Social History in Museums
Journal of the Social History Curators Group

Edited by Rebecca Fardell

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The Social History Curators Group

The Social History Curators Group (SHCG) aims to draw together all members of the museum profession to promote social history in museums and improve the quality of curatorship.

It aims to:
- Work with those who are continually developing standards, to improve the quality of collections care, research, presentation and interpretation.
- Stimulate and act as a forum for debate on issues effecting the museum profession.
- Act as a network for sharing and developing skills.
- Advocate the study and practise of social history in museums.

SHCG is a point of contact for other organisations, as well as its own members. It represents the interests and concerns of members liaising with Regional Agencies, Federations, the Museums Association and MLA.

The Group organises seminars throughout the year on a wide variety of topics which are a useful resource for member’s Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The annual conference provides a forum for a fuller analysis of major subjects such as interpretation, evaluation and community outreach. A News is issued several times a year and includes reviews of meetings and exhibitions, opinions on current issues and items of news. There is also a SHCG website and the Group is responsible for the firstBASE database.

*Social History in Museums* is produced annually and is issued to all members. Back issues are available via the Editor. Articles, reviews and books for review should be sent to the Editor who can be contacted via the website. SHCG does not accept responsibility for the opinions expressed by the contributors.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Changing Role of Collections and Information</td>
<td>Nick Poole</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning the Museum Inside Out</td>
<td>Suzanne Keene</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Collections Development Strategy for Scotland</td>
<td>Gillian Findlay</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting Broadband: the social context for the e-Scotland Collection</td>
<td>Alison Taubman</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big and Oily: collecting the North Sea Gas and Oil Industry</td>
<td>John Edwards</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing from the Inside Out</td>
<td>Kirsty Devine</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilberforce, 2007 and Beyond</td>
<td>Jayne Tyler</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Social History Still in Wonderland? An update to Social History in Museums Volume 16</td>
<td>Sharon Roberts</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret Museums: unlocking hidden histories</td>
<td>Stuart Frost</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Place in History at the Discovery Museum: a case study</td>
<td>Zelda Baveystock</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Editorial

This volume contains a number of papers from the 2006 SHCG Annual Conference which sought to address some of the challenges facing those curating collections in the twenty-first century.

The Changing Role of Collections and Information by Nick Poole discusses museums as 'knowledge institutions'; it considers the types of knowledge museums contain, and how that knowledge can be managed and disseminated.

In Turning the Museum Inside Out, Suzanne Keene looks at the growth of collections and challenges curators to spend as much time and resources on using the collections as on exhibiting them. Gillian Findlay explains the background to the new National Collections Development Strategy for Scotland’s Museums and how it is hoped that the strategy will affect the development of collections.

As the conference was held in Scotland, there were a number of case studies from north of the border. Alison Taubman outlines the spread of broadband in Scotland and explores how the e-Scotland Collection has developed. John Edwards reminds us of the significance of the North Sea Oil and Gas Industry to Aberdeen and uses a range of examples to show how Aberdeen Maritime Museum has needed to exercise ‘significant effort to collect, preserve and interpret the subject’. Designing from the Inside Out by Kirsty Devine explains the holistic approach taken to designing the new home for Glasgow’s Museum of Transport and the thinking behind this new museum.

In her paper from the conference, Jayne Tyler discusses how Hull intends to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery with the redevelopment of Wilberforce House, and the importance of continuing to engage with the city’s black and ethnic minority communities after 2007.

The final three papers challenge curators about the ways in which some subjects are represented in museum collections and displays. Is Social History Still in Wonderland? by Sharon Roberts is an update to an article she wrote for Volume 16 of Social History in Museums. In it she reviews how the subject of childhood is dealt with by museums and considers whether there have been any changes in displays on the subject since the late 1980s. In Secret Museums: unlocking hidden histories, Stuart Frost outlines how museums have historically approached the subjects of sex and sexuality, and explains why museums need to start addressing these subjects meaningfully and inclusively. While Our Place in History at the Discovery Museum is a case study of a project involving Tyne and Wear Museums and a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender group.

These papers reflect some of the issues facing social history curators as we seek to use the collections in our care to tell the stories of the communities we serve, and to collect the material that will be needed by our successors. With the presumption against disposal being strongly challenged, perhaps now as never before we need to be asking a wider range of questions about how we choose, use or lose our collections.

Rebecca Fardell
We Are All Publishers Now
The Changing Role of Collections and Information

Nick Poole

We often hear that museums are 'knowledge institutions', playing a vital role as part of a 'knowledge economy'. But what form does this knowledge take, do we really have it and what does it mean for museums? This was the subject about which I was invited to speak at the 2006 Social History Curators Group Conference in Edinburgh.

To begin with first principles, an object in a museum is interesting for two reasons. Firstly it is interesting in and of itself – as a physical artefact which provides a concrete connection to past cultures and ways of life. Secondly, and of equal importance, it is interesting for what we know about it, the combination of narrative and expertise which together enables curators to interpret their collections for the public.

As the spotlight has increasingly focussed on the social potential of historic collections, there has been an underlying assumption that museums are sitting on vast untapped bodies of pristine, authoritative content. Lurking within the Notes field of our Collections Management Systems, the thinking goes, lie well-formed narrative descriptions waiting to be unlocked in the name of access.

What do we mean by ‘knowledge’?
The reality, as anyone working with a collection will know, is very different. Collecting and documenting our knowledge about collections is not a finite process. It goes in fits and starts, with different areas of the collection receiving particular care and attention at different times, usually in response to projects and exhibitions as they develop.

Nor is collections-related knowledge the only kind of information which we actively manage and use. At a minimum, you’re likely to hold catalogue records, leaflets, visitor feedback, environmental monitoring data. Most museums end up with vastly more information than this – everything from education packs to personnel files to funding applications and financial records. It is hard to think of an equivalent small business with a need to manage (and retain) so much raw data.

For our purposes, it is useful to group this information under four headings:

1. You will probably have collections information. This includes simple object records, interpretive materials, collection-level descriptions and information about conservation and preservation;
2. Your museum is a business, and hence you will need to retain management information. This includes the usual things such as personnel records, financial information, but is also likely to include information about trustees, funders and volunteers;
3. You probably provide an education service and hence will maintain educational information. This might include teacher’s packs, gallery interactives, display panels and worksheets.
4. As a public service, you will also have public information which you use for marketing and advertising your services.

Of course, there will be plenty of overlap between these different areas, but it is still important to recognise the sheer range and quantity of information which we need to be able to manage in order to deliver our core services.

The Museum Marketplace
The marketplaces in which museums are operating are moving at an extraordinary pace. It is not only technological developments such as the Internet and
computer-literacy, but also the ready accessibility of mass media that are creating a market with sophisticated expectations in terms of access to services and information.

As digital media move from brute-force dissemination to services that are built and personalised on the fly, users are increasingly demanding information that is tailored to their needs. They expect that this information will be free at the point of use and that they should be freely available to assemble numerous sources to create their own material.

In an age that is defined by convergence, users expect museum services to be readily accessible within the services and brands which are already part of their lives. This is an audience (across all ages and demographics) for whom Google is the primary research tool. No matter how many cross-searching projects we ourselves generate, our services cannot truly be considered accessible until they are apparent throughout Google and other search engines.

Nor are these expectations limited to the digital world. Increasingly, real-world visitors are coming to the museum expecting tailored pathways through the galleries, thematic trails and showstopping entertainment. They expect exhibitions and displays which connect with the events and trends in other media such as broadcast.

All of these factors combine to create an audience that is both more sophisticated than those that preceded it and less so. An individual is likely to have considerable expertise in using search tools, for example, but may have a different approach to the use and interpretation of primary sources.

The State We’re In
Museums have not stood still as their environment has developed. Significant advances have been made and the modern museum is far more adept at creating, managing and recycling content for different audiences than its counterpart of two or three decades ago.

A significant majority of museums now use some form of electronic Collections Management System to manage at least part of their collections. Waves of project funding such as the New Opportunities Fund Digitisation programme (NOF-digi) and the Designation Scheme have enabled many of these museums to create digital images of small numbers of their objects and to add these to their databases.

Increasingly, suppliers of Collections Management Systems such as Adlib, KE or MODES are providing additional modules to their software which enable museums to publish their collections’ databases online. A very small number of museums are leading the way in creating rich user experiences based on thematic trails through mixed digital media.

Essentially, the museums’ industry has had to build its technical competence at the same time as getting to grips with the implications of new technologies for service delivery. The result can sometimes be a tension between delivering ‘traditional’ services and moving towards a role as a publisher of authoritative information.

Looking to the Future
It is possible to discern in the current situation the seeds of our future role. As museums move increasingly towards a role as publishers and mediators of content, the traditional practice of documentation will have to give way to a more all-encompassing approach based on organisational Knowledge Management. They will need to use fully web-enabled systems to create services which allow users to define their own interaction with the information.

In this brave new world, museums will need to exploit ‘museumness’ as a key part of their value to society. We are already coming to appreciate the brand equity associated with curatorial expertise and our position of trust within communities.
The important step will be to parlay this value into real-terms investment without damaging its intrinsic nature.

**The Business Model**
The museums' sector is typified by many different kinds of organisation, operating at every point on a scale from the very small to the very large. If we are collectively to make the transition towards the future modes of delivery, we will need to find stable business models which support the work.

Our sector is characterised by a combination of capital investment and project funding. As we are competing in an already crowded market for entertainment and leisure spend, the strictures on capital tend to be severe and at best will usually only cover the core costs of running the organisation.

Additional services tend to be funded through project investment. The value of this investment can be tremendous, as in the case of Lottery support for capital projects such as redevelopment. However, the corollary tends to be that the museum will prioritise 'attractive' projects over a longer-term approach to market research and product development.

Investment in content creation closely follows this model. Digitisation tends to be prioritised according to the requirements of particular projects or exhibitions, and it is only a very few organisations that enjoy the luxury of a long-term embedded strategy for digital content development.

We know from the experience of the Picture Library world that the economics underpinning digitisation can be precarious at best. The difficulty is that only a relatively small percentage of our digitised material is likely to be economically viable (in the sense of generating sufficient income to cover costs) but in all but a very few cases we lack the market experience to know which percentage it is. In the absence of a collective and competitive digital marketplace, there is no mechanism for balancing out what we need to charge and what our market is prepared to pay.

Ultimately, if we are to sustain content creation and digitisation without significant public-sector subsidy, we will need to learn some fundamental lessons from other industries. The first of these is prioritisation. As our understanding of the marketplace grows, we will become better at predicting where the demand lies, and tailoring content creation and publication accordingly. The second is aggregation. It is unlikely ever to be economically sustainable to have lots of small organisations competing for the same mindshare in their market. Large-scale services which aggregate both demand and supply will significantly reduce the unit cost of delivering content, bringing it within the reach of smaller organisations. The final lesson is marketing.

**Towards a Marketing Strategy for Museums**
The world at large seems to have mixed feelings about marketing. Conjuring as it does images of the hard sell, it is easy to see why we have become cynical. But at its heart, marketing is about the application of common sense to service delivery.

Creating a marketing strategy can often be a healthy process for an organisation. It usually involves going back to basics and reassessing a business from the point of view of its customers. It is about separating features from benefits, and communicating the benefits to users in ways which inspire them to do things (pay us a visit, go to our website).

Museums do not tend to act collectively. Lacking as we do the statutory coherence of, say, the Public Library sector, we tend to present ourselves as a cacophony of individual interests, each with a slightly different, but essentially similar product.

The future growth of the industry (both politically as well as publicly) will depend on our ability to range ourselves around a clear and consistent offer. Even if the detail of this offer varies significantly between institutions, there is a pressing need to crystallise
in the public psyche the idea of a museum and what it is for.

In producing a Marketing Strategy for museums, we would need to consider our external environment. We would need to identify our audiences and segment them according to patterns of behaviour. Ultimately, we would need to move away from communicating solely in terms of our ‘features’ (collections, buildings) and towards a clearer statement of the ‘benefits’ (entertainment, inspiration, creativity, education).

Ultimately, every interaction between a museum and its target audiences – whether they are users, or funders, or trustees or councillors – is a form of marketing. At the same time, the ways in which we develop and manage our knowledge and information will need to be informed by an overall understanding of the key marketing messages we are seeking to convey.

Conclusions
Ultimately, museums truly are ‘knowledge institutions’, but we are really only at the early stages of exploring the implications of this role and of building the mechanisms which will enable us to deliver it. There can be no doubt that Knowledge Management will be fundamental to this delivery, but it will need to be managed with a purpose. The clarification of this purpose remains one of the most significant challenges of the next few years.

Museums occupy a valuable role as trusted and authoritative providers of information, and other industries such as broadcast, publishing and telecommunications are increasingly interested in working with us to exploit the equity in this brand. The opportunity will be to ensure the sustainability of our collections. The risk will be that if we miss the chance, we do not want for competitors who will take it for us.
Turning the Museum Inside Out

Suzanne Keene

Introduction

Collections have increased enormously during the second half of the last century. Housing and managing them to accepted standards takes a substantial proportion of museum finance, staff time and space; and collections constitute a huge resource. Yet, museums still see themselves primarily as places that exhibit, with activities involving non-exhibited collections as optional extras. It seems to me that through accumulating these very large resources museums have in effect become different organisations, without yet realising this and without getting to grips with appropriate strategies1.

What is the issue?

UK museum collections are a huge resource. They are thought to include about 200 million objects – over 70 million in the Natural History Museum alone (Paine, 2000, p. 7). The National Maritime Museum in London has around 2.6 million items, about half of them paper-based: archives, images and photographs. In contrast, the National Gallery has only about 2,300 paintings. The justification for maintaining collections on such a scale is currently being challenged, especially by the governments of the UK and the Netherlands.

The issue is not just the absolute amount in the collections: it is the rate at which they grow (see Figures 1 and 2). In the late 1990s two authors calculated that ‘...at an annual growth rate of 1.5 percent [which had been established for the UK] the size of the Nation’s Collections will double within 47 years. A century hence it will have increased by almost 450 percent’2.

This is not an issue for large museums only: small ones often have disproportionately large collections that they find it difficult to make use of. One would hope that such a substantial resource would be well used, since it is nearly always maintained using public money. However these are a few statistics, from my experience in managing
collections and from the Pitt Rivers Museum website:
Science Museum small object collections
year 1996-9: about 700 visitors (researchers and tours)
year 2002-3: about 250 visitors (mostly specialists)
year 2004-5: about 700 visitors on 46 tours, after extensive publicity.

Victoria & Albert Museum, National Archive of Art & Design
Year 1998-9: just over 900 researchers

The Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford
'more than 200 research visits a year'.

These figures immediately raise two difficult issues. Two hundred research visits
implies a lot of museum staff time to service these researchers and to make sure the
objects are looked after and secure. A problem is that making use of collections always
means that people are in close contact with objects, and hence risks to the objects
from handling and possible theft, and perhaps to people, because of health and
safety problems.

Praiseworthy efforts by the museums in question have achieved these numbers of
users, but do they justify the existence of these large and expensive resources?
Objects are of course used for display, loan and so on. But these activities utilise only
a tiny proportion of the collections. In 1999-2000, the Science Museum’s 350,000
small and medium objects occupied 9,000 square metres of storage at an annual cost
of about £300,000 (excluding salaries, and insufficient to maintain the buildings to a
high standard). The Glenbow Museum, the large regional museum for Alberta,
Canada, found that approaching half of its £4.5 million operating budget was being
spent on storing and maintaining its collections.

Does it matter?
People such as the general public, non-curatorial colleagues, and even trustees and
other museum stakeholders are often quite baffled by museum collections. Keith
Thomson in his book, Treasures on Earth, has questioned whether public collections
really generate more benefit to people than private ownership.

In the UK, these sentiments have begun to be publicly aired, in two or three articles
in the national press and in government reports and consultation papers. We are not
the only country: in the Netherlands this issue has also been articulated by
government ministers and others. In the US, colleagues in email list correspondence
said that they had been embarrassed when legislators from funding bodies raised the
question. Archaeological collections present a particular problem, and for example in
the state of Victoria in Australia a research project is currently under way investigating
how much archaeological material needs to be kept.

So surely it does matter that museums collectively have a huge
resource, maintained at public expense, that at present we cannot say is
sufficiently used.

The positive side
Despite these daunting figures, there are many examples of collections being
accessed and used in a plethora of different ways. There are examples to be found all
over the world. I undertook a research project to study examples of use and to bring
them together so that they could be seen as a body of practice on which museums
could build. I also wanted to set the collections and their uses in the context of
museological theory, so as to provide a more coherent intellectual justification for their
existence. Too often, theory seems to be divorced from practical application, but when
we are floundering to justify the collections an intellectual grounding could be very useful.

**Collections varieties**
Before discussing uses of them, a note about collections. They are extremely varied, and of course some are more suited to one kind of use or access, some another. Broad categories that seem to be useful are:
- Collections to be visually enjoyed, such as fine art and often decorative art collections
- Functional objects, where there is an expectation that they will be made to work, and demonstrate their original function
- Those that are primarily archives for research, such as the 70 million specimens in the Natural History Museum, London, or archaeological collections
- Harder to define: collections relating to places and people – history and ethnography collections in particular.
Museums and their purposes are also very varied, but this is not the place to discuss that.

**Different collections, different uses**
I considered five broad uses of collections:

**Research**
This is the primary purpose of some kinds of collection, such as natural history and archaeology collections. Natural history collections in particular tend to be very well used for research. Archaeology collections are much less used, and many museums have difficulty in managing and justifying them. However all museum collections should be used for research, surely, by a wide range of people, and it would be good to see more of this important use.

**Education**
My focus here was on higher and ongoing education and learning, since there is so much literature on schools and museums. There has been a degree of concern about university collections: although some university courses make use of collections most do not. There is undoubtedly more scope for this use: it requires museums to enter into partnerships with universities and colleges and to let them take the lead – something that they are not good at doing. Much adult learning requires museum collections professionals to play an enabling role, rather than their current guardianship one.

**Memory and identity**
Museums are important players in fostering collective memory, which promotes social cohesion and a sense of belonging – or of exclusion if one does not feel that one’s past and culture is represented in these significant social institutions. At an individual level I found many examples of people being very moved by objects in collections – including particularly military collections and ethnography collections. There is a growing use of collections for memory work with the elderly, although this tends to use special handling collections, not the collections themselves.

**Creativity**
I was prompted to look at creativity by a natural history museum director, who observed that about half the visitors to his collections were in fact artists. I found an astonishing variety and amount of creative uses of collections, in literature (my book includes four poems), films (they draw on the dark, mysterious feel of museums –
which I think is the presence of the collections), architecture (there are a number of imaginative buildings for museum storage), music and sound (a number of sound installations), technology and design. It is clear that collections are a rich resource in the worlds of art and design, which would be much the poorer without them. Museums could do a lot to encourage these uses. The public draw on collections for creative purposes too, and I feel there could be much more of this.

**Enjoyment**
The large object collections of the Science Museum are quite accessible due to their sheer size and robust nature. The stores are regularly open to the public. The National Railway Museum (NRM) in York has a very successful open store, The Warehouse. 'I'd rather see all this than a quarter displayed properly': said a visitor to it. (Consultants’ advice to the NRM: Market the mystery)\(^9\). Of course these are but some of many examples of open stores or stores tours.

Glasgow's Open Museum project seems to have been highly successful\(^10\). The difference between this and other community exhibitions is that in Glasgow people were encouraged and permitted to use the Museum's own historic collections for their own exhibitions and events: in most such projects they are invited to donate and collect additional objects. This implies an openness to the use of collections that is far beyond what is normally the case in museums.

**The effects of digitisation**
Few organisations today are unaffected by digital technologies. Museums have barely begun to feel the effects. All of the major uses of collections that are identified above could be assisted by using digital technologies. I think that the most important development is making available online a complete inventory of what a museum has. This is fundamental to letting the public know what the museum holds, on their behalf, and to many or most of the other uses of collections.

**Multiple answers**
Henk van Os, ex-director of the Rijksmuseum, has bluntly written: 'The real problem is 'the unimaginative programming, failure of public relations or sheer lack of courage which prevent museum staff from making the best use of their stores and keep the public away.'\(^11\)

So, what to do about the non-displayed collections? There have been a number of proposals, not in my opinion sufficient to solve the problem (if it is agreed that there is one).

**Less stuff?**
Have museums simply got too much stuff? Is disposal, or dispersal to other museums, or even the public (as some advocate) the answer? I believe not. There are a number of startling examples of museums disposing of collections that are at the time unfashionable\(^12\). There is always a temptation to re-write history by eliminating aspects of collections that seem at the time unimportant or incorrect. Dispersal to other more suitable organisations is sensible, but it is very expensive, and does not result in less of a charge on the public purse. Nevertheless, the Glenbow Museum in Alberta reduced its collections by a very substantial amount and was able to finance better care and access for the remainder, so perhaps we should not completely dismiss this. However is the size or quantity of collections really an issue in countries other than the UK, the Netherlands and sometimes Canada? There is little sign that this is a universal problem, so let's not export a solution if it is not needed.
Loan and exhibit
The Dutch Minister of Culture has vigorously advocated getting the collections out and about, through loans and exhibits in a much wider range of places than is currently the case\textsuperscript{13}. This could be part of an answer, but it is very costly in terms of resources, and can only ever affect a small part of the collections. Moreover, let’s face it, a lot of collections and objects are not all that publicly attractive or interesting.

Collections centres
In the UK, collections centres, or storage off-site somewhere much cheaper, is a fashionable answer but surely this only highlights the issue? If a museum cannot make use of its collections for the public when they are nearby, with staff to provide information and to make use of them through public engagement and programmes, why are they going to be more useful when they are perhaps a hundred miles away down a salt mine in Cheshire? (This is proposed for parts of the National Archives, for which there is much greater justification, and being considered by the National Maritime Museum). For collections that are mainly used by professional researchers, such as archaeology materials or archives, this is perhaps a potential solution, but for most collections I have severe doubts.

A way forward
Rather than planning how to reduce the collections or send them somewhere cheaper but much more distant, I believe that museums should be planning how to make better use of this potentially marvellous resource. Not so much less collections, as more use.

Of course, this raises difficult issues. Closer contact for people with collections is always going to be resource intensive and therefore apparently not cost effective. Collections visits are never going to compete in footfall counts with exhibits and galleries, so how can we persuade politicians that they generate equivalent value?

A change of mindset
The Museums Association in its report in June 2005, \textit{Collections for the Future}, has called for museums to recognise the concept of cultural entitlement and to think beyond passive ‘access’ to active ‘engagement’ for people. By this they mean that everyone has a right to a certain level of cultural provision\textsuperscript{14}. Museums might think about museum collections as something that everyone is entitled to engage with in whatever ways suit them best, which might not be the ways that suit museums best.

There are a number of strategic implications for museums if they are truly to enable people to engage with their collections, centring on the organisational psychology of museums. Rather than being guardians of collections, they need to see themselves as facilitators of engagement with them. Rather than storing static collections, they need to see the collections as a service. Rather than seeing themselves as different and separate from other organisations and institutions they need to see themselves as some of the players in a network of services and provision for research, learning, creativity, enjoyment and leisure.

The notion of engagement with other organisations is crucial. Museums are not the organisations best placed to carry out research on collections: that might better be done by people in universities, the prime research institutions, and by individuals interested in their subjects, or even by commercial companies seeking to make use of collections information. Museums, as experience has shown with a number of courses that have run for a short while and then collapsed due to lack of demand or resources, are not best placed to provide formal education. Instead, they need to provide resources for and work with educational establishments – on their terms, not on those of the museum. The farsighted partnership of the Victoria & Albert with
the Royal College of Art is an example where this has worked. In this new view of life, success for the museum would be measured not by the outputs it produces itself, but by outputs from other organisations that have drawn on museum collections resources.

Conclusion
There undoubtedly needs to be a better balance. If museums allocated the imagination, resources and priority to using the collections that go into exhibitions there would not be a problem. Let us look forward to the time when all museums make use of the many diverse and inspiring ways that there are of encouraging and facilitating people’s engagement with collections, so that they are a truly popular and public resource. The UK artist, Mark Dion, has brought cheer and glamour to archaeology through his artwork. *Tate Thames Dig.* Like many artists, Dion is intrigued by collections. He has said: ‘The museum needs to be turned inside out—the back rooms put on exhibition and the displays put into storage.’15. There is a person who has really learned to love collections!

Notes
A National Collections Development Strategy for Scotland’s Museums

Gillian Findlay

Collections are all the rage in Scotland today. On a practical, operational basis, new networks are being established whilst established ones are benefiting from a new lease of life. Different mechanisms are being explored to share collections’ knowledge and increase opportunities for workforce development. A consistent effort is being made to reach and involve different communities in the production of exhibitions, to engage them with interpretation content and display, and the creation of new representative collections.

Edinburgh’s City Art Centre has two examples of the kind of work that is taking place across the country. Anatomy Acts brings together a number of partners of different sizes from all parts of the sector, who have worked together to produce one of the most significant and certainly one of the largest touring exhibitions ever seen in this country. Rainbow City, produced by Edinburgh City Museums Service in collaboration with a range of community and learning groups, illustrates the history of lesbian, gay and transsexual people in Edinburgh.

Clearly these exhibitions showcase the diversity of Scotland’s collections, but behind the scenes what they represent is even more exciting. The potential for collections use has been endorsed at highest strategic and political levels in Scotland and at the Scottish Museums Council (SMC), we are confident that in working together to implement the forthcoming National Collections Development Strategy for Scotland’s Museums, the sector will have a unique opportunity to lead cultural policy in this area over the next few years.

I would like to explain this more fully be sharing with you:

- the collections context for development of the strategy, specifically placing Scottish developments as integral part of the broader UK-wide movement
- the process we pursued in creating the document, and explaining how our main aims and priorities came to be agreed
- how we intend to implement the strategy and what we hope it will achieve in the long term

SMC is the membership body and strategic agency of the non-national museum sector in Scotland. Our members include all local authority, university and regimental museums and a large number of independent museums in Scotland. Together, they manage over 340 sites and vary in size from small voluntary trusts to large metropolitan services. Whilst historically we share the same roots as the area museums councils in England and like them, we have moved to an increasingly strategic remit, it is worth noting that we have not embraced the cross domain approach in Scotland. SMC remains a museums’ agency - though we work closely with our opposite numbers in libraries and archives our funding and relationship with the Scottish Executive remains distinct. We work directly to support our members and provide them with advisory and information services and we have always channelled funds to the sector in the form of direct, capacity-building, grant aid. However increasingly, collecting information and providing evidence about the sector becomes a key area of our work, as with our members we continue to work to raise standards and attract central investment.

SMC believes that the capacity to develop, care for and manage collections is fundamental to museums as the basis of the many other services they provide and as their legacy for future generations. It is a long-established principle, and accordingly, the foundations for this National Collections Development Strategy
A National Collections Development Strategy for Scotland's Museums

can be traced to several other, earlier, consultation responses, mapping and advocacy documents intended to safeguard Scotland’s museums and collections.

Scotland recognised some years ago its claim to a truly ‘distributed national collection’ and an awareness of the national, and international significance of some of it when on behalf of the Scottish Executive, SMC undertook the first-ever national survey of the services, sites, staff and collections offered by our museums and galleries. The findings were a real cause for celebration, not least because they made a concrete case for the first time of the contribution museums make both to the preservation of our national heritage and to other key areas of Scottish life – such as tourism, learning and community development.

This information has since been used to make the political case for significant investment and some truly exciting and groundbreaking work over the last few years to promote and safeguard this heritage. One of the first of these, when it was launched in 2002, was the Strategic Change Fund. This enabled thirteen exciting projects to take place across Scotland, lasting on average two to three years and channelling £1.2 million into the sector. In exploring three themes – building capacity, building audiences and increasing access to collections – it has enabled museums to successfully forge new partnerships in areas as diverse as education, enterprise, tourism and health and to deliver new opportunities for people to engage with museums around the country.

A number had a particularly explicit ‘collections’ focus, for example: The Distributed National Burns Collection project. This has been generally lauded as a highly successful initiative, which aimed to unite museums and other organisations in both private and public hands in the preservation, promotion and provision of access to one of the country’s most significant distributed national collections – that relating to Robert Burns.

First of all, a major scoping study was published – revealing the richness and diversity of collections – and examining for each of the holders, their specific capacity for collections management, access, learning and marketing. The second phase of the project focussed on improving this capacity and drawing public attention to the collections. It finally resulted in the creation of a suite of public resources, including web-based object trails, a comprehensive guide to collections, promotional leaflets and learning materials for schools.

The next major round of funding to benefit the Scottish museum sector was the Regional Development Challenge Fund (RDCF). A £3 million, three-year initiative again administered by SMC on behalf of the Executive, RDCF was launched in 2003 with the aim to:

- attract new users to museums
- develop the capacity and sustainability of the museum sector through active partnerships.

Between them, the ten projects taking place have impacted across Scotland, from Shetland to the Borders, ensuring that as many people as possible will benefit from the fund. Again there are a number which will notably impact the way Scotland’s collections are developed and accessed for example Scotland and Medicine. Led by the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, it celebrates this country’s position of having been at the forefront of medical developments since the eighteenth century. The project aims to promote medical and health collections in Scottish Museums to local, national and international audiences, and to deliver initiatives that make better use of them to meet health, tourism, social and economic agendas. Specifically the Partnership will deliver:

- a programme of skills development for staff at partner organisations
- an on-line directory of Scotland’s medical collections and connections
However as we all are aware, this sort of work has not been happening in isolation. Across the UK the whole sector has enjoyed a renewed and growing interest in collections over recent years. Their use and development has increasingly been promoted by museums as an unique way of participating with political agendas tackling social justice, regeneration and cultural entitlement. In Northern Ireland, a collections audit has just taken place to inform future practice and priorities for the sector. In England, several of the Regional Agencies have produced collections development plans or stewardship strategies of their own. In addition, the Museums Association's UK-wide Collections for the Future consultation of 2004 provided another important stimulus for discussion.

In Scotland, more than fifty delegates contributed to this debate through a collaborative SMC/Scottish Museums Federation meeting and ground was laid for production of our own National Collections Development Strategy to address specific sector needs and aspirations here. SMC pursued a consultative approach throughout its production. A consultant worked with us to scope existing UK collections initiatives and to devise a questionnaire asking museums about collections development issues. The information gathered at this stage was discussed further at productive open meetings held later in Aberdeen and Glasgow, and I was delighted to discover that findings overall suggested that across the sector, 'a clear and positive majority favour change' and that the Goals identified for the strategy were endorsed.

Throughout the process an Advisory Panel of UK museum professionals contributed knowledge and expertise during a series of meetings whilst an SMC Internal Group provided operational support. All ensured that this strategy, the fourth in a suite, aligns with other key areas of work. When it is published in Autumn 2006, the National Collections Development Strategy will come in the wake of those currently underway in ICT, Access & Learning and Workforce Development. It will be instrumental in ensuring that collections continue to be celebrated as the core from which museums provide invaluable public services and will benefit enormously because some relevant issues have been discussed already in earlier documents. For example:

- The ICT Strategy identifies the manifold benefits of using electronic means to record, interpret and share information about collections
- The Learning and Access Strategy promotes collections as unique educational resources, direct experience of which adds power and immediacy to learning encounters.
- The Workforce Development Strategy encourages the sector to adopt a learning culture, where management, curatorial and collections specialist skills are nurtured

The National Collections Development Strategy offers people managing and working in Scotland's museums a new framework through which to consider collections afresh.

It advocates the need for a creative approach to collections and a desire both to act and to change in order to better understand, share and develop them. Five key priorities are identified through which to progress the stated Goals. The first three are key and are underpinned or supported by the other two.

Key Priorities:

- Engaging People recognises the importance of understanding and involving diverse users in both public programmes and core collections activity
Scotland's museums offer various means for people to access collections. The most dynamic and truly engaging however, are those which place users at the centre of their operation. This means that in addition to prioritising audience interests when planning outreach activities and events, opportunity exists for public input into the development of core collections policy and practice.

- Improving Knowledge suggests that acquiring, growing and retaining information about collections is vital if they are to be used to their full potential. This area emerged very keenly as key area for development during the consultation with members.

Of course, the issue is a complex one. Knowledge in museums takes many forms. Factual and contextual information about every object is recorded from the moment it enters the premises and becomes subject to the documentation process. Collection and subject expertise is developed through study and research, whilst practical skill and technical know-how is gathered through the use, exhibition and dedicated care of collections. How museums manage and share this knowledge – and, crucially, the value they place upon it – is key to the success, we think, with which collections can be used.

- Shaping Collections explores the policies, practices and people needed to develop collections, ensuring they can evolve and stay relevant

This section is complex and perhaps will prove the most challenging. It starts from the basis that responsible collections management recognises both active collecting and rationalisation as necessary development functions. To be effective, both require confident decision-making based upon sound knowledge of collections, supported by robust policies, adherence to procedures and access to appropriate resources. It tackles strategic, contemporary and joint collecting opportunities and enforces the idea that as a sector we need to be braver in our discussions about disposal, particularly regards the transfer of collections to other museums or public agencies where they are better able to 'earn their keep' through active use or need.

Supporting Stewardship encourages a planned approach in all areas of collections management, wider adherence to published standards and greater use of available tools to achieve this.

Conservation and the on-going care of collections has been described as part of the hidden stewardship burden museums carry, and certainly the responsibility to preserve the nation's collections whilst enabling unprecedented levels of access presents challenges. So a realistic, planned approach to collections care or conservation activity for the explicit benefit of users can be the key to securing public funding.

- Working Together promotes mainstreaming of collaborative activity; sharing collections knowledge, resources and experience through partnership

Collaborative Working is a concept that we are all familiar with but which has tended to happen on an ad hoc basis or through the enthusiasm of individuals with regards collections development. In our recent consultation discussions focus has tended to be on skills sharing, the potential to develop practice in peer advice and exchanging knowledge, and organisational collaboration through Subject Specialist Networks, collections-based projects, exhibitions and collections management resources.

Whilst we recognise that none of these issues may be new, brought together into a
A strategic document with endorsement of the sector, they are the starting point from which we can instigate an action framework to work out how, when and who can play a part in instigating change. A three-year action plan will also be published along with the Strategy which identifies priorities, roles and responsibilities for this work, not just for SMC and its members, but for a wide range of other stakeholders. Collections Development will be an organisational priority for SMC during this period and we will act on the findings of a number of pilots and research projects to encourage informed actions and strategic, long-term culture change within the sector wherever possible.

We are very positive about the potential of this focus. The Scottish Executive report, Scotland’s Culture, was published in January 2006, ending a comprehensive review of services and infrastructure. It highlights the central role of non-national museums in providing opportunity for people to really participate with cultural activity as an entitlement. It also recognises collections as important cultural assets and the museum sector itself as a major contributor in achieving cultural priorities. The report also determines an even greater future role for collections in national life; an exciting opportunity we hope the sector will lead on through implementation of this strategy.
Collecting Broadband: the social context for the e-Scotland collection

Alison Taubman

This is a summary of a project begun last year to collect objects to represent the spread of broadband across Scotland. Given the impact of the internet on all our lives, this collection can be interpreted from a social historical perspective as much as from a technological one. It also provides the opportunity to strengthen the links between science and technology collections and social history ones as it is vital to view communications collections in a context of use (of course the same is equally true of other technology collections). Here the focus is specifically on remote and rural communities in the Highlands and Islands and the Borders of Scotland. The reasons for this focus are ones of geography which present specific issues in Scotland, though apply in some measure to other areas such as Cornwall for example, where there are similar issues facing remote populations and a comparable need to attract new employment opportunities.

Targeting contemporary collecting: The Scottish broadband context

Previous telecommunications collecting at the National Museums of Scotland, whether historical or contemporary, has focussed on the technological specimen which has left much of the collections devoid of social context directly associated with individual objects or their makers and users. To date much of that collecting has been passive, the museum becoming the recipient of often outdated or broken examples of declining technologies offered on an ad hoc basis. This has become more of an issue for technology departments in the electronic age when the pace of change makes defining collecting priorities harder but more urgent. The nature of electronic collections, often a series of ‘black boxes’, present greater challenges for interpretation than previous mechanical instruments (where the working parts could be on show), especially if there is no context of use to help explore their social impact, in this instance specifically on remote and rural communities across Scotland. Collecting therefore has to be active and project led and an attempt at engaging with these issues gave the impetus to the collecting project to represent the Scottish Executive’s initiative to provide one hundred percent broadband coverage for Scotland by the end of 2005.

Context of state intervention

Over the years the state has invested in telecommunications to provide internet access to rural Scotland, through Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise and European led projects. Since the launch of the Scottish Executive’s strategy for broadband provision in 2001, they have striven to provide broadband services to both the Highlands and Islands areas and the Borders to create a communications infrastructure capable of future expansion and upgrade, ensuring that future economic, social and learning opportunities include everyone thereby limiting what is called the digital divide, the perceived social and technological barrier created by lack of access to ICT. For Scotland, the concern to prevent a digital divide is mirrored by a geographical one. The Scottish Parliament’s initiative will impact most on the Highlands and Islands and the Borders where provision currently lags behind the Central Belt and urban areas. It is in part for the same reasons of topography that Scotland has witnessed several firsts and lasts in the history of telecommunications,
from the last manual telephone exchange at Portree on the Isle of Skye in 1976 and the last electro-mechanical exchange at Thurso in 1990; also the last A&B payphone at Papa Stour, one of the Shetland Islands in 1994, for example. By contrast, the first transatlantic telephone cable went out from Oban in 1955 - 56 and the world's first digital telephone exchange was trialled in the Grampians in 1979. Some of this equipment is on display in the Communicatel gallery in the Royal Museum in Edinburgh.

The figure for population density, measured in people per square kilometres, was 243 for the UK, in 2004. For Scotland this figure is 65. For the Highlands and Islands and parts of the Borders the figure is nine, amongst the lowest in Europe for such large areas. Add to that the geographical and topological challenges these landscapes present and it become clear why these populations were not deemed commercially viable to telecoms companies and intervention was necessary.

Up to April 2005 broadband connections were the result of partnership agreements between government agencies and private telecoms companies but direct state intervention to provide broadband to the remaining 378 exchanges still not upgraded had to be approved by the European Commission as compatible with state aid. This was duly achieved in November 2004 on the grounds that broadband is a necessary step in the modernisation of the European Union and is a pre-requisite for the development of e-government, e-learning and e-health projects. The Commissioner's ruling has cleared the way for similar European projects, on hold until the outcome of the Scottish case was known.

**Targeting contemporary collecting: collecting strategies**

The initial project focus was collecting a representative range of technologies used to overcome the difficulties in reaching all parts of Scotland, from upgrading telephone exchanges to deliver broadband, to the use of wireless and satellite connections. Inevitably perhaps it became a dialogue with individuals who are technologically very well informed and driven by an excitement in the social/economic/political potential of broadband. These people became a conduit for collecting and their accounts are as important as the objects in the museum's collecting process. As one of these, Maggie Symonds, points out in her report on the potential for broadband on community development

‘There is a significant group of players in the region who are experimenters as far as the combination of connectivity and communities is concerned. Some have come to community development with a real interest in technology and others have entered the world of technology with experience as community development workers. Such a combination is critical to the future of community development making the best use of broadband.’

Maggie's key interest is in helping people feel comfortable with technologies, essential if demand for those technologies is to grow as the Executive and the providers would like. She and her partner set up as one of the first independent Internet Service Providers in the Highlands and Islands in 1994, in Cromarty. The project grew out of recommendations she had made to local colleges for more effective networked working practice but was driven by the Symonds' ability to see that people in the local communities and voluntary sectors would equally make use of a service tailored to their needs.

There is an important contextual history to the development and use of the internet in the Scottish Highlands. Maggie Symonds highlights the key influence of the Rurtel network in particular as a computer networking and email system in the Highlands and Islands which was used as a means of strengthening links between geographically
isolated rural organisations. Rurtel (UK) Ltd was piloted between 1986 and 1989 when it provided one of the first rural computer networking and email systems in Europe. Many of the small group involved in the early days of Rurtel have gone on to positions of influence in the private sector, enterprise bodies or higher education and have taken their experience of early networking with them. One such, Dr Frank Rennie, is Head of Research and Post-Graduate Development at the University of the Highlands and Islands, and is developing e-learning strategies, a vital shift towards what he calls ‘distributed’ learning patterns which he described as about using technology to provide 'an educational pull' rather than a 'technological push', a change in the experience of knowledge - from being something that is given (or told) to us, to something that we seek out, verify, and to some extent personalise to our own appropriate context.' That such projects and the technology to deploy them were initiated in the Western Isles and the Highlands shows, as Frank Rennie says, a 'substantial shift in the mind-set that higher education would always continue to flow out of the urban areas and into the rural', and one that stretches back to the mid-1980s when Western Isles secondary schools were linked to 'a pioneering locally devised interactive database system for education called Bruetel, designed to network aspects of teaching and educational administration in the islands'.

These inventive solutions as well as the drivers to networking in remote communities are well illustrated here and these initiatives should be documented as part of rural Scotland's telecommunications history and are as much about social as technological histories.

**Collecting: State intervention**

The objects currently in the collections fall into three categories. The first of these is collecting to represent state intervention.

The targeted technologies to be represented in the collections so far are fixed wireless, satellite and, with the greatest impact, BT's Exchange Activate project which upgrades small exchanges by installing a component capable of handling thirty broadband connections, known as the Mini-DSLAM, first trialled at Muir of Ord and Drumnadrochit in the central Highlands at the end of 2002 and rolled out to other remote users across the UK from April 2003. Fruitful negotiations are underway with telecommunications companies to provide one of these components, with a Scottish context of use, though acquisition for the permanent collections will have to wait until one is decommissioned, which is expected in the next year.

The examples of fixed wireless connectivity in the collections come from two projects at either end of the country. The Scottish Borders Rural Broadband project used fixed wireless technology to provide access to users across the rural south of Scotland. The project was launched in August 2003 and installed through a partnership between Scottish telecoms firm THUS and Fife based firm MMT Wireless, responsible for the installation of the base stations and customer connections. They donated a customer antenna and Ethernet connector to represent their work on the project.

At the same time across the north of Scotland a separate fixed wireless network was being trialled across five locations, from Cromarty on the East coast to Achiltibuie on the West and up to Westray in Orkney. Hl-WIDE was launched in September 2003 as a not-for-profit company to respond to the need to provide broadband to the most remote parts of the Highlands. Much of the impetus came from particular individuals who volunteered to host the technology in their homes. One of these, Dr Andrew Muir, lives in the village of Achiltibuie, from where he works as a telecoms consultant. He has been actively involved in seeking broadband access to an area which combines a number of factors which has made it a good pilot for telecommunication trials.
Geographically very remote, the community is strung out along the coast over a distance of several miles making connection very difficult. Dr Muir’s presence ensures that the community will agitate for connectivity. The beauty and remoteness of the location means that it featured on the BBC’s 10 o’clock news in December 2003 as a signifier of the roll out of broadband to the remotest corners of the country. The National Museums of Scotland has acquired an antenna for the HI-WIDE connections which ceased being used when the exchange at Achiltibuie was upgraded through the Exchange Activate programme in 2004.

Collecting: Connected Communities
The second group of objects represent the separate project to enable the Western Isles.

On the island of Lewis, Donnie Morrison is part of the Global Connections project at Western Isles Enterprise with a remit to attract inward investment and jobs by exploiting new technologies to stimulate the island’s e-economy. Over the last few years the Work Global – Live Local website attests to his success in achieving this aim and jobs in such fields as engineering, publishing, scientific, database creation and internet support have been created as a result. Donnie is also project manager for the Connected Communities wireless broadband network along the length of the Western Isles. New levels of high performance connectivity have enabled the islands to attract opportunities for a local workforce which has a higher than average graduate ratio with high levels of ICT literacy and therefore well placed to take advantage of computer based development opportunities.

The immediate impact of greater connectivity however will be in schools, local authorities and health centres, where telemedicine for example is already proving its worth where before patients had to be flown to hospital in Fort William or Inverness on the mainland for diagnosis. As an early user of broadband, Donnie trialled BT’s satellite connection, launched in April 2003. His satellite dish and receiver unit are now in the national collections, as are examples of the fixed wireless indoor and outdoor subscriber units installed as part of the Connected Communities infrastructure.

Collecting: Personal enterprise
Finally, the third area covers the individual enterprise in a deregulated market.

Clearly state intervention and partnerships have progressed the digital infrastructure at a phenomenal rate since the Scottish Executive’s initial announcement on broadband provision in 2001. By and large the growth of connectivity and state aid to achieve 100 per cent coverage is seen as a positive move, both by the Executive and by those lobbying for connections. There are those, however, for whom state intervention has meant the undermining of an independent business as an Internet Service Provider which previously provided a service in areas where the larger providers did not wish to operate without subsidy.

Perhaps for the first time in the history of telecommunications, as a result of deregulation, it has been possible for individuals to compete with the larger providers to construct networks. Brian McLwraith set up in business as Speednet Scotland in February 2004 as a result of Ofcom’s changes to the wireless licensing laws to allow the commercial use of wireless 2.4ghz. His business extends to providing a fixed wireless network within a 25 mile radius of Troon, Ayrshire in the south west of Scotland. A local, personalised service is crucial to his market and he does not wish to expand beyond this base. To represent his work, the museum is hoping to acquire a subscriber’s receiver unit along with two connection hubs which he installs, one bought and one of the type he makes from recycled computer hard drives. A growing part of his business is represented by a VOIP (voice over internet protocol) adapter, allowing phone calls to be routed through the internet at virtually zero cost. As a result,
according to Brian, people in certain parts of rural Ayrshire have more advanced provision than available to many in Glasgow or Edinburgh.

**Conclusion**

The nature of contemporary collecting is that it is impossible to tell at this stage how significant some of this material will be in time but it is enough to know that it is significant now in representing issues that are very much the concerns of today and will have value in the future for that reason. The objects collected represent various iterations of Internet technology in the evolution of an infrastructure over three to four years, in the same way as the cables and instruments we have already represent the infrastructure of first telegraphy and then telephony.

The difference in this instance is access to the key players in the field, those who develop the technology's potential in their area and drive others to participate through their vision.

In the meantime, the next initiative to upgrade the UK’s telecommunications infrastructure is upon us in the form of BT’s 21st Century Network (21CN), due for completion in 2012. This means that instead of having separate networks for mobile phones, landlines, the internet and so on, there will be one multi-service network, with all communications routed over the internet. So, potential for a new collecting project presents itself.

Undertaking this current contemporary collecting initiative has helped to reinforce an obvious point, sometimes overlooked in collections defined as Science or Technology and particularly those relating to telecommunications. This is that the purpose of the technology is to facilitate human interaction. It is not an end in itself. This has to be represented in how museums collect information about the object’s context of use as well as the objects themselves. Howard Rheingold puts it very well in his book on the cultural impact of the Internet.

‘When you piece together these different technological, economic, and social components, the result is an infrastructure that makes certain kinds of human actions possible that were never possible before. The “killer apps” of tomorrow's mobile infocom industry won't be the hardware devices or the software programmes but social practices. The most far reaching changes will come, as they often do, from the kinds of relationships, enterprises, communities, and markets that the infrastructure makes possible.’

So, his question might be how do we collect those social practices? In a museum sector, still very much driven by the physicality of objects, it opens up much needed debate, on how we define ‘an object’, how we collect context and, crucially for telecommunications collections, about how to collect the human message as well as the medium.
Big and Oily: Collecting the North Sea Oil and Gas Industry

John Edwards

Introduction

One of Aberdeen Maritime Museum's first acquisitions was the model of the *SS Thermopylae*, an exquisite builder's cased model presented in the year 1891, the same year the ship was launched by the Aberdeen shipbuilders Hall Russell and Company. This clearly illustrates that contemporary collection is not a new concept in the museum world. The fact that the shipbuilders and museum at that time recognised the importance of preserving and displaying the modern technology of the day is something that we would applaud in our own modern times.

As early as the late 1970s museum staff in Aberdeen were actively seeking out the best examples of models, illustrations, film and artefacts from the booming North Sea Oil and Gas industry. At that time, and to a lesser extent even today, people in the industry would question the rationale for collecting material from such a technologically advanced sector for a museum, of all places. However the same reasoning that allowed a museum to collect a model of a newly built ship back in 1891 could be applied to the oil industry of our day.

"Collecting for the future" is the term we often give such practices and with the offshore industry of the 1970s and 80s we were faced with many questions relating to what sort of future we were collecting for. Many experts in the 1970s felt that the North Sea would be exploited over a brief period of time and the production platforms, pipelines and shore installations would be de-commissioned by the end of the twentieth century. The catch phrase at the time was very much "get it done and don't worry about the cost". In such a climate few gave a second thought to preservation of early material let alone whether the general public would be interested in seeing it.

A considerable amount of material was probably lost in those early years but there are now concerted efforts to see how much was saved and to develop projects to audit potential additions to collections. Specific initiatives such as the *Capturing the Energy* project will be discussed later in this paper along with various museum-industry partnerships that have had some positive outcomes for Aberdeen Maritime Museum.

First of all we will look at the background of the industry's history over the past thirty years and then investigate some of the criteria Aberdeen Maritime Museum has chosen for selecting its North Sea Oil and Gas collections.

The North Sea Oil and Gas Story

The UK offshore industry is all about big numbers. For instance:

- About 2.5 billion tonnes of oil and 145 billion cubic metres of gas have been produced by the UK to date.
- Total investment in the UK North Sea from 1965 to the end of 1999 is £105 billion. In today's money, that equates to £187 billion.
- There is a total of 273 oil and gas installations in the North Sea sector, interconnected by thousands of miles of pipelines and support infrastructure.

Naturally enough potential museum acquisitions from such a massive industry will tend to be of comparable size. As the Museum wishes to document and interpret the offshore industry, clear strategies for partnership working and collecting policy advice are needed to best inform the Museum and ensure that a coherent approach is made to its acquisitions' approach.
Strategies for Collection
The Aberdeen Maritime Museum has worked with a range of partners to achieve a considered and clear approach to its collecting policies. For many years the Museum has been a member of the UK Maritime Collections Strategy (UKMCS). Chaired by the National Maritime Museum, this Subject Specialist Network (SSN) has over time agreed the demarcation of collection boundaries within the group.

In this way, for example, the Royal Naval Museum is acknowledged as the UK’s museum of naval history and the Aberdeen Maritime Museum is recognised by the SSN as the “lead museum” for the collection, preservation and interpretation of material relating to the offshore oil and gas industries.

Meetings are held regularly and are linked to the wider form of the Maritime Curators Group. This has resulted in one of the UK’s first SSNs producing a coherent strategy for collections and insures a continuing dialogue amongst its community.

An equally important partnership for the Aberdeen Maritime Museum is its Oil Panel. This group consists of experts from the oil industries, including drilling, diving, oil producers, shipping companies, suppliers and academics who meet regularly with museum curators. Their role is to advise on trends in the industry and indicate where the Museum should be looking next for possible acquisitions.

The Museum’s long established Oil Panel has created an industry to museum interaction that has informed both partners on the needs and objectives of both parties. This has been a journey of understanding where the Museum has sought to inform industry on the scope of its collection policy and industry has responded with direction to areas that are significant and should be collected.

The Museum is well placed with its established collection strategy and Oil Panel to promote the understanding of the offshore industry by providing further information networks with collections in Aberdeen and further afield. There are links not only with oil related companies but with oil and gas museums across the North Sea and maritime museums around the UK.

What to collect
There are excellent examples of museums collecting large and complex items of technology. One only has to look at the Gulbenkian Award winning SS Great Britain in Bristol to see that the challenge of collecting and maintaining big objects, in this case a world famous ship, can be met with a high degree of success not only curatorially but for the visitor as well. Similarly, the icon of 1960s technology, Concorde, an aircraft once inaccessible to the millions who paid for it is now exhibited in the National Museum of Flight near Edinburgh and is enjoyed by its many visitors.

So what can we do to interpret the mammoth offshore industry which is literally beyond the horizon, unseen by the vast majority of the population? Clearly the issues of storage and cost are top of the list in considering the acquisition of any object from this industry.

Given the various strategies, collecting policies, partnerships and precedents for collecting in this sector we can look at some of the objects in the Aberdeen Maritime Museum as examples of collecting in practice.

The Murchison oil production platform model rises through three stories of the museum and is visible to visitors from every angle. Originally built as a “pipe-clash” test model by Conoco Oil model makers in 1979 to ensure the miles of pipes on board did not get in each other’s way. This was the only means available to do this and 27 years on, with the advent of AutoCAD computer programmes, it is very difficult to believe this was once the sole means of achieving this objective. Therefore the model is important on a number of different levels. It is in the long tradition of marine model making that required a detailed model of a ship to be built before the design could be tested and approved by the owners. It demonstrated how quickly technology has evolved in a
quarter of a century and that, at the beginning of the North Sea exploration phase, the engineering technologies available were very much in the post-war phase. The North Sea was the test-bed for new technologies driven by the need to build substantially stronger structures and extract oil and gas as soon as possible given the oil shortage crises of the 1970s.

Amongst the collection of items donated from people who worked on platform construction and installation the museum has a small snap shot of the Piper Alpha platform taken in the early 1980s shortly after it was commissioned. This is a valuable and poignant photograph taken by someone who knew some of the 167 people who perished on the night of 6th July 1988 when the platform exploded. Associated with this the Museum has the George Medal awarded to one of the rescuers that day, a maquette of the Piper Alpha memorial, the platform’s emergency procedures manual and a pewter tankard given to the platform crew to commemorate 100 days of safe working, awarded exactly one year prior to the disaster.

A further example of collection in practice can be found in the drill bit collection. Visitors understand the basics of drilling for oil and we do display some well used bits but we have been fortunate in being gifted unused drilling and coring bits. Drill bits can cost tens of thousands of pounds and so it is good to have companies on board and interested in showing the public the best of North Sea technology so that people can appreciate the resources needed to bring the oil and gas ashore.

We are also able to demonstrate how technologies have developed over time. The Museum's Dynamic Positioning System – a large consul that was part of a ship's bridge technology of the 1970s. Today the same job could be done with a portable radio-sized piece of kit, similar to the satellite navigation systems readily available to the general public. The Museum collected this not only for its example of early technology but for the fact that it could be utilised by installation of an interpretative video. A captain of a supply vessel shows the visitor around the bridge and explains the workings of the equipment. It is made the more real as our visitors can look into the actual ships berthed in the harbour, just meters in front of the Museum itself.

A recent development in the underwater technology exhibitions further demonstrates the Museum’s degree of partnership working with industry. Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) are the workhorses of the underwater inspection and maintenance programmes. They have largely replaced divers in the North Sea and are able to perform intricate tasks in particularly dangerous locations.

The Museum acquired Scorpio 29 from a specialist company who refurbished it after years of use and also paid for installation. This ROV would have cost over £300,000 in today's market making it a significant addition to the collection as well as being a "real" object for the visitors to view rather than a mock-up.

This was collected because of its importance to the whole industry and its place in the evolving technologies. Its importance was demonstrated when a Scorpio ROV from this country played a vital role in the rescue of the Russian submariners trapped in fishing nets and cables at the bottom of the sea in 2005.

A further example of partnership working is evidenced in the mini ROV called Scorpino which was designed and built by The School of Engineering at the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. (Scorpino means little Scorpion and research informs us that it is also the name of a cocktail). Scorpino is a fully operational version of its big brother and is demonstrated in a large water tank so that visitors may pilot it in the same manner as the full sized ROV.

All those who travel offshore must wear survival suits and be trained in evacuation. The suits will keep you alive for hours as opposed to minutes if you were to be exposed to the cold waters of the North Sea without one. These are real objects and indicate the development of safety over the past four decades. They are so plentiful and updat-
ed so frequently that we can collect any number of them and use them on open display and in handling sessions.

Exhibitions
Oil platforms and installations do not just drill and extract oil and gas. They have dozens of workers in other trades: caterers, domestics, maintenance, helicopter crew, radio operators and cleaners. Women working in the UK sector perform some of these jobs although they tend to be in a minority. Aberdeen Maritime Museum documented this trend in a joint project with the Norwegian Petroleum Museum in Stavanger with an exhibition called *Women in Oil Industries*. The exhibition compared the experiences of the two countries, and despite what some UK companies might say, the Norwegians are far ahead in terms of employing women throughout the industry in a much wider range of jobs. In the UK sector any jobs occupied by women tend to be in non-industrial or engineering positions while on Norwegian installations there is roughly a 50-50 split throughout the occupations including engineering, management and support services. Further partnership projects with Norway are planned and this will enable the museum to provide balance to its view of what is an international industry.

The very first large scale decommissioning of a platform took place in 2004 with the dismantling of the *Maureen* platform. The Museum documented this and collected objects and photographs. This resulted in an exhibition and served as a template for the inevitable mass of work that lies ahead with the decommissioning of installations over the coming decades.

Another major specialist exhibition, called *Evolution*, was mounted in 2005 to mark the 30th anniversary of first oil coming ashore. Funds from seven companies enabled the Museum to hire in designers and audio visual specialists to develop this exhibition. Education was a key element to the project and partnership funding allowed a *Young Persons Guide to Evolution* to be printed and for special Family Fun Weekend events to take place.

Future collecting at a time of decommissioning of oil fields
I wish to conclude by looking at some recent developments designed to tackle the complex issues that occur when oil and gas installations are decommissioned. Partnerships between museums and archives, business and universities around the UK and further across the North Sea are essential in ensuring that North Sea offshore industrial heritage is preserved.

The first example I would like to sight is the Norwegian Ekofisk Industrial Heritage documentation project.

Ekofisk occupies a central place in Norway's petroleum history as the first producing oil and gas field on the Norwegian continental shelf.

This position, combined with the size of the field and its interesting development history, defines Ekofisk as a part of Norway's industrial heritage with national value. The Norwegian Ekofisk Industrial Heritage documentation project was created and part funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage to ensure the systematic selection of documentary source material relating to Ekofisk.

The Norwegian Petroleum Museum has been tasked with providing facilities and expertise essential in the preservation and interpretation of drawings, photographs, film, publications, objects, interviews and other material. Digital databases represent the principal medium for storing these sources. This project represents the first time that cultural relics from the petroleum sector have been documented on such a scale. The museum calls the outcome of the project "a digital national memory".

Drawing on this experience we are now in the process of working with a broader partnership in Aberdeen with the aim of expanding the capacity to collect in this field.
A one-day conference was held in March 2006 aimed at encouraging wider recognition of the huge importance of the Offshore Oil and Gas Industry to the UK. Among its key aims was to promote the retention of the most significant records relating to the industry, to enhance future research programmes, and through these activities, generate a wider public understanding of the industry.

This resulted in the formation of a Steering Group made up of representatives from the Aberdeen Maritime Museum, The University of Aberdeen, British Archives Council of Scotland, Aberdeen University, Department of Trade and Industry and some key industry representatives. The project is called “Capturing the Energy” - Recording the UK Offshore Oil & Gas Industry and has made significant progress in developing strategies for further partnership projects. The Museum will continue to play a role in this project and it is anticipated that major positive results will occur in the near future.

As predictions for the final demise of the offshore industry now stretch to the 2030s our challenge is to maintain the Museum’s connections with an industry that will be changing and evolving into other forms of energy over the next few years.

In future will the North Sea Oil and Gas enterprise be viewed as something to be “dumped over the side”, as has been the case of many of our major industries of the past? Or will it be viewed as one of the significant industries of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, one that provided people with livelihoods, created wealth and contributed a multiplicity of new technologies to the nation?

To use a phrase from our Norwegian museum colleagues, my hope is that it will be seen as one of “the largest and most complex cultural monuments of our time” and therefore worthy of the significant effort required to collect, preserve and interpret the subject.
Designing from the Inside Out

Kirsty Devine

The current Museum of Transport is the second most visited transport museum in the UK and the third most popular free visitor attraction in Scotland. Each year we attract around 500,000 visitors. During 2009 a new purpose-built Museum (at a new site on the River Clyde) will open to the public. The move to the new location will be the third venue for the Museum of Transport.

The Museum was originally opened in Albert Drive, on the south side of Glasgow in 1964, although the city has been collecting transport and technology since the 1880s. The impetus for its creation was provided by the need to accommodate Glasgow's historic tram collection and renovated locomotives previously run by British Rail. In 1978, the important collection of ship models was transferred from Kelvingrove Museum & Art Gallery. The Museum of Transport moved to its current location at Kelvin Hall across the road from the Kelvingrove in 1988. Today there are 1,300 transport objects on display and many more in store. This excludes Glasgow Museums' large collections of clothing, works on paper, decorative art and art which relate to transport. Indeed the Museum is also a Glasgow Museums' store in its own right holding circa 800,000 natural history, art, anthropology, decorative arts and archaeology objects.

So why move again?
Aside from providing greatly improved conservation and environmental standards for the collections, relocating the Museum of Transport provides the opportunity to:

- Create a world-class visitor attraction on the Clyde that will contribute to the regeneration of the river and improve the display of the City's important transport, technology and related collections
- Represent and interpret Glasgow's internationally important shipbuilding and maritime heritage and history, and the vital role of the River Clyde and Glasgow people
- Ensure the attraction responds to the needs of its diverse audience
- Design from the inside-out, conceiving imaginative displays from the strengths of the collections, which lead and guide the development of the building and are integrated with the riverside site and the SV Glenlee

This final point of designing 'from the inside out' is particularly important for us as a client team and has been our mantra from the very outset of the project. In June 2004, an Official Journal of the European Union advertisement was issued for the procurement of the building, landscape and exhibition design services. We have taken the unusual step of appointing the exhibition 3D designers (Event Communications Ltd) at the same stage we appointed the building teams (Zaha Hadid Associates and Buro Happold). The decision was deliberate. By allowing the building and displays to develop in tandem we aim to produce a building that not only meets our audiences needs but responds to the collections, and the nature of the external site as well.

From the eight short-listed architects Zaha Hadid Associates' design concept was approved because it wove the different strands of the project – visitor needs, transport collections, position on the River Clyde – into a dynamic and functional response to the brief. The design elegantly suggested a sense of movement reflecting the very nature of the collections it will eventually house. It is this aspect of the design that stems from the desire to have the building designed from the inside out.

Inside the building itself the new museum displays are being developed under the
overarching concept of ‘Glasgow on the Move’, reflecting the philosophical change from a focus on transport, technology and technique to incorporate travel, social context and most importantly people.

Building on the work of the Kelvingrove New Century Project, the project has adopted a display philosophy of ‘storytelling’. Stories are being developed which are self-contained, focused on the object’s real significance and relevant to the target audiences. The use of chronological or taxonomic displays where objects are chosen to fit into specific pre-defined narratives has been rejected. The selection of new displays is based solely on two criteria: the significance and strengths of the collections and audience interest. Museums undoubtedly have the opportunity to tell different stories over time based on new research, new acquisitions and an awareness of visitor interest. The substantial and wide-ranging stakeholder research carried out to date emphasizes the need to enhance and rotate the variety of collections on display. To ensure this flexibility, each discrete ‘story display’ will be easy to change to a greater or lesser extent without disrupting a larger exhibition display. This means that over a eight year period 30 percent of the display will alter.

At its most fundamental level transport museums are about travel and movement. However displays often fail to communicate this. Objects, which were once moving, and noisy, are rendered static and sanitised within the museum environment. The development of an agreed number of what we term Key Attracts focus on bringing a sense of movement and drama to the Museum, acting as focal points around the Museum, and bringing an additional layer of interpretation to the high density displays that in turn show the depth of the collections. In short, they will help to bring our collections ‘back to life’.

The design of these major set piece exhibits have been considered as a priority for design development ahead of the main content development programme because they will most fundamentally affect the fabric of the building. They required the different design teams to work together to resolve a number of issues both practical and aesthetic. Outlined below are three of sixteen key attracts currently at the concept design stage including plans for the No.9 Locomotive; ship paternoster, and the recreated ‘Street displays’.
Locomotive No.9
Glasgow was a major locomotive manufacturing centre producing some 28,000 locomotives, two thirds of which were exported around the world. It will come as no surprise therefore that locomotives form an integral part of Glasgow Museums' collections.

However, often the excitement, noise and drama of a travelling locomotive is lost in a static display. The No.9 steam locomotive will be housed at first floor level directly within the line of sight of the building entrance. The engine will be positioned so that it appears to be almost breaking through the Museum walls. The front face of the locomotive (visible from the North entrance of the Museum) may be used to demonstrate the noise, scale and look of a steam engine in motion or braking. This may include the sound of the engine, the brakes, the implied movement of tracks, and the great cloud of steam as the engine apparently comes to a halt, front wheels apparently about to drop off the edge of the mezzanine. The rear portion of the locomotive will be used to tell particular stories relating to its history. This type of interpretation will help to convey animation and movement, as well as bringing the object back to life for visitors.

Ship Paternoster
The history of Glasgow is synonymous with shipbuilding and maritime trade. With a truly significant collection of over 500 ship models both on display and in store our aim is create displays to allow maximum impact within the Museum. Housed on the upper floor of the building the ship paternoster is fleet of ship models, displayed on a moving conveyor belt which suggests a continuous voyage towards the Clyde and set within their social context. The principle behind the ship paternoster is both to create visual impact by grouping a significant number of ship models together with the ability to get close to the models and see each in turn. Screens will be installed at certain points along the paternoster, creating a sudden zoomed-in detailed view of parts of the models. Such an approach will make explicit links with the River Clyde, and introduce a sense of movement into the building.

Streets
The inclusion of street(s) within the Riverside Museum is a direct response to the visitor evaluation carried out as part of the 2002 Masterplanning phase of the project, which highlighted the fact that the current reconstructed Glasgow Street was the most popular attraction at Glasgow Museum of Transport.

We envisage a much more immersive experience than is currently offered in Kelvin Street with visitors able to enter the majority of street 'units' and enjoy some form of interaction. It will show land transport in a social context, as well as the structure of human transport within cities. As such, some shops, businesses and transport vehicles will change, develop or simply disappear as visitors move through different eras. The initial proposal was to incorporate two streets (1900 and 1930). Following further inhouse discussions three streets spanning the period 1900 to 1980 are now under development as an effective method of showing the changes in transport history and the development of the street in a more in-depth manner.

There are three streets designed into the architectural fabric of the museum;

- 1900s - 1930s street
- 1930s - 1960s street
- 1960s - 1980s street

We are aware that to accurately and realistically reflect the multiple stories common within a streetscape we need to move away from a linear progression of history, frozen
at a particular moment in time. The environment of the street displays offers the Museum the opportunity to present a series of clearly defined and scripted narratives which have the ability to actively engage visitors, encourage learning and spark curiosity. Using interpretative media such as audio visual and live interpretation we plan to present a series of ‘street concept’ stories.

Concept stories will make use of the vehicles, other collections, shops and fixtures and fittings of the streets, to tell wider stories about the manufacture, maintenance, use and consumption of vehicles and the nature and evolution of ‘Glasgow streets’. The shows, which will last approximately three to five minutes and shown regularly throughout the day, will take up a substantial section of the street space or be whole street experiences and will weave the collections into the show. The shows will resonate with likely visitor interest. Final content is still to be determined but we have already begun to identify a number of broad subjects for further development. Given the appeal to visitors of the existing Street within the current Museum of Transport we regard these ‘street concept stories’ as high investment shows (in terms of infrastructure required to deliver the stories) that we will advertise as key attracts.

Interpreting and Using the Landscape
Designing from the inside out doesn't mean we leave consideration of the 'outside' until the very end of the project. The landscape surrounding the Museum offers unique opportunities to integrate the story displays within the Museum with the features and views found in looking outwards from the Museum. It also allows us to demonstrate the operation of road and water transport. The proposed site on the confluence between the River Clyde and River Kelvin, will enable us to represent and interpret Glasgow’s internationally important shipbuilding and maritime heritage in context for the first time. The SV Glenlee and other Clyde Maritime Trust vessels will be integrated alongside the new Museum and will be interpreted in the landscape surrounding the Museum. Visiting historic and contemporary vessels will be able to moor alongside the Museum. The views up, down and across the River Clyde will be interpreted to provide visitors with a contemporary and historical context to the Museum. The banks of the River Kelvin are a protected wild life corridor, which will be interpreted by our natural history curators to give visitors a greater enjoyment and understanding of the natural environment.

In order to maximise this opportunity to make direct links with the external landscape, a number of story displays have been developed that make explicit links between the new museum and its surrounding landscape. Some of these stories will be inside the Museum and exploit views to the external environment, and others will be outside in the landscape. A large plaza directly outside the main entrance to the Museum will be used to operate and demonstrate historic or contemporary land transport and provide a location for transport rallies.

Conclusion
Working concurrently with different design teams can prove tricky but to date has been a fruitful and creative experience. We feel it has been vital to take this approach. We did not want to take ownership of a building where the collections sat uneasily within the space – the architecture and the objects sitting together like odd bedfellows. Three years on from that early aspiration to ‘design from the inside out’ we are confident that the building will respond sympathetically to the needs of our visitors, our collections and our landscape.
Wilberforce, 2007 and Beyond

Jayne Tyler

March 25th 2007 is the bi-centenary anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in Britain and the colonies. As birthplace of the parliamentary anti-slavery campaigner, William Wilberforce, this throws up a number of opportunities and issues for the city of Hull.

To put the Wilberforce Project in context it is important to understand a little bit about the city of Hull. Since the fishing industry collapsed in the 1970s, Hull has been trying actively to support the regeneration of some of its most deprived areas. The Council has a clear vision to raise aspirations for the communities in Hull and to embed cultural activities at the heart of its policies, particularly in areas of education and citizenship.

The hard reality of life in Hull is that it is the ninth most deprived local authority in England, 41 percent of the population of 250,000 have no qualifications and 62.3 percent of adults are from the socio-economic grouping C2DE. There are only 3.9 percent black and minority ethnic communities in Hull. There is a higher than average incidence of mental illness across the city and a high number of teenage mothers living in Hull.

At the same time cultural activity in the city is a key driver of tourism which is worth approximately £209 million a year and 3,900 jobs. European, Heritage Lottery and Millennium funding has enabled the development of huge visitor attractions such as The Deep, the KC Stadium, the award winning Museums Quarter and the forthcoming St Stephen’s development, which have helped towards the city’s cultural and

Picture 1: Community consultation – the Mama Tora Group.
economic regeneration. Hull’s eight museums and art gallery are key players in this regeneration.

The 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British slave trade has enabled Hull to focus on Wilberforce and issues relating to slavery at a time when resources will be available for development. As birthplace of the parliamentary abolitionist it is an opportunity to raise the profile of the city locally, nationally and internationally. Hull City Council has appointed a 2007 citywide team of Community Managers and officers to work with communities in the city to produce a range of public participation programmes for 2007. In addition to this Hull Museums have secured external funding and political support for the re-development of Wilberforce House Museum to improve physical and intellectual access and to explore the subject area in a wider context for the first time.

Wilberforce House Museum was the first museum in Britain to deal with the subject of slavery when it opened in 1906. New transatlantic slavery displays opened in 1983 to mark the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery which although now outdated were still ahead of their time. In 1999 early development and feasibility studies commenced for the current project and in 2005 Yorkshire Renaissance funding enabled us to take on two project officers who have been involved in fundraising, audience development and community consultation on the project. 95 percent of the £1.6 million capital cost of developing Wilberforce House has been covered by external fundraising. For the first time Hull has been able to build in audience development work as an integral part of the capital display and fit out due to Renaissance funding.

2007 has also provided the opportunities for some key partnerships. The Wilberforce team have worked closely with black, minority, ethnic and access groups to work up the design briefs and graphic panels for the displays. They have also linked to other 2007 activity across the city to get a wide range of views from stakeholders on the future development. The Project Team have worked with current museum users and non-visitors to develop a sense of what the public want from such a high profile museum.

Picture 2: David Lammy MP and others looking at the Wise Wall.
Key partnerships have included the Wilberforce Advisory Group (WAG) which includes academics, curators and community leaders from Britain, West Africa, Canada and the Caribbean. These have acted as a 'critical friend' on the project making comments on design briefs and graphic panel text. This has meant that the project has benefited from some of the latest research and best practice available.

The project is proceeding with the vigorous support of local politicians, the BBC, the Hull Daily Mail and the Hull business community.

Hull Museums are partners with the University of Hull in the new Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation (WISE) which has been jointly developed on the Museums Quarter site. It is in an ideal location next to Wilberforce House fully accessible and with a modern architectural feature and entrance sweeping down into Mandela Gardens itself. A feature of the Institute is a stunning Derbyshire stone wall with carefully chosen 'names in the wall' of key human rights campaigners past and present. This project was funded by a £1.3 million grant from Yorkshire Forward, the regional development agency. Hull City Council provided the building free of charge and it will eventually house fifteen staff and 35 research students, making it the largest such institute in Europe.

The main aims of the Wilberforce Project are to provide access for all, clear orientation around the Museum and to engage with local communities in the development of their new museum. Our local consultation groups want to see information on West African culture during slavery, personal narratives of the enslaved, positive messages and images of modern Africa, details about the conflicts in Wilberforce’s role, contemporary slavery issues and museum enablers. Other items on their wish list are handling material, differentiated learning, questioning of historians motives, to find out about the full horrors of slavery and to see slavery related to issues of legacy, racism, human rights and reparations today. There is also a strong desire for audio-visual interpretation and changing community displays. This is a very comprehensive, challenging but achievable list of themes, techniques and approaches to interpreting the subject of transatlantic slavery and abolition.

One of the key challenges we face as a curatorial team is how to take on board these ideas with very few objects, limited budgets and a deadline that is non-negotiable. The Museum opens on the 25th March 2007, the actual anniversary of the Act.

A challenge for all museums in the run up to 2007 is the lack of material culture relating to the transatlantic slave trade. Hull has a lot of objects and archives relating to Wilberforce and the abolition campaign. However material relating to the transatlantic slave trade is mainly two dimensional, for example Jamaican Plantation records. If as a museum we focussed just on areas where there was a wealth of material culture and missed out key issues and themes there would be many gaps resulting in ‘hidden’ narratives and ‘hidden’ histories in the displays.

A way of overcoming the lack of objects for Hull has been to look at personal narratives from enslaved Africans such as Olaudah Equiano, Ignatius Sancho and to build on these previously hidden histories. Imaginative interpretation techniques including ‘voices in the wall’ audio interactivs, strong imagery and audio-visual techniques have helped to overcome some of the problems of object gaps.

Clear themes in the displays emerged early on based on research and audience development. These included ancient slavery, Africa during the transatlantic slave trade, capture and enslavement, the middle passage, slave auctions, plantation life, resistance and rebellion on the plantations, abolition in the widest sense, the post-abolition period and contemporary slavery and legacies.

Initially our design team’s approach to the displays was to take a scenic approach to some of the interpretation to balance the lack of material culture. This was challenged by the consultation group and project team and resulted in heated
discussions amongst our project team and designers. The outcome was that we pulled much of the realistic treatment of scenic works and instead developed a more contemporary design for the displays.

It was felt that reproducing West African village dwellings prior to enslavement would send out a stereotypical message to our visitors. Instead the West African Cultures gallery focuses on the rich material culture of West African societies during transatlantic slavery, exploring this through the loan of some spectacular material from the British Museum and advice from the Horniman Museum in London. In addition to this some of the input from our Curatorial Adviser, Celia Nicol at the Sierra Leone National Museum, Freetown, has resulted in the creation of an Acacia tree in the gallery under which the oral tradition of storytelling can be explored by visitors and learning groups alike.

I cannot underestimate the amount of time and debate which has accompanied every decision to include or exclude certain elements of the displays. The Acacia tree, originally based on an idea of the Cotton Tree that sits in the middle of a roundabout in Freetown, Sierra Leone, is now a tree developed with a recycled metal work finish, to avoid the 'rural' stereotypes that many museum visitors associate with life in West Africa. The roots are designed to hold a seat for the visitors and house a wide range of accessible books exploring everything from modern life in Nigeria, to Adinkra symbolism and West African children's games.

Another difficult area was the display exploring the capture and enslavement of African people prior to their transportation to the Caribbean and the Americas. This explored capture and imprisonment of the enslaved in Baracoons and Slave Forts in West Africa. It involved focussing on the difficult issues of how to portray the view of the last exit of people from the slave forts through the 'door of no return' onto the waiting slave ships. Initial design discussions exploring a physical reconstruction of this were quickly dropped in favour of a large image of this last exit from the slave forts.

Eventually a solution came through working with a local Ghanaian photographer who has over the past five years regularly visited Ghanaian slave forts and documented images from these visits. The display now contains a visual presentation of a series of 30-40 black and white contemporary
images of slave forts in Ghana taken from some interesting angles. The imagery is visually stunning and poignant and the presentation is silent. Through the use of contemporary photography, the artist has presented views that touch on both the history of this area and contemporary issues including cultural tourism and slavery.

In the Contemporary galleries the focus on Key Stage 3 and 4 has enabled us to deal with issues of human rights, citizenship and Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) through a number of different interpretative techniques. Simple interactives such as the Freedom Forum enable visitors to the Museum to vote on what rights are more important than others and what happens when rights clash. These challenge people’s perceptions and raise the debate. Other contemporary collecting has enabled the Museum to purchase a series of Rock Against Racism posters from a local artist who designed them for Hull gigs in the 1980s. It has also led to an appeal for contemporary material relating to twentieth and twenty-first century human rights campaigns.

There is a strong focus on local communities in the contemporary galleries and an opportunity to look at local profiles of people living in Hull. Another audio-visual interactive focuses on the WISE names in the wall idea exploring human rights campaigners with an additional focus on local role models. For example Lilian Bilocca, a famous local campaigner for safety on the fishing trawlers, is profiled through interviews with her surviving son. This makes the subject of human rights and what individuals can and have done to stand up for human rights, more accessible to local people who can relate to many of their local heroes. The key to engaging our local audiences is often finding a link or a way into a display to make it relevant to them.

The Project Team have worked closely with our education team to develop new learning programmes particularly focusing on schools. Extensive consultation with partners has resulted in new programmes for both primary and secondary audiences. This has informed the development of the new galleries. These programmes are being supported by innovative m-learning resources including developing the use of PDAs in the new galleries and new learning journeys being created for the Yorkshire Renaissance ‘Mylearning’ website and for the national ‘Understanding Slavery Initiative’ website.

Many arts projects have been commissioned in Hull, nationally and internationally for 2007. These have provided another way of interpreting the subject of transatlantic slavery for whole new audiences in a variety of ways. A local photographer’s project called Wilberforce Women has commissioned women across the city to take photographs under the 2007 city themes of Pride, Freedom, Belief and Change. These will be made into greetings cards and sent to woman in Sierra Leone. A reciprocal project will return images from women in Sierra Leone to Hull.

The key for Hull and many other institutions, individuals and organisations is what happens after 2007? It is important that after 2007, Hull Museums continues to engage with its communities and stakeholders and continues to act as a venue for their activities and a collecting deposit for material culture that reflects many of the hidden histories of black and minority ethnic community (BME) groups in the city. Changing community exhibition spaces and dedicated learning packages put
together by the education team will continue to prevent the Museum becoming static once it has opened. Audience development work which has been carried out on Wilberforce House will be used as an example of best practice to develop the next phase and future re-development of the Hull Maritime Museum.

The citywide 2007 team are making a real impact now with the help of other council agencies with communities on some of the most deprived estates in Britain. 2007 has acted as an impetus for the city to provide contact for many people for the first time with BME groups in the city. Although small scale, perceptions are being challenged and issues of racism and violence in the city are being debated with schools and youth groups.

Wilberforce House The Next Phase, the scheme to provide public access and a dramatic re-display of the Decorative Arts collections in the attached Georgian Houses is ambitious. The creation of a state of the art glazed visitor pavilion with access to all floors via a glazed lift, café, courtyard and minimalist break out space for the public to contemplate the issues raised in Wilberforce House is currently being developed. This will provide an extension of the Learning Centre venue internally and externally for use by learning and community groups across the city.

The architecture of the next phase is aspirational and the quality of the materials used is high to reflect what the people of Hull deserve. These aspirations are supported and reinforced by our local politicians at all levels. The Council's mission is to secure a positive and sustainable future for the city. 2007 and the opportunities it presents are enabling Hull to work towards these goals for the benefit of their communities.

![Visualisation of Phase 2 of the Georgian Houses.](image-url)
Is Social History Still In Wonderland?
An update to Social History in Museums volume 16
Sharon Roberts

The child undoubtedly occupies a special place in our society. In modern Western society, childhood is the most revered time of life, with the prevailing representation conceptualising a world of innocence, joy, imagination and fantastic freedom. This modern image often places children in a metaphorical walled garden, a state where the child can experience freedom and pleasure, but is at the same time protected from the harsh reality of the outside world, preserving the child as happy and innocent of adult worries. This image of childhood – and the almost universal nostalgia it evokes amongst adults, especially in the face of modern debates about childhood being in crisis, being eroded or disappearing altogether – has not passed museums by. In 1988, the Annual Study Weekend (ASW) of the Social History Curators Group focussed its discussions on dealing with issues surrounding exhibiting the themes of childhood and childhood history in museums, and the subject of child visitors, entitling the proceedings Social History in Wonderland, a title intended to reflect two important ideas relating to childhood and museums. Firstly, wonderland in the sense of childhood imagination and play, the magic, mystery and potential of childhood, and secondly the wonderland entered into by the unwary curator, who may be overwhelmed by this captivating imagery and become “content with portraying the childhood of the Edwardian nursery, the innocence of the gingham dress and the sailor suit, the Meccano set, the teddy bear, the doll’s pram” (Fleming 1988: 31).

The collection of papers that resulted from the study weekend proceedings was later published in Social History in Museums 16. These papers were a significant step forward in the understanding of how museums in Britain address the issues surrounding childhood history and child visitors, as nothing much appears to have been available before this point, certainly not in the area of interpreting childhood (and its history) in museums. This is perhaps not surprising. At this point in time, childhood history was still a relatively recent addition to the field of social history as an area worthy of serious study. Interest in childhood history was really begun by Philippe Ariès’ L’Enfant et la Vie Familiale sous l’Ancien Régime (1960), which was later translated into English as Centuries of Childhood (1962). Despite widespread later criticism, it is important to acknowledge the profound significance of Ariès’ work; when an increased interest in social history began in the late 1960s, Centuries of Childhood stood out as the only significant modern book in its field. Publications in this area (and the closely related family history) gradually increased throughout the 1970s and 1980s (see Burton 1988), and are now abundant, having become something of a mainstream topic within social history. Children as visitors, on the other hand, were understood to make up 50 percent of the museum audience and most visited in family groups (Winterbotham 1988) at this time. The National Curriculum had only just begun in 1988, so the implications this was to have for museums – and their child visitors – were yet to become apparent.

Social History in Wonderland was introduced by Elizabeth Frostick, who posed many key questions about the nature of childhood (such as whether it can truly be considered the universal experience it is often perceived as), how to cater for children in museums, and how to relate theoretical social history to the material objects in collections. Ultimately, she identified childhood, children and curatorship of children’s objects as key themes for the study weekend’s considerations. Papers took a variety of approaches to these key themes, including accounts directly on the history of childhood (Jenkinson 1988); discussion on portrayals of working class children (Davin...
1988); issues surrounding children's costume in museums (Rose 1988); a case study of the City Children Project in Birmingham Museum (Glasson 1988), and an overview of children as museum visitors (Winterbotham 1988). A major contribution to the volume was Anthony Burton's perspective on the new social history of childhood galleries he was then in the process of designing for the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood (Burton 1988), which was appended by a comprehensive reading list of childhood history sources extending from Ariès to 1987. (A selected bibliography of sources published from 1988 onwards, intended as something of an update to Burton's reading list but also including museum-focused publications, is included at the end of this paper). The overwhelming impression was that most of the contributing authors were unsatisfied with the way childhood had been represented in museums and how children were being served as visitors. Museums were being accused of displaying an unreal, one-sided history that relied strongly on nostalgia — although the City Children Project in Birmingham was included as a positive example of ways in which a more balanced approach can be taken, even given the lack of material culture representing poor children living in the inner city (Glasson 1988). As David Fleming put it: "let us give the public the Edwardian nursery by all means, but let us give them more" (Fleming 1988: 32).

These papers therefore set up a challenge to museums, and especially to social history curators, to take the issue of children and childhood into serious consideration in their interpretation work, both as subject matter and as a visitor demographic. More problems than solutions were presented, but it would be unfair to criticise the authors on this account, as childhood history experiences considerable problems with limited material evidence in museums. Indeed, it is arguable that childhood objects suffer more than many other areas of social history, with items made specifically for children being rare in the past, and the playthings that children make for themselves being ephemeral and disposable, and therefore very difficult to identify and collect in the first place. As Frostick concluded her article, "I am convinced that once aware of a problem, it becomes at least possible to overcome it. I hope this ASH raised problems and prompted discussion on ways to seek a solution to them" (Frostick 1988: 3).

However, children and childhood are still discussed comparatively little in museum and heritage texts, suggesting that Social History in Wonderland seems to have had relatively little effect thus far in provoking discussion in these areas, and indeed those commentaries that have been produced contain much the same criticisms of museums as these papers did.

What Has Happened Since Social History in Wonderland?
In 1988, it could be said that, "as a subject in museums, 'childhood' is still quite new...children are still largely an unexplored area" (Fleming 1988: 32). 'Childhood' is not so new now — simply by virtue of nearly twenty years having passed since this statement was written — but whether it remains unexplored is debatable. Since the publication of Social History in Wonderland, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount that children and childhood are portrayed in social history museums in Britain. At the time of the publication of the Social History in Museums 16, there were three dedicated museums of childhood in the UK: the Edinburgh Museum of Childhood (opened 1955), the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood in London (renamed as such in 1974), and the National Trust Museum of Childhood in Sudbury Hall, Derbyshire (opened in 1974). There was also a permanent childhood section within Judges' Lodgings Museum in Lancaster, and the Apprentice House at Quarry Bank Mill in Styal, Cheshire, which stands as a unique testament to the lives of child workers in the cotton industry, and can quite rightly be considered something of a museum of children's experience (if not "childhood" as we would commonly perceive it) in its own right. As Frostick suggested, "there was a lot of 'childhood' about"
(Frostick 1988: 3).

Since then, a fourth museum of childhood has opened – the Highland Museum of Childhood in 1992 – and a new permanent childhood gallery opened in Abbey House Museum, Leeds, in 2001. In addition to this, childhood has become a popular and widespread choice of theme for temporary exhibitions, a move linked as much to the nostalgia associated with childhood as to the appearance of the themes of children and toys in the past as part of the National Curriculum’s history Key Stages 1 and 2, which makes childhood history exhibitions targets for school visits – and of course impacts on the theme of children as visitors to museums. A brief survey of British museum websites revealed that in the year between summer 2003 and summer 2004, three major temporary exhibitions were produced by accredited museums alone on the theme of childhood; still more were being advertised as future attractions, or offered on allied themes such as schooldays or toys. However, despite the growing inclusion of children and interpretation of childhood in our museums, it can be argued that recent concern expressed regarding the representation of social groups in terms of equity, empowerment and authenticity in museums has largely ignored children and childhood, which is perhaps surprising given the recent increase in interest both in the academic study of the child and childhood history, and (perhaps more significantly) in the portrayal of the “hidden histories” of marginalized sections of society in museum exhibitions. There has been little professional or academic interest in children or childhood in museums (or heritage sites for that matter) since Social History in Wonderland, and much of the work that has been done languishes in unpublished theses and conference papers. While museums may be exploring childhood more in the sense of putting on a greater number of exhibitions, there seems to be little interest or awareness in exploring the issues of understanding and interpreting childhood that Frostick raised in her opening paper.

Having visited ten different museums exhibiting children’s histories and childhood – the four dedicated museums of childhood, the three permanent exhibitions and three temporary exhibitions mentioned above – it has become clear that many different approaches can be taken to this theme. Research conducted in 1994 indicated that the “Edwardian Nursery” image of childhood was still the prevailing representation in museums at that point, with displays reinforcing rather than questioning cozy and nostalgic images of childhood on most occasions (Law 1994: 45). By 2001, it was noted that although such imagery was still being widely used in museums, curators in some institutions “will try to include some difficult or controversial issues” (Maultby 2001: 55-56), suggesting that a broader range of interpretation was being introduced into museums over this period in time. This seems to fit well with what was observed in the recent visits. Many museums are still using imagery of a nostalgic middle class childhood filled with expensive toys to represent children in the past, especially in the Victorian and Edwardian eras. This is not to say that there is anything wrong with this type of display, as long as it is made clear to visitors that not all Victorian and Edwardian children lived in cozy nurseries, and indeed that not all children who had the privilege of such surroundings would have found it an entirely pleasant experience; the Edwardian nursery could be as much a symbol of isolation as privilege. Neither of these points was mentioned in any of the museums visited, leaving only one reading to be taken from each situation. The representation of children and childhood that the study weekend was so critical of in 1988 therefore still existed in museums in 2004; despite indications that representations have been broadening over recent years, the idealised middle class childhood is still prominent in British museums interpreting childhood history.

The vision of Anthony Burton to bring social history of childhood galleries to the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood has now been realised. The exhibitions designed by Burton in 1988 are no longer on show – they were replaced in 2003 – but his lega-
cy remains in that the top floor of the museum is still dedicated to social history themes. While it could be argued that without such themes the museum is actually a museum of childhood objects rather than a museum of childhood, it is interesting to note that perhaps the visiting public does not agree with this idea. In 1994, Brian Shepherd administered a survey to adult visitors at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, with the aim of gauging opinions about the displays in the museum. This questionnaire failed to elicit a single response that the museum concentrated on toys at the expense of other important aspects of children's lives. An almost leading question asking whether the respondent had expected the displays to reveal more about the domestic, educational or working aspects of children's lives produced a strong response that such themes would be better dealt with in another museum, and that the concentration on toys at Bethnal Green was entirely appropriate (Shepherd 1996: 261). The results of this survey suggest that in the minds of the visitors, a museum of childhood is synonymous with a toy museum. It also seems to imply that the audience of this museum had a fixed and idealised image of childhood, an image in which the idea of childhood is removed from the world of daily living, and the child becomes culturally isolated from adult reality in a land of comfort and toys. It therefore appears that adult visitors have clear ideas about what should be displayed in museums of childhood; this is perhaps to be expected given that it is adults who manufacture and distribute toys, who construct and perpetuate images of childhood, and who create the social, intellectual and emotional spaces that children are obliged to inhabit.

The issue of the limitations of the surviving material evidence remains a problem for museums. It was suggested in 1988 that more needed to be done to go beyond these deficiencies, and that lack of material evidence should not equal lack of interpretation in museums. There has been some encouraging progress in this regard in recent displays. Alongside the popular standby of oral history – particularly useful in the case of childhood, as it can access intangible evidence such as childhood songs and rhymes – some museums have shown imagination and inventiveness in presenting children's histories and childhood. For example, at the Apprentice House in Quarry Bank Mill, the National Trust uses costumed guides and a “period appropriate” handling collection (made up of objects from the right period not directly related to the property, and modern reproductions) to replace the authentic objects that had long been lost to interpret the property. Elsewhere, The Silk Mill in Derby created character cards narrating different themes (such as children at work, school, clothing and play) from children’s perspectives to accompany their 2003 temporary exhibition Grow Up: The Derby Childhood Experience, which could be carried around by visitors to compare between boys and girls, rich and poor families, different themes and historical eras. Sudbury Hall also used an interesting approach to adapting the material it had to interpreting the themes it wanted to exhibit. To illustrate the theme of working children, there were no objects that could be directly linked to children either through lack of survival or because children used the same material culture as adults: so the museum instead exhibited the products of industries that used child labour in the local area instead.

In terms of child visitors, children still appear to make up a large share of the museums audience. Following the abolition of entrance charges to national collections in 1999, for instance, the number of children visiting such museums was reported to have risen by 20 percent by the year 2001. A Museums Libraries and Archives Council research report in 2000 put the proportion of child visitors at 30 percent of total museum visitors, which was supported by another survey done by Visit Britain in 2005, which also stated that children make up 30 percent of museum visitors. This is rather lower than the 50 percent figure put forward in 1988, but given the basic difficulty of defining what a child is (pre-teen? still at school? under 18?) then comparing these
figures becomes almost impossible, and the difference between them may be as much a factor of different ideas of what a "child visitor" is as an actual decline in the number of children coming to museums since 1988. However, what is clear is that a lot of people that museums classify as children – by whatever definition – do visit museums. The impact that the National Curriculum has had since 1988 has seen museums specifically using childhood as an exhibition theme to target this group of visitors, perhaps implying that school visits are now more important (certainly in the eyes of the museum) than the family visits that predominated in 1988. Good displays and education activities targeted at National Curriculum topics can result in the same schools visiting museums on a regular basis. Provision for children in many museums has also changed: the opening of the UK’s first children's museum – Eureka in Halifax – is just one result of the museum world taking child visitors a lot more seriously.

Conclusion
It has been said that, “children are hot property in today's museums” (Shepherd 2001: 1). While it is of course important to acknowledge children as a significant visiting demographic and to provide for them as museum visitors – and much progress seems to have been made in this area since the publication of Social History in Wonderland – museums seem to have stalled in the other key area highlighted by the study weekend proceedings. Seeing children and childhood as important seems only to extend as far considering children as participants in family visits and educational groups, not to considering ways in which to better collect, interpret, represent and exhibit their lives and histories in museums. Museum audiences are often particularly interested in displays that they find meaningful and relevant in terms of their own experiences in life; as everybody is or has been a child (even if they have not had a "childhood"), then perhaps it is time to recognise the interest that could be provoked amongst visitors of all ages and backgrounds by including children more in displays, and to finally give people more than the Victorian schoolroom and Edwardian nursery.

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Selected Bibliography: An Update to the Reading List on Childhood

Secret Museums: Unlocking Hidden Histories

Stuart Frost

The twentieth century society has seen tremendous change in attitudes to sex and sexuality but museums have been slow to reflect these shifts. Mark Liddiard was one of the first to observe that until the early 1990s museums had ignored sex. He maintained that this was partly because it was believed there was a lack of relevant material culture to exhibit. However a number of recent exhibitions and other strategies have successfully addressed sex and sexuality. These initiatives have demonstrated that museums can display and interpret histories related to sexuality successfully. They also indicate that there is more relevant material in collections than may be realised; that temporary exhibitions offer museums an opportunity to actively acquire objects and histories related to sex and sexuality; and that by addressing these subjects museums can create displays which are inclusive, engaging and that appeal to a wider audience.

The relationship between museums and sex has historically been a difficult one. There have always been objects and histories reflecting societies attitudes to sex and sexuality to collect. ‘Erotic’ pieces from the classical world were amongst the first to find their way into museum collections from the late eighteenth century onwards. Sexually explicit material excavated from Pompeii and Herculaneum was initially openly on show for wealthy Grand Tour visitors but by 1823 there was a ‘Cabinet of Obscene Objects’ to restrict access. These objects were later placed in a secret room in the Museo Borbonico (which became the National Archaeological Museum of Naples). A catalogue of this restricted collection was published for the first time in 1866 with the inaccurate and anachronistic term ‘pornographic’ included in the text.

By the 1830s some antiquities at the British Museum were also being segregated from the main collections on the basis of their ‘obscene nature’. In the 1840s and 1850s other objects and acquisitions joined those that had already been segregated. In 1865 a collection of over four hundred (largely) phallic objects was acquired. The acceptance of this collection prompted a more systematic approach and a Museum Secretum was created. Access was restricted and a formal letter of application needed to be approved by the Director before access to the Secretum would be considered. The Secretum only received its last items in 1953. Thereafter new ‘erotic’ acquisitions went straight to the relevant department.

Other museums who acquired smaller quantities of material that was graphic sexually were also clearly troubled by what to do with it. Formal Secret Museums were not common. Elsewhere difficult artefacts could be kept in the keeper’s office or left languishing in stores. Sometimes objects were physically censored. The over-painting of ‘exuberance’, the addition of fig-leaves, emasculation and the addition of ‘loin cloths’ were all employed as strategies by museums and private collectors. By the mid-twentieth century the situation had begun to change but an enduring stigma remained. By segregating material either formally or informally museums supported the notion that there was something wrong or unnatural about this material. This history helps explain why the significance of sex and sexuality in ancient (and contemporary) cultures was not successfully addressed in museum displays until recently.

It is arguably only in the nineteenth century that sexually explicit material began to be produced in large quantities for the purpose of arousal. This type of truly pornographic material (in the sense that its primary original purpose was as an aid or stimulus to masturbation or sex) is more likely to found in the ownership of private collectors rather than museums who have generally not collected it. Objects from
classical (and other ancient) cultures may have been considered 'pornographic' but it was rare for them to be destroyed as their cultural importance was recognised. However contemporary erotic imagery was considered to be of no value and was therefore ignored or destroyed. Pornography has always been rich with cultural significance and the links between pornography and popular culture have never been stronger. It is therefore a category of material which some social history museums should arguably be collecting. The issue of how to display this material obviously requires careful consideration. Some museums have already successfully exhibited artefacts that could be considered to be pornography.

Tate Britain's *Exposed: The Victorian Nude* (November 2001 - January 2002) explored the connections between art and pornography, acknowledging the emergence of pornography onto the Victorian cultural landscape. The exhibition helped demonstrate that far from being an era when sexuality was repressed, there was actually an explosion in the number of discourses about sex. *Surrealism: Desire Unbound*, at Tate Modern, explored the importance of love, lust and sex in inspiring surrealist art and featured some very explicit artworks. The Royal Academy made headlines with its *The Dawn of the Floating World* exhibition, the few explicit prints which featured receiving a disproportionate amount of column inches in the press. An exhibition of contemporary Japanese art at The Hayward Gallery featured some sexually explicit photographs, including erect penises and penetrative sex. In general it seems that art galleries have been more active than museums in addressing sexuality openly perhaps because the links between art, sex and sexuality have always been.

Where museums have addressed sex and sexuality as the main focus for an exhibition they have tended to focus on homosexuality. For example, in 1999 the Museum of London exhibited *Pride and Prejudice: lesbian and gay London*. The exhibition aimed to explore the role lesbians and gays have had in contributing to London's social and economic life and to give a historic overview of homosexual culture in London. The exhibition coincided with Gay Pride 1999. Exhibits included an anti-homosexual ballad of 1707, the memoirs of an eighteenth century lesbian and contemporary photographs of Gay Pride. It was a small exhibition that only lasted six weeks. However, it was one of the first significant exhibitions in any of England's major museums to focus on such issues. Visitors to the exhibition were asked to complete an electronic questionnaire and the results showed overwhelming support for the exhibition. More than 270 tickets for a public debate held at the museum were sold. It was received positively with little criticism. The exhibition allowed the museum to reach a new audience. As a result of the exhibition the museum enhanced its collections with more than fifty objects. *Pride and Prejudice* demonstrated that homosexuality can be successfully addressed by museums and that they have much to gain by doing so. The Museum of London demonstrated its long term commitment to documenting lesbian and gay history with *Queer is Here* (4th February – 5 March 2006), an exhibition which coincided with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Month. The exhibition featured photographs that documented the annual Gay Pride events, and also incorporated extracts from the Museum's oral history recordings.

Croydon Clocktower's exhibition *Celebrate*, in Lifetimes: Croydon's Museum of Stories presented aspects of the lives and times of Croydon's lesbians and gays in the twentieth century through objects, photographs and oral history. The twelve displays which formed the exhibition were given a prominent position in the Lifetimes gallery. Each display featured objects donated by the person whose story was told. The use of interactive telephones allowed each person's story to be communicated in their own words. The exhibition offers a successful approach for other museums to adapt. The Museum of London and Croydon Clocktower all had little material in their collections prior to these exhibitions. By working with local communities they were able to fill the
gap bequeathed by previous generations.

A recent exhibition at the British Museum, *The Warren Cup: Sexuality in Ancient Greece*, demonstrated that the history of same sex relationships is a long and complex one. The Warren Cup is a small silver vessel is decorated with scenes showing two pairs of males engaged in lovemaking. These scenes on this Roman object, made early in the first century AD and said to have been found near Jerusalem, raise many questions about ancient Greek and Roman culture which museums have tended to ignore. The Cup is a remarkable object that exemplifies changing attitudes to sexuality and sexual imagery remarkably effectively. The Cup was in the private ownership of E P Warren until his death in 1928. Following Warren’s death the Cup proved difficult to sell. In 1953 it was offered to the Metropolitan Museum but it was denied entry to the USA on grounds of immorality. It was first publicly displayed in 1985, and finally acquired by the British Museum in 1998. The Cup is usually displayed in Gallery 70 with a fragment of a cameo glass cup that depicts love making between a youth or men, and a boy and similar scenes of pieces of Arretine ware. However the recent temporary exhibition highlighting the Cup is the first to fully set the Cup into a meaningful context for visitors, exploring the ancient Greek culture that informed the scenes shown on the Cup. A small selection of other objects allowed the exhibition to explore how the ancient Greeks (and Romans) viewed sexuality, including same sex relationships between women and between men. The displays also highlighted the attitudes of other cultures and contemporary society to homosexuality.

Some museums have begun to integrate meaningfully same-sex relationships into exhibitions through histories associated with single objects. Several exhibitions have used images of Antinous to explore classical attitudes to same-sex desire. Antinous drowned in the River Nile in AD130 after which Hadrian had him immortalised in marble, and other precious materials. Antinous’ image was widely distributed throughout the Empire and Hadrian had him deified. Whilst many representations thought to be of Antinous survive, museums have tended to pass over his relationship with Hadrian as friend and lover. In part this is because there are only so many points that can be made on a label, but one suspects there is a lingering legacy of omission. A recent exhibition about images of Antinous at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds did acknowledge the nature of the relationship between Antinous and Hadrian: ‘Antinous was the lover of the Roman Emperor Hadrian’. That the exhibition explored the nature of this relationship no further then this single sentence is partly due to the limited interpretative approach used generally, and also because the central aim of the
exhibition was not to explore Greek and Roman attitudes to sexuality. The images of Antinous used in the display were borrowed from other institutions, serving to highlight how many images of Antinous there are in many different museum collections, many of which have probably not gone as far as the single sentence offered by the Henry Moore Institute.

*The Road to Byzantium: Luxury Arts of Antiquity* at Somerset House included a single marble portrait of Antinous, dated to the second quarter of the second century AD. Here the sculpture was used to make the point that Roman art of this date relied heavily upon classical Greek models. Nevertheless the label did state acknowledge that ‘Antinous was the adored favourite, and probably boyfriend, of the Emperor Hadrian.’ Those visitors who had opted to take the free audio-guide could find out more about what ‘boyfriend’ in both ancient Greece and Rome meant by listening to the audio-description. There was an option at the end of the initial audio script to find out more about Hadrian and Antinous’ relationship. The audio served to underline that it was not just in terms of art that earlier classical Greek culture proved to be influential in imperial Rome.

There must be a significant number of objects within many collections that have a less immediate connection with sexuality that have yet to be identified or researched fully. As an example the V&A has within its collections an exquisitely carved ivory box, known as the Veroli Casket. The casket was probably made in Constantinople during the mid-tenth century. The sequence of ivory panels, mounted to a wooden core, include scenes related to Dionysiac revelry and a representation of the Rape of Europa. There is an overt eroticism in the scenes but it is only recently that it has been argued that some of these, including scenes featuring Herakles, were intended to express homosexual or queer desires. It has been suggested that these scenes relate to an educated culture of the time where similar desires were expressed in homoerotic and pederastic poetry. Classical themes and styles were chosen to give form to these expressions of desire.

Some museums have used events programming as a means of addressing sexuality, a useful strategy where there are insufficient objects to form a permanent display or exhibition. The Imperial War Museum, London staged an event entitled *The Persecution of Homosexuals in the Third Reich*. This consisted of a screening of a documentary that traced the history of homosexuals in Germany, from 1920s Berlin to incarceration in concentration camps. The screening was followed by a discussion between Peter Tatchell and film-researcher Dr. Klaus Muller. Richard Parkinson of the British Museum recently gave a fascinating lecture entitled *The first gay kiss? Same sex desire in Ancient Egypt* which provided a thought-provoking insight into literary and archaeological evidence for same-sex relationships in this ancient culture. The gallery text for *Michelangelo Drawings: Closer to the Master* did address his sexuality, and attitudes to same-sex relationships in Renaissance Florence where further explored in a lecture by Michael Rocke.

There has always been potential for museums to address sex and sexuality either through objects already in the collections, or to borrow it for temporary exhibition or as a longer term loan. The Clocktower in Croydon and the Museum of London, have used exhibitions as an opportunity to acquire material and make links with local communities. It has long been recognised that it is essential important to collect the histories associated with objects but there are probably many objects in collections where relevant oral histories, context and associated information that could have been acquired is lacking or not adequately documented. The Proud Nation Survey is a significant recent development which should help ensure wider awareness of what material is available for those interested in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) history. Museums, galleries and archives were sent recently a two-page questionnaire and asked to register any exhibits relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual and
transgender history. The results will create a searchable national database of LGBT related items, an important resource for curators and researchers to draw upon for future work.

Addressing sexuality offers an opportunity for museums to challenge negative attitudes towards people and communities who may feel marginalised and present more accurate and relevant histories. Case studies in the GLAMM report on social inclusion vindicate the view that museums can contribute to community empowerment, affirmation of identity, questioning of prejudices and preconceived beliefs and the promotion of greater tolerance. Some museums have run projects which have helped promote healthier communities. Nottingham Museums, in conjunction with Nottingham Health Authority, ran a project called Sexwise in a secondary school for six weeks. This aimed to raise awareness about the implications of pregnancy in an area of high teenage pregnancy and was linked with an exhibition. This exhibition featured work by the original group of Year 10 students, and dealt with issues of teenage parenting, sexual health and contraception. The work resulted in a series of projects with six schools. Wolverhampton Art Gallery was involved in a prostitutes' collective project in partnership with a health worker who wanted to raise AIDS awareness. A small exhibition went ahead in the Civic Centre. These are clearly important projects that have attempted to make a real difference to the lives of people in the community served by the museum. Museums which hold material related to sexual health and contraception have the potential to participate in projects which have real social value and worth. The Proud Galleries' Rankin: Male Nudes exhibition was linked with a campaign to raise awareness of testicular cancer.

It seems likely that sex and sexuality offer good possibilities for increasing visitor numbers and reaching new audiences. Pride and Prejudice was a conscious and successful attempt to reach and engage a new audience. The Sexwise exhibition was a project that brought teenagers into the museum environment. Sex and sexuality as subjects have the potential to help challenge the perception held by many people of museums as dusty and worthy but dull institutions lacking relevance to their own lives.

The inclusion of histories and artefacts related to sex and sexuality clearly raises issues which need to be debated and depictions of sexual activity need careful interpretation. Cultural attitudes to sexual conduct have varied widely but this has not always been recognised. Terminology can be difficult. Without careful interpretation the viewer may misconstrue what they see. Most material from antiquity, and the more recent past, reflects a male perspective and was often intended for a male gaze. The issues of absence and gender-bias needs to be addressed. The phallus is very common in ancient material but depictions of female genitalia are rare as are scenes of female-to-female sexual activity. Some Japanese, Peruvian and ancient Greek and Roman material depicts male-to-female sexual activity where there is a strong element of coercion. Recent material, such as Pirelli calendars and soft-core mens' magazines can be considered to be exploitative, offensive and degrading. These are not reasons to not exhibit this type of material but significant points to be considered at an early stage.

Museums in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often dealt with representations of sexuality by classifying them as obscene or pornographic, by segregating them in 'secret museums' and by censoring or ignoring them. This legacy has been enduring. Although there have always been objects and histories related to sex and sexuality to collect few museums have done so actively until recently. The history of segregation, censorship, suppression and deliberate omission is disconcerting. The significant number of recent exhibitions and strategies that museums have used to highlight sex and sexuality offer approaches that other museums may be able to adapt successfully. It is clear that museums that have not yet
done so can stop going about on tiptoes and begin to address sex and sexuality more meaningfully and inclusively.

Find Out More

For further information about the Proud Nation Survey visit: www.proudheritage.org

For a picture of the Warren Cup and more information visit: www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass
Our Place in History at the Discovery Museum: a case study
Zelda Baveystock, Nicolas Tyack and Kylea Little

In February 2006 Tyne and Wear Museums (TWM) hosted its first exhibition to mark Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) history month. The exhibition, *Private Lives Public Battles*, was a collaboration with local LGBT group, Our Place in History (OPIH). This article examines how TWM worked with OPIH, the development of that relationship and the future of LGBT collections on Tyneside. This process reflects a concept now familiar to most museums of empowering and enabling groups to collect their own history, raising questions of ownership, access and sustainability with such projects.

**Origins and Development of Our Place in History**

The project began in 2004 when the annual LGB creative writing festival, ProudWORDS, programmed an exploratory session on the history of the Tyneside LGB community. They invited the then Senior Keeper of History at TWM, Zelda Baveystock, to talk about LGBT collections and the potential for oral history, and Ellen Galford, who described Edinburgh’s successful LGBT *Remember When* project. Participants at the session were sufficiently enthused to suggest there was scope for a Newcastle history group to be established. TWM was keen to be involved, as they were aware that LGBT experiences were under-represented in their collections. Previous efforts to work with the community through the *Millennium Making History* project had met with only limited success.

The group started in earnest in January 2005, with a series of oral history workshops led by Baveystock. Participants brought objects in from their homes and attics, and much lively discussion took place over the changes on Tyneside over the last 30 years. Oral history interviewing skills were developed and ethics discussed, a tailored copyright form drafted and lists of potential interviewees drawn up. It was agreed that it was essential that the project should have a tangible outcome, with LGBT history being celebrated with a wider public. While many ideas for exhibitions, websites, books and tours were discussed, an exhibition was favoured as the ‘obvious’ offering for a museum partnership. A target was set to produce something for LGBT History Month in February 2006, although the precise nature of the ‘something’ was yet to be known...

However, as the months passed it soon became clear that progress was not going to be sufficient to meet the target. Although committed to the idea, most members of the group were in full-time work and had busy lives, restricting their capacity to organise and undertake oral history interviews. Some also did not want to do the actual interviewing, but offered other skills like transcription. Even arranging mutually convenient dates to meet in the evenings and weekends was at times problematical, with long lapses occurring between meetings. During this time, the group was sustained substantially by one member, Maggie Thacker, who kept momentum up by setting up a website, and publishing a newsletter in August 2005. Thacker also took forward the naming of the group, and Our Place in History was born. Her unceasing dedication and enthusiasm for the project proved essential for its success, and was a timely reminder of the need for a ‘project champion’ when working with community groups.

As it became clear that the chosen approach was not working as anticipated, Baveystock and Thacker agreed to try another tactic. Rather than individual oral history interviews, recorded group reminiscence sessions were planned which were open to all. With an eye to possible exhibition outputs, it was decided the sessions would be themed. Three evening sessions took place at Discovery Museum on the
subjects of the Scene on Tyneside, political campaigns and legislative activities, and individual experiences of coming out and being gay in the North East. These proved to be highly popular, with the first session in particular attracting a mixed aged group of fourteen people. Smaller numbers attended the second and third sessions, possibly because of the more personal and contentious nature of the stories covered. Some of the contacts made later agreed to be interviewed on a one-to-one basis, and crucially many were able to identify objects which illustrated their stories. The recordings provided important content and detail, and the chosen themes remained substantially the same for the underlying structure of the exhibition.

By Christmas, activity was at full pitch. The group was re-energised as the exhibition hove into view, with different members taking on roles of transcription, text writing, object collecting, photography, and set building. In common with other exhibitions curated in collaboration with outside groups, TWM encouraged OPIH to decide on the direction of the project, but various museum staff gave guidance on issues such as exhibition design, access and curatorial practice. A small budget was provided along with display cases, and further staff time for graphic design, marketing and curatorial assistance. The exhibition finally opened on 7th February 2006, with a well-attended opening in the presence of the Mayors of Newcastle and Gateshead.

Private Lives and Public Battles Exhibition
The exhibition consisted of three main topics: personal experiences, politics and the LBGT community, and the Scene. The first was illustrated through the use of excerpts from five individuals’ oral histories talking about objects (also on display) which had strong associations with their coming out.

The politics section had a strong chronological narrative, displayed through the use of a timeline of key national and local events, highlighted with a collage of flyers, posters and personal photographs. In 1978 the Tyneside branch of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) produced a tape/slide presentation aimed at schools entitled Homosexuality – A Fact of Life. The presentation came in a kit with handbooks for both teachers and students, and was circulated nationally before Section 28 caused a major clamp down in the teaching of homosexuality in schools. The original slide projector used for many talks was a key object for this section of the exhibition. The slide presentation itself was digitised and projected next to the timeline.

The Scene section attracted a lot of attention as it involved the display of a fully furnished Gay bar, loosely modelled on a well-known Newcastle venue from the 1980s, complete with a soundtrack of Judy Garland, Frankie Goes to Hollywood and Pete Burns. A fake loo door affixed to the wall of the gallery bore typical graffiti, although it was agreed not to include scribbles with overtly sexual content.

Evaluation of the Exhibition
OPIH had felt strongly that the exhibition should have a celebratory feel, without denying the struggles that the LBGT community has faced on a daily basis. The comments book suggested that this aim was met, with a host of positive comments such as “Beautifuuly put together, a real cause for celebration,” and “This is a wonderful exhibition - the very exhibition itself makes an important step in gay rights. I'm so pleased this is here. Brings back so many memories.” Several comments expressed a level of regret that the exhibition was neither permanent, nor bigger, whilst a couple of others noticed that the exhibition gallery itself was poorly signposted within the Museum - as one visitor said, [we] "had to 'out' ourselves to find exhibition (but I’m out and proud)." A lack of comments from straight visitors means it is hard to assess how the exhibition was viewed by this audience. One lone commentator noted that "This section history is... different," [sic] but otherwise there was a noticeable lack of response. There had been a degree of nervousness amongst
some Discovery staff that an LGBT exhibition might provoke complaints from its core "family audience", particularly over the peak February half term period when the Museum is at its busiest with small children.

Whilst both OPIH and TWM had always recognised that the exhibition was only a first step in a much longer process of including and showcasing LGBT histories in museums, the group became aware through the process of the limitations of a single exhibition. Only certain stories could be told in the space and time available. This was picked up on by one visitor, who wrote "Great if you are middle class – what about the sanitising of the scene and disappearance of places like 'the Gardens'?" The reminiscence groups had also revealed an extremely complex history in the 1970s and '80s of rivalry and in-fighting between both gays and lesbians, and between lesbians of different political backgrounds. This was partially hinted at by the written comment "There was also Lesbian/Gay battles within the Trotskiest far left - and subgroups feminist Marxist free love/decodents [sic] in the 1980s which I was a part of." To foreground this history would have been unduly negative for a first exhibition on the subject, but the challenge remains of how the subtleties and diversities of LGBT history can be expressed. Furthermore, the desire for a celebratory atmosphere resulted in a downplaying of the problems and prejudices that members of the LGBT community face daily, although some of the individual stories were traumatic. This contrasts with the approach taken by Remember When in their exhibition, Rainbow City, at Edinburgh City Arts Centre in summer 2006, where visitors were confronted with the 'tunnel of fear' filled with audio and textual homophobic abuse. Thacker later commented having viewed this exhibition that maybe OPIH had been too cautious in confronting prejudice.

A home for the collection?
One of the most difficult issues raised by this project was where the collection formed should most appropriately be stored for the future. Several OPIH members had an ultimate vision of a dedicated archive for LGBT history on Tyneside. However, a pragmatic recognition of the difficulties of financing such a venture meant that this was never considered to be a realistic ambition. The vagaries of LGBT funding, with a local history of projects losing their support at short notice, meant that members knew all too well how difficult a separate archive would be to achieve. Consideration was given to housing the archive at ProudWORDS' office, but despite the success of the festival over a number of years, even the future of this organisation was constantly in the balance.

The option of the group acquiring a 'Heritage Cube' at Beamish, The North of England Open Air Museum was also considered. These are large storage boxes available for community groups to house collections they have built up. However, this would mean taking the OPIH material out of its Tyneside home and into rural County Durham. Public access to a community group's Heritage Cube is also problematical, meaning a fundamental aim of OPIH would not be met.

As both the long-term preservation of the work and the possibility of future public access to it was considered critical, it therefore seemed obvious that TWM should offer to house the collection. However, much of the material uncovered was strictly archival: different members had in their homes correspondence and minutes of meetings of various campaigning and support groups such as Lesbian Line, and a complete run of CHE newsletters were amassed. Other people had important personal collections of flyers and posters for one-off nightclubs and Pride events. A substantial archive of correspondence relating to the Campaign for Homosexual Equality was also found to be held in the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies, at Newcastle University. It was recognised that an important task to be done was to bring all these collections together in one place. However, TWM normally recommends that
material of this nature should be housed by the separately-run Tyne and Wear Archives (TWAS), as the organisation is better equipped to enable researchers to access archival material through its search room facilities. Tyne and Wear Archives also has a staffed conservation laboratory, with expertise in archives preservation. Other parts of the collection brought together important material culture: numerous gay and lesbian badges, Pride T-shirts and personal memorabilia. This material could be better cared for by TWM, which has extensive costume and textile, social history, and science and technology collections with high grade storage facilities and dedicated curators. Oral history is collected by a number of organisations in Tyne and Wear, but TWM is also highly active in this field with a dedicated Keeper of Contemporary Collecting to care for it. The conundrum therefore presented itself of whether to split the collection to ensure its proper preservation, or keep it in the community and risk its potential loss in the future.

A further challenge is the different conceptualisations archives, museums, and community groups can have of collections. TWAS accepts material on deposit, so ownership could remain with the group (although with the lack of a formal constitution, this in itself is possibly legally questionable). TWM acquisition policies prohibit taking in long-term loans unless they are on display, so material would have to be donated in perpetuity, with the corresponding transfer of title. Furthermore, museums routinely separate and store collections according to their own internal codes of practice: a T-shirt may be kept in a physically different space to a slide projector. These subtle distinctions are by no means obvious to community groups, who want to be able to walk into one space and access the entirety of a collection on demand.

One obvious way forward would be to digitise all the material held. After the exhibition, discussions were held over the potential for a future digitisation project, but without funding or staff to carry this out this was not feasible at the time. It is hoped that Proud Nation’s work to facilitate an on-line national distributed collection of LGBT collections will go some way to solving these problems, but for the moment OPIH’s collection remains split between TWM, TWAS and community members.

What next for OPIH?
In April 2006 OPIH was successful in gaining an Awards for All grant to record more oral histories, and it began preparing a bid to the HLF to grow into a self-sufficient archival group. OPIH continued its relationship with TWM by borrowing its audio recording equipment free of charge (a service which now offered to other groups following the creation of digitisation loans boxes). The follow-on project looked into the community’s favourite songs and how ‘gay anthems’ have shaped their identity. In May 2006 OPIH lost the premises they were using as offices, and Maggie Thacker decided to move away from the region temporarily to undertake a professional archives qualification. The loss of both her and another key member of the group who has also left the region means that OPIH is currently inactive, although it is hoped that the group will regalvanise in the future when Thacker returns.

The project therefore illustrates some of the key issues of sustainability in community archive projects. Whilst museums are working with community groups more than ever before, providing them with skills and equipment to collect their own history, the future of the histories collected are by no means straightforward. TWM would like to continue to make its collections and exhibitions as representative of the local population as possible, and working with communities is essential in doing this. Transferring skills in the process means that more history can be uncovered, however as we have seen this can create a sense of ownership within the community group and a set of priorities (mainly immediate access to material) that museums often cannot guarantee.

For a museum to insist on taking material for its collection can lead to conflict and
a breakdown of trust with community groups. However, for the members of a community group to create their own archive means the museum has not added to the publicly-held collection, and has not been able to make that collection more representative as an outcome of the project. The knowledge that material is out there, combined with an awareness that community archives often have a fragile existence, may create a frustrating situation for curators trying to promote inclusivity in museums.

Despite the present lack of certainty surrounding the future of the artefacts, there are clear and significant benefits arising from the project. By sustaining links with groups such as OPIH, supporting them with skills and advice as far as possible but at the same time keeping the option of museum donation open, should the material be at risk at any point in the future, we are preserving our heritage regardless of the current physical home of the material. Through the project, discussed here, although answers may not have been found to all the questions raised, Tyne and Wear Museums has, helped to uncover and provide a public outcome for a history that has long been hidden.
Notes for Contributors

The Editor will be pleased to consider articles for inclusion in Social History in Museums. The article should be supplied on disk along with a printed copy. Articles should be in the region of 2,000 - 3,000 words, but longer articles will always be considered.

References (Footnotes)
Contributors may use either of the standard conventions:

(a) In text citation of sources
   Give author’s surname, date of publication and page references (if any) in parentheses in the body of the text, e.g. (Dyer, 1994, 179). Where a second or subsequent work by a particular author in the same year is cited, references should be distinguished by letters (a, b, c, etc) placed after the date. A complete list of references cited, arranged alphabetically by the author’s surname, should be typed at the end of the article in the form:


   Give place of publication, not the publisher. Titles of books and journals should be in the form of the examples in these notes.

(b) Citation in footnotes
   References should be given in notes, numbered consecutively through the typescript with raised numbers. Type the notes on separate pages at the end of the article. Full publication details should be given at first mention, a short form thereafter:


   Short forms:
   Platt, *King Death*, p. 102.
   Ashton and Hilton (eds) *English Rising*, p. 25.
   Penn, ‘Female wage-earners’, p. 12.

Quotations
Quotations should be in single inverted commas, with double used only for quotations within quotations. Quotations of more than five lines should be set off from the text and indented.

Tables and illustrations
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# SOCIAL HISTORY IN MUSEUMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nick Poole</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Changing Role of Collections and Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne Keene</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning the Museum Inside Out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillian Findlay</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Collections Development Strategy for Scotland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison Taubman</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting Broadband: the social context for the e-Scotland Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Edwards</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big and Oily: collecting the North Sea Gas and Oil Industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirsty Devine</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing from the Inside Out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayne Tyler</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilberforce, 2007 and Beyond</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon Roberts</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Social History Still in Wonderland?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An update to Social History in Museums Volume 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart Frost</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret Museums: unlocking hidden histories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zelda Baveystock</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Place in History at the Discovery Museum: a case study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>