

# National Museums Directors' Conference

National Museums Directors' Conference



International Dimensions

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National Museum Directors' Conference  
Imperial War Museum  
Lambeth Road  
London SE1 6HZ

[www.nationalmuseums.org.uk](http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk)

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**Cover images, left to right: Shoes from Majdanek, Panstwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, Lublin, Poland (Imperial War Museum, London). Visitors in the Forecourt of the British Museum (British Museum/ Phil Sayer). Diver conducting biodiversity assessment, Abu Dhabi (The Natural History Museum). Fruit of a Xanthium species, Millennium Seed Bank (The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew). Librarian of Deir-el-Suriyan Monastery in the Conservation Room at the British Library, London (Sarah Lee)**

## Members of the National Museum Directors’ Conference

British Library  
British Museum  
Fleet Air Arm Museum  
Imperial War Museum  
Museum of London  
Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland  
National Army Museum  
National Galleries of Scotland  
National Gallery  
National Library of Scotland  
National Library of Wales  
National Maritime Museum  
National Museums and Galleries of Wales  
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside  
National Museum of Science and Industry  
National Museums of Scotland  
National Portrait Gallery  
Natural History Museum  
Public Record Office  
Royal Air Force Museum  
Royal Armouries  
Royal Botanic Gardens Kew  
Royal Marines Museum  
Royal Naval Museum  
Royal Navy Submarine Museum  
Sir John Soane’s Museum  
Tate  
Victoria & Albert Museum  
Wallace Collection

### Note

This report focuses on the international activities of the members of the National Museum Directors’ Conference – the UK’s nationally funded museums, libraries and archives – and is largely based on discussions with these institutions as well as published material. It does not make specific reference to overseas work undertaken by other museums, galleries, archives and libraries in this country, many of which have international links and participate in the networks of collaboration and exchange described here. In many instances, the comments made about the nature of overseas museum work apply to the sector as a whole.

Neither does the report address the role of the British Academies, Royal Societies and other institutions that form an important part of Britain’s contribution towards international cultural and scientific exchange, and whose activities are often closely linked to that of the National Museums.

For the sake of simplicity, the term ‘National Museum’ is used throughout the report to describe all institutions, which are members of the National Museum Directors’ Conference, notwithstanding the fact that not all are museums, although all are custodians of collections.

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National Museums  
Directors' Conference

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# International Dimensions

# Preface

When the National Museum Directors' Conference (NMDC) met in May 2001 to assess future priorities, the international dimension of National Museums' activities was identified as a crucial aspect of their work, which had not received the attention it deserved. We also agreed that this was an area where joint discussion and greater co-ordination, within the Conference and beyond, was required and would offer significant benefits. An International Affairs Committee was formed in the summer of 2001.

The Committee's first decision was to commission a report mapping and contextualising the extent of existing international activities of Conference members – to stimulate internal discussion, inform a collective agenda, and also, crucially, to highlight to government, to our stakeholders and to our partners the importance of this area of great contribution and the even greater potential it offers for the future.

The report, researched and written by AEA Consulting, paints a remarkable picture of activity in areas well beyond those that might be regarded by some as their traditional fields of operation. It presents us with a number of important messages. In essence, these can be summarised as follows:

- As institutions preserving, interpreting and presenting major cultural and natural assets from around the world, we are by definition international in scope. In most cases we have been so since our foundations, because of our defining responsibilities and the nature of our activities. Examples of these activities are offered in the report, and a time-line (see pages 44-47) offers international and chronological context;
- We occupy a pre-eminent position internationally within a small group of leading institutions in each of our respective fields. This reflects our expertise and skills base, the historical origins of our collections, as well as our day-to-day exposure to an international public – particularly those amongst us located in a world city, which London has without question been in the past and remains today;
- In conducting our activities, we rely on an extensive network of collaboration and exchange with colleagues all over the world, often beyond our immediate peer group. This is driven by long-standing personal relationships.
- Increasingly, the remit of our activities extends beyond national boundaries, and links directly into much wider cultural, environmental, social and economic agendas, which we share with the global community – the preservation and protection of the world's natural and cultural riches, or the dialogue between nations and cultures being two important examples of this. Many of us are actively engaged in various forms of cultural diplomacy, which have endured in times of

tension or even conflict. As such, we contribute to this country's international standing and form an integral part of its contribution to the world.

The context of so-called 'globalisation' has re-inforced our position in recent decades, assigning to us as institutions a growing role within increasingly diverse and multi-cultural societies, at home and overseas. As international institutions, we offer major benefits in educational terms, by providing comparison and contextualisation of world cultures, past and present. We recognise the changing demands and expectations associated with an expanding international remit, and the need to re-assert the notion of our global reach and responsibility as fundamentally enshrined in our missions. We share this with the other large and pre-eminent museums in major capitals and world cultural centres.

This report demonstrates that it is time to consider this role more explicitly and to let it inform our thinking and planning for the future, individually and collectively within the NMDC and with the wider museum community at large. This will also provide the broader context within which we can continue to address appropriately such important and sensitive issues as illicit trade, spoliation and the repatriation of cultural property. It must also include thinking about our duties as national institutions where we can act as conduits and facilitate international links for other museums in this country.

We wish to thank the many professionals listed overleaf, both from within the UK and from overseas, who have been consulted and who have been most generous in sharing their views and experience, thus providing the rich texture for this report.

Robert Anderson  
*Chairman*

*International Committee*

Robert Crawford  
*Chairman*

*National Museum Directors' Conference*

London, June 2002

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**National Museum  
Directors' Conference  
International Committee**  
Members for 2002

Robert Anderson *Director, British Museum (Chair)*  
Sean Bullick *Secretary, National Museum Directors' Conference*  
Richard Calvocoressi *Director, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art*  
Nigel Ferguson *Leader of Collections Consultancy, Natural History Museum*  
Neil MacGregor *Director, National Gallery*  
Sandy Nairne *Director: Programmes, Tate*  
Penny Ritchie Calder *Head of Exhibitions, Imperial War Museum*  
Deborah Swallow *Chief Curator, Indian and South East Asian Departments,  
Victoria and Albert Museum*

## List of people consulted

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Suzanne Bardgett *Imperial War Museum*  
Joanne Bernstein *Tate*  
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Irene Bizot *International Art Exhibitions Group, Paris*  
David Bomford *National Gallery*  
John Boyd *British Museum*  
Manus Brinkman *ICOM, Paris*  
Robert Bud *Science Museum*  
Roy Clare *National Maritime Museum*  
Michael Clarke *National Galleries of Scotland*  
Peter Crane *Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew*  
Oliver Crimmen *Natural History Museum*  
Helen Dorey *Sir John Soane's Museum*  
Andrew Durham *National Museums and Galleries Merseyside, Conservation Centre*  
Clive Field *British Library*  
Michael Fopp *Royal Air Force Museum*  
Mary Fridlington *Natural History Museum*  
John Gilmour *Ulster American Folk Park*  
Timothy Green *Tate*  
Jonathan Griffin *Britain Abroad Task Force*  
Elizabeth Hallam Smith *Public Record Office*  
Stephen Hackney *Tate*  
Carol Homden *British Museum*  
Henrietta Hopkins *Re:source*  
John Jackson *Natural History Museum*  
Andrew Kitchener *National Museums of Scotland*  
Lorraine Knowles *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside*  
John Mack *British Museum*  
John McAuslan *National Gallery*  
Campbell McMurray *Royal Naval Museum*  
Nick Merriman *University College London*  
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Anne Millett *Science Museum*  
Frances Morris *Tate*  
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David Saunders *National Gallery*  
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Mark Taylor *Museums Association*  
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Susan Whitfield *British Library*  
Damien Whitmore *Victoria & Albert Museum*  
Eurwyn Wiliam *National Museums and Galleries of Wales*  
Mark Wilson *National Gallery*  
Guy Wilson *Royal Armouries*

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# Introduction

Britain's National Museums preserve major cultural and natural heritage assets for mankind. They occupy a pre-eminent position internationally in their respective spheres, reflecting the breadth and depth of their collections. This position is rooted in the historical context of their formation as institutions between the second half of the 18th century and the early 20th century, a period characterised by the spirit of the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, the age of discovery and of colonial expansion, during which Britain was a leading political and economic power with an empire spanning the globe. The majority of National Museums are located in London, which during the course of the 20th century turned from being the capital of a nation and its empire into a world city with a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic population, host every year to millions of visitors from overseas.

This historic legacy, and the context of a 'globalising world', entails an international role and responsibility. As repositories of material evidence charting the history of humanity and of the natural world, and as centres of learning and expertise, the work and impact of Britain's National Museums naturally extends beyond a national context. Collaboration and exchange with peers in museums, academic institutions and with the international heritage community at large, and the dialogue with audiences from all over the world – on site, through exhibitions, publications and, more recently, on the worldwide web – form an integral part of their existence.

This report sets out the context within which the national museums in the UK (as indeed most museums, large and small, with internationally pre-eminent collections) operate globally, discusses the forces driving their international involvement, and reviews key areas of museum activity where international links are particularly prevalent or of growing importance. It aims to demonstrate that this international dimension is of great importance, culturally and economically, and is firmly rooted in the evolving role of museums in contemporary society. It argues that this aspect needs to become a more explicit part of National Museums' institutional agendas, in order to be more widely recognised by government and the private sector as a significant contribution to the UK's presence in the world – and one that has the potential to be developed substantially further in the context of important global agendas, such as those linked to the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage, and the dialogue between cultures. A timeline (to be found on pages 44-47) provides a chronological and geographical context.

# A changing context

Britain's National Museums have always operated in an international context due to the profile of their collections and the nature of their activities. Only a few have ever primarily been national in scope.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, a distinction can be drawn between different levels of international exposure. These are linked to institutional missions and histories, and can be categorised as follows:

- The 'encyclopaedic' collections, which can be described as fundamentally *universal* in their mission. These include the earliest and largest institutions: The British Museum, The British Library and The Natural History Museum (both initially parts of the British Museum), and The Royal Botanical Gardens, for which both collecting and research activities have always been global in scope. These institutions all have their origins in the Enlightenment tradition of the 18th century, pre-dating the age of nationalisms.
- Museums devoted to subjects which, while not necessarily global in scope, extend beyond national boundaries. They belong to an international peer group of institutions – for instance: art museums and galleries (and museums of modern and contemporary art as an increasingly prominent sub-category), museums of decorative art, libraries and archives, museums of military history, architecture, or science museums. Many of these are 19th century creations and formed part of a 'national project', with parallels throughout Europe and North America and, since the mid-20th century, other parts of the world. A notable example is the Victoria & Albert Museum, which had its origins in the impetus of the 1851 Great Exhibition of All Nations, and which inspired the foundation of a group of similar museums around the world.<sup>2</sup>
- Institutions created in the context of the British Empire with strong historical links with countries of the Commonwealth. This particularly applies to the Imperial War Museum, the board of which comprises, ex-officio, the High Commissioners of seven Commonwealth countries.<sup>3</sup>

In all cases, National Museums' international involvement *predates* the late 20th century phenomenon of so-called 'globalisation' – commonly defined as the lowering of international barriers to trade, travel and employment and to the flow of information, ideas, fashions, customs and values, as well as the technology driven acceleration of these flows.

That said, the forces of globalisation have had a strong impact on the status, role and functions of museums generally, and of pre-eminent institutions in particular, enhancing their exposure to the rest of the world.

On balance, National Museums in the UK have seen their international profile reinforced by globalisation, and have responded to this by extending their global reach in all core areas of activity. Globalisation has also given rise to new pressures on institutions, reflecting growing expectations from a widening range of stakeholder and customer groups, and new questions about their mission and responsibilities.

Amongst the many aspects of globalisation, the following four have been chosen to illustrate its impact on the international museum community, and more specifically to the section to which most of Britain's National Museums belong – large or pre-eminent, metropolitan based collections.

These are:

- The rise of 'world cities';
- The phenomenon of multi-cultural societies;
- The impact of virtual communication technology; and
- The convergence of professional standards of practice.

## The rise of 'world cities'

The emergence of very large metropolitan centres, whose development is no longer driven by national or regional, but by global economic and social factors, has been a striking phenomenon of the late 20th century. These so-called 'world cities' are characterised by:

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<sup>1</sup> For example the Tate Gallery in its early days, or the National Portrait Gallery, which by its very subject, however, is connected to the history of Empire.

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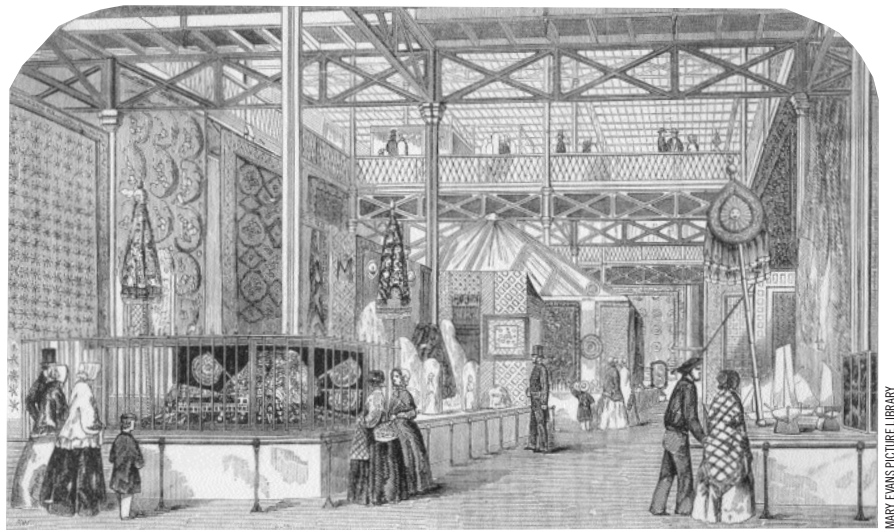
<sup>2</sup> Notably in Berlin, Vienna and Paris, and in the United States where major museum foundations of the mid-late 19th century, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, emulated South Kensington.

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<sup>3</sup> Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa and Sri Lanka.



**The 1851 Great Exhibition of All Nations, London**



MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY



BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON/PHIL SAYER

**The Great Court, British Museum**

- High concentration of wealth and economic power;
- Multi-cultural resident populations;
- Substantial cultural activity (a reflection of the cultural ambitions and interests of its resident middle classes); and
- High levels of international tourism, much of which is culturally driven.

In many aspects, these cities have come to share more with each other than with the nations they belong to. London, arguably the first world city of modern times, remains a paragon of this in the Western world. Museums form a core part of the fabric of these cities, which in turn provide them with:

- Access to a world audience on their door step;
- An ability to attract professional talent from all over the world; and
- Access to affluent cosmopolitan resident and visiting audiences whose sphere of influence is international.

For the London-based National Museums, this has meant an unrivalled access to a global audience and the ability to tap into a global pool of resources, be it for recruitment or for fundraising purposes. A world-city location has also brought challenges due to, for instance, the demands of a well travelled and culturally diverse public, but also due to the disproportionately high and rising costs of operating in such cities. The latter raises questions over the longer-term sustainability of current funding levels, in particular with regard to staff remuneration.

**The phenomenon of multi-cultural societies**

One of the starkest aspects of globalisation has been accelerated mobility, leading to increasingly heterogeneous populations across the globe – in particular in the large metropolitan centres of the Western world – and the formation of large diasporas, exposing both migrant and local populations to different cultures, customs and values. Whilst not a new phenomenon historically, the pace of its development is unprecedented in recent history. This has been re-inforced by trade, travel, television and other forms of cross-border communication and information flows, all of which have contributed to widespread cultural assimilation.

This process has heightened our awareness of cultural differences and similarities. It has also challenged prevailing values and canons – raising fundamental, intellectually and emotionally charged questions of individual and collective identity.

The growing interest in, and unprecedented popularity of museums can in part be attributed to this, correlated as it seems to be with society's level of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. As repositories of the material culture of past and present civilisation, museums are inevitably called into the process of

assimilation (and assertion) of cultures and traditions – the more so, the more historically significant and iconic their collections.

National Museums in the UK are in a pivotal position in this respect, due to their collections, history and location. This is a source of great opportunity, but also raises important questions – about the nature of their audiences and the dialogue with these, as well as their role as stewards of cultural property of other civilisations.

### **The impact of virtual communication technology**

Information technology has revolutionised communication, in part by doing away with national boundaries. This applies to communication amongst professionals, as well as the dialogue between museums and other ‘customer’ groups, in the broadest sense of the word. The interactive nature of the Internet has also changed the nature of the dialogue itself, breaking down (or at least eroding) hierarchies and creating an environment where the role and status of participants is not pre-determined. At the same time, the vastness (and often poor quality) of content due to low barriers to entry, has added to the power of ‘brand’ – as a mark of authority and force of authentication.

For museums, the advent of digital technology and the internet has created significant opportunities, in particular the ability to:

- Engage with audiences who would never otherwise have access to the collections and knowledge base of the institution;
- Bring together previously dispersed collections (through digitisation), without the need for physical re-unification;
- Facilitate the dialogue with colleagues internationally, across all time zones and at very limited costs; and
- Involve pro-actively the public in research and collecting activities by means of interactive communication technology.

National Museums, many of which are recognised international ‘brands’ in their respective fields, have been well positioned to develop a presence on the Internet, and have already invested considerable resources towards this. This process has also revealed the high cost of developing and maintaining a credible presence on the web. As other high profile public (and indeed private) organisations, they have also become exposed to the more adversarial aspect of the Internet, when it is used as a tool to form (often *ad hoc*) activist groups to influence public opinion.

### **Convergence of professional standards of practice**

Most fields of professional activity have seen an increasing convergence of work practices, usually driven by US/Anglo-Saxon models. Led by the corporate sector and cross-border patterns of investment, this phenomenon has spread to government and the non-profit sector, in particular since the later 1980s. The notion of benchmarking against international best practice is now prevalent throughout all sectors of the economy. This has been accompanied by the rise of management sciences and a plethora of professional literature. In this field, English is the undisputed *lingua franca*. Homogenisation has also contributed to greatly increased cross-border mobility amongst professionals, giving rise to global competition for talent. In the commercial sector, this has led to substantial inflation for top rated professionals.

In the museum sector, this trend is manifest in:

- The rise of Museum (and Museum Management) Studies as a subject taught in universities. The UK has been a leader in this field, attracting students as well as museum professionals from all over the world;
- The proliferation of museum management related literature, again primarily in English and to a very large extent drawing on Anglo-Saxon models; and
- The internationalisation of the museum profession, with increasing cross-border movement of staff – in particular at curatorial level, and increasingly also for senior management appointments.

For National Museums in the UK, this has provided a context fostering the international exchange with overseas colleagues, as well as increasing their recruitment pool by capitalising their international standing as collections and institutions, and the attraction of their location as places to live and work.

The biggest challenge in this area lies in senior and specialist staff recruitment. National Museums will need to be in a position to offer compensation packages competing with those offered by overseas (in particular US) institutions, and reflecting the high and rising cost of living in cities like London. This raises succession planning issues for the future, and suggests rising resource and funding requirements.

As in many other areas of society, globalisation can be characterised as having led to a polarisation within the museum community, widening the gap between institutions which have distinctive, high profile collections and ‘brands’ in prime locations and those which do not.<sup>4</sup> This trend is unlikely to reverse in the foreseeable future.

Britain’s National Museums, by virtue of their collections and, for the London based institutions, their location in a city with unrivalled access to the rest of the world, have if anything seen their position, and the potential to develop their international presence, enhanced by globalisation. This has reinforced the notion that as institutions their remit extends beyond their national role. This is recognised within organisations themselves, but also increasingly by their stakeholders and the public.

The degree to which this applies varies from organisation to organisation, and is naturally strongest with the large encyclopaedic collections, which act as stewards of world heritage and represent foreign cultures and their histories. They share this with their peers in the Western World - the large national and other public collections in the major capitals and metropolitan centres of Europe and North America.<sup>5</sup>

The prominence of this group at a global level has also nurtured expectations, in particular outside of the Western world, as to their role and contribution to a global agenda for the preservation and sharing of the world’s cultural and natural heritage. These expectations cannot always be met, not least because of competing claims on a tight pool of institutional resources from increasingly demanding domestic agendas.

This situation calls for more explicit definitions of international roles and responsibilities as part of National Museums’ stated mission and purpose: providing the context within which the relationship between national and global responsibilities, as well as the resulting questions of institutional resource allocation, can be addressed.

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<sup>4</sup>This is sometimes referred to as the ‘Winner Takes All’ phenomenon, an expression coined by *The Winner-Take-All Society*, Robert H Frank & Philip J Cook, (1995).

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<sup>5</sup>Paris and New York, and also Berlin, Washington and St. Petersburg.

# National Museums in the international arena

National Museums are part of widely networked international communities, which extend well beyond their direct peer group. The nature of international exchanges crosses all core areas of activities – collecting, conservation, research, exhibitions and organisational management. They can be collaborative, as well as consultative, short-term project based as well as long-term.

Notwithstanding this diversity, there are a series of common characteristics, which cut across most areas of international museum work. These can be summarised as follows.

## **Museum communities**

Generally speaking, international museum collaboration and exchange takes place within two types of communities:

- Those which are defined by a particular *field of expertise and interest* and can be described in terms of international professional peer groups. Many of these are now organised in formal associations as well as informal networks, which meet on a regular basis and often have their own specialised publications and communication tools (journals, newsletters, bulletins etc.). A selection of the most significant ones can be found on page 48; and
- Those which are defined by *language, cultural and historic links*. In the case of the UK, this means first and foremost the North America and Commonwealth countries (in particular Australia, the Indian Subcontinent and certain African countries). In this area, the links tend to be bilateral and less formalised, as with professional peer groups.

The former now constitutes the main driver of international activity, although the latter still provides the context for a large number of collaborations and exchanges.

## **The human factor**

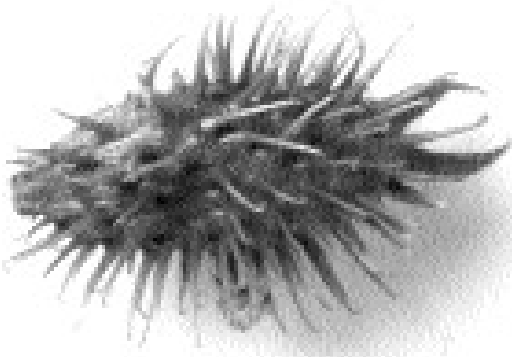
The majority of international activities originate as a result of professional contacts forged by individuals within organisations, usually at departmental level. As a rule, they do not follow a set institutional route, but tend to be opportunistic, as well as being serendipitous in their subsequent development.

In terms of overall institutional representation, this pragmatic, relationship-driven approach has meant that international activity has tended to be dispersed with no single co-ordination or dissemination point within organisations, let alone collectively within the National Museum Directors' Conference. This partly explains why significant aspects of museums' international work remain beneath the surface, little publicised externally (and indeed internally) and, as a consequence, receive little attention from stakeholders and the public.

## **The principle of reciprocity**

The terms under which museums operate internationally are varied, ranging from straight *pro bono* arrangements to commercially priced consultancies and loan fees, with third party project funding (from government or EU sources) and a multitude of non-monetary arrangements in between.

In the majority of cases, however, a cost-benefit equation can be drawn, even where this is not made explicit. In general, the international community of museums operates on the basis of the notion of *quid pro quo*. Relationships are based on an implicit understanding of the long-term balance of reciprocity between the parties to any particular transaction. This is particularly evident in international research collaborations and the practices ruling the international loan circuit, but also informs different forms of skills transfer and local capacity building which can be linked to the pursuit of collecting activities and the ongoing access to sources of information, as shown by the example below. This fine balance has been a key characteristic of the ecology within which National Museums have operated globally. In some areas, such as overseas lending, this has come under threat as a result of pressures to raise earned income.



**Fruit of a *Xanthium* species commonly known as Rough Cocklebur, Millennium Seed Bank**

### **Example Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: Millennium Seed Bank Project**

Kew Garden's Millennium Seed Bank Project (MSB) is an international programme to store seeds from about 24,000 wild plant species, mostly from dry land areas, representing about 10% of the world's seed-bearing flora. To be completed by 2010, this will be a global resource to widen scientific understanding and address sustainable use and conservation of plants, particularly in regions where human livelihoods are most dependent on wild plant species. The project activities are based on legally binding Benefit Sharing Agreements between Kew and project partners. These establish the legal framework for joint seed collecting and allow for a wide variety of benefit sharing – including data repatriation, financial support, purchase of equipment, training and collaborative research projects – thus linking the project with conservation targets in these countries. To date 18 institutions in 13 countries have signed such agreements.<sup>6</sup>

### **Culture and diplomacy**

As autonomously governed institutions, Britain's National Museums generally provide a territory on which international exchange can continue even in times of international conflict and isolation of countries and regions. The fact that National Museums, although government funded, operate at arms' length of national foreign policy (a situation which generally prevails in Western countries, but by no means everywhere), allows them to pursue the dialogue between nations even at times when official diplomatic relations have broken off.

### **Example British Museum: Archaeological work in the Sudan**

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society (SARS), based in the British Museum's Department of Ancient Egypt and the Sudan, has been carrying out archaeological fieldwork in the Sudan for over ten years, in close collaboration with the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums in Khartoum. This work, involving to date eight major field projects in Northern Sudan forms part of a wider international effort in the region. The work has been pursued despite a break-off in diplomatic relations with the Sudan and the closure of most UK and other Western organisations in the country. This ongoing involvement, which has also resulted in much publication activity, as well as secondments, advice and support in conservation work and the development of site protection, is due to culminate in an exhibition in 2004 of objects from the collections of the National Museum in Khartoum and from regional museums in Sudan, to be held in both Sudan and the UK. Overall the SARS work has served to highlight the cultural

### **Excavations in the Northern Dargala Reach, Sudan**

<sup>6</sup>Australia, Burkina Faso, Chile, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mexico, Namibia, South Africa, United States of America, and Saudi Arabia. The MSB is currently in discussion with parties in a further 10 countries. For information see: <http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/seedbank/msb.html>





IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM, 2002

richness and diversity of Sudan, a country, which has hitherto received little attention but provides significant evidence for the development of civilisation in the Nile Valley and in the eastern Saharan regions. SARS is now planning a campaign of excavations above the Fourth Cataract in Sudan in advance of the construction of a new dam. Museum experts will assist Sudanese colleagues in rescuing monuments, which otherwise will be destroyed by the construction of the dam.

In other instances, the considerable prestige of National Museums overseas has been effective as part of a process to re-establish and further links with foreign nations. A visit to a National Museums also frequently forms part of the programme of official visits to the UK.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Example British Museum: Establishing links with North-Korea**

In 2001, the Director of the British Museum and the curators of Korea from the Museum and the British Library visited North Korea on an invitation from the government in Pyongyang. This was the first official contact with North-Korean museums since the partition of Korea and the international isolation of the country in the 1950s. The visit took place in the wider context of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between London and Pyongyang, in the course of which North Korean officials had visited the new Korea Foundation Galleries at the British Museum.<sup>8</sup> At that time, these did not contain any material relating to the North of the country. The visit to Pyongyang led to English book-ordering being re-established by the North Korean National Library and the acquisition of contemporary works by the British Museum, which were subsequently shown in the Korean Galleries. A North Korean study day for the public followed in late 2001, which included a contribution from a museum director from Pyongyang.

<sup>7</sup> The British Museum, for instance, recorded more than 200 official visitors from the Peoples' Republic of China between 1996 and early 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Funded by South Korea and opened 8 November 2000.

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**Example Re-engaging with museums in Teheran**

Under the aegis of Visiting Arts, curators from British museums have visited colleagues in peer institutions in Teheran, as part of an effort to re-establish the links between Iranian museums and the international museum community which had broken down in the decade following the Islamic revolution. A visit in June 2002 of curators of seven British institutions (including the Tate and the V&A) has focussed on the collections of Western art at the Teheran Museum of Contemporary Art, established under the Shah's regime. These have been kept in store for over two decades and received no conservation during that period. It is hoped that the visit will result in an exchange of expertise with a view to build local conservation capacity.

National Museums' independent status has also been an important factor in establishing their international authority in their respective fields. This has at times put them in a position to address sensitive topics in ways which their peer institutions overseas are not always able to.

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**Example Imperial War Museum: Explaining the Spanish Civil War**

The Imperial War Museum's temporary exhibitions programme has established a reputation, nationally and internationally, for addressing sensitive topics in fair and innovative ways. This has encouraged lenders to collaborate on projects, which they might otherwise feel diffident about. The recent exhibition *The Spanish Civil War: Dreams and Nightmares*, mounted to mark the sixty-fifth anniversary of the arrival in Spain of the International Brigades in 1936, is an example of this, addressing the human cost of the War and its impact on writers, artists, photographers, intellectuals as well as ordinary civilians on either side of the conflict. The conception of the exhibition found the support of a large number of Spanish institutions, many of which would not have been natural collaborators on home ground but recognised the IWM's position to tackle a subject which still remains taboo within many areas of Spanish society. Material for the exhibition was also contributed by museums, archives and private collections in France, Germany, USA, and the UK. The exhibition itself received extensive press and TV coverage in Spain and many Spanish lenders came to see it. The project allowed the IWM to build new links with Spanish institutions, which are expected to lead on to future collaborative projects.

The main forms of international activities of National Museums within their core areas of activity are outlined in the four sections below. These are illustrated by case examples chosen for their ability to demonstrate the breadth and depth of international work, and how it links into core institutional as well as wider museum sector agendas, and beyond. They show how this often forms part of an international response to global issues. The sections follow a traditional functional breakdown, addressing specific issues linked to conservation, research and scholarship, public interpretation and lending, and organisational management. In many instances, this can be an artificial distinction as vividly demonstrated by some case examples, which show the cross-over between different areas of activity.





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# Preserving a global heritage

**Opposite: Bamiyan  
buddha, Afghanistan**

At their core, museums are repositories of objects, material evidence of the man-made and the natural world. This fundamentally distinguishes them from other learned and educational institutions. As a community, museums are therefore bound by a common concern for the preservation of objects for current and future generations. This concern for the material world naturally extends beyond the immediate boundaries of collections and encompasses objects, specimens and species, which remain in their original context and natural habitat. As such, museums form a core part of the wider community of institutions and individuals concerned with the protection and preservation of the world's cultural and natural heritage.

In the international arena, the involvement of Britain's National Museums falls broadly into two categories:

- The development of conservation standards and techniques, as well as the technologies required to support this; and
- The elaboration of strategies and responses to address the threats to cultural and natural assets worldwide.

## Conservation standards and techniques

Conservation standards and techniques have advanced greatly in recent decades. Although individual institutions, including a number of National Museums in the UK, have made singular contributions in this field, this was and remains an area of concerted international effort in the face of growing appreciation of the threats to cultural and natural heritage worldwide.

High-profile catastrophes have been one of the catalysts for this – such as, for instance, the floods of Venice and Florence in November 1966 which resulted in an unprecedented scale of conservation needs to which conservators from all over the world contributed, sparking off the development of new techniques and approaches which have since been steadily refined. The pace of development is dictated by the great care with which unique and priceless objects have to be treated.

Other factors have been the applications of new technologies, rendered financially accessible over time, to the development of conservation techniques. Key areas have been the development of palliative and preventative forms of conservation and techniques based on the principle of minimum intervention to objects and specimens. These are shared internationally in the context of conferences, through publications and informal contacts, as well as collaborative projects themselves.

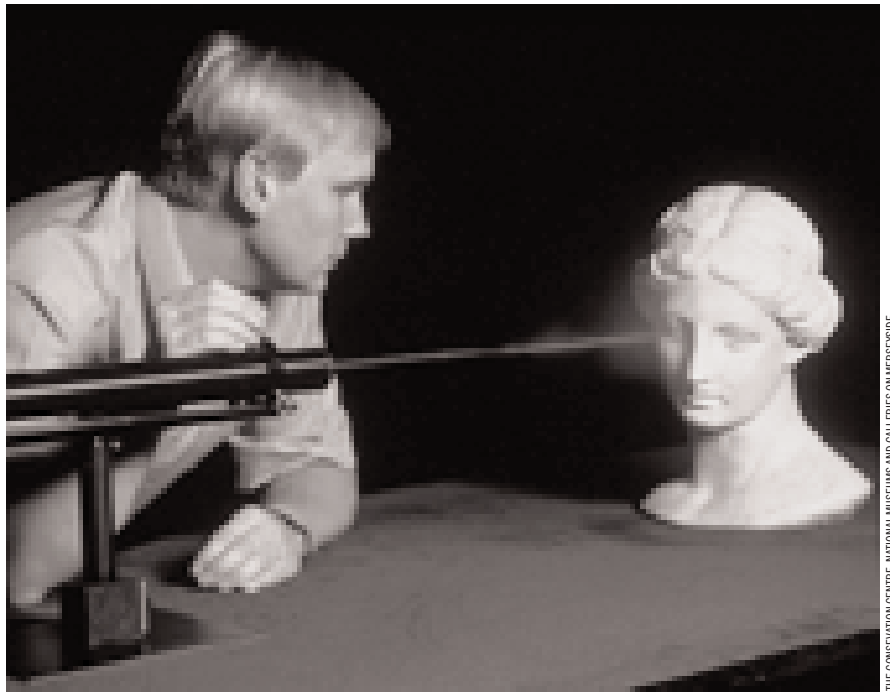
The field is therefore, by definition, international and collaborative – led in its different segments by a relatively small cohort of conservation departments in large and pre-eminent museums and specialist research departments and organisations. A number of National Museums play an important part in this exchange.

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### **Example** National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, Conservation Centre, Liverpool: Applying laser technology to sculpture recording and replica making

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The Conservation Centre at Liverpool has developed laser scanning techniques to record, replicate and reconstruct sculptures and the methods by which these are created. The impetus behind this has been the unsatisfactory recording of sculpture through traditional photography and photogrammetry, the evolving ideas about replica in response to the deterioration of original sculpture exposed to the elements, and for the reconstruction of historic sites. The technology, which was developed over a period of 6 years in collaboration with the British company Lynton Lasers and with funding from trusts and foundations as well as the DTI's PSRE scheme, involves the 3-D recording of surfaces in a way which



THE CONSERVATION CENTRE, NATIONAL MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES ON MERSEYSIDE

allows works to be viewed on screen from any angle. Transformation into machining data then allows computer controlled cutting machines to create exact replicas in marble, stone and other materials. The technology is currently being used for a project aimed at creating a replica of the tomb of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings, Egypt. The accuracy of copies (far greater than that of professional copy carvers) has raised the issue of fakes, in particular as the technology used is readily available. This is an area, which calls for a concerted action amongst museums internationally.

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**Example Imperial War Museum, Duxford: Leading historic aircraft technology conservation**

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The restoration and conservation programme at Duxford is one of the largest operations of its kind in the world. The museum maintains partnerships with around 24 aviation museums internationally, as well as links with international aerospace organisations. In particular, Duxford has close collaborative links with the United States Air Force Museum. This includes a regular exchange of loans involving the conservation of aircraft (seven in 2001). Duxford has developed a process aimed at stabilising the condition of aircraft and ensuring that the conserved exhibit remains as authentic as possible. This involves striking a balance between replacing damaged material and conserving the aircraft in its original condition. The process is carried out in stages including extensive recording of the original condition. Only severely corroded areas are replaced with new metal. Through Duxford's support of the European Skills Networking project, the museum is contributing to the establishment of European standards for conservation and restoration in aviation museums. This involves Duxford staff leading residential courses for professional engineers in the transport heritage sector. To date these courses have attracted interest from leading aviation museums both in Europe and North America.

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**Example National Museums and Galleries of Wales:  
Developing standards for mine site conservation**

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Wales is a traditional home of mining and the many now-redundant sites hold important information for the future of mine site conservation worldwide. MINESCAN is a partnership project between the National Museums and Galleries of Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales, reviewing metal mines of Wales. The project has established a definitive database of these mines, on

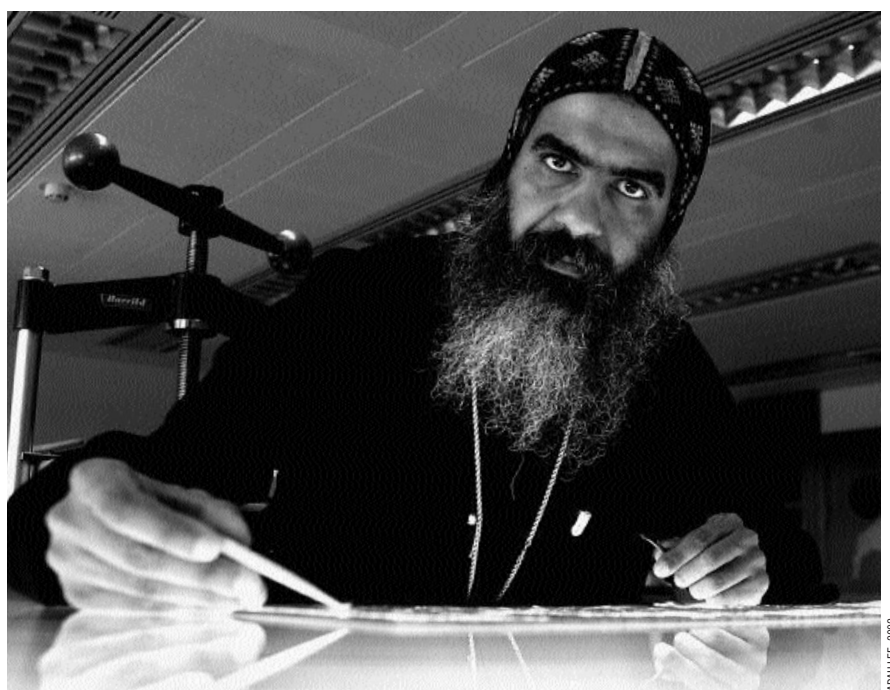
which it can draw to define a strategy for the conservation of metal mine sites in Wales. This provides a framework of sites to be selected for conservation. The methodology and findings from this project were presented at the 1999 Madrid Conference “Towards the balanced management and conservation of the geological heritage in the new millennium”. The Conference proceedings were published, thereby disseminating the methodology developed by the MINESCAN project. The museum has since been involved as part of a wider UK team in a major UNESCO sponsored project aimed at establishing a global framework for geological site conservation. The evaluation methodology adopted for the MINESCAN Project are being considered as a possible tool for this work.

As centres of expertise, National Museums have also been called on to assist smaller institutions overseas with their own conservation programmes, whether by undertaking conservation work on their behalf or building local capacity through a combination of placements and secondments. Conversely, National Museum staff are seconded overseas for training purposes, as well as being called to sit on advisory committees for major conservation projects internationally.

#### **Example British Library: Training conservators for Coptic monasteries**

The British Library holds important 4th/5th century Coptic and Syriac manuscripts, some of the earliest dated books in existence and rare testimonies of the early Eastern Christian tradition. These were brought to England in the 1830s by Lord Curzon who acquired them from the monastery of Deir-el-Suriyan in the Egyptian desert.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the 19th century, at large, the monastery’s library had been dispersed amongst Europe’s leading public libraries, although important holdings remained. The last few decades have seen a revived interest of the Coptic monasteries in their literary and artistic heritage, as part of a strong revival of monasticism, which has attracted many university graduates. This laid the ground for a range of international collaborative projects, including working with the British Library. Part of this exchange involves training monks in conservation techniques to create local capacity in this area of expertise. In early 2002, the librarian monk of Deir-el-Suriyan (a chemistry graduate) spent 3 months in Britain to be trained in parchment and paper conservation techniques. Following his return he will be assisted, amongst others, by a senior conservator from the British Library in spreading practical knowledge in his monastic community. Linked to this is a digitisation project, which aims ultimately to reunite virtually the monasteries’ collections – reconnecting them with their

**Librarian of Deir-el-Suriyan Monastery in the Conservation Room at the British Library, 2002**



<sup>9</sup>These were established in the 8th century by monks fleeing their homelands of Baghdad and Syria.

place of origin, fostering international scholarly work and exchange, whilst ensuring that the works themselves remain protected for future generations.

### Addressing global threats

Global threats to cultural and natural assets have probably never been greater. They create a lethal cocktail of:

- Geophysical and climate changes generally associated with the phenomenon of ‘global warming’. This has led to rising water levels, temperature changes and extreme weather conditions, which endangers buildings, archaeological and other heritage sites, as well as affecting biodiversity. Examples of this include the rising water levels in the Venice Lagoon or the effects of increasing water temperature and ultra violet radiation on aquatic ecosystems.<sup>10</sup>
- Emission based air and water pollution leading to the deterioration of buildings and unprotected works of art, the destruction of natural habitats and their species. Examples of this include the erosion of monumental sculpture and architecture in cities, but also other regions affected by ‘acid rain’.
- War and conflict, destroying cities and countryside, religious and other culturally significant artefacts as a result of pillage or in the context of ideological conflict. Conflict also threatens customs, traditions, skills and knowledge transmitted over many generations. Examples of this include the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha in Afghanistan by the Taliban, the recorded theft of 4000 items from Iraqi museums during the Gulf War and the destruction of ancient cities, monuments (most famously the bridge of Mostar and the centre of Dubrovnik) and museums during the Balkan wars.
- Travel and tourism threatening the fabric of historic sites and natural habitats. Examples of this include the tourism related conservation problems of Venice, Prague, Angkor Wat, Gizeh or the National Parks of Africa.
- Illicit trade, which is fuelled by the booming international trade in arts, antiquities and rare species and the accessibility of sites as well as the economic climate and political instability in poor countries. This has led to the looting and destruction of archaeological sites, the theft of artefacts from museums and the killing of endangered species. Looting of archaeological sites is considered particularly pernicious as it separates objects from their context, causing (sometimes irretrievable) loss of knowledge and appreciation. Examples of this include, the looting of Khmer artworks in Cambodia, the looting of remains of the Maya civilisation in Guatemala, or of Malian terracotta statuettes and the annual looting of hundreds of Etruscan tombs in Italy. In China, it is estimated that 40,000 ancient tombs have been excavated illicitly. Interpol lists thousands of items stolen from museums every year.<sup>11</sup> The value of the international market in protected wild animals and plants has been estimated at £20 billion.<sup>12</sup>

The international community has been reacting to these threats, and museums worldwide form part of a number of bilateral, multi-lateral, regional and global initiatives, to address these. Key international agreements which have led to concerted action, and established accepted codes of practices in this area include:

- The 1970 *UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*;<sup>13</sup>
- The 1973 *Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES)*;<sup>14</sup>
- The 1986 *ICOM Code of Ethics* – which includes strict rules on acquiring and transferring collections;
- The *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)*, which resulted from the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, and led to a number of national and regional initiatives, including the UK government funded *Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species*;<sup>15</sup>
- The 1995 *UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects*;<sup>16</sup>
- The 2001 *UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage*.

Britain’s National Museums have been guided by the spirit of these agreements within their respective fields of operation, and have been active participants in a number of initiatives and concerted operations, which have emerged from these.

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**10** United Nations Environment Programme – World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP – WCMC). For information see: <http://www.unep-wcmc.org>

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**11** Source: ICOM website.

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**12** Source: *The Independent*, 22 April 2002, p.3.

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**13** To be ratified by the UK in 2002.

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**14** The UK became a member party in 1976.

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**15** The Darwin Initiative, funded and administered by the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, is a small grants programme that aims to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of resources in less developed countries. For 2002, grants of over £3 million have been awarded to support 26 new projects, based throughout the world in countries as diverse as Colombia, Burma, Kenya, Bolivia and Kazakhstan. For information see <http://www.nbu.ac.uk/darwin/>

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**16** This takes up the principle of ‘due diligence’, which requires proof by anyone acquiring an object that they acted in good faith, and establishes the right of recovery without imposing a need for government to intervene. It is controversial, in particular because of its principles on limitation period, and has been signed by 22 countries to date.



**Returning illicitly traded material to Egypt**

### Example UK Panel on Illicit Trade

The Ministerial Advisory Panel on Illicit Trade, appointed by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) in May 2000, considered the nature and extent of illicit international trade in art and antiquities, and the UK's involvement in this. It brought together representatives from the world of heritage, archaeology, museums, the art and antiquities trade and included the Director of the British Museum. The Panel's key recommendations included the UK accession to the 1970 UNESCO Convention (to take place in mid-2002), the extension of national criminal law where necessary, the increase of power for enforcement authorities, the establishment of specialist databases and increasing public awareness through an official campaign. The Panel continues to monitor implementation of these recommendations. A further initiative now being pursued is the use of the export licensing system to retard cultural objects, which were unlawfully removed from countries of location, from leaving the UK.

### Example Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Natural History Museum:

#### Assisting the enforcement of CITES

In the UK, the implementation of CITES is administered by the Global Wildlife Division of DEFRA.<sup>17</sup> This involves issuing permits and certificates for the import and export, or commercial use of specimens. Applications for CITES permits are referred to a designated CITES Scientific Authority of which the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is the independent authority giving advice on the conservation status and requirements for the import and export of plants. The Natural History Museum provides identifications for agencies like HM Customs on the identity of items confiscated under CITES (and other legislation, such as the one on mammal skins). Identification is also needed as part of the export documentation for certain fine art objects (e.g. ivory/bone). In one case the museum was employed by the Australian authorities to identify samples of insects found in cannabis resin in order to establish that the material was not native and therefore had been smuggled.

### Example Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: Investigating

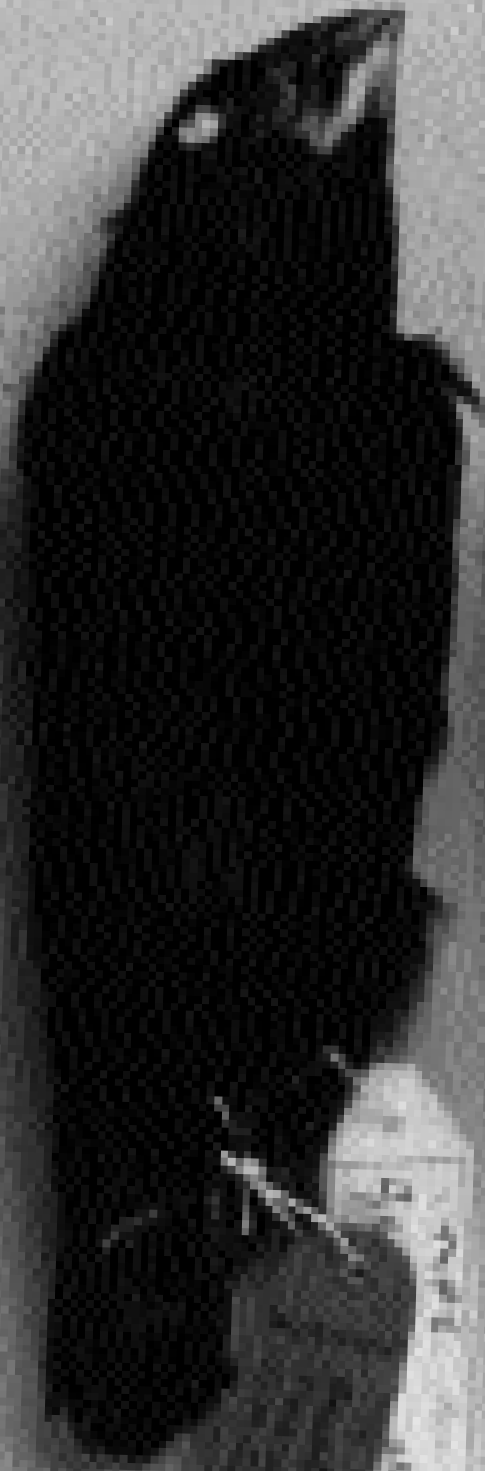
#### deforestation in Zambia

The Royal Botanic Garden's Millennium Seed Bank Project (MSBP) is involved in a Darwin Initiative funded joint collaborative project in Zambia to analyse deforestation of the Itigi thicket around Lake Mweru Wantipa in northern Zambia. The area contains numerous rare species of plants. The project, which is run by The Geographical Information Unit (GIS) in the Kew Herbarium in collaboration with University College London's GIS MSc programme, aims to identify trends in thicket cover over the past 25 years to determine the extent to which it is an endangered habitat. The data will enable the MSBP to target future collection missions. The results of the investigation have shown that thicket cover reduced by about 71% over the last 23 years. At this rate, the thicket faces total destruction within the next 9-19 years. Recommendations will now be made as to how urgently a seed collection campaign must be implemented.<sup>18</sup>

Through their interface with global audiences and by virtue of their authority in their respective area, National Museums can also act as disseminators of information on these important issues to a wide public, creating awareness of global issues and contributing towards a better understanding of causal links and effects, and ways in which individual action fits into these. In the context of a world city such as London, as a global financial and trade centre (including for the art market) with resident expatriate populations of wealth and influence, institutions with a high international profile are in a position to use their authority and act as opinion formers in order to contribute to a process of global consensus building and policymaking.

<sup>17</sup> Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs.

<sup>18</sup> For information see <http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/gis/projects/zambia/index.html>



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# Research and scholarship

**Table 1**  
**Libraries and Archives (Visitors and Users) 2000/2001**

	<i>Overseas Number</i>	<i>% of total</i>
British Library	309,112	37
British Library (offsite document supply)	1,268,256	33
Public Record Office	45,111	15
National Art Library (Registered and non registered users 2001)	7,926	18

Britain's National Museums have a long tradition as centres of learning and subject expertise. Collections-based research and scholarship are inextricably linked to their other core functions, collecting and public interpretation, both of which cannot be adequately discharged without it. Stewardship of the collections implies an ongoing research activity in order to keep up the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of these, and without which they represent, at best, a 'dormant asset'. As material evidence of past civilisations or stages in the evolution of the natural world, collections provide important clues to the history of the planet and mankind for which there is often no other reliable form of transmission.

The characteristic of museum-based research in recent decades is its focus on the object. In many areas this contrasts with university research, where the emphasis on theory and contextual analysis has meant a shift from taxonomy and object based research. As a result, museums have sustained a level of expertise and a knowledge base, which were otherwise being eroded. In the field of natural sciences, the concerns about biodiversity, and the recent developments in areas such as genetics has meant that this expertise (and the material to which it is attached) has taken on a new meaning with applications extending well beyond the walls of the museums.

## **Example** Natural History Museum: Collections as records of biodiversity

The collections of the Natural History Museum, assembled over a period of three centuries, number more than 70 million items. These are fundamental to the naming and classifying of species, and the understanding of important phenomena affecting life on the planet, for instance climate change over the past millennia.<sup>19</sup> The Museum is one of the leading institutions in this field and its collections are extensively used by the international scientific community. In 2001 specimens were on loan to more than 4,000 scientists. 8,538 scientists visited the museum for a total of 15,396 visitor days.

Research is, almost by definition, a collaborative endeavour, which knows no geographical or national boundaries. It is therefore not surprising that some of the most frequent, and longest established international links within museums are found in the context of research activity. The nature of these links and collaborations varies greatly – some being part of long-term associations between groups of individuals or departments, sometimes arising out of *ad hoc* alliances to secure sources of funding predicated on the principle of cross-border collaboration (as is particularly the case with EU funded programmes). Often, however, projects follow a serendipitous path, which also characterises the nature of the research process itself.

Research on National Museum collections is also pursued by independent scholars or researchers from other institutions. Many of these are in receipt of fellowships, often funded by National Museums and affiliated institutions (such as the British Academies), as well as private trusts and foundations.<sup>20</sup> Conversely, National Museum curators visit peer institutions overseas for their research projects, e.g. in the context of exhibitions and publications projects. The British Library and the Public Record Office are greatly used by the international research community, as are the other specialist libraries and archives within museums themselves.

Collaborative research projects have traditionally taken place within a peer group of scholars and researchers defined by a particular subject and area of expertise. These span other museums, universities and other academic institutions, as well as independent scholars and researchers. Different types of collaborative research projects can be identified:

- Projects linking collections of the same content/nature, often in the context of publications and exhibition projects.

### **Opposite: Two of Darwin's Galapagos finches, The Natural History Museum, London**

<sup>19</sup> For example, there are few palaeoclimate indicators that preserve interannual climate records. Seasonal climate records can be achieved from oxygen isotope analysis of incremental growth in land snail shell carbonate. This approach is currently used in a project to determine seasonal changes in rainfall sources over Sri Lanka for the past 40,000 years using snail shells from cave deposits.

<sup>20</sup> For instance the Wellcome Trust, the Leverhulme Trust and US foundations, such as the J. Paul Getty Trust.

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**Example Victoria and Albert Museum: Re-assessing the Italian****Renaissance interior**

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The V&A is the lead partner in a research project re-examining the Italian Renaissance interior. This project is international in respect of its content, its funding, and its participants. Museums typically display Italian Renaissance decorative art objects as unique works outside of the context for which they were originally made. The project explores how such objects might have appeared as ensembles in the domestic settings of the period, an approach which requires collaboration between scholars from different disciplines and intellectual backgrounds. The research team comprises V&A curatorial and research staff, curators from other museums, and academics from the universities of London, Princeton and Texas. The project has received collaborative funding from the Getty Grant Program, and comes under the auspices of the Centre for the Study of Domestic Interiors which links the V&A, the Royal College of Art, and Royal Holloway, University of London, and is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board. The outcomes of the research will include conferences, academic publications and an exhibition, which is being planned with two leading museums in the USA. The research will also inform the £11 million development of the V&A's Renaissance Galleries, to start in 2004.

- Projects involving research in the provenance of objects. Recently this has included an international effort in identifying objects in museum collections which represent material spoliated by the Nazi regime and during the Second World War.

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**Example National Museum Directors' Conference:****Identifying spoliated material**

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In June 1998 the National Museum Directors' Conference established a working group to examine the issues surrounding the spoliation of art during the Holocaust and World War II period and to draw up a Statement of Principles and proposed actions for member institutions. The Statement was finalised and adopted by the NMDC in November 1998 and presented to the Washington Conference on Holocaust Assets in December 1998. Its recommendations included a proposal that each National museum, gallery or library should draw up an action plan setting out their planned approach to research into the issue of provenance. A similar statement was issued by the Museums & Galleries Commission in April 1999, as guidance for non-national museums and galleries and a group of university and local authority museums subsequently began to consider what provenance research they might undertake. These museums are also represented on the working group. In 2000 the NMDC first published a report containing a preliminary list of works of art whose provenance, for the whole period of 1933-45, cannot with certainty be specified. This list is being updated on a regular basis. An external advisory committee is reviewing continued progress.<sup>21</sup>

- Projects involving the development of new technology. These projects often have access to sources of funding from outside the cultural sector, such as, in particular, EU science and technology programmes, which often include commercial partners.

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**Example National Gallery: Developing digital imaging technology**

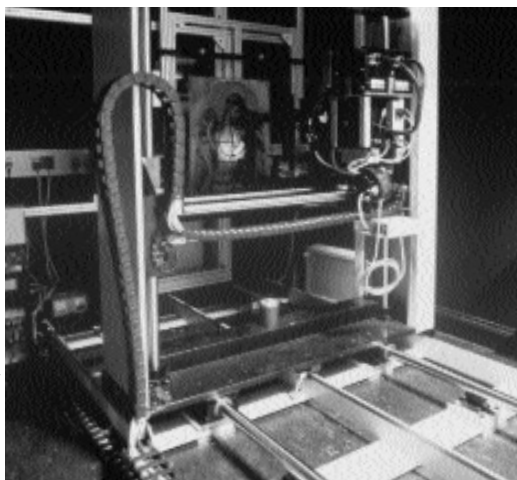
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The Scientific Department of the National Gallery has been involved for more than a decade in a succession of EU-funded collaborative projects with museums, conservation institutes and technology manufacturers in the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland to develop digital imaging technology replacing the traditional photographic process for the recording and reproduction of works of art. The initial VASARI project (1989-92) developed a scanner capable of producing accurate colour images directly from paintings, which could provide a permanent baseline record against which the future condition of works and

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<sup>21</sup> For information see:  
<http://www.nationalmuseum.ms.org.uk/spoliation/spoliation.html>





The VASARI scanner

colour changes could be monitored. This could not be achieved with previous transparency based reproduction methods due to their deterioration over time.

The subsequent MARC (Methodology for Art Reproduction in Colour) project developed this, improving resolution levels and colour accuracy, and allowing a high degree of colour consistency independent of light levels use. This greatly facilitates image exchange and analyses, for instance when works are transported. The project also completed the digital chain from painting to publication, allowing images to be printed on a conventional 4-colour press with no need for additional proofing cycles. Collaborative work is now being pursued with the CRISATEL project, aimed at producing digital image correcting the effect of aged and glossy varnish. This will assist future conservation work and support the principle of minimum intervention.

- Projects involving field work, in the context of archaeological excavations and scientific research expeditions, but also specifically to provide new elements towards the understanding and interpretation of existing collections.

#### **Example British Museum: Investigating ore of the bronzes of Igbo-Ukwu**

In the mid-1990s, a joint scientific research project involving the British Museum, the University of Nigeria, the University of Toronto, Canada and Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge investigated the still mysterious origins of the famous bronzes excavated at Igbo-Ukwu in South East Nigeria. Fieldwork led to the collection of samples of copper and lead taken from old copper and lead workings along the Benue Rift in South East Nigeria. The analysis of the samples supported the argument that the metal used to make the bronzes was local, thereby confirming their indigenous design and technology. The broader implication of these findings for the understanding of the society that produced the bronzes are profound, suggesting a considerable degree of sophistication despite of its isolated position at the edge of the West African rain forest. This added to the findings of other research into the rain forest economy belying previous theories which regarded these environments as being non-innovative, culturally and technically backward.

Increasingly, museums are also involved in projects with partners outside of their immediate peer group, including:

- Field work involving communities, for instance in the context of contemporary collecting or the re-evaluation of historic collections – based on an increasing appreciation of the importance of oral and other forms of non text-based knowledge transmission.

#### **Example Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: ‘Local Plants for Local People’**

Plantas do Nordeste (PNE) is an Anglo-Brazilian interdisciplinary research and information dissemination programme based in the North East region of Brazil. Experts are working with local organisations involved in alternative agriculture, forestry and community development, to improve the local knowledge base of the region’s plant life and methods of sustainable management. Via grass roots organisations, the project helps to ensure that this knowledge is disseminated and put into practice. The guiding theme for the project is ‘local plants for local people’. The project has led to the establishment of a plant information centre based in and managed by the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) in Recife. The centre will offer technical guidance to PNE projects partners in the region so that the results of their research are disseminated to conservation and planning agencies throughout the region. Since 1992 twelve projects categorised either as biodiversity or economic botany initiatives have received funding. Each project has direct links with one or more of the local communities. The Brazilian Government has supported PNE with training awards for courses. These have enabled over 100 students to participate. The Royal Botanic Gardens will repatriate Brazilian plant information from their databases back to the Centre in Brazil.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> For information see: [http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/s\\_cihort/pne/index.html](http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/s_cihort/pne/index.html)

- Research projects, which apply the knowledge base and expertise residing within museums and their collections to other fields, including commercial ones. In these cases, museums often act in a consultancy capacity.

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**Example Natural History Museum: Shark skins and swim suit technology**

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In the run-up to the Sydney Olympics in 2000, the Curator of Fishes at the Natural History Museum was approached by a researcher from Speedo to investigate the possibility of designing a swimsuit inspired by fish skin. By analysing samples of sharkskin, Speedo worked with the museum, looking at how the boundary layer of these skins is able to reduce the amount of water friction or 'drag'. The result was the development of a 'Bio-mimetic sharkskin' material for a swimsuit and wet suit entitled Fastskin. The body-hugging suit is covered with V-shaped ridges known as dermal denticles, which improve a swimmer's glide through the water by reducing drag by up to 3 percent: a crucial advantage in a sport where fractions of a second can mean the difference between winning and losing Olympic gold. The collaboration was the start of a close relationship between the museum and Speedo, and has opened up the potential for future investigations into how fish might be examined to inspire, develop and improve swimsuits, goggles and other water sport equipment.

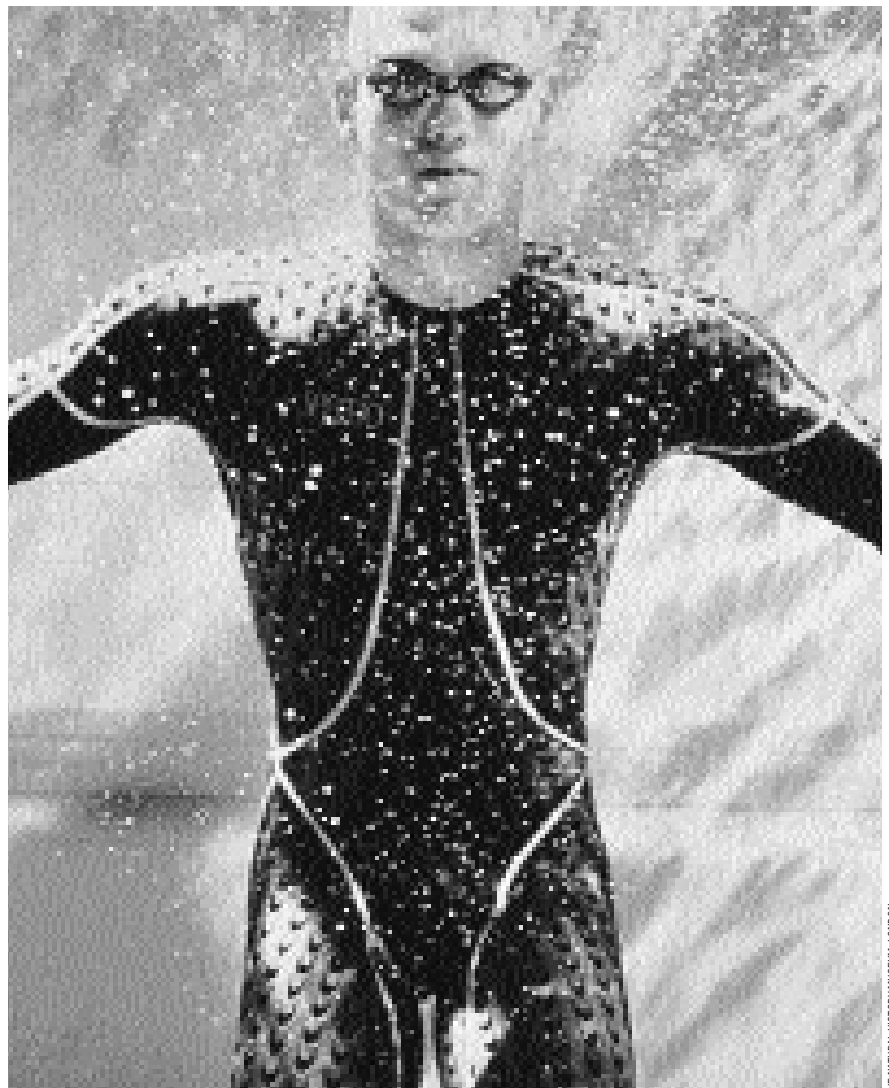
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**Example National Maritime Museum: CLIWOC international logbook project**

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Climate for the World's Oceans is a three-year international project involving Universidad Complutense de Madrid, University of Sunderland, KNMI,

**The 'Fastskin' swimsuit,  
Speedo**



THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, LONDON

Week Days	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	
1796								
Monday	3	South	134.6	86	34.06	14.38	52	Latitude 48° 56' E. Longitude 11° 52' W.
Tuesday	4	South	134.6	81	34.59	13.43		Latitude 48° 56' E. Longitude 11° 52' W.
Wednesday	5	South	134.6	65	34.52	15.1		Latitude 48° 56' E. Longitude 11° 52' W.
Thursday	6	S.	134.6	134	34.08	17.39		Latitude 48° 56' E. Longitude 11° 52' W.
Friday	7	South						At 10 o'clock Anchor in South Bay Cape of Good Hope
Saturday	8	South						Do
Sunday	9	South						Do
Monday	10	Variable						
Tuesday	11	Variable						
Wednesday	12	SW						
Thursday	13	SW						

Logbook of climatic data, c.1790

Fundacion del Centro Regional de Investigaciones Cientificas y Technologicas Mendoza, the University of East Anglia and the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, UK. The project is to abstract and interpret information from the logbooks of ships travelling in the North and South Atlantic between 1750-1850. The ships' logs record the climatic conditions experienced at sea during a period which was free of man-made influences affecting climate change (such as those influences which are ascribed to 20th century global warming), and provides a base line from which further research can be conducted. The documents and subsequent research have also revealed fresh and thought provoking insights into the social history of the sea both in commercial and naval terms. Overall the project aims to improve access to this internationally significant data held within this collection.

### Example National Museums and Galleries of Wales: Surveying the seabed of the Irish Sea

The NMGW is involved in an ongoing series of surveys of the seabed invertebrates found off the Welsh and Irish coasts. The most recent was an EU-funded INTERREG programme investigation in the south eastern Irish Sea, a collaborative project with Trinity College Dublin and the University of Wales, Bangor, with an associated environmental consultant AquaFact International Services Ltd. This project, entitled the South West Irish Sea Survey (SWISS) aims to contribute to a baseline set of data on the fauna of the Irish Sea. This data is critical to monitor levels of pollution and environmental change, and will be vital in case of future oil slicks or ecological disasters. The seabed is being surveyed in sections in terms of sediments, animal assemblages and biodiversity. Such collaborative projects are important in facilitating the creation of an integrated marine policy between Wales and Ireland, sharing responsibility between the two countries. Specimen samples are being preserved and stored in the NMGW, as well as at the Natural History Museum in Dublin. Two substantive reports have so far been published.

More recently, as a result of increasing development of the field of museology, museum based research has also extended into areas linked to the delivery of the museum's core functions themselves. This has led to a range of international collaborative projects in areas such as collections management, and new interpretation and audience communication tools.

### Example Victoria and Albert Museum: Key Workers project

Key Workers is a trans-national project for the development of wider participation in adult education by museums. Funded by the European Union's Socrates programme, since 1998 its aim has been to identify and document innovative ways by which 'key workers' can link museums, as cultural learning resources, to potential learners in the community. 'Key workers' may be museum staff, adult educators, youth and community workers, or others in local public services who can play a mediating role alongside and between museums and will include, among others, youth workers, arts workers, community workers, adult educators, volunteers, and public employees. Partners in the UK, Ireland, Sweden, Austria, Portugal and Luxembourg have carried out a survey of museums' provision and practice, and a range of in-depth case studies have been compiled.

The future suggests an increase in large international collaborative projects linking museums and universities. It is also a way to tap into additional sources of funding. This will be required to sustain an active research agenda in the face of competing priorities for core funding. The opportunities to leverage in-house research expertise for applications outside of the sector are also likely to increase, although these will not be distributed evenly and will primarily reside with those museums whose collections link into life science and technology based research agendas.



# The dialogue with global audiences

**Table 2**  
**Overseas Visitors (2000/2001)**

	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of total visitors</i>
<b>London</b>		
British Museum*	2,530,000	55
National Gallery *	2,450,000	50
Tate (London)*	1,908,480	32
Royal Armouries (London) <sup>1</sup>	1,650,000	85
Natural History Museum	524,100	30
Victoria and Albert Museum	496,569	37
National Maritime Museum	407,886	51
National Portrait Gallery*	329,175	27
Science Museum (London)	273,376	20
Royal Botanic Gardens Kew <sup>2</sup>	258,102	30
Imperial War Museum	207,237	36
Museum of London	129,732	35
Wallace Collection* <sup>1</sup>	100,000	40
Sir John Soane's Museum*	45,267	54
<b>Outside London</b>		
National Museums of Scotland	277,857	25
Museums and Galleries Northern Ireland	188,739	38
National Museums and Galleries of Wales	77,857	11
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside	50,000	7
Royal Armouries – Leeds	13,000	5

Figures show totals for all museum sites unless indicated

\* Denotes museums with free admission for the entire financial year 2000/2001

1: Estimate

2: Figure excludes Wakehurst Place

Directly or indirectly, Britain's National Museums engage daily with audiences from around the world. This takes many different routes, which have multiplied over recent decades due to some of the phenomena of globalisation discussed in Chapter One, including:

- Growth in global (cultural) tourism;
- The position of London as a world city;
- The expansion in the international circuit of special exhibitions and other forms of loans; and more recently
- New forms of access created by the advent of the Internet as a communications tool with audiences worldwide.

The reality of a global and increasingly diverse audience base, representing a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and consequently with different frames of references, is accepted and informs the dialogue of museums with their publics at home and overseas.

This is not an area free of tensions. The conflicts inherent in multi-cultural societies and the vocal and at times violent opposition to globalisation, argued in terms of threats to individual and group identities, have challenged the notion of universal values on which the original museum project has traditionally been based. The opportunities linked to low cost travel and communication technology cannot obscure the fact that the dialogue amongst cultures has, if anything, become more layered and complex. National Museums in the UK, as indeed their peers overseas, who operate in a global arena, acknowledge their responsibility to inform and facilitate this process through their collections, formed as they are of objects, which can be powerful carriers of identity and stories.

## International visitors

The most immediate and tangible interface with international audiences takes place on the territory of museums themselves. Overseas visitors represent a significant share of the regular audience base of most National Museums, in particular those based in Central London.

Museum visits form a core part of the itinerary of visitors to London and the UK. This is the case in most cultural centres in the Western world.<sup>23</sup> The large number of flagship capital projects in recent years has supported this by generating an unprecedented level of international media exposure.

The profile of overseas visitors varies widely, reflecting the nature of collections and resulting cultural links and affiliations. The fact that most of the National Museums' collections are international in scope means that the interest and motivations drawing overseas visitors are not easily defined in common terms (as they would, for instance, for the visitors of historic houses and properties).

For some, the breadth of the collections and the iconic status of specific objects are a prime motive – putting them in the context of the collections of their international peer group. For others, the interest is focussed on those parts of collections relating to their own countries or cultures of origin.<sup>24</sup> The excitement and international media coverage of great events, such as the opening of Tate Modern or the Great Court at the British Museum has in itself acted as a strong catalyst drawing overseas visitors to London.

In many ways, the distinction drawn here between overseas and domestic visitors is artificial against the background of an increasingly multi-cultural society within the UK, particularly in London with its mix of large immigrant and expatriate communities from all over the globe. The globalisation of museum audiences happens just as much on home ground as it does through international tourism.

As a result of this, Britain's National Museums, probably more than most of their peers overseas, have had to respond to the changing composition of their

## Opposite: Visitors in the Forecourt of the British Museum

**23** London Tourist Board figures for 2000 show 11 National Museums amongst the top 20 visitor attractions in the capital.

**24** There is limited market research based evidence in this field. However, British Museum market research revealed that 21% of visitors to the Korean Galleries were Koreans, followed by 15% from the US and 11% from the UK – significantly different from the museum overall visitor profile. The Wallace Collection, which represents the most important collection of French decorative arts outside France, receives a very high percentage of French visitors.



THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON  
**Visitors at 'The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms' exhibition**

audiences and consider the nature of the interface with a public that is no longer bound by a homogenous framework of cultural references and canons. This has found its way into new forms of public interpretation, exhibition and educational projects of an interactive nature, and remains an area where significant development can be expected in the future. This extends to diaspora communities outside of the UK.

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**Example Victoria and Albert Museum: The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms exhibition**

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In 1992 the V&A gave its support to a small-scale exhibition and conference organized by the Sikh Foundation and the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco entitled. Subsequently, the Chairman of the Sikh Foundation approached the V&A with the aim of developing the subject into a major international project. This resulted in a programme of research and attracted community interest in the project among Sikh communities in the UK, USA, Pakistan and India. This culminated in 'The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms' exhibition, held to coincide with the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Sikh Khalsa in 1699. The exhibition was shown at the V&A, the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco in 1999 and at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada in 2000.

The exhibition attracted substantial numbers of visitors from the Sikh communities at each site. It played a significant role in creating an ongoing interest in Sikh history, art and culture and conservation issues among the diaspora communities in the UK and North America and with Sikh organizations in India. The V&A's continuing programme of educational events, developed in collaboration with members of the community, regularly brings interested individuals, community groups and international scholars and speakers together. Web communications ensure that activities at the V&A, AAMSF and ROM are advertised internationally.

A by-product of London's world city status has been the way in which it has placed the capital's larger cultural institutions outside of a context defined primarily in national terms. This is a phenomenon which can be observed in other large Western capitals, but nowhere does this appear to be quite as advanced (with the possible exception of New York, which is not a capital city).

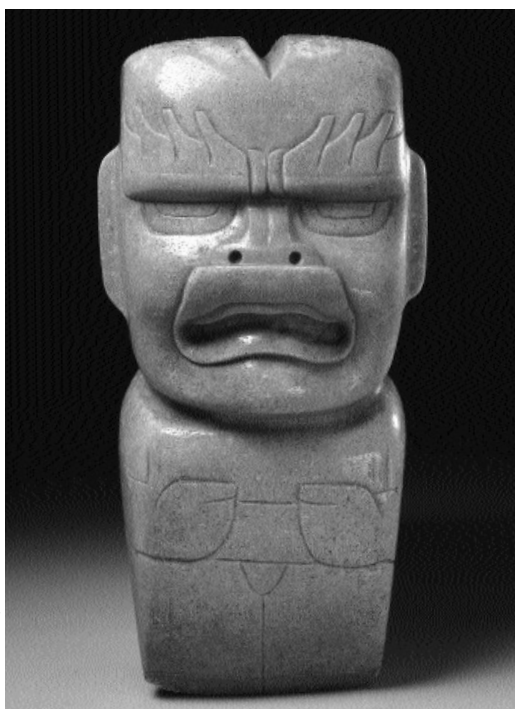
This level of international exposure has allowed some museums to provide an effective platform for the presentation of other cultures outside of their own borders. This applies in particular to the large encyclopaedic collections. A long tradition of independence and their arms' length relationship with government have been critical to this, providing the authority with which such a role can be undertaken without being undermined by perceived political partisanship. Over the years, this has led to collaborations with leading national institutions overseas, motivated by a desire to reach out to an international public beyond their own shores.

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**Example British Museum: Creating the Mexican Galleries**

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The idea of creating Mexican Galleries at the British Museum was born out of a temporary exhibition, the Day of the Dead, held at the Museum of Mankind in 1990. This established links with the Mexican Embassy in London and led to a visit by the then President of Mexico to the museum as part of an official visit to the UK. The subsequent development of permanent galleries dedicated to the cultures of Mexico then became a collaborative effort between the Department of Ethnography and the Consejo Nacional Para la Cultura e Las Artes, supported by Mexican state funding. Mexican curators and designers worked together with British Museum staff on the elaboration of the exhibition. In the course of this process, the British Museum was able to confirm the rightful provenance of the works in its collections. The galleries were opened to the public in 1994. Since then, the galleries have been in frequent use by the Mexican Embassy and continue to be a destination for official and other visits from Central and Latin America. Research on collections and their archaeological context in Mexico has



**Volitive Jade Axe, Olmec,  
1200–400 BC**

continued to develop collaboratively. This ongoing collaboration has included a temporary loan from the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City.

### International lending

Lending is a long-established practice for sharing collections among institutions internationally, and has been a major conduit for making works accessible to publics and, in the case of archives and libraries, users across borders. As the table below shows, Britain's national collections play an active part in this, both as lenders and as borrowers.

Much of the rationale for lending rests on the diversity of museum collections, due to, at its most basic, the uniqueness of objects but also the respective historical contexts for their formation and subsequent development. In a field where supply is finite and de-accessioning of major works is extremely rare, the opportunity to fill gaps left by past collecting activity, let alone to create major new collections, is increasingly limited even with considerable financial means. Lending therefore represents a natural response to what can be described as a 'constrained market place'.

Over the last few decades, museums' willingness to allow works from their collections to travel has fed a growing circuit of special exhibitions - epitomised by the headline-grabbing blockbuster show, which has become a global phenomenon of cultural consumption.<sup>25</sup> As outcomes of research projects, as well as major instruments of audience development, they fulfil a core function in museums and galleries. They allow original works to be brought together in changing contexts and interpretations, and are seen by increasingly large audiences internationally – although this remains in the most part confined to the industrialised world due to the cost of transport, and the increasing emphasis on conservation and security issues.

Lending is not limited to exhibitions, but also happens as part of ongoing relationships between institutions with similar or complementary collections. This takes the form of temporary (sometimes longer term) loans shown as part of permanent displays.

### Example National Gallery: Temporary loans from major

#### European collections

In recent years, the National Gallery has been able to secure important temporary loans from major European museums and art galleries during periods of closure for refurbishment. These have included the Galleria Doria Pamphili Collection, Rome, the Musée des Beaux Arts, Lille, the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, the Statens Museum, Copenhagen, the Oskar Reinhart Collection, Winterthur and the Kunstmuseum, Basel. In addition to being shown as temporary exhibitions, the loans were sometimes shown as part of the Gallery's permanent displays, adding depth to their own collections. Many of these loans were conceived opportunistically and within a short period of time. This was possible due to the long-term relationships, which existed with these institutions. For the lending

**Table 3**  
International loans 2000/2001

	Loans overseas (outbound)			Loans overseas (inbound)	
	Items	% of total	Venues	Items	Venues
British Museum	2,210	78%	340	471	20
Imperial War Museum	21	13%	6	696	na
National Gallery	115	55%	52	207	69
National Galleries of Scotland	354	75%	na	356	na
Natural History Museum	c.40,000	80%	c.1,400	na	200
National Maritime Museum	na	na	14	na	3
National Museum of Science and Industry	31	16%	8	10	9
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside	na	na	16	na	na
National Portrait Gallery	72	50%	17	na	na
Royal Botanic Gardens Kew	na	na	277	na	268
Sir John Soane's Museum	236	85%	na	19	na
Tate	174	29%	60	na	na
Victoria and Albert Museum	295	10%	44	195	49

<sup>25</sup> Research carried out by *The Art Newspaper* listed 663 major exhibitions for 2001 worldwide. Of these, 154 received over 100,000 visitors.



THE BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON

**Queue for the 'Egyptian Treasures from the British Museum' exhibition, Shanghai, 1999**

institutions, the displays, which were well publicised and accompanied by a programme of events, provided a showcase for their collections in a major international institution.

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#### **Example Royal Armouries: Partnership with Japan**

Since the Japan Festival in 1991, the Royal Armouries have regularly exchanged objects from their collection with the Nikko Toshogu Shrine, the burial place of Tokugawa Iegasu, the first modern Shogun. This involves, at any one time, revolving displays of 10-20 objects from each others' collections for periods of 18-24 months. These loans complement the presentation of 16-19th century arms and armours, highlighting amongst other things parallel developments in the development of military technology and in the case of the Armouries, its own Japanese collections. The exchange also involves annual re-enactments of martial arts, with teams being exchanged between the two organisations. Future plans include a major exhibition for 2004 on the life of the Shogun, his links with Europe and the impact of the introduction of European fire-arm technology of the time on the ending of the long period of Civil Wars.

Loan demand has also been fed by the global boom of new museums and gallery developments, many of which have limited collections of their own. For museums with high profile collections and the expertise to mount exhibitions, this presents numerous opportunities, in some cases with the potential to develop profitable sources of income.

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#### **Example British Museum: Travelling exhibitions to China**

From June to October 1999, the Shanghai Museum, hosted the 'Egyptian Treasures from the British Museum' exhibition. The show, which brought together 100 objects illustrating the different aspects of Ancient Egyptian Life and funerary practices, attracted more than 650,000 visitors.

It represented the first opportunity for the Chinese public to see a major collection of Egyptian Antiquities, a subject of particular interest in a country deeply interested in its own ancient civilisation and the comparison with other old world cultures, but with limited collections of non-Asian material in its own museums. Put together by the British Museum's Department of Ancient Egypt and the Sudan, the show had previously travelled to the Museum of Art in Hong Kong and the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore where it had attracted 300,000 and 120,000 visitors, respectively. The subsequent transfer to Shanghai was made possible through sponsorship of BP who met the full cost of shipping and couriers, as well as the exhibition loan fee. The success of this first major showing of British Museum collections in mainland China has led to further projects being planned, notably an exhibition of Greek and Roman objects in Shanghai in 2004.

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#### **Example Science Museum: Exhibition design and development**

The Science Museum, through its Commercial Development Unit, has been developing exhibitions for museums, science centres and visitor attractions in the UK and across the world. These have been based on exhibitions concepts initially developed for the Science Museum itself, subsequently adapted either for touring or permanent display. The Museum now has a workshop of 45 specialist staff to support these activities. Recent examples include the Science of Sport, which has toured in three versions since 1999 and will be on permanent display at the new City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, Spain, and The Human Factor, an exhibition about product design. Current developments include an exhibition about espionage, due to tour in the US after being shown in both Bradford and London. The Unit is also involved in model making, reproducing individual objects and installations from the Museum, as well as creating replicas of other objects to order. The majority of overseas demand is currently generated in Europe and North America, although not exclusively.





**‘The Science of Sport’  
touring exhibition**

Cross-border lending is complex, linked as it usually is to the safety of unique and irreplaceable objects, as well as the management of long term relationships between colleagues and institutions. If anything, this has increased as the number of players involved keeps growing. The principles ruling the institutional loan circuit have evolved out of practice and the experience accumulated over the years. At their core, they are driven by accepted standards for the safe transport and display of loaned objects, as well as a generalised notion of *quid pro quo*, determining the terms of lending.

Over the years international collaborative initiatives, in which Britain’s national collections have played a major part, have sought to address these issues by developing standards of practice, and by working in collaboration with private sector service providers such as art handlers.

#### **Example International Art Exhibitions Group: Setting common standards**

The International Exhibitions Group was formed in 1992 as an initiative of the then Director of the Réunion des Musées Nationaux and the Director of the Hayward Gallery. Its aim was to bring together the leading European exhibition organisers to address generic problems, arising in the context of exhibition planning, to work together on establishing common standards of practice. The group is informal and its membership personal instead of institutional (members are co-opted). Since its formation it has been joined by leading US museum directors and now has a membership of sixty (35 European, 15 US and 10 from the rest of the world). UK members currently include the directors of the British Museum, National Gallery, National Galleries of Scotland, Tate and Victoria & Albert Museum. Over the years, the group has developed and published guidelines, which have been disseminated through the members in their respective countries.<sup>26</sup> In recent years, the group has extended the range of issues it discusses beyond those immediately connected with exhibition making. The effectiveness of the group lies in its informal and confidential nature (Chatham House rule applies), which allows sometimes sensitive issues to be openly discussed and dealt with pragmatically.

#### **Example Tate - ‘Art in Transit’: Developing safe transport technology**

Over the past two decades the Tate has been involved in an international collaboration on the development of handling expertise and transport technology for works of art. The development of conservation research and technology in the 1980s, which substantially enhanced the ability to monitor conditions of art works when travelling, provided the context for a collaborative research initiative with the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the Canadian Conservation Institute and the Conservation Analytical Laboratory at the Smithsonian Institution, to investigate paintings’ tolerance thresholds for variations in environmental conditions and the effects of vibration while travelling. This work culminated in a conference entitled ‘Art in Transit’, which was hosted by the Tate in London in 1991. The conference set a precedent in consolidating international knowledge on the packing, handling and shipping of works of art. Leading commercial art handling firms such as Hasenkamp and Momart took part in the conference and the information was made available widely to shippers and agents. The conference acted as a catalyst for subsequent developments of, for example, more environmentally friendly casing methods, and more sophisticated security measures. The overall improvement in the security and safety standards in art handling and transport has been an important factor in holding back the rise in insurance premiums during a period which saw a sharp rise in the market value of art works, thereby supporting the ongoing viability of international lending.

The notion of the *quid pro quo* is based on the ability to reciprocate loan requests, to provide conservation for loaned objects, opportunities for staff exchanges and other forms of technical assistance, or simply the promotional impact of having works showcased in a high profile location, to audiences which otherwise would

<sup>26</sup> Copies can be obtained from the Head of Exhibitions and Display at the National Gallery, London.



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM, LONDON, 2000

**Shoes from Majdanek,  
Panstwowe Muzeum na  
Majdanku, Lublin,  
Poland**

not be reached.<sup>27</sup> This has been the basis on which the principle of a ‘free economy’ of lending have been upheld, justifying the considerable demands on lending museums in terms of processing and administering requests without direct financial remuneration.<sup>28</sup>

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### **Example Imperial War Museum and the Museum of London: Conserving of Majdanek shoes for the Holocaust Exhibition**

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The Imperial War Museum was able to obtain 800 shoes on loan from the collection at the State Museum of Majdanek (Poland) for the opening displays of the Holocaust Exhibition in June 2000. The shoes, taken from among the 800,000 at Majdanek, are seen as one of the most powerful symbols of the Holocaust. As part of the loan agreement, the shoes underwent conservation treatment at the Museum of London to clean them of post-war accumulated dirt. This was a sensitive procedure, ensuring that original mud and polish was preserved as clues to the objects’ unique history. The collaboration with Majdanek continues on the basis of a revolving loans/conservation programme. Considering the limited amount of Holocaust related material in UK collections, the Holocaust Exhibition displays rely heavily on loans from institutions and individuals overseas, in particular from Poland, Germany and Eastern European countries.

In recent years, the principle of ‘free’ lending has come under review, with some institutions now charging administrative fees to recoup in-house costs, and others openly charging loan fees as a means to shore up earned income. These developments challenge the economics of exhibitions and cross-border lending. Other challenges to international lending come from increasingly stringent security and conservation related considerations, as well as the ability of borrowers to meet the (rising) cost of transport and insurance, the latter driven by the exponential rise in the market value of works of art and, more recently, the enhanced security risk from increased international terrorist activity. This places increasing importance on government indemnities.

Another recent phenomenon has been the formation of cross-boarder strategic alliances. So far, two types of models have been developed. The first is based on the alliance between high profile museums with complementary collections jointly acting as impresarios for loan exhibitions. A well publicised example of this is the alliance between the Guggenheim Museum, the Hermitage and the Kunsthistorisches Museum. The second model is the alliance between organisations which can be qualified as ‘asset rich’ (in terms of collections and expertise) but ‘cash poor’ and those which are ‘cash rich’ but ‘asset poor’. This is usually based on the principle of revolving loans from the former’s collection.

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### **Example Royal Armouries: Louisville, Kentucky partnership**

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The Royal Armouries have formed a partnership with the Frazier Arms Museum, a new and privately funded museum in Louisville, Kentucky, which is due to open in spring 2004. The Royal Armouries have been advising the \$30 million project since its early planning days. The partnership will involve revolving loans of up to 350 objects (all from the Royal Armouries’ reserve collections), to be exchanged every 2-3 years, as well as the Royal Armouries staff input in exhibition design and planning. The loans will add depth to Louisville’s primarily US and 19th century collections by illustrating the links between British/European and early American history through the story of arms technology in colonial America. The loan agreement does not involve fee payments, although all direct costs incurred by the Royal Armouries (including time and additional appointments) are covered. A commercial agreement covers joint retail activities and reciprocal membership schemes. For the Royal Armouries, the partnership provides a foothold and showcase in the United States, which is the leading country in terms of collecting, public interest and research in the field of arms and armour.

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<sup>27</sup> The latter applies to the Wallace Collection, which due to its international prestige has been able to secure major loans for its developing temporary exhibition programme despite its statutory ban on lending from its own collections.

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<sup>28</sup> This, however, never applied to direct costs of transport and insurance, which have always been borne by the borrower.

The overarching principle of such alliances is understood, although they have yet to be tested against reality in terms of operational and financial viability. The principal concern expressed by the museum community has been the risk of cartelisation, upsetting the ecology of lending in a way which might endanger the free sharing of cultural resources globally. As yet, however, there is no conclusive evidence of this.

A major issue remains the extent to which practices and economics of lending have penalised the poorer countries and institutions lacking funds for transport and the infrastructure to display objects in secure environment. So far, the British Council, through its touring initiatives, has been the main vehicle to address these imbalances. National Museums have participated in these, and see this as an area for future development.

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**Example Victoria and Albert Museum and British Council:**

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**Lafayette Studios photographic exhibition tour to South Asia**

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The V&A has collaborated with the British Council and an independent curator to develop a low-cost travelling exhibition of contemporary photographic prints of portraits of the Indian princes from the V&A's collection of 3,500 glass plate negatives from the Lafayette Studio. Many of the rulers of India's princely states sat for their portraits during the peak years of the studio while in London to attend official occasions such as the Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and the Coronations of 1902 and 1911. The exhibition was shown at the British Council in Karachi in August 2000, before touring to Lahore, Peshawar and Islamabad. Roli Books (India) subsequently published a pocket guide book of the images, and to promote the book, the British Council mounted the exhibition in Delhi in November 2001. As a result of its popularity and extensive press coverage the show then moved to Jaipur and Chandigarh, and is now likely to tour to the eight other British Council offices in India, followed by Dhaka, Bangladesh. The use of new, instead of vintage prints, meant the exhibition could be achieved at low cost and unencumbered by security and conservation concerns.

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**Example Tate and British Council: Touring British modern and**

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**contemporary art to Brazil**

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The Tate is planning a major exhibition of British art from the 1960s to the present day of works from its permanent collection, which will travel to São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in 2003-4. The exhibition will set a precedent as the Tate's first exhibition to be sent to Latin America. The São Paulo Biennale, established in 1951, has played an important part in establishing an audience for contemporary art in Brazil, which also has a thriving contemporary art scene of its own. These factors created a receptive atmosphere for the project, which will enable the Tate's collection to reach new audiences and provide the context for collaboration with Brazilian art institutions. The Tate already has a reputation in Brazil, though major incoming exhibitions have until now mostly come from North America and the European continent. The project has been planned in collaboration with the British Council, which initially organised a research trip in May 2000. Criteria for assessing the receiving venues included factors such as security, environmental controls, the experience of handling international art exhibitions, but also the existence of a receptive audience and the availability of sponsorship. Tate is acting as organiser of the exhibition, with the British Council providing on the ground liaison with partner organisations and supporting local fundraising activity.

**Virtual access**

The revolutionary impact of the new digital information and communication technologies derives from their ability to break down barriers of geographic separation and to allow instant and real-time remote access. Digitisation of museum collections, and the opportunities to disseminate publications and other interactive educational content on the Internet, has opened up substantial new opportunities to engage in an active dialogue with audiences and users



**Visitors to the Public Record Office**

worldwide. Considerable investment has taken place over the last few years in developing digital resources and establishing a presence on the web.

However, this is still an early stage of development. The full significance of these new technologies is difficult to gauge as yet, and the areas where application is likely to have the greatest transforming impact are only beginning to emerge. In terms of international reach, it is also important to acknowledge that access to technology is not at present equally distributed, although it is spreading fast, even in the poorer regions of the globe and can be expected to continue to do so.

Experience so far suggests the following areas as those offering the greatest potential for museums in extending their global reach:

- Digital access to material of general public interest, which for conservation or practical reasons cannot be made accessible, or only to a very limited number of people, and which cannot be allowed to travel. This particularly applies to archives and works on paper.

#### **Example Public Record Office: 1901 Census on Line**

In January 2002, the Public Record Office launched a website providing online access to the 1901 Census Returns for England and Wales. This allowed searching over 32 million names on a database, not only by person, but also by address, place, institution and vessel. An image of the relevant census page and full transcription details can be viewed for a small charge (£0.75/0.50). The PRO, which developed the site with QinetiQ,<sup>29</sup> expected the demand to be considerable and the site was designed to cope with a daily capacity of 1.2 million visitors. In the event the site received more than 30 million hits on the launch day, which brought the system to collapse. It is now being geared up to meet higher demand. Evidence gathered from the online 1901 Census exhibition and other part of the PRO site suggests that almost half of the visitors were from overseas, primarily from the United States, but also from Canada, Australia and New Zealand and other parts of the Commonwealth where the widespread pursuit of family history and genealogy creates a significant demand for on-line access to archives and records in the UK. The PRO is pursuing its policy of digitisation and on-line access with the First World War soldiers records and Second World War RAF operational record books.

#### **Example Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland (MAGNI):**

##### **Institute of Migration Studies**

The Centre for Migration Studies at the Irish American Folk Park in Omagh, County Tyrone, documents the collective memory of Irish emigration. It contains a variety of original material including emigrant letters, newspaper articles, shipping advertisements, passenger lists, as well as official government reports, family papers and extracts from books and periodicals. New documents are added to the collection on a regular basis. The Centre is an important research resource for all historians, teachers, students and genealogists with an interest in Irish-America, with 60% of users coming from Irish diasporas in North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The centre has recently developed an on-line Emigration Database, which provides access to primary source documents on Irish emigration to North America (USA & Canada) throughout this period.

- Re-establishing lost connections, e.g. by digitally re-uniting previously dispersed collections for the purpose of study without the need to displace objects physically, or change the legal status of ownership.

#### **Example British Museum and British Library:**

##### **Digitising the Stein Collection**

Since 1994, the British Library has been leading a project on the digitisation of Silk Road manuscripts, printed documents and paintings, which enables online

<sup>29</sup> Formerly the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency, part of MoD.



THE BRITISH LIBRARY, OR.8210/S.6983/F.10V-11R

Illustrated manuscript, the Stein Collection, the British Library

digital access to artefacts which previously have been accessible on microfilm. The core of these documents was found in 1900 in a cave near Dunhuang, a major Silk Road town in Chinese Central Asia. They include the earliest dated printed documents in the world and are a unique testimony of religious and secular life in the communities along the Silk Road. The material was subsequently dispersed and is now found in collections in Beijing, Paris, St Petersburg, Japan and London (in the British Library and the British Museum). Long-term display of the collections has been prevented by the need to preserve this delicate and light sensitive material. Work on digitisation started in 1997 and over 20,000 catalogue entries and over 5000 images of manuscripts went online in 1998.<sup>30</sup> Funding from the Mellon Foundation has accelerated digitisation with the aim of reaching over 50,000 images by 2004. A Mellon grant also enabled the British Museum to begin to digitise the 2D collections manuscripts in 2001. Manuscripts held in the National Library of China collection are also being digitised as part of the IDP and will go online in November 2002. All material is made freely accessible in an interactive web database. The project is working closely with other international holders of manuscripts with a view, over time to re-unite in virtual form all the material from the cave library at Dunhuang and other Silk Road sites.

- Data gathering and educational projects, which require interactivity and feedback mechanisms.

### Example Natural History Museum: 'Taxonomic Information across the Internet', Thailand

'Taxonomic Information across the Internet' is a project funded by the Darwin Initiative. It explores the use of the Internet as a mechanism for an accelerated exchange of taxonomic information in the context of coastal zone pollution management. This is a collaborative venture between the Natural History Museum and a number of institutions in Thailand. In the coastal zone of many countries there is a conflict of between economic development and the health of the sea, which can only be solved by active coastal zone management. In Europe and North America routine surveys of sea bed ecosystems are an important and cost effective method to monitor the pollution status of coastal waters. In Southeast Asia, the shortage of readily available literature for the identification of many common sea-floor animals inhibits routine biological monitoring. This is a reflection of the richness in species of the Indo Pacific region, which has made the traditional methods of species description too time consuming, producing a substantial taxonomic bottleneck. To break through this the Internet has been used to link researchers in the region together and to give them direct access to specialists. This used the latest developments in Internet browsers to provide an interactive website into which specialist researchers can enter details of any potentially new species that they find and compare them with existing records on the database.<sup>31</sup>

The potential to develop virtual channels as an integral part of museums' communications toolbox is undisputed. The challenge will be to address the financial sustainability beyond the initial start-up phase, which usually benefits from external seed funding. It has already become apparent that the maintenance of a strong and credible presence on the Internet is a costly affair. The question is whether part of the cost could be covered by some sponsorship or revenue generating mechanism – at the risk of breaking the current principle of free access – or whether core institutional resources will need to be contributed towards this. This is an area where more in-depth international collaboration and the pooling of resources will be required.

<sup>30</sup> For further information see <http://idp.bl.uk>

<sup>31</sup> For information see: <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/zoology/taxinf/>



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# Sharing skills and building capacity

**Opposite: Examining seed material**

In many respects the museum profession has always been international, bound by common issues and a tradition of sharing practices amongst colleagues across borders. However, in parallel with many other fields, recent decades have seen the standardisation of museum functions, with a growing emphasis on the development of managerial practices. This process, which also reflects the growing range and complexity of museum activities, is driven by a combination of factors, including:

- The proliferation of formal and informal networks, and professional publications, for virtually each area of museum practice helped by the ease of travel and communication means;
- The introduction of private sector practices in the public and not-for-profit sector, a reflection of new political paradigms established in the 1980s;
- The development of Museum Studies since the 1970s, as a vocational subject taught in higher education institutions;
- The museum development boom of the 1980s and 1990s, which has allowed buildings and operations to be designed from the ground up and has also acted as a catalyst for the development of new models of practice and organisational transformation;
- The increasingly international market for senior museum professionals, which is leading to a growing number of cross-border appointments of museum professionals – in particular within the Anglo-Saxon world (including Australia and New Zealand), and more recently also in Continental Europe.
- The increasing awareness of international benchmarks amongst customer side, funders and other stakeholders, including the public, all of whom have come to evaluate the performance of individual museums against these.

As a result, generally accepted standards of practice in museum management are being established internationally – more or less formalised by representative bodies and groups. These developments have largely been led by the museum community of large and well funded institutions in the Western world, which maintain an active dialogue with each other.

The UK's National Museums, not least as a result of their size, prominence and location, have been actively involved in this process – both as contributors and as beneficiaries. Particularly significant in this respect has been:

- The UK's leading role in establishing the first Museum Studies courses, and associated professional literature. Since the 1970s these courses have attracted a large number of young museum professionals from all over the world to Britain. These have established personal links with colleagues and institutions, which in turn have provided internships and placements and created long-term links as these students returned to their home countries. This has been particularly relevant for fostering relationships with institutions in the non-Western world. Although Museum Studies courses are now offered in many countries, the standing of the UK remains high – not least because it offers access to the London collections and those in the other metropolitan centres;
- The Lottery funded boom in museum developments. These initially led many museums to seek expertise and inspiration from latest museological developments worldwide (in particular in North America and countries in Continental Europe such as France where major projects had already taken place in the 1980s and early 1990s), and subsequently to create their own precedents, generating considerable new experience and expertise which has become of interest to museum professionals overseas as museum building activity continues to stretch across the globe. The National Museums, due to their high profile and well-publicised developments, have naturally been the target of interest from overseas.

Many National Museums, because of their long standing overseas links and international prominence in their respective fields, have acted in a capacity building role for those parts of the globe still lacking in a domestic skills base – in particular in such areas as collections management. This has often been part of an integrated approach in developing long term collaborative links supporting core areas of collecting and research, as well as their wider international remit and responsibility.

National Museums have also supported the export activity of UK private sector professions who have been developing overseas business on the back of the global boom in museum capital projects. This includes architects, exhibition designers and other suppliers to the museum sector, whose work for the flagship institutions at home has acted as a showcase to secure contracts overseas.

The different forms of experience sharing and capacity building has taken a number of routes, including:

- Informal consultation and advice – in many instances National Museum representatives have served on working groups or committees overseas, for example, major museum development projects or international initiatives.

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#### **Example Association of European Maritime Museums (AEMM)**

In June 2001 the maritime museums of Amsterdam, Barcelona, London and Paris agreed to work as an informal group, recognising the mutual interest in their specialist subjects with the aim of encouraging institutional co-operation as well as contributing to institutional renewal in a European context. Their main purpose is to promote public awareness of European maritime heritage and culture, through expanding the capacity for learning. To date the group has identified the following elements for the initial programme of co-operation: Information Technology; Staff Exchange; Learning; Collections, Conservation and Display; Marketing and Sales. The members will meet bilaterally as necessary to undertake the programme, and to keep all members informed about progress. An annual plenary meeting of the four members is planned, hosted by each in rotation.

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#### **Example Hermitage International Advisory Board/National Portrait Gallery of Australia**

The Director of the National Gallery is a member of the International Advisory Board of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, which was formed in

**Gallery of the State  
Hermitage Museum,  
St Petersburg**



PHIL SAWER





**Intern conserving  
an 18th century  
Boullé table**

1994 with the assistance of UNESCO. The board, which brings together 12 leading international museum professionals, provides ongoing advice to the museum on the development of its international links, and on its major expansion plans for the General Staff Building on the South Side of Winter Palace Square.

The Director of the National Portrait Gallery, London, has been a member of an informal confederation linking the major national portrait galleries in the world.<sup>32</sup> He has been a member of the international advisory Board of the creation of the National Portrait Gallery of Australia, Canberra (opened 1994), and has been asked to advise on projects to create national portrait galleries, most recently in Romania.

- Travel and study tours – fact-finding missions usually involving informal exchange of experience, often in the context of planning major projects and developments.

#### **Example Public Record Office: Developing the ‘Readers First’ Programme**

The PRO embarked on a substantial review and upgrade of its services to readers in the mid- 1990s. Dubbed ‘Readers First’, many elements of the programmes were developed with reference to good practice, which the Head of Reader Services and colleagues had identified in the course of visiting archives and libraries, in particular in North America and France. This included looking at self help systems for readers of records on microform and reading room orientation tours for first time visitors, both of which were aimed at improving the user experience at the same time as streamlining service delivery. In the meantime, the PRO has itself become recognised internationally as a model of customer service and receives many visits by colleague archivists from all over the world. ‘Archival tourism’ amongst archive professionals is recognised as an effective conduit to share operational expertise and experience in a way which informs the development of practice, tailored to the specific need of institutions, instead of promoting ‘one size fits all’ solutions.

- Internships, placements and secondments – for junior and senior museum professionals. Britain’s National Museums have long practiced this form of professional exchange with peer organisations worldwide. In many instances, these have been funded by special schemes and bursaries.

#### **Example Wallace Collection: Internship programme**

The Wallace Collection regularly offers internships to students in conservation and museum studies, lasting from a few weeks to up to 6 months. These are highly sought after, due to the museum’s reputation and the unique opportunities it offers for ‘hands-on’ work experience with world-class collections and have over the years attracted a large number of high calibre candidates from overseas. In the last five years, this has included 30 students from more than 10 different countries. Many of these have worked on substantial projects, for instance the conservation of the central staircase’s spectacular early 18th century balustrade (formerly in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France) or on the new displays for the Centenary development. Many students have subsequently gone on to become respected practitioners in their fields. The programme has allowed the museum to identify overseas talent for subsequent recruitment, including its current conservator of furniture, a graduate from the renowned Ecole Boulle in Paris.

#### **Example Victoria and Albert Museum: Nehru fellowships**

In 1990, at the time of the opening of the Nehru Gallery of Indian Art, the V&A used funds raised in India to set up the Nehru Trust for the Indian Collections at the V&A with the explicit aims of giving Indian citizens easier access to its Indian collections and providing the means for scholarly and skills exchange between both countries. Working in collaboration with the British Council, the Charles

<sup>32</sup> Including London, Edinburgh, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Washington, Ottawa and Canberra.

Wallace India Trust, the University of Cambridge and the Department for International Development, the Trust has made over 250 awards in its first ten years, 100 of which have involved direct exchange between the UK and India, the other supporting individuals within India. In the UK, the Trust collaborates with a large number of institutions besides the V&A itself, many hosting fellows and award holders for visits ranging from a day to three months for the purpose of sharing conservation and museological skills, or academic research. It has also supported collaborative publications, conferences and international workshops. In total the Trust has supported individuals from over 60 Indian institutions, making it a valuable hub for a network of connections and communication within and between the two countries.

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**Example British Museum: BP Fellowship programme**

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The BP Visiting Fellows programme was established in 1998 as a new type of partnership between BP and the British Museum. The scheme is designed to provide overseas museum professionals with an insight into collection management, education and funding at the British Museum and to build professional links with participating museums. Now in its third year, the scheme offers six fellowships annually. To date participants have come from Algeria, Angola, Azerbaijan, Brazil, China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russia and Uzbekistan. The programme for Spring 2002 includes senior curators from Egypt, Bolivia and Argentina. In 1999, as a result of participation by Algerian museum directors, a loan exhibition on Life and Ceremony in Urban Algeria was shown at the British Museum. The exhibition created a new collaborative link between the National Museum of Art and Popular Traditions in Algiers, the National Museum of Ahmed Zabana in Oran and the Ethnography Department of the British Museum. The exhibition was seen by an estimated quarter of a million visitors in London and was widely covered in the Algerian press and on Algerian national television.

- Professional training scheme – delivered by National Museum staff to groups of museum professionals both in the UK and overseas. These range from long established, formal courses with professional qualification status to *ad hoc* initiatives in response to overseas requests.

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**Example Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: Diplomas**

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The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew regularly runs two-month international Diploma courses in herbarium and plant conservation techniques. Initially hosted at Kew, courses are now increasingly being held in countries overseas. The courses make a significant contribution to building capacity in the field of biodiversity, a corner stone of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The courses are a mechanism to share vision and common goals as well as to increase levels of expertise in biological diversity nationally and internationally. To date 171 overseas participants from 73 countries have attended herbarium or conservation courses at Kew. Among the many participants include Millennium Seedbank Project collaborators from Kenya, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and Darwin Initiative Project partners from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Lebanon. Overseas courses have been held in Kenya, Brazil, Malaysia, Russia, China and Tanzania.

- Partnerships and parenting schemes – involving a long-term relationship with a peer institution or department overseas.

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**Example National Museums of Scotland and Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing: Partnership scheme**

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The department of Geology and Zoology of the National Museums of Scotland has an ongoing collaboration with the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing. The project, which started in 1998, examines the fossil plants of China in detail, and allows their comparison with the more comprehensively known fossil plants

of other regions of the world. The project contributes to capacity building of expertise in China by sharing modern techniques and practices, which are specifically designed for palaeobotanical investigation with Chinese participants. This ensures the research style and practices in China match those of palaeobotanists internationally. For the National Museum of Scotland, the exchange provides access to unique fossil plants from China that would otherwise not become incorporated into its scientific database on fossil plants. Conversely, Chinese participants gain access to British and European specimens within National Museum of Scotland collections for comparative purposes. The project has been successful in attracting financial support from governmental funding agencies in both China and Britain including The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), the UK's Royal Society and the National Natural Science Foundation (NNSF) of China.

● Consultancies – contractual and usually on a remunerative basis. These can be collaborative as part of a team (with other museums/peer institutions, universities and research institutions etc).

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**Example Natural History Museum: MINURALS project**

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Mining related activities in the South Ural mining region of Russia have left a catastrophic legacy of environmental problems. It has been discovered that vegetables growing in the region contain more than ten times the national permitted levels of lead, nickel and arsenic. To date, however, no effective monitoring of the scale of the pollution has been carried out. Since 2000, the Natural History Museum has been working within a consortium consisting of 9 EU and Russian partners from research institutes, universities and private organisations on a systemic study into the nature and scale of the problem. The project, which is funded by a 3 year EU grant, involves the identification and development of new geological concepts and tools, as well as the proposal of new environmentally aware mining industry legislation and environmental law and adapting European legislation for the specific needs of the Urals region. Specifically, the Natural History Museum is evaluating the environmental impact of the past and present mining activities. The project aims to set up an international communications network between the MinUrals partners to provide public access to the results of the project, using a database accessible via the web.<sup>33</sup>

Looking ahead, the key areas for development reside in the area of capacity building in the non-Western world, as a way to bind organisations in these countries more closely into the network of international exchange and the wider sharing of the world's intellectual and cultural heritage.

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<sup>33</sup> For information see:  
<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/mineralogy/minurals/minurals.htm>

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# Looking ahead

This report highlights the exceptional diversity and reach of our current international involvement, and the way in which these link into a range of important contemporary agendas affecting society and the future of the planet. It also demonstrates the singular contribution, which museums can make, with their defining role as stewards and interpreters of collections representing the world's cultural and natural heritage, in ways both distinct and complementary to other institutions in education and academia. It shows how cross-pollination with these and other areas critically adds to the pursuit of common endeavours. This should fill us with confidence in our enduring role as institutions in a rapidly changing, globalised world.

That said, much remains to be done. Importantly, the report has shown that, although deeply embedded in the day-to-day discharge of our activities, our overseas work often remains buried within the bowels of our institutions and is not as explicit within our institutional thinking and planning as it could be. We also recognise that there are areas where by greater dialogue and co-ordination within the NMDC and with others, the effectiveness and impact of our individual actions could further be increased - not least to unlock additional resources in support of our international work.

With this in mind, the Conference has identified the following four areas as requiring further consideration. These are to be taken forward by the International Committee:

- Articulating and communicating more clearly our international reach and responsibility:
  - by giving it more prominence in our respective mission statements and corporate plans;
  - by making it an explicit part of our reporting cycles (in annual reports etc.);
  - by recording and consolidating key information about international activities at NMDC level.
- Reviewing our respective internal organisational and governance structures where they impact on our ability to develop our international role and presence, in terms of:
  - Strategic responsibilities at senior management level;
  - Staff composition, e.g. in terms of nationality, language skills overseas experience and cultural backgrounds;
  - International representation on Boards of Trustees and their Committees.
- Re-defining and taking practical steps to develop the Conference's relationship with government departments and other organisations with an international remit with a view

to promote greater collaboration and co-ordination, in particular with:

- The Foreign & Commonwealth Office;
  - The British Council;
  - Non-national museums with strong international links;
  - Universities and other higher education institutions;
  - Key research funding bodies, both public and private;
  - Major corporate sponsors.
- Establish a regular pattern of communication and consultation between the NMDC and ICOM.

This will provide a framework within which to develop a collective dialogue about some of the issues raised in the report (and no doubt many others), and to elaborate common responses and initiatives as required.

Finally, we would like to thank Magnus von Wistinghausen, Sue Daniels and Alice Richards at AEA Consulting for producing such a valuable document for our consideration.

Robert Anderson

Robert Crawford

# Timeline

	<b>1503</b>	<b>1630</b>	<b>1649</b>	<b>1660</b>	<b>1683</b>
<b>Founding dates of UK museums</b>				Royal Armouries	Ashmolean Museum Oxford
<b>Major overseas museums</b>	Vatican Belvedere Courtyard Rome	Cabinet d'Histoire Naturelle du Jardin Royal des Plantes Médicinales Paris			
<b>Collections/ideas</b>			Sale of collection of Charles I		
<b>General history/society</b>				Royal Society founded	
	<b>1768</b>	<b>1772</b>	<b>1773</b>	<b>1776</b>	<b>1778</b>
<b>Founding dates of UK museums</b>	Royal Academy				
<b>Major overseas museums</b>		Nationalmuseum Stockholm Museo Pio Clementino Rome	Charleston Museum (first American museum)		
<b>Collections/ideas</b>	First edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica Voyage by Sir Captain Cook on The Endeavour				Houghton sale (Walpole collection)
<b>General history/society</b>				American Declaration of Independence	
	<b>1816</b>	<b>1820</b>	<b>1821</b>	<b>1822</b>	<b>1823</b>
<b>Founding dates of UK museums</b>					King George III Library given to British Museum
<b>Major overseas museums</b>	Prado Museum Madrid			National Portrait Collection, Gripsholm Castle Sweden	
<b>Collections/ideas</b>	Restitution of works of art from the former Musée Napoleon		Pacca Edict (Export Law)		
<b>General history/society</b>		George IV accedes to the throne			
	<b>1848</b>	<b>1851</b>	<b>1852</b>	<b>1854</b>	<b>1856</b>
<b>Founding dates of UK museums</b>		Liverpool Museum		Industrial Museum of Scotland (later Royal Scottish Museum)	National Portrait Gallery
<b>Major overseas museums</b>			New Hermitage St Petersburg		
<b>Collections/ideas</b>		The Great Exhibition London			Opening of the Suez Canal
<b>General history/society</b>	Bourgeois Revolution France Germany			Opening of Japan to the West	

1707	1718	1748	1751	1753	1754	1756	1759	1764
	Kunstammer St Petersburg	Pompeii excavations	Society of Antiquaries of London	British Museum	Royal Society of Arts Manufactures and Commerce (later Royal Society of Arts 1908)	Vatican Museums Rome	Royal Botanic Gardens Kew	Catherine the Great acquires Gotzkowski's collection
Treaty of Union								
1780	1783	1789	1793	1799	1806	1808	1812	1815
National Museum of Antiquities Scotland		Bibliothèque Nationale Paris	Louvre Musée Central des Arts Paris	1792-1799 Dispersal of Duc d'Orléans collection Discovery of the Rosetta stone		Rijksmuseum Amsterdam	Discovery of the Temple of Abu Simbel	End of Napoleonic Wars Treaty of Vienna
	American War of Independence	Storming of the Bastille (French Revolution)		Napoleon Coup d'état	Dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire			
1824	1826	1830	1834	1835	1836	1837	1838	1840
National Gallery, London		Altes Museum Berlin	Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge	Egyptian Museum Cairo	Alte Pinakothek Munich	Sir John Soane's Museum	Public Record Office Act	National Botanic Garden, Kew nationalised
	First photograph (Nicéphore Niépce)		1831-1836 Darwin's voyage on The Beagle	William Henry Fox Talbot system of photography		Queen Victoria accedes to the throne		Smithsonian Institution Washington DC
1857	1859	1860	1861	1867	1868	1870	1871	1872
South Kensington Museum (later V&A and Science Museum)		Uffizzi open to the public Florence	Nationalgalerie Berlin	Marx <i>Das Kapital</i>	Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin	Metropolitan Museum New York		National Museum Tokyo
Art Treasures Exhibition Manchester	Darwin <i>On the Origin of the Species by Natural Selection</i>					John D Rockefeller founds Standard Oil Company	Paris Commune Unification of Germany Unification of Italy	

	1873	1877	1882	1889	1891	1894	1895	1897
Founding dates of UK museums	National Maritime Museum in Royal Naval College							National Gallery of British Art Millbank (later Tate Gallery) Wallace Collection
Major overseas museums	Museum of Ethnology Berlin			Naturhistorisches Museum Vienna	Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna			
Collections/ideas			Ancient Monuments Protection Act			Finance Act (graduated estate duty)	National Trust	
General history/society		First sound recording (Thomas Edison)				First moving image (Lumière brothers)		
	1919	1920	1922	1929	1930	1931	1933	1934
Founding dates of UK museums								National Maritime Museum
Major overseas museums				MoMA New York	Pergamon Museum Berlin		Museum of Science and Industry Chicago	
Collections/ideas		Einstein <i>Theory of Relativity</i>	Discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb			Courtauld Institute		
General history/society	First non-stop flight across the Atlantic	League of Nations American women given the right to vote	Egyptian Independence	Wall Street Crash			Hitler Chancellor of Germany	
	1956	1957	1959	1962	1966	1967	1968	1970
Founding dates of UK museums								
Major overseas museums			Guggenheim Museum New York	National Portrait Gallery Washington DC		Botanic Gardens Canberra, Australia Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago	Getty Museum Los Angeles	
Collections/ideas					Venice and Florence Floods			UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property
General history/society	Nationalization of Suez Canal	EC Treaty of Rome Ghana first African nation to become independent			Cultural Revolution China		Student riots	
	1989	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Founding dates of UK museums				Tate St Ives			Royal Armouries Museum Leeds	
Major overseas museums	Grand Louvre Pyramid opens Paris	Berlin State Museums united			National Portrait Gallery of Australia Canberra			Guggenheim Bilbao
Collections/ideas					National Lottery Act	UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects Rome		
General history/society	Fall of the Berlin Wall End of the Cold War	Dissolution of USSR	Earth Summit Rio de Janeiro	End of Apartheid South Africa				Summit on Global Warming Kyoto



1900								
	Freud <i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i>			USA waives tariff on the import of works of art National Art Collection Fund II				
		First manned flight by Orville Wright		Finance Act (Acceptance in Lieu)				
1937	National Gallery of Art Washington DC							
		Auction in Lucerne of Degenerate Modern Art from German Museums	Commission de Récupération Artistique established in France	UNESCO constitution signed ICOM founded	Land Fund			
		Start of Second World War				Indian Independence		
1972	British Library Act							
			National Gallery of Australia Canberra		National Museum of Australia Canberra			
	UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage World Heritage List			Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act		National Heritage Act, UK Creation of National Heritage Memorial Fund		
	British Museum Treasures of Tutankhamen exhibition	End of Vietnam War						
2000	Tate Britain and Tate Modern							
		ICOM resolution on the spoliation of Jewish Cultural Property Barcelona						
			Earth Summit Johannesburg					

# International organisations and associations (selection)

UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (<http://www.unesco.org>)

ICOM: International Council of Museums (<http://www.icom.org>)

## Archaeology

World Archaeology Congress (<http://www.wac.uct.ac.za/>)

## Architecture

International Committee for Historic House Museums (DEMHIIST) (<http://www.museobagattivalsecchi.org/icom/demhis—e.htm>)

International Confederation of Architectural Museums (ICAM) (<http://www.icam-web.org/>)

## Archives

International Council on Archives (ICA) (<http://www.ica.org>)

International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) (<http://www.cinema.ucla.edu/fiaf>)

## Botanic Gardens

Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) (<http://www.bgci.org.uk/>)

International Association of Agricultural Museums (AIMA) (<http://www.icom.org/affiliates.html>)

International Association of Botanic Gardens (IABG) (<http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/bgci/iabg.htm>)

## Conservation

European Union Network for Heritage Conservation, Restoration and Maintenance (EUROCARE) (<http://www.univie.ac.at/bit/eureka/eurocare/euroc.htm>)

International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) (<http://www.iccrom.org>)

International Institute of Conservation (London) (<http://www.iiconservation.org>)

## Libraries

European National Libraries Group / Conference of European National Librarians (CENL) (<http://www.bl.uk/gabriel/en/cenl-general.html>)

International Association of Libraries and Museums of the Performing Arts (SIBMAS) (<http://www.theatrelibrary.org/sibmas/sibmas.html>)

International Federation of Library Associations (IFLANET) (<http://www.ifla.org>)

Research Library Group / Consortium of European Research Libraries (<http://www.cerl.org>)

## Maritime

Association of European Maritime Museums (AEMM) (<http://www.port.nmm.ac.uk/new.html>)

International Conference of Maritime Museums (ICMM) (<http://www.icmmonline.org/index.html>)

International Maritime Organisation (IMO) (<http://www.imo.org/index.html>)

## Military

International Associations of Museums of Arms and Military History (IAMAM / ICOMAM) (<http://www.klm-mra.be/ICOMAM/index.htm>)

## Transport

International Association of Transport and Communications Museums (IATM) (<http://www.iatm.org/main.html>)

## Science

European Collaborative for Science, Industry and Technology Exhibitions (ECSITE) (<http://ecsite.ballou.be/net/beta.asp>)

European Science Foundation (<http://www.esf.org/>)

## General

Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM) (<http://www.maltwood.uvic.ca/cam>)

Consortium for the Computer Interchange of Museum Information (CIMI) (<http://www.cimi.org>)

Council of Europe (<http://www.coe.int/portalT.asp>)

European Heritage Forum (<http://www.eur-heritage.org/>) or (<http://www.conservare.be/>)

European Museums Information Institute (EMII) (<http://www.emii.org/>)

International Movement for New Museology (MINOM) (<http://www.francoroute.on.ca/minom/>)

International Organization for Standardisation (IOS) (<http://www.iso.ch/iso/en/ISOOnline.frontpage>)

Museum Security Network (<http://www.museum-security.org/>)

Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) ([www.ne-mo.org](http://www.ne-mo.org))

World Monuments Fund (WMF) ([www.wmf.org](http://www.wmf.org))