



**INTERNATIONAL  
COUNCIL  
OF MUSEUMS  
UK**



## **Working Internationally**

**27 February 2014**

**A conference organised by NMDC, ICOM UK and the V&A.**

**Held at the V&A Sackler Centre, London.**

The aim of the conference was to share good practice, experience and information between the museum sector regarding international partnerships and activity. The audience was made up mostly of project managers, curators, international programme managers and museum managers from museums of all sizes. The conference was working on points raised at the Working Internationally Conference 2013.

This is the second of three guides containing the main points raised at the conference and reference to the help available for museums embarking on pursuing an international profile.

---

## **Models and processes - 'Getting started' and 'Delivering International Work'**

**Martin Roth, Director of the V&A** welcomed the audience to the Working Internationally conference and posed the question; are working and working internationally different ideas? Can we separate the two? In museums we are looking to compete for linked resources, shared audiences and culturally there is a link to becoming outposts of the commercial world. Can we develop a museums network and by doing so, aim to strengthen international relations? To start, we need an agreed framework with goals. We are to look at short term aims of touring exhibitions, pop up displays, long term collaborations and the swapping of ideas and skills. ***"This is more than sending a Titian to Tiananmen Square for two***

***weeks, we are looking for a sustainable way to collaborate on a long term basis.***” We are aiming to combine forces to work together but we need a framework to work with - this could be provided by the British Council but there are many successful models that are working for museums today. Today we will be looking at a model of effective partnership through the model that ICOM UK, NMDC and the V&A have provided in setting up this conference.

**During the day delegates heard from speakers who had a wide range of experiences from working internationally. Here are some of the recommendations and experiences from those individuals.**

### **Starting with the collection: Claire Blakey, Curator, Potteries Museum, Stoke on Trent**

International work in Chinese museums led to strengthened UK connections

Tangible outcome: An exhibition *Two Cities*

Funding from the British Council and a Jonathan Ruffer Grant to continue research to find potters at the beginning of their careers.

The Potteries Museum in Stoke on Trent can boast a world class collection of Staffordshire Ceramics. The collection’s strength has been recognised for its breadth of representation of UK produced ceramics but also its influences from the international field of historical and contemporary ceramics ranging from Chinese to Islamic countries. Claire became involved in the collection on a short term 5 month contract in 2007 to look at the collections links to Chinese pots; seven years later she is still researching these links and has built up a network of colleagues in China but also throughout the UK. Claire sees the international work as important but something that has to be completed alongside her day job.

Claire travelled to China with British Council funding along with partners from Bristol Museum and Art Gallery (Curator, Kate Newnham) and Colchester. The bursary allowed the UK team to meet people in China to reach an important stage of partnership clarification early on in the project. The initial grant enabled research and partnership work to take place that culminated in an exhibition *Two Cities*.

Further down the line, a Jonathan Ruffer Grant was awarded that enable the team to travel back to China (Shanghai and Jingdezhen) to find potters who were at the beginning of their career. Bristol, Stoke on Trent and Cheltenham worked as UK partners collecting pieces that would make a UK touring exhibition to the three UK venues. Claire has also worked with schools in the ‘Firing Up’ initiative; aiming to start a dialogue between the old collection and the contemporary.

Claire commented that compiling the two bids took a lot of work. Money that was left from the initial British Council bid was used with agreement to travel within the UK to ensure that project partners could meet face to face. This contact was very important for the project but had not been seen as a major expense in the initial project documents, so had not been budgeted for. Claire advises to seek as much funding as possible and not be too prescriptive.

**Recommendations:** Think creatively. Use the collection as a resource and a shared link in the partnership. Raise the profile of the institution. Aim for a variety of outcomes to benefit all partners.

<http://www.stokemuseums.org.uk/collections/ceramics/>

## **Training and Consultancy: Laura Frampton, Partnerships Manager, Science Museum Group**

Key objective: To establish and sustain the Science Museum Group (SMG) as a truly international organisation

Outcomes: Partnerships and International presence

Funding: Self funded with an aim for profit from consultancy

Laura is in charge of delivering the International strategy for the SMG. The Science museum covers 5 sites. Over the last 3 years under the new Director there have been more ambitious plans for international work. The International strategy was approved by the Board of Trustees in November 2012. Questions were initially asked about why there was a need to develop the international profile; the reasons found were to increase expertise, to secure value for money, to contribute to government agendas, to enhance benefits for the museum audience and to develop an aim to touring the science programme.

The focus has been on training and consultancy. Launchpad receives 1 million visitors per year. The energy of Launchpad is not just to do with the equipment but about the audience and the explainers that can not be packaged and sold on. Two other initiatives have been created: Punk Science and the Cockroach Tours.

There is a lot of soft knowledge in why people are interested in what we do. The strategy is more about being reactive to work that comes in rather than about planning.

The SMG works with (amongst 22 countries): Malta Science Centre - the Science Museum show dynamic ways to engage audiences.

Saudi Arabia - helped to conceive shows, define audiences, look at creating energetic and dynamic way of learning.

In Istanbul the SMG has created learning tools that enable schools with the backing of the Government to learn about science.

The SMG also works in South Korea; they ran a training course for 30 Korean teachers. A Korean curator was awarded a six month internship. Senior members of the SMG Learning team attended the KOFAC STEAM conference in Seoul, promoting creativity in science education.

**Recommendations:** To enrol senior support staff to drive the work forward. early on in the project

Set up a working group within the museum made up of interested staff who already work internationally. Understanding the benefits of working internationally is crucial to continuation

Understand that there will be costs and plan for them - staff time, opportunities, subsistence, value of unique expertise, agree what costs you would be prepared to cover. Map all these costs out.

Listen to what is needed by potential overseas partners

It may be cheaper to repurpose what you already have and what the retailer already has to offer. These can make it more of an efficient way to work.

## **Generating revenue from digital assets, Lauren Sizeland, Head of Licensing, V&A Enterprises**

Outcomes: Various

Commercial enterprise

Income from digital assets can be seen as the fusion of commercial imperatives combined with non-commercial aims.

A museum must be able to define what digital assets are: 'A digital asset is any text or media that has been formatted into a binary source that includes the right to use it' (Aj van Niekerk, 2006).

The V&A Created range is influenced by the museums collections.

V&A retail company runs the shops within the museums.

Vandaprints.com runs an online print service.

V&A Publishing publishes 25 books every year.

V&A Inspired products - range using brand.

V&A Brand Licensing allows the brand to be used on saleable items.

V&A Image licensing - images are used for one off use.

VandAimages.com an online image market.

The V&A digital assets have four key strands - the decorative - the glamorous - the British - the exotic. (The exotic does not appeal to the East but to the West).

V&A Enterprises exhibits at trade shows, including Brand Licensing Europe in London, the Mapurg trade show in Beijing and the USA Licensing International Expo in Las Vegas. They advertise widely in trade press.

Is it appropriate to invest in a transactional website? Prioritise where to invest money and at what stage in the business. Use an agency or agencies to licence your assets. Is it possible to create a revenue stream from publishing, merchandise, licensing or digital products? Other opportunities include using materials related to major exhibitions, touring shows and touring individual objects.

Understand how your customers will want to engage with you and how they would like to access data; develop functionality to meet their needs. Set terms and conditions of use.

Keep an eye out for possible joint projects and partnerships, popular culture and changing trends. The V&A create mood boards for licensees to sell the products so that the strong branding can be carried through to outpost shops. Understand products and ensure that there is buy-in from stakeholders. Be realistic with resources and available timing.

Appoint staff with commercial know how. Image licensing can be more profitable and risk free.

**Recommendations:** Understand and have confidence in your assets. Support from directors, trustees and curators and other stakeholders is vital. Use information available and from industry bodies to research the market, potential partners and your commodity thoroughly. Be realistic with the resources available, timing and expectations. Choose the right URL. Be prepared to be flexible. Appoint staff with commercial experience.

## **Working in Partnership: Tate and Pinacoteca de Estado de Sao Paulo, Silaja Birks, International Programmes Manager, Tate**

International work between Brazilian partners and the Tate has led to long term benefits for both institutions

Tangible outcome: An exhibition entitled Ceramic Cities: Design transfer between the East and West.

Funding from the British Council and a Jonathan Ruffer Grant to continue research to find potters at the beginning of their careers.

When the Tate adopted the international strategy their aim was to develop programmes beyond North American and Western European regions. The team are still learning as they progress through each project. The principle aims of the Tate's international work are to reciprocate, collaborate and exchange knowledge and ideas. The group have insights and expertise but approach projects with an open mind and certainly do not know it all.

In January 2012, Tate Trustees approved the Tate's International Strategy. The key principles of the strategy are – reciprocity, exchange, knowledge, ideas and reflecting art production. The aim is to look at representing art from the other parts of the world. Following on from the International Strategy the Tate Latin America Acquisitions Committee was established in 2000. Curatorial activities also expanded in co-ordination with the international strategy.

Within the Tate and Pinacoteca project rather than establishing pre-defined links the strategy aimed to use the natural links between the institutions. Silaja reflects that the ambition of both institutions was to move beyond creating exhibitions and towards ensuring that conservation care was practiced to improve the condition of the art involved. An MOU between the Tate and the Pinacoteca was developed and signed in August 2012. The Pinacoteca MOU was a framework that provided focus for what people were doing and where the project was going.

***Recommendations:*** It is worth establishing an MOU between institutions.

Approval of an international strategy from Directors or Trustees within your institution is important.

The Plus Tate network is a helpful resource.

<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/conference/mira-schendel-conference>

### **Borrowing objects from institutions overseas; The Search for Immortality, Tao-Tao Chang, International Manager, Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge**

Tangible outcome: exhibition Tomb Treasures of Han China, 5 May - 11 November 2012.

Chang recommends that it is important to know the remit of the individuals involved in international project work. With the knowledge of the partner's remit it is easier to tell if the partner is looking to generate income. There is massive construction going

on in China which means that a lot of cultural projects need to make money to fund new building aspirations. It is also worth finding out if there is a country wide strategy for the project that may have an effect on local and national knowledge. Through experience it is wise to have the right contacts in China to get things done. However, it is also good to have a knowledge of the status of the people involved in the project, this may have an influence on decision making and the length of time needed for approvals. People are often not in a position to compromise their position by saying 'yes'. UK couriers were always used, Chang found that Chinese couriers do not actually travel with the objects. ACE helped with the negotiations for the project, but no specific help with negotiations from the British Council or from British Embassy in China or Chinese Embassy in UK was sought. All objects had to be shipped from Beijing due to paperwork. This meant that the fee doubled in order to cover the costs that incurred from travelling items through Beijing and the Province and back to Beijing. Cuts were taken before money got through to the provincial curators.

**Recommendations:** It is essential to read between the lines and build an understanding of the aims and priorities between the two parties. Draw on people who know how to navigate the system.

Chang recommends that a contingency plan is formed and a contingency budget is put aside. Be prepared for hidden costs.

The Government Indemnity Scheme will always advise on insurance: William Brown is the contact.

<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/security/further-advice-about-security>

<http://www.tombtreasuresofhanchina.org>

## **Touring objects overseas: V&A touring exhibitions, Sarah Scott, Head of Touring Exhibitions, V&A**

The V&A has an international and national touring programme. Considerations to the content of exhibitions and which objects are suitable for touring are given at planning stage.

The V&A started touring in 1995 with a tour to Japan of the 'Treasures of the V&A' exhibition. There are currently 37 people in the touring department.

Why tour? It makes the collections accessible. It encourages knowledge exchange and the sharing of expertise. Touring aims to meet the objectives of the V&A in being the world's leading art and design museum. The museum aims to promote, support and develop the UK creative economy by inspiring new design and makers; by

stimulating enjoyment and appreciation of design and by providing a platform for debate. The aim is to also operate with financial and organisational efficiency.

The V&A approaches venues very early on with exhibition ideas. There are different types of exhibitions formulated to promote headline and smaller ones. It is exciting to see that exhibitions have a life beyond the V&A, after spending years to develop an exhibition it is good to see the exhibitions in different venues.

The V&A has a set of processes that works for them – in a simple description we could describe the process as: curating the exhibition, label, text and object mounts, mannequins and frames are all developed as part of the exhibition package. The V&A will build creates and package the objects themselves.

It is important for museums to look at who will want to see the exhibition. Have they got a specific agenda or way of interpreting things? How do we protect the objects - how do they travel and to how many venues? The V&A will tour to a minimum of 3 venues to make the touring cost effective. The issues that take time during preparation include working through light and environmental sensitivities of the objects, looking at how the items will be stored, defining who the key stakeholders are and preparing the items for travel. There must be some flexibility for venues who want to display items differently. Things need to be clear with lenders. Sarah hypothetically spoke of an ideal touring model that would enable partners to share the freighting costs of touring so that the more venues the show is travelled to, the cheaper the costs. V&A contracts to overseas touring venues outline the UK Government Indemnity Scheme guidelines. The V&A will also issue a really clear contract that itemises cost and VAT.

**Recommendations:** The V&A works with venues to establish new partners but working with an existing contact is always recommended. The USP of the exhibition must be shown to attract potential touring venues. The V&A also takes into account the appeal of the show by considering what the venue doesn't have. Keep in mind the bigger picture. Enable flexibility within boundaries. Anticipate where things might go wrong by completing a risk assessment; remember that people are more important than objects.

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/links/our-international-work/http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/i/international-touring-exhibitions/>

## **Exploring international links in local history: Norman connections, John Davies and Angela Riley, Norfolk Museums Service**

The project aims were to research and discover more about our Anglo-Norman sites. The project outcomes was a successful academic conference on Anglo-Norman



archaeology, architecture and artefacts in Norwich Castle, May 2012. Outcomes also included on-site development, innovative technology and public events that brought Anglo-Norman history to life. Cross-border coordination and professional exchanges also took place and were invaluable to future collaborative work.

During the project start up a project idea was established, partners were identified within an eligible area, a project leader was nominated and project goals and a target group recognised. Objectives were set and a start and end date were agreed.

**Recommendations:** The team would recommend using video calls and meeting in person at least every three months to ensure that all messages are clearly communicated between partners.

Working with their French partners the team were aware of the protocol of inviting local dignitaries to events.

The team learnt to keep all documentation that related to expenses: when working with European Union funding it is important to have very detailed accounts of expenditure.

Internal buy in is very important - the power to promote the project is important.

[http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/Visit\\_Us/Norwich\\_Castle/The\\_Castle\\_Keep/index.htm](http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/Visit_Us/Norwich_Castle/The_Castle_Keep/index.htm)

## **The Queen's Own Hussars Regimental Museum, Lord Leycester Hospital, Warwick, David Walker**

The museum will have a new display by 2017. The common theme will be India and the Indian Sub-continent. The museum in the UK made contact with the Indian National War Museum in Delhi and the 1857 Memorial Museum in Lucknow.

**Recommendations:** Have an idea of what you want to achieve and understand what they want to achieve, think about how you will benefit and who is paying. A formal proposal is recommended

Assume nothing, priorities may not be the same.

Be prepared for delays in contact due to time zones.

Direct refusal is often seen to offend.

Think through your proposal in terms of what the other party may achieve rather than what you want to achieve.

Understand that there are different procedures in India.

Have a reliable guide or driver, a few words of the local language is useful, contacts are useful.

## **Working in India, Rebecca Jacobs, William Morris Gallery**

Funding: British Council

Outcome: workshops for families, research and deeper understanding about Indian links within the collection

The William Morris Gallery (WMG) is run and managed by Waltham Forest Council. There is currently no international remit the main focus is on the local community. After a substantial holistic redevelopment which included a redisplay and expansion of the gallery, a total rethink also took place to engage new visitors.

Why go to India? William Morris was a multifaceted man involved in many arts and crafts, perhaps better known for his design work - furniture and stained glass.

William Morris was very influenced by Indian textiles, especially the block printing and use of natural dyes. Morris used Indian craftsmen as their model and benchmark to design his own designed furniture.

The aim of the project was to link local UK communities to the craftsmen who were so influential to Morris. Look at shared history and current similarities. The British Council bursary allowed Rebecca Jacobs to spend two weeks in India. The aim was to allow children to talk directly with woodblock printers and highlight ethical work and production.

Another aim was to raise the profile of the WMG. On the trip to India Rebecca wanted to scope out who to work with and who would provide benefits in the future. Sutra group textile industry in India was holding a conference at the same time as Rebecca's. Attendance at the conference enabled her to increase knowledge related to the collection. Rebecca collected samples and books for the collections. Found a Burn Jones stained glass window at St Pauls church in Calcutta, the original drawings of which are in the WMG in Walthamstow. Rebecca offered to provide information about the panel for the window.

**Recommendations:** Skype is widely used in India - conversations and points can get lost in emails.

Networking is important in India.

Allow time to adjust to people's patterns of working.

Be flexible and as open as possible when planning.

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

## **Collaborative research and knowledge exchange: working with Australian museums academics and indigenous communities, Dr Christopher Morton, Head of Photograph Collections, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford**

From 2011 - 2015 the Australian Research Council funded the Globalisation, photography and race: the circulation and return of Aboriginal photographs in Europe to take place. An international team were involved from the Monash University, Melbourne, the University of Western Australia, Perth, The Pitt River Museum, University of Oxford, the Musee du Quai Branly, Paris, the Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge. The aims of the project were to support excellent basic and applied research by individuals and teams, to enhance the scale and focus of research in the Strategic Research Priorities, to expand Australia's knowledge base and research capability, to encourage research and research training in high-quality research environments, enhance international collaboration in research and to foster the international competitiveness of Australian research.

**Recommendations:** Enhanced database records before and after research visit.

Digitisation of material took place, which also enhanced the collection. Tangible exhibitions took place by Aboriginal artist Christian Thompson in Oxford and internationally. Collections were connected to indigenous communities and their descendants, enhancing relationships. Images of descendants and community groups were presented to the relevant people in the photos. It was very beneficial to collaborate with colleagues internationally around related collections. The status and interest in the photographic collections in museums, libraries and archives amongst colleagues nationally and internationally was enhanced.

## **Co-production: National Museums Liverpool and European partners, Fiona Philpott, National Museums Liverpool**

The National Museums Liverpool are involved in a wide range of partnership projects; locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. The museum formed an international partnership in 2008 to create a large-scale family exhibition for the World Museum which would be an interactive exhibition exploring the world of plants called Plantastic. The exhibition had a universal subject and a strong concept, it was designed to accommodate three European languages and was targeted at 7-14 year olds and their families.

The National Museum Liverpool worked in partnership with 5 partners including 2 museums, 2 science centres and an exhibit production company. Each partner were using their distinctive qualities to enable a successful touring exhibition. These

qualities included being a member of Ecsite (European network of museums and science centres), all partners had a shared value to inform, educate and entertain visitors.

The National Museums Liverpool are always looking for new opportunities, this enables the museum to keep the offer fresh, relevant and challenging while also competitive. The outcome was three highly successful science based exhibitions, this significantly increased visitor numbers to the World Museum and was a sure way of securing capital investment.

The methodology used was allowed for the content to be created at risk over 6 months. There was an agreed launch date of April 2009. The next stage would cover design and development and production. All work was covered and agreed in detailed contracts between all parties. If anyone pulled out ownership would remain with the surviving partners. Financially the exhibition design was market tested in 2007. Each partner contributed EUR 200,000. A strong design was developed that included production and brand identity. Partners covered local costs such as security, marketing and advertising and the programmes and events.

Reportage and writing by **Lucy Watts**

**The International Council Of Museums** is the global organisation of museums and museum professionals committed to the conservation of the world's natural and cultural heritage.

**ICOM UK** is the national branch of ICOM in the United Kingdom. It is a gateway to the global museum community and the only UK museum association with a dedicated international focus. To join ICOM UK <http://uk.icom.museum>