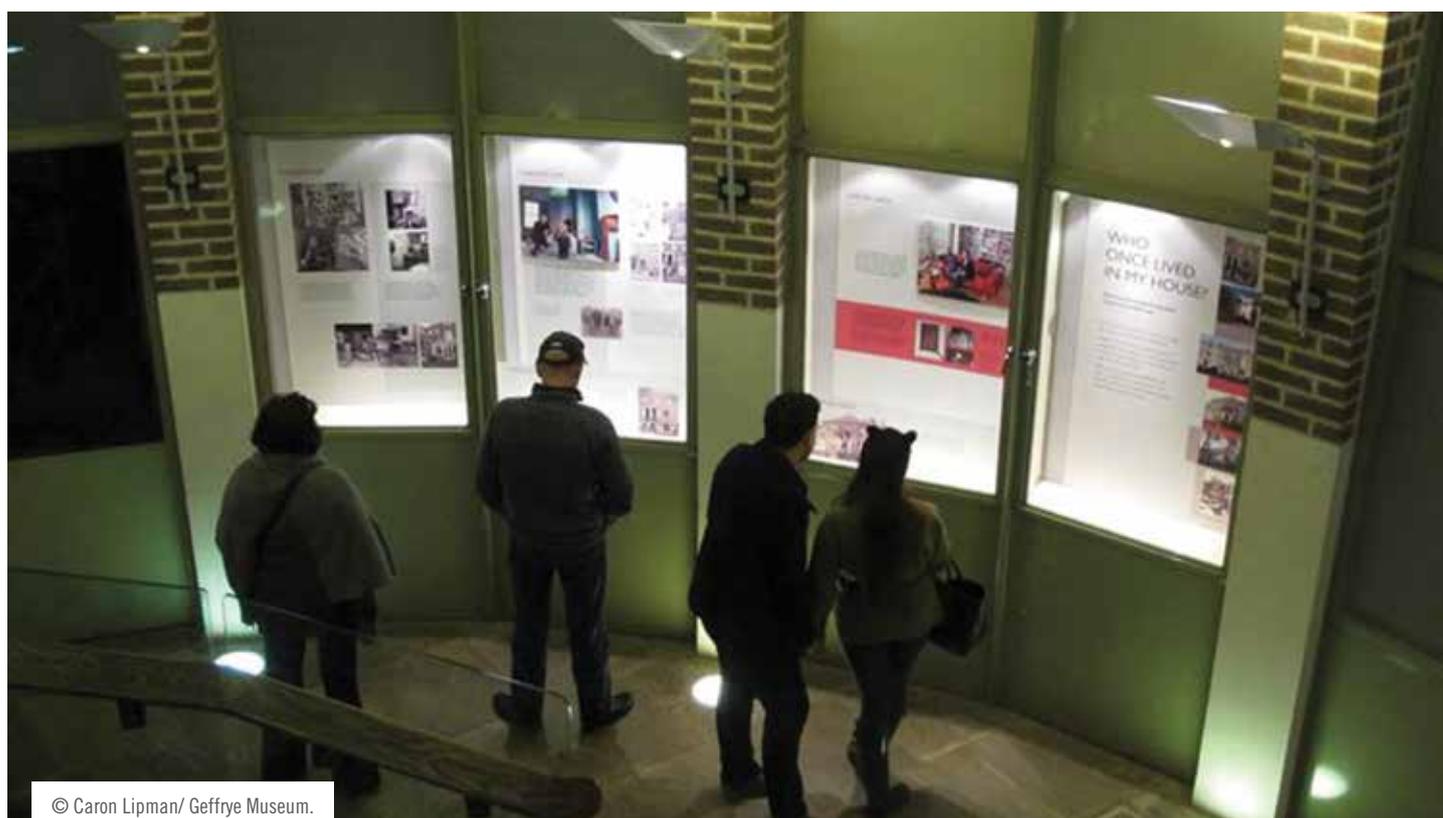
As the researcher who had recruited and engaged with the participants, no one else had access to the materials that would fill the exhibition, which I needed to scour for what I deemed appropriate stories. By my criteria this included stories that were engaging and complimentary, or constituted a range of locations, ages and relationships to the past; that were accessible and easy to tell in a small space; that had a visual, potentially 3-dimensional component; and where I knew participants were personable and enthusiastic.

I had only just finished the interviews, which meant I didn't have interview transcripts to work with and had to listen through the recordings; having made very detailed research diaries proved helpful. I assumed that I would have an abundance of material to choose from. I only needed to fill 9 of 11 panels (the first and last being overviews) and had

interviewed 35 households. But of these, only eight seemed to fit the criteria, and of these two households declined to take part. This should offer a warning: people willing to be interviewed for an academic project may feel differently about having their stories, their faces, names and homes, projected into a public arena. But of the six remaining case studies, we had enough material for half to be given two panels each. On balance, this did provide enough variety without feeling insubstantial.

I then prepared a document outlining all the materials for each case study. This included a summary of the stories and circumstances, potential usable quotes, and visual and other ideas such as old photos and objects we might borrow and how research into previous inhabitants might be presented. The dossier was comprehensive because I wanted to allow the other collaborators to choose from the information gathered. Alex and Eleanor gently reined me in when I vied for more stories and text to be included; collaborating meant I couldn't be too precious about the materials I had chosen. We did make a case for slightly longer sections of text to be included in a couple of places.

Perhaps a limitation of presenting a professionally-designed display is that it might present materials which look a little too complete, sleek, seamless and confident, not reflecting the ongoing messiness, the complexity as well as limitations of



© Caron Lipman/ Geffrye Museum.

people's knowledge. This was in part mitigated by the text – in focusing on the questions and issues participants raise – as well as by an evocative use of visual effects and design details to reflect or suggest different aspects of people's stories.

The onus was also on me to take photographs for the panels. We decided that there would be visual continuity and flow between the panels by showing the same two images: a family shot of participants in their living room and an exterior shot of their home. If my photos weren't good we would have to employ a professional photographer, which would have been expensive and time-consuming. The designer implemented our ideas and added excellent ones of her own, although there were many requested changes; this later stage of the process required detailed decisions to be made between us.

I noted that a broader question posed by displaying research as part of a collaborative exhibition was that of who gains by doing this. As the researcher, I have a particular take on this question and will offer my personal view to conclude. Firstly, there were no direct benefits to the research in creating the exhibition. The exhibition, as suggested, utilises and overlaps with the research, but the process of producing it needs to be seen as separate.

But in terms of indirect gains, there were many. Just as we were creating a reflective space for visitors, I was also offering myself a reflective space; the process allowed the possibility of making different connections. As it happened, it suggested a way of framing a conference paper. In thinking about the choices and decisions we had made in terms of what to display in the panels, I found myself thinking about the choices and decisions that participants themselves had made to show, hide, recycle or remove inherited objects; the museum exhibition offered a wider framework for thinking about aspects of display and archive within these ordinary homes.

Access to the experience of curation was also interesting for its own sake. There were process benefits, too, not least psychological and social. Research can be a lonely, hard slog with uncertain end points, including publications for a likely rather limited audience. To be working towards a tangible, material output with a select group of experienced individuals was thus particularly satisfying, as was the end result itself – the sense of pride in collectively creating something which was rather good; the frisson of seeing aspects of the research come alive in a different forum; of eavesdropping on members of the public engaging with the panels; and the feeling of giving something back – particularly at the launch party, where I had invited project participants. How often do you get to offer a glass of wine to people who have generously given their time to be interviewed?

But if these were the benefits, a drawback also needs to be acknowledged, and that is the thorny issue of time. Doing anything properly does take time. Collaboration with more than one other person involves an inevitable slowness in discussing and agreeing on details, often over email, and liaising with participants was also time-consuming. Could the process have been streamlined, its logistics improved? I'm not sure. As researcher, no one else could help me collate the materials or engage with participants. Catherine took on the major administration burden. Alex and Eleanor spent much time advising us and engaging in the decision-making process. They set up the designer, hunted down and sorted out copyright issues, organised permissions and the storing of borrowed objects, and ultimately set up the exhibition itself.

But the fact is that time used for developing the exhibition was time taken from the main research. And the reality is that for early career academics, unless you are hoping to work as a curator, the focus for getting on in academia, rightly or wrongly, is still on publishing in journals rather than on other activities which might add value beyond the narrow confines of the academy. These issues represent a tension which I never completely resolved but I feel needs to be acknowledged and debated.



Arranging objects for the exhibition.
© Caron Lipman/ Geffrye Museum.

Monks, Myths and Multi-vocality: Presenting the Ruins of Glastonbury Abbey

Rhianedd Smith



© Rhianedd Smith/ Glastonbury Abbey.

This exhibition was part of an AHRC-funded archaeological archive project which sought to fully analyse and publish the excavation archives of Glastonbury Abbey for the first time. My Collaborative Doctoral Studentship from the AHRC examined the inter-relationship between the mythological and spiritual meanings of the Glastonbury Abbey site and its archaeological investigation and interpretation. From a practical perspective I was tasked with co-authoring a new interpretation strategy and co-curating a temporary exhibition called 'From Fire and Earth: The Archaeology of Crafts at Glastonbury Abbey'. The interpretation strategy highlighted the core themes of 'Spirit, Space and Society' and we aimed to trial some of our initial thinking in the temporary exhibition.

When deciding on a theme for the exhibition there were numerous directions we could have gone in with the wealth of new evidence. We eventually chose crafts, as there is a thriving arts scene in the region and we thought it would be more accessible than some of the more detailed site plans and phasing discussions. Another key factor was that the exhibition had to be able to tour to the Society of Antiquaries Symposium which would report back key findings from the project.



© Rhianedd Smith/ Glastonbury Abbey.

We made the decision to make the process of discovery a key part of the exhibition. Quotes and photographs from members of the large team of specialists were included on text panels, and when writing text we kept asking ourselves 'how do we know that?' This also fed into the design, with archival images forming the backdrop to the stone analysis case, tile making equipment borrowed from a local maker sitting alongside original tiles, and finished glass sitting alongside glass making debris.

There was also a focus on the crafts people who were revealed by archaeological and archival analysis. Lack of evidence makes this difficult but a biography of a mason known only by his mark as 'Triple Triangle' on a stone that he carved, demonstrated that it could be done. The project also looked to the local people and, over the summer that the exhibition ran, there were also a series of crafts workshops in the Abbey grounds. Initially I had wanted to include the voices of craftspeople in the display to make it a little more multi-vocal, but this actually repeated the previous exhibition. Hence, it's worth thinking about your exhibition not simply as a one off event, but as part of a much larger programme.

The touring element was much harder to organise and it was eventually decided that we could not move objects. However, we were able to get our large text panels printed on moveable boards which could be attached to different surfaces. Getting them into central London from Somerset was hard work and in retrospect we possibly should have picked a lighter option. Making your exhibition portable may not be something you immediately think of, but even a small tour (say to a local library, school, or an academic conference) can greatly enhance the reach and potential impact of an exhibition. Many design and print companies can offer affordable options; you just need to plan.

In conclusion, a temporary exhibition is a great way of crystalizing your ideas, not just about content but about methodology. While we weren't able to achieve everything we initially envisaged, we were able to demonstrate that small changes could bring the voices of different specialist and people from the past into a temporary exhibition format. The crafts programme at the Abbey has also demonstrated the potential for the arts to inform the interpretation of an archaeological site. The Abbey is a sacred space for people from multiple spiritual paths and by bringing the arts and archaeology together we can inspire and make space for the multiple responses to this unique site.



© Rhianedd Smith/ Glastonbury Abbey.



© Rhianedd Smith/ Glastonbury Abbey.

Hidden Histories of Exploration: Researching and Exhibiting Geographical Collections

Felix Driver

Exhibitions do not merely present research: they may be part of the research process, stimulating new ideas, challenging preconceptions and creating new data. Exhibition as a mode of research is a large topic with many ramifications. In this paper I use one example – the Hidden Histories of Exploration exhibition held at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) in 2009 – to address two specific issues: the nature of the collaborative curatorial model underpinning a research exhibition, and the role of design within the exhibition space.

The exhibition was based on research in the vast collections of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS-IBG), supported by a grant in the AHRC Museums, Galleries, Archives and Libraries scheme. This funding context generated a management structure quite different to that through which humanities researchers have traditionally become involved in exhibitions. Far from being a 'guest curator', tangentially involved in the actual making of an exhibit, a Principal Investigator is responsible for overseeing every aspect of the project, from conception to delivery, and this involves developing a variety of collaborative relationships. The project also had long-term consequences for the closer working of internal departments within the RGS, notably collections, education and research.

The original rationale of the exhibition was to challenge an influential narrative dominating the public understanding of exploration, highlighting the actions of heroic individuals in extraordinary circumstances – European and American men, usually, venturing forth on incredible journeys, surviving against all the odds. We wanted to encourage a different perspective by highlighting the roles of the people who made exploration possible but were rarely centre stage – the porters, cooks, soldiers, interpreters and intermediaries. We hoped to show that exploration is a fundamentally collective experience involving many different people in various kinds of relationships of work and exchange, often unequal exchange of course, but nonetheless relationships in which the agency was not all on one side. The exhibition also sought to raise wider methodological questions: to what extent might the collections of the RGS-IBG themselves contain traces of these other stories? How might these histories be made more visible? (Driver and Jones, 2009).

Finding the best way of representing the co-production of geographical knowledge posed its own challenges. Sometimes it simply meant recovering the names of individuals rendered anonymous in explorers' texts and images; often it led to questions about the category of 'local knowledge' itself, as so many of the guides and porters employed by explorers were anything but 'indigenous'. Advised that the term 'co-production' would be a little too academic for an exhibition-going public, we settled on the phrase 'uneasy partnerships' as way of characterizing the entangled relationships between

explorers and those intermediaries acting as cultural brokers or go-betweens. Some of these individuals acquired far more experience of exploration than most European explorers could ever hope to attain, such as the so-called 'pandit' Nain Singh who undertook covert mapping work for the British in Tibet and Central Asia.

In its physical manifestation, the exhibition occupied two sites in the RGS-IBG building: the pavilion gallery (where most of the exhibition panels were situated) and the Foyle Reading Room (where the original materials, including oil paintings, were displayed). The effect was to connect the spaces of exhibition and research, underlining that this was a new phenomenon in the history of the Society's recent displays: a research exhibition. There was something of a tension at work here between different modes and spaces of display. On the one hand, we were committed to archival authenticity, highlighting the materiality and the institutionally embedded nature of the collections. On the other, we worked with design specialists to transform the material in the interests of effective communication.

The design process involved an iterative process of dialogue between the designers, researchers, the Society's professional staff in education, collections and research, community members and heritage professionals. Joe Madeira and Sally Stiff, the design team appointed after a tender process, played a paramount role in shaping the ethos and atmosphere of the exhibition. It was through their work that we were able to make manifest the core ideas of co-production or indigenous



Dr Rita Gardner, Director of the RGS-IBG, opens the Hidden Histories of Exploration exhibition in October 2009. Behind her are archive portraits of Sherpas re-scaled and mounted on the gallery wall. © Philip Hatfield/ RGS-IBG.



Hidden Histories in the Exhibition Pavilion at the RGS. © RGS-IBG.

agency through the selection, juxtaposition and re-sizing of images, transforming the way the narrative of exploration was seen (Driver 2013). This was evident in Joe Madeira's choice of exhibition motif or 'hero image' - Thomas Baines' oil painting, captioned A Malay native from Batavia at Coepang - from which he derived an attractive palette of colours used in exhibition publicity, panels and banners.

The process of planning and design prompted further reflection on the possibility and limits of the predominantly biographical and celebratory mode in contemporary heritage practice (cf. Smith et al, 2011; Edwards and Mead, 2013). In the context of exploration, especially, replacing one kind of hero (the white explorer) with another (the heroic indigene) only takes us so far. In this context, it was important to situate individuals within wider cultures and networks. To name them was of course an important step: for example, Baines' 'Malay native' was actually a portrait of a specific individual, Mohammed Jen Jamain, a former djakse or muslim magistrate (Jones 2010). But we also wanted to go beyond individual biographies to address aspects of the wider culture of exploration, including questions of infrastructure, representation and recognition. The salvage brand of heritage practice, enthusiastically endorsed in the title and the design of the exhibition, took us much further than we imagined possible: but it too had its limits.

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Collider: Bringing the World's Largest Experiment to the Science Museum

Harry Cliff

In 2011 the Science Museum made the rather brave decision to put on an exhibition about one of the most complex subjects in contemporary science: particle physics. This marked a renewed ambition to engage with 'hard' science and to grow the museum's independent adult audience through a new series of temporary exhibitions with sophisticated content for the intellectually curious visitor.

The crucial ingredient in this mix was the wave of public interest generated by the then recent launch of the world's largest ever scientific experiment, the totemic Large Hadron Collider (LHC). The 27 kilometre particle accelerator had captured the public's imagination like no scientific endeavour before, thanks to a combination of spectacular machinery, promises of answers to questions on the nature and origins of the universe, and (in the UK at least) the dreamy eyes and smooth Mancunian tones of Professor Brian Cox.

I arrived at the Science Museum in January 2012, as 'Fellow of Modern Science', a job in which I would juggle particle physics research with the role of head of content on the exhibition, later to become known as Collider. It was clear from the outset that this would not be an 'objects-in-cases' show. The artefacts of particle physics are wholly unfamiliar to the non-expert, and in order to fit into a museum gallery those we selected would have to be relatively small components of much larger pieces of apparatus. Besides these practical considerations, we were also faced with the challenge of reassuring visitors that their instinctive fear of words like 'Higgs boson' and 'superconductor' was unfounded, and that the exhibition would be both intelligible and enjoyable to a person without a doctorate in high energy physics.

After an eye-opening research trip to CERN, home of the LHC, a consensus emerged that the exhibition should attempt to recreate the experience of a visit to the lab itself. A creative team was appointed, led by Pippa Nissen, an expert in both exhibition and theatre set design, and included a playwright, theatre video designers, graphic designers, a theatre sound artist and not one, but two Olivier Award winners. Armed with their combined expertise we set out to recreate the world of CERN in an 800 square metre gallery in the basement of the Science Museum.

The exhibition development process was a collaborative one. During several two-day workshops the creative and curatorial teams mapped out a number of possible visitor journeys and approaches. A common feature was that the exhibition would open with some kind of theatrical experience, engaging the audience emotionally while providing the necessary intellectual orientation. Early on there was a discussion about

whether this should take the form of a scripted piece of film performed by actors or a more traditional documentary featuring real LHC staff. The former would give us greater control over the intellectual and dramatic content, though might be perceived as lacking authenticity. In the end the scripted drama won out; it was felt delivering the key content message while also building a sense of immersion and engagement, all in around ten minutes was too tall an order for a documentary.

The opening film re-imagines the events leading up to the discovery of the Higgs boson in 2012, based heavily on first-hand accounts. Set in CERN's main auditorium, the story revolves around a young PhD student, Melinda, who finds herself with the huge responsibility of bringing the almost fifty year search for the Higgs boson to an end by announcing its discovery to thousands of her assembled colleagues. After a brief journey back into history to glimpse the discovery of electron at the Cavendish Laboratory in the late 1890s the audience is then taken to the CERN Control Centre, where we meet the engineers responsible for operating the Large Hadron Collider and learn more about the machine itself.

After this point visitors are able to explore the exhibition at their own pace. From the CERN auditorium they pass through a series of reconstructed spaces, beginning with the tunnels beneath CERN that house the LHC. High resolution photographs printed onto exhibition backdrops at life size are used to create the environment, along with the ambient sound of machinery and hazard warning signs, transport crates and tool boxes. The artefacts are set into the context in which they would be found at CERN and are given context by video and audio interviews with the engineers and physicists who built them.

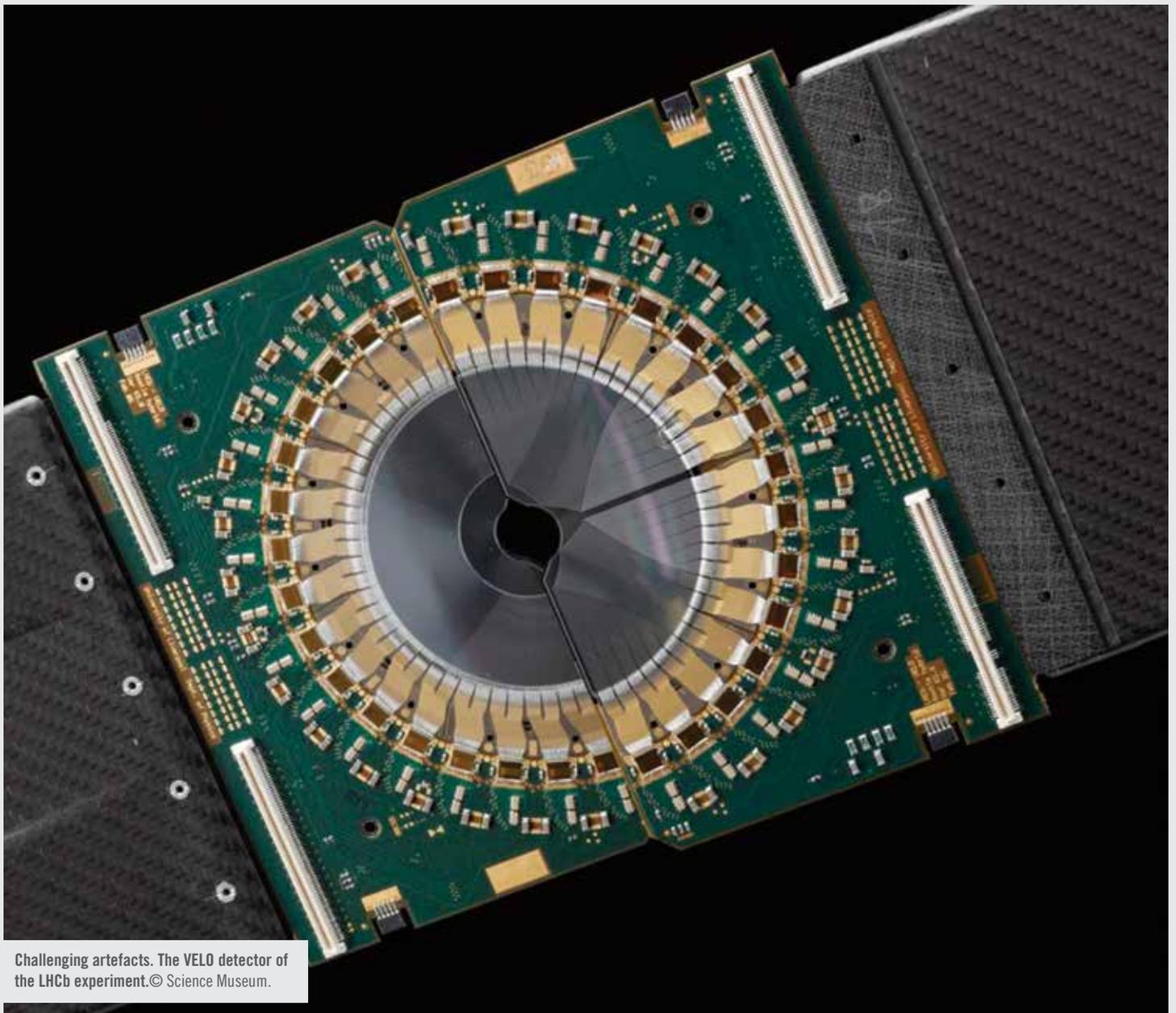
In order to maintain the conceit of a 'visit' to CERN, traditional museum text panels were done away with, indeed Collider lacks an explicit curatorial voice. Instead, content is delivered in a way that one might encounter it at the lab, through a combination of diagrams sketched on whiteboards, engineering blueprints and maps of the CERN facility. Object labels remain, disguised as CERN-style forms used to track the location and function of experimental equipment.

The visual climax of the exhibition comes in the form of a piece of video art, projected onto the walls of a large circular space. The animation plunges the visitor into a huge experimental cavern, housing one of the four gigantic particle detectors, before zooming down to the size of a single proton and immersing the visitor in a beautiful particle collision.

Perhaps the most surprising and popular space in the exhibition proved to be a reconstruction of a rather drab 1970s CERN office corridor, complete with conference posters, in jokes stuck on office doors, bus timetables and adverts for the CERN choir and table tennis club. Off to one side visitors could enter a highly authentic reconstruction of Melinda's office, and witness the moment at which she saw that the Higgs boson existed for the first time. The ordinariness of the physicist's working environment, in stark contrast to spectacular underground world of CERN, was something we were keen to get across, and by simply walking down that corridor it is possible to get a real sense of the international community and character of the laboratory.

Watching all this take shape as the builders got to work in October 2013 was as exciting as it was nerve-racking. Until all the various elements; stage sets, graphics, artefacts, video projections, props, animations, sound and light came together it was impossible to know what the experience would be like. It was only the Friday evening before the launch that everything was in place and we could finally get a complete view of what we had created.

Publicity for the exhibition was given a huge boost by the presence of Peter Higgs, who had obligingly won the Nobel Prize for physics only a month earlier. It all seemed like we had orchestrated the whole thing rather brilliantly, when



Challenging artefacts. The VELO detector of the LHCb experiment. © Science Museum.

Collider: Bringing the World's Largest Experiment to the Science Museum

Harry Cliff

in fact we had no idea that the Higgs boson would be discovered, let alone that Higgs would win a Nobel when we had begun work in January 2012.

Critical praise for the exhibition was almost universal, with the highlight a five star review in The Independent, which went so far as to describe Collider as 'sublime'. Over the six month run in London the exhibition attracted over 50,000 paying visitors, well above the most optimistic projections and is now at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester ahead of an international tour that will take in Paris, Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia.

Working on the exhibition was a hugely rewarding experience. I have had the privilege of working with some incredibly talented people and the experience of seeing something that

you have spent almost two years thinking about become physical reality, and what's more be appreciated by visitors, is a pleasure that's hard to top. The caveat for academics thinking about a foray into the museum world the obvious reality that exhibition work leaves less time for research. It is easy for self-directed research to take a back seat when you find yourself part of a busy team with deadlines to meet, and a great deal of self-discipline is required to ensure that the research doesn't cease altogether. One the other hand, there is nothing like having to explain your work to a non-expert audience to make you think hard about you are really doing, what is interesting and valuable and what you don't fully understand. My knowledge of my own field has increased immensely thanks to my work on Collider, and with the above caveat in mind, I would encourage others to seize similar opportunities if they come their way.



Physics humour from the CERN corridor. © Harry Cliff.



The tunnels of CERN, recreated in the Science Museum basement. © Science Museum.

Have you got what
it takes to be a

Appendices

Engine Driver?

Step inside and
experience the
sights, sounds &
smells of life on
the footplate

**HOLD ON
TIGHT!**

Sources of Funding

The sources of funding available to museums, galleries, and cultural organisations are quite different to university funding. Below are some of the organisations that make a considerable contribution to funding in arts & heritage in the UK. The list is not exhaustive, however – talk to your collaborative partners and research locally as well as nationally to find the best fit for your project.

AHRC – The Arts and Humanities Research Council is primarily an academic funding body, but supports a wide range of subjects, as well as a number of museums.
<http://www.ahrc.org.uk>

Arts Council – Arts Council (England) offers larger-scale support across the arts, but has several smaller schemes (like the Strategic Touring Programme) which may be useful.
<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding>

Association of Art Historians – This Association provides bursaries specifically aimed at collaborations between academics and museums or galleries, with biannual application deadlines.
<http://www.aah.org.uk/funding/museum-bursary>

The Culture Capital Exchange – An organisation that partners with a number of (mainly London, but constantly expanding) universities to encourage collaboration between member universities and creative and cultural industries.
<http://www.theculturecapitalexchange.co.uk/>

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation – The foundation is well-known in the cultural sector for its Collections Fund (supporting research and acquisitions), but also funds projects like exhibitions and learning programmes. Grants start at £5,000 and increase to up to £1million.
<http://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/>

ESRC – The Economic and Social Research Council is another academic funding body which supports a wide range of subjects, as well as cultural and media studies.
<http://www.esrc.org.uk>

Heritage Alliance – Alliance of independent heritage organisations from across the UK that hosts the Heritage Funding Register – an invaluable database of heritage funders.
<http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk>

Heritage Lottery Fund – HLF is a major heritage fund that offers funding from £3,000 to £3million+. In particular, look up the ‘Sharing Heritage’, ‘Start-up Grants’, and ‘Our Heritage’ schemes.
<http://www.hlf.org.uk>

Monument Trust – Part of the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts, the Monument Trust supports Arts & Heritage programmes, especially in economically deprived areas.
<http://www.sfct.org.uk/the-monument-trust/>

Also:

Museums – Most museums will have an exhibitions and public programming budget. These budgets will be extremely tight, and may need to be supplemented by outside sources, but you should talk with your collaborative partners early on about this.

Sponsorship – Many museums seek sponsorship deals with commercial companies (usually with shared interests) to fund exhibitions and events. This could be worth investigating for your project (although be aware of ethical implications of having a commercial partner).

Your university! – Don’t forget to consider funding opportunities within your academic institutions. Engaging the public with your research through exhibitions might be eligible for departmental or institutional funding. Even if you can’t see a scheme that your exhibition idea might fit, talk to your academic school, college, public engagement or marketing teams before ruling them out.



Resources on the web

General

Archives and Records Association – Association of Archivists and Record Managers, offering training, online resources and lists of suppliers of archival-quality materials.

<http://www.archives.org.uk/>

Centre for Studies of Home – The collaborative partnership between Queen Mary, University of London and the Geffrye Museum includes news, events, and a lengthy research register.

<http://www.studiesofhome.qmul.ac.uk/>

Ministry of Curiosity – The Ministry focuses on new and unusual events and exhibitions, as well as museum training and conferences in London. Their events calendar is quite comprehensive.

<http://theministryofcuriosity.blogspot.co.uk/>

Museums Association – The MA website has information, features, advice, and reviews of museums and exhibitions, as well as training events. Museum Practice is especially useful for practical advice.

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/>

Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) – The RGS-IBG have a full programme of events and exhibitions, both on site and on tour, as well as several funding opportunities for geographers.

<http://www.rgs.org/>

Conservation and Documentation

Collections Link – Part of the Collections Trust, Collections Link is dedicated to knowledge transfer, sharing expertise, market data, and industry standards (including SPECTRUM) in museum collections.

<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/>

ICON – The Institute of Conservation, offering Conservation advice and guidelines. Also includes a 'Find a Conservator' feature to locate specialists throughout the UK.

<http://www.icon.org.uk/>

MuseumPests.net – Run by conservation professionals, this website includes information on pest monitoring, identification and management.

<http://www.museumpests.net/>

UK Registrars Group – Website where you can find a number of Collections Information Document Templates, including the Standard Facilities Report.

<http://www.ukregistrarsgroup.org/>

Museum Jobs

Guardian Jobs – The Guardian Jobs website has the option to search for jobs in 'Arts & Heritage' which is a great source of opportunities in museums, galleries, and charitable trusts.

<http://jobs.theguardian.com/jobs/arts-and-heritage/>

Leicester Museums Studies Jobs Desk – A large weekly posting of UK and international vacancies, including research posts, studentships, and freelance positions. Updated Thursdays.

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/JobsDesk/>

Museum Jobs – General listings for museum vacancies. Most are based in the UK but some are overseas.

<http://www.museumjobs.com>



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Servants at Dinefwr Castle ©
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The Merchant's House Museum,
New York. © Laura Humphreys



Front Cover Images (clockwise from top left):

National Botanic Garden of Wales,
Carmarthenshire.

Pithead Baths Exhibition at Big Pit,
National Coal Museum, Blaenafon.

Enchanted Palace Exhibition at Kensington
Palace, Historic Royal Palaces, London.

Old Operating Theatre and Herb Garrett,
London.

Smithsonian Natural History Museum,
Washington, D.C.

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Pit, National Coal Museum, Blaenafon.
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