

Nine museums join forces to inspire online learning

~Schools, lifelong learners and enthusiasts worldwide will benefit from the world's first combined museum collection online~

London, 20th January, 2009 – Nine of the UK's leading museums and galleries will be combining their own online collections for the first time in February 2009. The National Museums Online Learning Project brings the nation's inspirational collections into one place, providing a search facility that spans collections from the British Museum, Imperial War Museum, National Portrait Gallery, Natural History Museum, Royal Armouries, Sir John Soane's Museum, Tate, Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) and The Wallace Collection. This is the first time so many national museums and galleries have worked together in this way.

The project was made possible through funding from HM Treasury from the Invest to Save Programme and cash contributions from the partnering museums. The project aim has been to use existing online content with new web technology to drive forward a whole new kind of e-learning. Having access to the widest range of original source material helps people of all ages find out more about art, science, history and culture.

The combined collections are available through two new complimentary applications appealing to different audiences: **Creative Spaces** and **WebQuests**. Both applications are hosted on each partner's website and allow online visitors to browse the collections across all participating partners, gather information and inspiration and store favourite finds in personalised online notebooks. Enjoying amazing collections doesn't just have to take place at the museum itself; online access is worldwide, 24/7 and completely free.

'**Creative Spaces**' is a social networking application where users can share their ideas and experiences of the museum collections for their own creative purposes. Users can search across all nine museums and gallery collections and discover what inspires them. Using virtual notebooks, users save and share items that they have found through search or uploaded themselves; these items can be text, images, videos or web links, about anything from paintings through to family history. 'Creative Spaces' users can make connections with people of similar interests and form online community groups around specific

topics with museums as a continuing space of creativity. A proactive online experience provides inspiration from unexpected discoveries. It's serendipity in action.

WebQuests are open-ended enquiry investigations for schools. These are written by educators and mapped to the national curriculum at Key Stages 1-4, making learning a journey of discovery. WebQuests will provide teachers with a mass of high-quality e-learning web resources which translate into highly interactive and engaging lessons and homework projects, encouraging pupils to think critically, utilise their IT skills and directly interact with incredible source material. Schools throughout the UK will be able to access our nation's cultural riches in a simple, free and fun to use environment regardless of location, funding and resources. For many it will be the first time they'll experience the world of history and culture provided by these national museums and galleries.

"This is a great example of global museums working together for the public good," said David Anderson, Director of Learning and Interpretation at the V&A. "This project paves the way for future museum and gallery collaborations, providing new opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn from these terrific collections and then share this worldwide via the internet."

The project is scalable, sustainable and provides ongoing opportunities for further strategic development.

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Notes to Editors

The National Museums Online is a highly innovative combined museum collection project, bringing together virtual objects and creative ideas in a way never possible in the physical world.

The V&A is the lead partner and the project was conceived by David Anderson (Director of Learning and Interpretation, V&A) and Gail Durbin (Head of Online Museum, V&A). The consortium of nine museums have created an interactive, accessible to all, self-directed, flexible learning resources making use of a wide range of existing original source material online. The project was made possible through funding from HM Treasury from the Invest to Save Programme and cash contributions from the partnering museums. The nine museums and galleries involved are:

British Museum, Imperial War Museum, National Portrait Gallery, Natural History Museum, Royal Armouries, Sir John Soane's Museum, Tate, Victoria and Albert Museum and The Wallace Collection.

Creative Spaces and WebQuests are hosted on and only available via the partner museum and galleries websites:

The British Museum:	www.britishmuseum.org
Imperial War Museum:	www.iwm.org.uk
National Portrait Gallery:	www.npg.org.uk
Natural History Museum:	www.nhm.ac.uk
Royal Armouries:	www.royalarmouries.org
Sir John Soane's Museum:	www.soane.org
Tate:	www.tate.org.uk
Victoria & Albert Museum:	www.vam.ac.uk/
The Wallace Collection:	www.wallacecollection.org

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