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...and much more.

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Members' news



Commemorative ceramic showing Ivy Benson (1913-1993), a musician and bandleader of an all-female swing band. Made for the Leeds Museums and Galleries collection in 2017 by Katch Skinner, and part of the forthcoming 'A Woman's Place' exhibition. © Leeds Museums and Galleries.

NMRN collaboration to protect wrecks and guard against illegal salvage

The National Museum of the Royal Navy and the Marine Archaeology Sea Trust have led work with Government and law enforcement groups to better protect wrecks off the UK coast. 19th and 20th century wrecks in particular may be fragile, contain explosives and toxic minerals and be endangered by (and a danger to) divers attempting to illegally remove material. The complexity of the law has also created ambiguity about how different interest groups can interact with wrecks.

NMRN Director, Professor Dominic Tweedle said that *"surveillance and technologies employed in other government work will be helpful in monitoring the wrecks, to both record and protect the naval remains better"*. NMRN

V&A's ReACH Declaration on the reproduction of works of art is launched

The V&A has been working with museums across the world to produce the ReACH Declaration, which stands for Reproduction of Art and Cultural Heritage. Digital technology offers new ways to reproduce, share and store art, while threats to cultural heritage include war, pollution and mass tourism. The Declaration represents a shared understanding of how to approach recording and digitising collections in the light of these changing circumstances. Many museums have signed up to it following international roundtables at the Smithsonian, Hermitage Museum and Palace Museum in Beijing. The group hopes that more international museums will now join the dialogue. Areas of agreement in the brief declaration include:

- Digital records should not be a replacement for conservation, and collections must not be damaged by the act of recording.
- Records should have metadata attached and be retrievable even if technology changes. Institutions should collaborate on formats for data storage, so information can be easily shared worldwide.
- Stewards of collections are encouraged to make records freely available to the public and for non-commercial purposes, and to reach new audiences especially those with special needs.
- 'Stewards of Works with resources' are encouraged to offer support and training to other institutions without those means, so these too can record collections and adopt good practices.

V&A, Museums Journal

Also: Representatives from the Great Wall of China and Hadrian's Wall have signed a collaborative agreement to increase cultural and historical understanding between the two sites, discuss archaeological challenges and the potential to increase tourism. It is the first international agreement of its kind. Gov.uk

Also: The V&A's first international gallery, part of a complex at Shekou, China, has now opened, and images have been published of the new space. V&A Deputy Director Tim Reeve describes how the gallery is in the 'right place at the right time' as China shifts from being a manufacturing nation to one increasingly interested in design. M +H, DCMS blog

National Museum of Scotland wins National Geographic Readers' Award

The National Museum of Scotland has won the Readers' Award for 'New (UK) National Treasure' for its galleries, many of which were refurbished and then reopened during 2016. The museum beat two other museums on the shortlist: the Hintze Hall at the Natural History Museum and Ironbridge Gorge in Shropshire. The awards list also features favourite cultural destinations abroad including the Lost City of Kuelap in Peru and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. NMS reached a landmark footfall of two million in 2017 and will be opening two final new galleries in 2019. A VisitScotland spokesperson said that it was a 'fantastic achievement' to be recognised by the publication. The National, The Scotsman, National Geographic Traveller, NMS

Images this month: 'A Woman's Place'

Images this month are from the exhibition 'A Woman's Place' which opens at Leeds Museums and Galleries' Abbey House Museum on 20th January. The exhibition marks a century since the first group of women received the vote. As well as historic artefacts, it features four pieces created specially by local ceramicist Katch Skinner, which commemorate famous women from Leeds not previously represented in the collections. Visit Leeds

Appointments and resignations

Matt Hancock MP has become Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport following a Cabinet reshuffle. The previous Culture Secretary, Karen Bradley has now become Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Design Week

Michael Ellis has become Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Margot James MP is the new Minister of State at DCMS with responsibilities yet to be officially confirmed. Previous Arts Minister John Glen is leaving DCMS for a Treasury post. Gov.uk, The Bookseller

Hilary McGrady has been announced as the new Director-General of the National Trust, replacing Dame Helen Ghosh. Hilary was previously Chief Operating Officer at the NT. She will take over the post on 12th March. M + H, Museums Journal

Kate Bellamy has been appointed new Director of Museums at Arts Council England. She is a former head of Strategy and Advocacy at the V&A. M + H

Dr David Fleming is to retire as Director of National Museums Liverpool, a post which he has held since 2001. He will be moving to a new post at Liverpool Hope University. Click Liverpool, Museums Journal

Tim Cooke is leaving his post as Director of the Telegraph Museum in Cornwall to become Chief Executive of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. M + H

Also: AIM's new Director, Emma Chaplin has spoken to Museums + Heritage Advisor about her philosophy and approach as she takes up her new post. M + H

Changing law and policy



1960s children's toy: 'Merit LITTLE HOUSEMAID SET' by J. & L Randall Ltd., Potters Bar, box containing floor brush, hand brush, brillo pads, Acdo, Chemico etc. © Leeds Museums and Galleries.

Law Commission's programme for law reform includes museum collections

Every three or four years the Law Commission is required by the Law Commissions Act (1965) to submit a programme of areas which it will work on where the law needs reforming. Museum collections will be among its areas of concern in the next few years. It will concentrate on collections where acquisition records are hard to come by, making it hard to transfer objects to other museums, or to dispose of unwanted items. The Commission aims for reform so that museums do not need to seek expensive specialist legal advice in these circumstances, or continue to store unneeded objects. The Law Commission

Hague Convention on Cultural Property now in force

On 12th December, the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, its two Protocols, and the Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Act 2017 come into force for the UK. As a result, the UK's most important heritage and cultural property is protected if there is armed conflict in the country, and the UK is now formally required to respect and protect the cultural property of other countries during armed conflict. Apollo Magazine

NMDC and MA respond to UK consultation on ivory, as China bans the ivory trade from 2018

NMDC has responded to the Government consultation on the ivory ban which will make most sales of ivory in the UK illegal. It supports the ban of ivory sales but endorsed the Government's proposed exemptions for musical instruments, de minimis, items of artistic, cultural or historic significance and to and from museums as long as strict criteria are met and sufficient method of enforcement is ensured. The Museums Association is seeking exemptions for museums along the same lines as the licensing system for historic firearms. Policy Officer Alistair Brown emphasised that the system would need to be tightly controlled: *"determining what constitutes artistic, cultural or historic value is clearly a subjective judgement and one which is potentially open to abuse. We recommend that items that are given this exemption should have to first gain approval from a committee drawing on the expertise of curators and other museum professionals."* The Government will now consider the results of the consultation and respond within 12 weeks.

Meanwhile China, previously one of the largest markets for the ivory trade, has banned it completely from 1st January. During 2017 there was a 65% decline in the price for raw ivory in the country, and an 80% decline in seizures of ivory entering China. Over 80,000 elephants are killed each year for their ivory; wildlife campaigners hope that increasing restrictions internationally will conserve the species. Museums Journal, BBC (China ivory ban), Antiques Trade Gazette

Updated safeguarding strategy

The Charity Commission has published an update to its 2013 Safeguarding Strategy advice. It emphasises that trustees must take reasonable steps to make sure that all who come into contact with a charity are kept safe from harm, and describes what to do in the event of an allegation or safeguarding incident. Gov.uk

Government

Brexit reports published

The Department for Exiting the EU has released redacted versions of its sector reports after being required to do so by Parliament. Much of the material is an overview of facts already in the public realm rather than analysis. The 17 page Creative Industries report, which includes museums, galleries and libraries redacts the section on sector views. Channel 4 News comments that this is typical – *"the real meat of the reports is missing: all the details from businesses and trade bodies about how Brexit will affect them have been redacted."* The Creative Industries Federation welcomed the reference to EU funding programmes, intellectual property and digital single market in the report, but said there was no discussion of other important topics, including *"the huge role freedom of movement has played in the creative industries' success"*. It also criticised a *"lack depth on the issue of trade, where there is little consideration of the export of creative goods or performances"*. The reports have been widely criticised as lacking in substance: DExEU has denied that it has ever had detailed sector analysis, and said *"as our analysis does not exist in the form Parliament requested, we took time to bring together information in a way that met Parliament's specific ask."* Parliament.uk, Parliament.uk (Creative Industries report), Channel 4 news, Creative Industries Federation, Independent, Guardian

Records from the National Archives mislaid by government departments

The *Guardian* reports that around 1,000 files from the National Archives have been recorded as lost after being loaned to government departments. Some are on sensitive political subjects such as the Falklands War, Northern Ireland's Troubles and the Zinoviev letter. The *Guardian* writes: "*the disappearances highlight the ease with which government departments can commandeer official papers long after they have been declassified and made available to historians and the public at the archives at Kew, south-west London.*" An average of 7 – 9,000 files are loaned to government departments each year, with a majority being returned. None of these records were lost while in the care of the National Archives. In a statement, it said "*under the Public Records Act departments can request the return of records for the conduct of official business, for a loan or exhibition or for publication. In the main, files are returned for the conduct of official business. The National Archives regularly sends lists to government departments of files that they have out on loan. If we are notified that a file is missing, we do ask what actions have been done and what actions is being taken to find the file.*" *Guardian*

Futures

Greening the internet, understanding audiences, but losing the privacy of the mind?

Nesta has published its annual predictions, and nearly all relate to the advances in digital technology, especially Artificial Intelligence and the imminent potential for social good and dystopias as it becomes easier to read people through their unconscious signals with ever greater accuracy. Anticipated developments include:

- Making better policy through simulation: Nesta imagines a future Chancellor stepping into VR to discover if a new flying car industry will be intrusive on the streets. For now, board games help policy makers think through the consequences of rubbish disposal policies, and the Creative City Model simulates the complex outcomes of city land use. All seek to reduce the potential for unintended consequences.
- The era where consumers passively swapped data about themselves for free content is coming under greater scrutiny, Nesta comments that the GDPR regulations coming into force in May have 'mainly...spooked innocent non-profits'. However, there is potential to create banks of 'shareable data... with the citizen in control' and the government is seeking to develop data trusts – to allow controlled access to data to create AI solutions to problems.
- Existing AI can now reliably tell if someone is lying, spot a fake smile, track audience reactions to digital content more accurately than by asking people through traditional evaluation. It can also track markers for suicidal ideation on social media. On the one hand, there is the opportunity to receive conclusive audience feedback or make an emergency intervention. On the other, people's assurance that they have the privacy of their own thoughts is evaporating.
- There is also growing interest in greening technology – recycling and mending electronic goods instead of throwing them away. Repair Cafes, which are springing up across the UK offer opportunities for science learning and community as well as environmental benefits.

Nesta's predictions demonstrate the speed with which digital, AI and new data sets are likely to affect all aspects of society, including museums, and demonstrates the need for spaces for informed civic discussion about choices and consequences. Nesta

“Another win for stone” - million-year data storage (from satellites to salt mines)

How far into the future does our duty of care to history extend, and might it outlive the human race itself? What is the best way to store the vast quantities of information for a hundred, thousand or a million years? Radio 4's 'The Far Future' looked at projects designed to convey information far beyond our current civilisation and technologies. Solutions ranged from encoding in DNA – now being explored at the European Bioinformatics Institute in Cambridge, but so far without a reliable retrieval system; continuous transmission from a satellite – or writing data on ceramic tiles and burying them in an Austrian salt mine. The leaders of the latter project explain that as well as being resistant to temperature change, ceramic has the advantage of being worthless and therefore at less risk from theft. For perspective, the British Museum's Neil Spencer also reflected on what has been lost from ancient Egyptian culture – including all recipes and all music, while classicist Mary Beard argued that texts by women largely didn't survive the ancient world because of the priorities of later generations. Insights from curators and historians about what has survived from the past until now – and what we wish had survived – offer a guide to what we should store for the far future, once we have worked out how to preserve it. BBC, Memory of Mankind, The Conversation

Reviews of the year

Exhibition highlights: looking back and forward

Various news and cultural organisations have published their lists of highlights for 2018, and favourites from last year.

- The *Art Newspaper*'s top picks in London in 2018 include the National Portrait Gallery's 'Michael Jackson: On The Wall' examining the pop star's continuing effect on contemporary artists, and three exhibitions featuring Tacita Dean, including at the National Portrait Gallery. Museum Crush's London list includes the Horniman exploring coral reefs through the medium of textiles. The *Art Newspaper*, Museum Crush,
- The BBC notes the reopening of Kettle's Yard in Cambridge after two years and Frida Kahlo's Wardrobe, receiving 'blockbuster frock treatment' at the V&A. BBC
- Vox pops from BBC Culture nominated favourite exhibitions of 2017, often with a strong vein of interactivity: from the Science Museum's 'Robots', the Museum Prinsenhof Delft's Strandbeests BBC Culture
- The *Guardian*'s art show picks include some unusual combinations: 'Rodin and Ancient Greece' at the British Museum, and 'The House of Fame' at Nottingham Contemporary. The latter shows the results of punk photomontagist Linder Sterling's residence at Chatsworth House, where "*she has been sounding out its spirits and seeking the skeletons in its ornately carved closets*". *Guardian*,
- *The Art Newspaper* has also chosen its 'top ten museum acquisitions for 2017' from around the world. Its list includes the V&A's acquisition of a pink 'pussyhat' worn at the women's march in Washington and Tate's acquisition of 12,000 photobooks by the photographer Martin Parr. Old Masters, Native American and African-American art also feature among its choices. The *Art Newspaper*

NMDC will be collecting and publishing members' highlights for 2018 over the next month.

A year of Cultural Gifts

ACE has published its annual report of the Cultural Gifts and Acceptance in Lieu Schemes, both of which offer tax advantages in exchange for giving significant cultural objects to the nation. Collections received in 2016 – 17 include archives of the novelist Thomas Hardy and politician Denis Healey as well as works by Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, LS Lowry and Eric Ravilious among others. 44 objects or collections were received in total, up eight from the previous year. Six of these were Cultural Gifts. The total value of Acceptance in Lieu objects was £40m. *Museums Journal*, ACE

Taking Part statistics April – September 2017

DCMS has published the provisional Taking Part statistics for the period April – September 2017. Museum figures showed that:

- 3% of adults were aware of local or national events to commemorate the First World War, and 75.9% were supportive of commemorations, a similar figure to the previous year.
- 9% of adults said they had visited a museum in the past year.
- 5% said they had visited a museum three or more times.

Museum visit figures are lower than the previous year (52.9% and 22.6% respectively). However, this may be because the Taking Part question was slightly reworded, rather than because of a real shift. DCMS is reverting to the original question for the last quarter of 2017 – 18 to see how that affects the figures. Gov.uk

Reimagining museums



Stereoscope cards from the 1860s showing a woman struggling with her voluminous crinoline. ©Leeds Museums and Galleries.

Vatican Museums' first female Director addresses issues of heavy footfall

Barbara Jatta has become the first female Director of Vatican Museums, chosen from an otherwise all-male shortlist by Pope Francis. Vatican Museums face a problem affecting many major destination museums: a level of tourism so high that visitors risk lengthy queuing followed by a brief, crushed experience as too many try to see the same art highlights, especially during holiday seasons. For this reason, Jatta's predecessor said he would allow only pre-booked ticketed entry to the museums once the footfall exceeded six million. Jatta has stepped back from this approach, despite visitors growing by 10% in 2017. She cites the ethical difficulties of preventing entry: *"we are also a museum with moral and spiritual value. The Sistine Chapel is also a chapel, and that's something that cannot be forgotten."* Instead, she plans a second entrance, driving visitors to some of the less heavily visited parts of the museum complex, and an immersive multimedia show about the Sistine Chapel in an auditorium near the Vatican, offering time and space to contemplate the star attraction away from the building itself. New York Times

Also: ITV has announced a new series 'Great Art' featuring many works which attract huge crowds in museums. Presenter and artistic director of the Royal Academy Tim Marlow said *"this might sound like shooting myself in the foot [but] seeing something filmed in high-definition, without crowds of people and as close up as you can get - in some ways you get a more intimate experience."* Telegraph

Brutalist Sheffield council block to become art gallery and cultural centre

A Grade II listed Brutalist council block in Sheffield is to be redesigned to include studios for artists, a cafe, and Sheffield's largest art gallery. The building was originally created by Arup in the 1950s: the same firm now returns to transform it for its new use. The whole structure is 13 storeys high and originally consisted of 995 flats, four pubs and 31 shops. It is hoped that the project will give the building itself 'another 60 years of life' while making Sheffield a significant arts and culture destination. Yorkshire Post, Apollo Magazine

Thurley Review says National Museum Wales needs to address 'fundamentally uncommercial' culture

The headline recommendations of Simon Thurley's review of National Museum Wales were published last September, but the full text has now been released with more details, and a comparative analysis of the museum's resilience compared to similar bodies. It also draws from interviews with 68 people from government to unions and museum staff.

- There is a difficult relationship with the Welsh government, described by interviewees as a 'breakdown of the arm's length principle'. The review recommends that both parties need to 'clear the air' to create a more constructive relationship.
- Interpretation at all sites is strong except at the National Slate Museum and National Roman Legion Museum which need refreshing. Renewal at St Fagan's has been expensive in terms of attention and resources, but has created an impressive site punching well above its weight.
- Smaller museums in Wales look to NMW for loans and expertise, some have found this support has lessened as the museum has dealt with its own difficulties. Thurley recommends specific funding to help NMW support small museums.
- Visitor figures have been static at 1.7m for five years, and although growing in Cardiff, could be increased further. 57% of visitors are from Wales, with around 60% repeat visits – the museum should consider how to tell a wider story also attractive to tourists and international visitors.
- The report finds that NMW is a 'fundamentally uncommercial organisation' and that this makes it more vulnerable to cuts in Grant in Aid which some comparable bodies have weathered. It recommends interventions ranging from making cafés profitable to selling better merchandise, closing sites in winter, and charging for car parking and special exhibitions. To achieve this, it will need more commercial people on its Board and in senior management.
- The museum's long term strategic plan should be re-examined in the light of the Review, as it is complicated and does not address all issues.
- Responses on Trip Advisor are consistently enthusiastic, and Thurley records that 'I have heard nothing but praise and enthusiasm' for the learning programme.

A spokeswoman for the museum said that it is appointing a commercial director, and has invested time and resources into staff relations after some lengthy strikes. Welsh Culture Minister Dafydd Elis-Thomas said the report was 'one of the best reports of a public body that I have ever read'. NMW Director David Anderson said the report was 'a positive endorsement of the organisation, its staff and future ambitions' and that NMW would take forward the recommendations with the Welsh Government. Wales Online, Welsh Government (full text), Museums Journal,

Museums and galleries at risk

Towner Gallery's staff and programme at risk from 50% cut

The Towner Gallery in Eastbourne, which is South East England's largest regional gallery, is facing a substantial cut from its largest funder, Eastbourne Borough Council. The gallery currently receives £614k a year, but the council proposes a cut of £200k in April 2018 and a 50% reduction within four years assuming the council's budget is reduced further by central government. If all the cuts take place, funding will only cover the preservation of the collection and the building, leading to the end of the learning programme and a reduction in exhibitions and events. This in turn could jeopardise ACE funding if the exhibitions programme falls away. David Dimbleby, the Chairman of the gallery's Trustees said *"we could lose six out of 10 exhibitions a year, as well as our award-winning learning programme, putting at risk everything that Towner stands for."* Commenting for the Council, Councillor David Tutt said that it would be happy to help the Towner develop alternative support, but Eastbourne's funds from central government had declined from £10m to £5m, with a further 30% cut in 2018. He added *"it is with no degree of satisfaction that we are cutting the budget for Towner, as the council is strongly supportive of the arts and the benefits that they bring to society."* The Towner points out that the Council is investing £44m in the Devonshire Quarter which surrounds the gallery, and that its presence will be essential to the success of the regeneration. It is organising a letter writing campaign aimed at Council members. Museums Journal, Towner (letter writing campaign)

Charlie Chaplin's family join campaign to save The Cinema Museum

The Cinema Museum in Lambeth may be forced to close when its lease expires next March. South London and Maudsley Hospital Trust (SLAM) are planning to sell the site, and although the museum has put in a competitive bid in collaboration with a housing charity, this may not be enough if it is sold on the open market. The building, which is open for pre-booked guided tours, was once Lambeth workhouse. Charlie Chaplin lived there with his mother and brother during his destitute youth, and later wrote about the initial shame of entering the workhouse and *"shock of seeing Mother enter the visiting-room garbed in workhouse clothes"*. The museum's collection which begins in the 1890s and includes Chaplin memorabilia, also holds material saved from a swathe of cinema closures in the 60s and 70s. Five of Chaplin's children and 25,000 signatories to a petition have opposed the closure. SLAM is seeking bids in excess of £10m – a spokesperson said *"as a public NHS body, it is our duty and aim to sell these properties so that we maximise the value for these assets."* Change.org, BBC, Cinema Museum, The Guardian, The Conversation

Museums as resources for health and community

Alzheimer's Society launches dementia friendly heritage guide

Alzheimer's UK, HLF and a number of heritage organisations have worked together to produce a guide to creating dementia friendly heritage sites. 850,000 people in the UK currently live with dementia – the guide explains how to turn often unpredictable historical spaces into places easier to navigate and understand. Examples in the guide include the Big Pit National Coal Museum which offers a Google Expeditions preview, so visitors know what to expect; 'Sensory Palaces' sessions at Hampton Court including storytelling, dance and art; and health walks at Kew Gardens. The report suggests that the evolving work will also benefit historic sites economically. Spending power of people with dementia is expected to have doubled from £11bn in 2014 to £23bn by 2020 – those people are likely to 'do less and spend less unless businesses adapt to their needs'. Alzheimer's, Telegraph

Things are better than you think – Manchester museum pilots a values-based approach

74% of people in the UK believe they hold 'compassionate' values (broadmindedness, social justice, honesty) but also think that 77% of the rest of the population primarily hold 'self interest' values (wealth, public image, success). For the past year Values and Frames has been working with Manchester Museum to explore how museum spaces can be used to help people see what they have in common as citizens. In doing so, they hope to close the 'perception gap' about what others value. Museum applications of the research have been highly practical: such as discussing with visitors the trade-offs of what to stock in the museum shop, and discovering how to increase donations by asking in the right way. The result is a new guide, drawing from the findings in Manchester and the work of social psychologists. Manchester Museum Director Dr Nick Merriman said *"we have an opportunity to convey to people the simple truth that most citizens care for other people and the places that we live – much more than we currently imagine... Manchester Museum has begun to work in this way, but this is a good-news story that can and must be told by many other organisations"*. On 24th January, Museums Development North West is hosting a free event for museum staff interested in finding out more about this approach and its benefits. Values and Frames, Values and Frames (guide), Arts Professional, Museum-id, MDNW

Also: The Minneapolis Museum of Art has received \$750k from the Andrew W Mellon Foundation to create a Center for Empathy and the Visual Arts. Director Kaywin Feldman says the Center seeks to discover *"how to spark and nurture empathy through the visual arts, so that MIA and all art museums can contribute even more toward building a just and harmonious society."* Artnet

NHS Head Simon Stevens champions arts and museum prescriptions

The head of the NHS Simon Stevens has championed the growing social prescribing movement, suggesting that GPs should consider pointing patients to social interventions rather than 'doling out a pill for every ill'. Activities can range from gardening to tango, dancing and fishing – or museum activities such as IWM's 'Volunteering for Veterans' programme. National Museums Liverpool also has a long term programme working with health and social care providers in its region. Research by the University of Westminster found that those receiving social prescriptions reduced visits to A&E by a quarter, relieving pressure on the NHS. Simon Stevens said *"for people who are stressed or depressed, who have chronic pain, or with other long-term health problems, social prescribing is often worth trying either in place of drugs or alongside other usual care."* Telegraph, National Museums Liverpool

Events



A range of original illustrations have been created for the exhibition by Jacky Fleming. © Jacky Fleming

V&A offer 19 professional development courses

The V&A has announced the content of its 2018 Professional Development Programme, which runs from January to June and consists of 19 short courses. Topics range from creating digital learning programmes to making exhibitions, organising talks, ecclesiastical metalwork, paper conservation and writing gallery text. Course lengths vary from an afternoon to several days, and fees begin at £25 - £1,250 depending on the course. V&A, V&A (Learning Academy full brochure)

Future of Knowledge conference 2018

The Knowledge Quarter – a group of cultural and digital organisations based around King's Cross and Bloomsbury – will be holding a major conference in 2018. It will explore 'the future of knowledge in an era of untruth' and will have a broad range of speakers from politics, media and academia. Speakers include Knowledge Quarter Chair and British Library Chief Executive Roly Keating, Director of SOAS, Baroness Valerie Amos, David Lammy MP, Eleanor Mills, Editorial Director of the Sunday Times and Ronan Harris, Managing Director of Google UK. The event takes place on 12th February at The British Museum. Tickets range from £50 - 100. Knowledge Quarter

Risks, rights and reputations half day course

'Risks, rights and reputations' is a half day course aimed at CEOs and Chairs of Trustees of arts organisations. It gives guidance in handling difficult subjects and sensitive stories as well as explaining relevant legislation. Created by Index on Censorship and What Next? the course is supported by ACE. Sir Nicholas Serota commented "*censorship – and self-censorship – can stand in the way of great art. That's why ACE is committed to supporting those organisations who are taking creative risks. It's important such organisations are aware of relevant legislation and the excellent guidance that exists as well as, crucially, being supported by colleagues across the sector in similar situations.*" The half day course will be delivered at five venues across the country between late January and June. Arts Fundraising

Visitors Studies Group conference

The Visitors Studies Group is holding a conference 'Big Data, Big Opportunities?' It explores the role data plays in helping museums respond to visitors, what data frameworks have been tried and tested, and where collaborative work helps. There will be keynotes from Angie Judge, Chief Executive at Dexibit as well as speakers from Transport for London, the British Museum, Museum of Science, Boston and the Market Research Society, offering insights from cultural and commercial use. The event takes place at the Natural History Museum on 8th – 9th March. Tickets are £75 - £267. VSG

GEM conference and events for the spring

GEM has announced a full programme of events running from January to March across the country. These include courses in health and wellbeing, leadership, fundraising and heritage interpretation and a 'Learning and Sharing Centre Celebration Conference on 29th March at the National Army Museum. Intermediate courses are £90 for non-members and £50 for members, advanced workshops are £75, or £100 for a manager/officer pair. GEM

Methods for Change evaluation courses

Methods for Change are offering a number of evaluation courses during the Spring suitable for assessing museum, university and science events. Topics include public engagement, science communication, survey design and qualitative focus groups. Prices begin at £50 for concessions, to £120 full price. Methods for Change

Events to celebrate a century of women's suffrage

In 2018 there will be many events marking a century since the first group of women received the vote. London Underground's Art on the Underground scheme will commission only work by women artists throughout the year. Work by Romanian artist Geta Brătescu will also appear on 25 million tube maps. Head of Art on the Underground Eleanor Pinfield said "*the spaces of our cities are not neutral, and neither is space afforded to public art. Wider social inequalities are played out in the structures of urban life.*" London.gov

Museums and wellbeing week

The third Museums and Wellbeing week takes place from 12th – 18th March, and is an opportunity for museums to showcase work in this area. Participating venues can add their events to a growing list, which so far ranges from Leeds City Museum's Community Choir, to Tai Chi on the Terrace at the Roman Baths and a Teacher's Mindfulness Session at the Hepworth Wakefield. Museums and wellbeing

Great Exhibition of the North to launch with giant river fountain

Organisers of the Great Exhibition of the North, which begins in Newcastle-Gateshead on 22nd June, have announced details of the opening event. It will feature an 80m long fountain in the Tyne which will reach the height of the Tyne Bridge. The installation represents the marrying together of arts and industry which is at the heart of the Great Exhibition. There will also be an introductory film – setting the scene for all who visit the exhibition – and an anthem for the north written by Lemn Sissay. Museums across the conurbation are offering exhibitions and events during the festival. Great Exhibition

Festival of Commonwealth events during April

In April 2018, the UK will host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, which will see up to 52 leaders from Commonwealth countries coming to London and Windsor and six days of activity dedicated to the Commonwealth across the UK. In the run up to the summit, a Commonwealth and UK-wide public engagement and celebrations programme is being put together to provide opportunities for citizens across the 52 member countries to learn about the Commonwealth. Museums are invited to participate by highlighting Commonwealth works of art from their collection and offering themed tours and talks until 22nd April. These events can be promoted on the summit website to a broader audience. A "proud to support" version of the summit logo is available for museums. Email getinvolved@chogm2018.org.uk to be featured on the summit website and social media. and follow on Twitter @Commonwealth18 and like on Facebook at /Commonwealth2018. For more information please visit **CHOGM2018**

Surveys



'Votes for Women' lapel badge, probably worn by the Leeds Suffragette Leonora Cohen, a member of the Women's Social and Political Union. ©Leeds Museums and Galleries.

AHRC survey on classical civilisation education

Advocating Classics Education is an AHRC project seeking to extend classical-subjects education across the secondary sector. It is running a survey gathering the experiences of people who took UK school qualifications in Classical Civilisation or Ancient History. (The research project focuses on non-linguistic qualifications, though the survey asks if respondents additionally studied any classical language). It closes in August. Advocating Classics Education

Interpretation and disputed histories

Historic England reviews its guidance on contested heritage

Arguments about how to treat contested and uncomfortable histories of the past have never been so contentious and politicised – from the Rhodes must fall protests, to place names in Bristol or Confederate statues in the US. Historic England is revising its guidance on contested heritage, and is seeking all views on the subject – whether in favour of preserving, reinterpreting, moving or removing statutory and other objects. It also seeks feedback on the wording of the guidance itself. The deadline for responses is 16th February.

Historic England (draft guidance), Historic England (introduction to the consultation), Survey

Also: The Difficult Heritage conference is being planned to take place in York on 13th April and organisers have issued a call for papers. Difficult Heritage

Birmingham Museums Trust's Story Lab tests a 'new tone' for historical interpretation

Francis Galton was founder of the Eugenics Education Society; Joseph Chamberlain believed that the 'British race is the greatest of the governing races'; both are among Birmingham's most celebrated sons. Birmingham Museums Trust's new Story Lab is an experimental space which addresses our changing reactions to historical figures, and the narrative of history itself. Its first exhibition 'The Past Is Now' describes Birmingham's relationship to Empire, moving away from a 'traditional' narrative about trade, to explore (for example) how Birmingham guns connected to the slave trade. The project brought in local artists and activists, to re-explore the 'tone' and conventions of museum exhibitions. Project manager Sara Wajid hopes that the approaches explored in Story Lab will resonate with Birmingham audiences that have previously stayed away and tell 'complex stories...that do represent multicultural Britain'. M + H

Awards

New Collecting Awards opened for 2018

The Art Fund has launched the fourth round of its popular New Collecting Awards. These support a new generation of curators, by offering them funds to acquire collections of fine art, design or visual culture for their museums, while developing their own skills and experience in the process. Curators can apply for any amount, but typical grants are in the range of £50 - £80k. The proportion of funding for professional development is ringfenced at 10%. The deadline for expressions of interest is 13th February – shortlisted candidates will present to a panel in April. Art Fund (press release) Art Fund (detail), Art Fund (previous winners)

ICOM travel grant recipients announced, with a new round opening for visits to Europe

ICOM and the British Council have announced the six recipients of its Travel Awards, which will allow staff from non-national museums and galleries to develop relationships overseas. Winners include Elizabeth Scott of the Guildhall Art Gallery who will visit museums in Seoul, South Korea to explore city-focused public programming, and Eva Bredsdorff of Powysland Museum will visit South Africa to create relationships with military museums. The next round of ICOM travel grants offer up to £700 for trips to Europe and Greater Europe. The deadline for applications is 5th February. M + H

Weston Loan Fund selects museums for first £200k of grants

The Art Fund and Garfield Weston Foundation have announced the recipients of the first round of Weston Loan programme funding. The fund enables the wider sharing of national collections, alongside a training programme. £200k has been shared between several museums in this round, from a total fund of £750k. Highlights include:

- Rugby Art Gallery & Museum will receive self-portraits of Lucian Freud, Richard Hamilton and Eduardo Paolozzi from the National Portrait Gallery, to be shown alongside Rugby's own works by these artists.
- The Becket Casket will be loaned by the V&A to Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery as part of the 900th anniversary celebrations of Peterborough Cathedral.

Art Fund Director Stephen Deuchar said *"the response has been overwhelming. We're pleased to provide the means to enable the greater sharing of art, but, just as importantly, to help empower museums to realise their ambitions."* Art Fund

Travel grants for volunteers and early career professionals

The British Association of Friends of Museums is offering one or more travel grants for committed museum volunteers or early career professionals, to travel in the UK or abroad to have behind the scenes experience of museums and build contacts. The award is up to £2k, and is offered every two years. Applicants will need a provisional invitation from the receiving venue, and there may be an interview. The deadline for applications is 30th April. AIM

Coventry becomes 2021 UK City of Culture

Coventry has beaten a shortlist of four other cities to become UK City of Culture in 2021. Judges said that the bid impressed with its focus on *"youth, diversity and the scale of impact not only in Coventry but across the UK as a whole"*. There are considerable benefits: during Hull's year as City of Culture it received £3bn in investment, saw a £60m increase to the economy and engaged nine out of ten city residents. Coventry will receive a £3m grant from HLF as it lays plans for the year. City resident Helen Jones has written on some of the cultural heritage the city can build on: from the music of the Specials to Frank Whittle, inventor of the turbojet engine, the story of conflict told through the ruined cathedral, and the myth of Lady Godiva. The *Telegraph* also points to Coventry Transport Museum with its *"genuinely impressive collection of cars, motorcycles and pushbikes accumulated from Coventry's time as the car manufacturing capital of the world"* Gov.uk, DCMS blog, Guardian, Coventry Telegraph, Telegraph, Museums Journal

Also: In late November, it was announced that 27 historic buildings and sites across Coventry will be handed over to Historic Coventry Trust, once funds are in place to restore the buildings for new uses. A spokesperson for Historic England said the size of the transfer was 'unique' and 'should be celebrated'. Coventry Telegraph

Applications open for Museum of the Year 2018

The Art Fund has launched its Museum of the Year competition 2018, with a £100k prize for the winning museum, and £10k for each of four finalists. The deadline for applications is 6th February and the winner will be announced on 5th July at the V&A. Last year's winner was the Hepworth Wakefield. Director Simon Wallis said *"the impact of winning has delivered even greater audience growth this year as the broad media exposure introduced the gallery to new people and convinced those who have long been meaning to visit to finally make the trip"*. Art Fund (press release), Art Fund (dates)

Three UK museums on the EMYA shortlist

Three UK museums are on the forty-strong longlist for the European Museum of the Year Award. The Mary Rose Museum, Science Museum and Design Museum are competing with a wide variety of museums including the Lenin Museum, Finland, Archaeological Museum of Thebes and Hospital in the Rock Nuclear Bunker Museum in Budapest. Winners typically have a highly innovative approach which comes to influence other museums internationally. The winners will be announced in Poland in early May. Museums Journal, EMYA

Funding

New round of £4m Wolfson/DCMS Galleries Improvement Fund opens in the spring

DCMS has announced that the eleventh round of the Wolfson/DCMS Galleries Improvement Fund will open in the spring. Up to £300k is available to improve exhibitions and exhibition spaces and increase access. Previous rounds have supported 343 improvement projects for 107 museum groups and galleries. Successful applicants to the latest round will be informed in December 2018. Gov.uk, Wolfson Foundation (last year's recipients)

Year of Young People in Scotland

VisitScotland's themed year for 2018 will be the Year of Young People, focusing particularly on those aged 8 – 26. VisitScotland is offering a business toolkit, a co-design blueprint to help cultural organisations involve the young, and a partner programme allowing organisations to align their activity with the themed year. MGS

Nesta's guide to 65 crowdfunding platforms and counting

Nesta is closing its guide to UK crowdfunding platforms, CrowdingIn.com, but in doing so has published an analysis of how the crowdfunding scene has grown and transformed in just a few years: in 2012 less than £0.5m was raised on a handful of platforms – by 2015 there were at least 65, which generated £3.2bn. Many are dedicated to specific sectors, such as DigVentures for archaeology projects. Nesta explores which platforms have survived over time and the difference between reward, equity and lending platforms. This analysis may help museums and galleries understand the options, and pinpoint the right platform for a project. Nesta

Rethinking Parks fund

HLF and Nesta have opened a new round of the Rethinking Parks fund, which first supported 11 projects over 18 months in 2014. The new round offers two kinds of awards:

- A replication fund offering up to £200k over 2 years to build a project created from already tried and tested models.
- A prototyping award of up to £100k for 9 – 15 months to test new models.

Many museums and galleries sit in parks, and the fund welcomes innovative approaches from new angles, and the application of digital solutions. However, applicants must demonstrate an understanding of the problems facing parks. Nesta

Heritage

Neolithic trackway and acoustic mirrors among 1,000 new listed sites

Around one thousand new sites gained listed status from Historic England during 2017, including the homes of Philip Larkin and J Arthur Rank, but also many unusual sites including the 'Esplanade Gardens' in Skegness where Billy Butlin opened his first holiday camp in 1936, Acoustic mirrors at Fan Bay in Kent, used to detect the sound of enemy aircraft, a rare Roman Parade Ground at Alchester, the grave of a horse called Blackie who survived the First World War and a 4,500 year old trackway near Doncaster. Historic England's Chief Executive Duncan Wilson said *"99% of people in England live within a mile of a listed building or place. While many places on the List are well-known and even world-famous, we also want people to understand and enjoy the extraordinary range of history on their own doorsteps. These sites are irreplaceable and showcase the wonderfully distinct and diverse character of England and its people across thousands of years."* Historic England

Tourism

Cultural Collections in the Cities of Northern England receives £1m Discover England support

Two more consortiums have received support from the Discover England Fund, which encourages regional groups to work together to produce attractive bookable products for overseas visitors. 'Cultural Collections in the Cities of Northern England' is being led by Marketing Liverpool and also promotes events in Newcastle, Hull, Leeds and Manchester. The programme will receive £1m in support, and work to attract people from Nordic countries to enjoy breaks which package transport, accommodation, events, festivals and performing arts in northern cities. Discover England has also given £800k to develop a package around waterways in the Midlands. VisitBritain

Also: VisitBritain has launched a new campaign to attract more adventurous overseas tourists called 'I Travel For...' and offering options including food, culture, the unexpected, discoveries and relaxation. More details and how to get involved will be published by VisitBritain shortly. VisitBritain

Managing risk in distinctive building projects

When the Eiffel Tower opened in Paris in 1889 major artistic figures lined up to criticise it; in 1973 the Sydney Opera House cost 14 times the original estimate to build. Both of these buildings have now become icons drawing millions to their respective cities. By contrast, the equally high risk and expensive Garden Bridge project failed, leaving substantial costs. Blogging for Nesta, John Davies considers some of the benefits and pitfalls of unusual building projects – and how to judge success. He argues that structures that do not intrinsically have value – from Stonehenge to the Eiffel Tower – still have economic benefits which can be measured. He also argues for pragmatically allowing for multiple future uses when building a landmark structure, noting that the Olympic Games have often left a legacy of derelict sites. He says that although such major projects come with risk and some failures *“nevertheless, a world without such buildings would be more homogenous and less interesting. We should dare to dream.”* Nesta

Delicious museums: come for the art, stay for the food

The *Observer* has run a feature on museums and galleries that also provide relatively high-end food offerings. At the Hepworth Café at the Hepworth Wakefield, the chefs say that it has been a ‘huge step up’ providing food for the Museum of the Year, adding *“[it] is only six years old and it’s still really fresh in its outlook, so they’re willing to take more risks than other museums.”* The full vegan breakfast is the most popular thing on the menu. Elsewhere, the Whitechapel Gallery and ICA are offering restaurant standard food cooked from scratch. Cameron Emirali at the Whitechapel says *“if you go to an art gallery or museum, whether it’s for a cup of coffee or a biscuit or something more substantial, it should be as good quality as the art. That’s what we’re aiming for – to mirror the quality in the gallery.”* Guardian

More Chinese visitors, but fewer French and Germans as visitor figures are projected to rise in 2018

VisitBritain expects overseas tourists to the UK to continue to rise during 2018. Latest figures project that:

- Visits are likely to rise by 4.4% compared to 2017 to 41.7m. This breaks the 40m mark for the first time.
- Spending is also expected to rise by 6.8% to £26.9bn.

During 2017, the double-digit fall of the pound against the dollar and euro encouraged tourism, with visitors primarily from Europe (up 4%), North America (up 14%) and China often attracted by places with links to books and films. However, French, German and Italian visitors were exceptions to the upward trend, showing a decline of 4% since the June 2016 referendum. No European country has a more favourable opinion of the UK since Brexit was announced, with 38% of Germans and 28% of French people saying they viewed the UK less favourably. However, 35% of Americans now have a more favourable opinion. ALVA, Guardian, Sunday Times

Social media and Tech

#Heritagechat joins #museumhour on twitter

The heritage sector has created an occasional professional talking forum on twitter, under the hashtag #HeritageChat and @HeritageChat. It currently takes place monthly. The next chat will be 1 – 2pm on 18th January, to discuss evaluation. Meanwhile @museumhour continues in the new year with its regular weekly slot from 7 – 8pm on Monday evenings.

Digitising a huge museum collection (in less than 1,500 years)

The Natural History Museum holds 80 million objects, ranging from its huge Blue Whale to meteorites and tiny insects. Each averagely has six labels attached to it, and a digitisation project which began in 2014 has so far succeeded in capturing only 4.5% of the collection. Vince Smith, NHM's Head of Informatics estimated that it would take 1,500 years to fully capture the collections using existing approaches. Consequently, his team has developed software which will recognise objects when photographed in bulk, and uses six DSLR cameras to photograph up to 200 items at a time. Images of the process snapped by *Wired* magazine show how fragile books and trays of insects are captured, and the usefulness of Lego in supporting NHM's customised digitisation equipment. The photographed items go online for volunteers to transcribe, and to NHM's Data Portal for use by researchers. The Smithsonian is also working on an accelerated digitisation programme involving a conveyor belt, cameras and machine learning. *Wired*, NHM Data Portal, Smithsonian

Complex strategy meets Blue Peter in Culture Digital's 2017 highlights

Chris Unitt, author of the Cultural Digital newsletter, has published his highlights for 2017. He offers an eclectic mix of techie good thinking from the National Portrait Gallery's digital strategy to Derby Museum's 'We Make An Artbot' (watch – and join in the manic laughter - as young demonstrators embrace the technical revolution with felt tips, a paper cup, 'some googly eyes' and a milk frother).

Elsewhere you can see the consequences of using deep learning to 'cross dinosaurs with a book of flowers'. There is a subscribe button at the bottom of the list to receive more of the same during 2018. Culture Digital

Pay and employment

Scotland provides funds for 3% pay rise for many museum workers, but cut to collections budget

The Scottish Government has published its draft budget for 2018 – 19, with a mixed picture for museums and cultural bodies. Plans include:

- Cultural collections funding will be £73.4m, down 5% from £77m this year. This money includes funding for Scotland's national museums and galleries. Over three years, the reduction has been 15%.
- Museums Galleries Scotland and National Museums Scotland have both indicated that their core funding will remain the same as the previous year.
- Overall, cultural spend will go up by 10% to £168m. There will be increased funds for Historic Environment Scotland.
- Investment in Creative Scotland will increase significantly from £52.1m to £70.5m, including £10m for a new film unit. This has been described as a 'lifeline' by one cultural commentator, Ruth Wishart, as lottery money for Creative Scotland declined from £40m in 2012 to £26.9m in 2016.
- Scotland's new public sector pay policy guarantees a pay rise for public sector workers earning less than £30k in 2018 – 19. National Museums Scotland will receive additional funds from the Scottish government to cover this cost.

Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop said "*we have been working relentlessly since early this year to mitigate the impact of the reduction in UK lottery money.*" A spokesperson for NMS said that the 'financial climate remains challenging' and that it hoped to mitigate this with tight cost controls and an increase in earned income. Museums Journal, Scottish government (culture plans overview), Herald Scotland

ACE publishes guides to recruiting diverse talent

ACE has published short guides to help cultural organisations recruit a more diverse workforce. The six page guides highlight barriers to recruitment, such as a lack of role models, pay and conditions, levels of qualifications and lack of awareness. It also gives pointers to programmes such as Arts Emergency's mentoring scheme and the Law Society's diversity access scheme which have successfully encouraged a broader group of people into sectors with a historically homogenous workforce. As well as entry-level issues, the guides cover diversifying leadership and boards. ACE

Nature says scientists should consider a career in museums

The science journal *Nature* has written on the role of scientists in museums, and praising the benefits, from a varied career, to direct access to collections for research and the opportunity to talk to the public (who are also enthusiastic about encountering scientists). The downsides, it says, are low pay compared to comparable jobs in universities, and fierce competition for very appealing work. *Nature*

Jobs

A selection of jobs from across the NMDC membership this month:

- Research Curator, Medicines Gallery - Science Museum Group
- Science Festival Lead & Producer - Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
- Postdoctoral Researcher, NERC Frogs - Natural History Museum
- Intern, Conservation of Exhibitions and Loans - British Library
- Interim Learning Manager - York Museums Trust

A complete list is available on our website here.

This newsletter can also be read online at <http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/news/newsletters/>