

British Museum

World Conservation and Exhibition

Centre Activity Plan evaluation

Year 3 report



Visitor handling a coin at the volunteer-facilitated Hands On desk

The Audience Agency

Main report activity period: till end May 2018

Commissioned by the Head of Interpretation & Volunteers

Contents

Introduction	4
Introduction to the WCEC Activity Plan	4
Aims of this evaluation.....	4
Scope of this report	4
Executive Summary	5
Collections Skills Training.....	13
An introduction to Collections Skills Training	13
How has Collections Skills Training progressed against targets set out in the Activity Plan?	14
Summary of activity	15
Successes, challenges and key learning	17
Evaluation.....	19
Participant feedback	19
World History Lab	28
An introduction to World History Lab (WHL).....	28
How has World History Lab progressed against targets set out in the Activity Plan?	29
Evaluation.....	30
Summary of activity	30
Successes, challenges and key learning	32
Legacy	39
WCEC Volunteering programme	40
Hands On.....	40
Behind the Scenes tours	41
Object Moves and Object Journeys	41
How is the Volunteering strand progressing against targets set out in the Activity Plan?	42
A) Hands On desks	43
B) Behind the scenes tours	51
C) Object moves	65
Successes, challenges and key learning	66
Object Journeys	70
An introduction to Object Journeys.....	70

How is Object Journeys progressing against targets set out in the Activity Plan?	71
Summary of activity	72
Evaluation.....	75
A summary of Object Journeys findings	76
A) Impact on Object Journeys community partners	88
i. Kiribati Partners	88
ii. Family project partners	104
B) Responses from visitors to the display and events programme.....	125
i. Display	125
ii. Public programmes	131
C) Mapping attitudes towards - and impact of - collaborative working on internal British Museum staff (who are all stakeholders in the Object Journeys project).....	134
D) Investigating views and experiences of the External Steering Group.....	157
E) Exploring the experiences of British Museum’s regional museum partners	167
Brighton Museum and Art Gallery	167
F) Considerations	173

Introduction

Introduction to the WCEC Activity Plan

The World Conservation and Exhibition Centre (WCEC) is a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) supported development which has enabled the British Museum (BM) to provide first-class facilities for visitors and researchers, taking conservation, scientific research and collection management to a new level of excellence. The WCEC includes the Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery (SEG), Conservation Studios and Science Laboratories, world-class storage and the Collections Hub.

The WCEC Activity Plan includes the, Collections Skills Training Programme, World History Lab, Behind the Scenes Conservation and Science Tours for the public, a Volunteers' programme and the Object Journeys programme. The WCEC Activity Plan Steering Group met monthly to review activity across all strands.

Aims of this evaluation

This report explores how far and how effectively the Activity Plan has met its aims through bringing together reporting from internally collected evaluation data from the Collections Skills Training, World History Lab, Tours and Volunteering programme strands. The Audience Agency has been commissioned as an objective and independent external evaluator to support internal data collection of the above strands and undertake a mainly qualitative evaluation Object Journeys. The findings have been brought together in three annual reports each summer, plus a final overall report in autumn 2018, to communicate the impact and learning with both the British Museum and the wider sector.

Scope of this report

This third report - Year 3 - covers delivery activity between July 2017 and May 2018. In some cases, evaluation undertaken this year and featured in this report, relates to Year 2 activity. An overview of the activity, progress against HLF targets as set out in the Activity Plan, evaluation approaches and findings - framed as 'successes, challenges and key learning' is contained in each section. Object Journeys is more detailed, reflecting the scale and complexity of the project, and its potential value to the British Museum and the wider museum community. This report does not contain findings from some Object Journeys activity, including the public programmes, which takes place beyond the timeframe of the project funding.

Executive Summary

Collections Skills Training

A series of films and face-to-face sessions utilise the collections, staff and WCEC facilities to provide skills training and experience to the museum sector.

61 face to face training sessions have been delivered over the three years, exceeding the target of 60.

The training sessions have continued to receive excellent feedback. Satisfaction rates are similarly high to Year 2, 98% rated the training very good or good (same as Year 2) and following the training 90% rated their ability in the subject to be very good or good now (92% in Year 2).

The practical elements of the training, such as demonstrations and workshop activities have continued to prove most popular. Feedback is consistent in that more pre and post resources would have been preferred, however the development of the training films has potential to meet this need. Challenges such as inevitable drop out of some people after booking and time-consuming on-the-day delivery, has been met by overbooking and utilising support from Visitor Operations respectively.

All 10 short training films have been produced and published, meeting the project target.

The films aim to increase the skills and confidence that museums need in order to request loans of objects for exhibition more frequently. These skills would be relevant to museums wanting to borrow from the British Museum, and potentially from other national museums as well. They are available to regional partners and can be distributed further afield via the Collections Trust. They also complement the face to face training and can support internal learning at the British Museum, so leave a strong legacy for the programme.

World History Lab

The expertise within the Museum's departments of Conservation and Scientific Research is sector-leading, and by creating better online resources using video, audio, images and text this expertise can be shared and used more effectively by a wider audience.

Year 3 has seen a continued increase in the popularity of content with the Museum's digital audience.

World History Lab's online content, which shares the Museum's work with a wider public audience through online channels, has continued to exceed total project targets by 483%, with around 2.5 million visits – almost half of this has been achieved in Year 3.

There has been an average of 60,244 views per post across the whole project (69,734 in Year 3), exceeding the target of 500 views per post by 12,049% (13,946% for Year 3).

The series format for films has continued to be extremely popular, with audiences eager to watch weekly instalments. There have been over 1 million views of the Vulture Embroidery series. Engagement sustained over the 11 episodes, with comments and reactions even increasing toward the final episodes.

The film about when conservators do and do not wear gloves was the most popular standalone film, closely followed by the laser cleaning film. This suggests that topics that are accessible but slightly provocative are appealing.

To ensure there is a successful legacy for World History Lab, a training guide was developed to support staff to upload future content online.

Volunteering Programme

The WCEC Activity Plan has successfully enabled the British Museum to expand volunteering opportunities, supporting public engagement in new areas of activity.

1,995 days of volunteer time has been created.

Hands On desks

Authentic objects and artefacts have been effectively used in eight desks in the Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery so far - significantly exceeding original targets. The desks are offering visitors valued tactile experiences and opening up interesting conversations related to the special exhibition in the WCEC.

Year 3 has seen greater levels of volunteer engagement and visitor satisfaction.

95% of visitors said that they would recommend the Hands On desk to other visitors, increased from 87% in year 2.

97% of visitors said that the desk had enhanced their visit, up from 91% in Year 2.

100% visitors rated volunteer knowledge as very good or good. 95% visitors learnt about a new topic through their engagement with the desk. Two thirds of visitors have been engaging with the desk for over 5 minutes.

Overall, most volunteers (87%) say their experience is valuable and enjoyable. Evidence from the Rodin desk shows that relocating it outside the foyer results in more people engaging.

Volunteering Programme

WCEC Behind the Scenes tours

The tours of the WCEC conservation studios have continued to be delivered monthly, with the final tours delivered in May 2018. These tours were led by volunteers from the Information Desk in the Great Court. On arrival in the conservation studios, staff took the lead and visitors rotated between three different conservators who talked about their work.

Due to delays in Year 1 arising from lift problems the overall targets for numbers of tours and attendees have not been met. Whilst only 26% of initial tour delivery targets have been reached, 86% of the total available slots have been delivered (568 out of 660).

Despite these challenges, visitor, volunteer and staff satisfaction continued to increase over Year 3. Visitor feedback has been extremely positive.

99% visitors rated tours very good or good. As with Year 2, wanting to improve understanding of the Museum's Conservation and Scientific work and have an introduction to behind the scenes were the top factors cited by visitors in deciding to attend. These were achieved to a very high extent (99%).

94% of visitors agreed that the tours demonstrated the purpose of the WCEC effectively and 98% of visitors agreed their understanding of the Museum's work had improved. 97% would recommend the experience. Almost half of visitors would prefer a slightly longer tour - which volunteer and staff feedback supports.

Volunteers rated their experience highly - 100% agreed it was a valuable and enjoyable experience, which is an increase from Year 2. Staff delivering the tours have rated their experience higher in Year 3 - nearly all said it was very good or good. Most staff see the wider benefits for their work.

Volunteering Programme

Object Moves and Object Journeys

Significant progress has been made with Object Moves volunteering as the Africa, Oceania and Americas (AOA) collection and other collection material moves in to the new WCEC building.

Volunteers have contributed 947 days towards Object Moves, exceeding the original target of 240 days by 395%.

Volunteers especially enjoyed the object handling training and rated the supplementary training opportunities highly. Overall the experience supported them to achieve personal development and learning goals.

Volunteers have continued to support other parts of the Activity Plan, including the Object Journeys programme.

Object Journeys

Object Journeys is a three-year programme, where community partners have been supported to research and explore the British Museum's AOA collections. They have been working collaboratively with staff to produce displays in permanent galleries, programmes of events, and new information/knowledge in response to the exploration of the collection. The Object Journeys exhibits are displayed in the Wellcome Trust Gallery: Living and Dying (Room 24). The *Kiribati: between sea and land* display opened at the British Museum in July 2017 complemented by a range of well attended events. The *Object Journeys: celebrating the work of families* display opened at the Museum in May 2018 and the launch event took place in June, with follow up events planned later in 2018.

Kiribati community partners

Kiribati partners had a very positive experience and felt valued and trusted by the Museum. They felt in control and had ownership of the project, believing they had final say over decisions and were responsible for the information that represented their culture. The project supported development of strong social connections, as well as a greater understanding of and connection to their culture. Partners believed that having

the opportunity to showcase their culture was a sufficient benefit for the time and effort they put into the project.

‘There’s so much obviously to the culture and just so good just to have a little snippet of it in the British Museum, very lucky to have a display there.’ (Kiribati community partner)

‘We shaped it, we chose the objects, we chose the theme.’ (Kiribati community partner)

Family community partners

This project is a partnership between the British Museum and a group of 8 London-based community partners exploring the theme of family. The group all come from London but have various cultural backgrounds. The Museum took a slightly more facilitated approach to the display development this time. Museum staff [curatorial and community partnerships staff] aided the project group much more in the object research and long-list object selection than in previous projects. The partners focused mainly on theme and narrative development, rather than generating new knowledge about the objects. The group were responsible for the final object decisions, the final narrative and messaging structure of the display and in writing the interpretation supported by relevant Museum staff.

Overall, they had a positive experience. They felt they had learned a lot, gained new friendships and valued the exclusive access to collections. However, it was clear there were mixed responses about the level of ownership and equality of partnership achieved, even though these did not appear to have a negative impact partners’ experience.

The thematic approach and short timescale posed real challenges for the group. They all agreed there was too much to do, further compounded by a project theme (chosen by the Museum) which the group themselves said was too broad, and collection choice that was too wide. Whilst the group did have more control of the narrative and theme of the display, the perception was that the overall project theme was so broad it was challenging to narrow the focus. The group thought that they lacked collections expertise, which meant they did not always feel empowered to lead or feel like they were experts. Partners were not expected to be collections experts by the Museum, but this does indicate that when adopting a thematic approach, perhaps more could be done to build confidence around thematic expertise.

Whilst these community partners were comfortable not leading or being seen as experts

(they did generally feel engaged and supported), for the British Museum, this thematic approach may be a limitation to considering alternative forms of knowledge and expertise.

'I think in the other exhibitions I suppose that the people who were leading or the people, the community people who were working with, they had more power because they've got the knowledge. Somali, Kiribati, but we went from so different and a big subject.... You don't feel empowered.' (Family community partner)

British Museum staff

Staff continued to have a positive experience overall, a sense of achievement around creating displays with community partners. Staff valued deepening their understanding about working with community partners to explore collections and collaboratively create displays. They believe this is what the British Museum should be doing more of.

Many felt the project has gone a long way towards establishing a model for this practice at the Museum, but,

it is clear there are different understandings of what community-led practice means. Advocacy, senior buy-in and British Museum systems are seen as barriers to overcome before this way of working can be properly embedded.

External Steering Group

The Group, made up of professionals in collaborative practice, continued to value the networking and collaborative learning that the experience provided. They think that Object Journeys has been a huge success, believing it to be a great achievement for a large, national Museum to deliver this work, as well as observing that staff at the Museum are recognising the benefits. Their own practice has been enriched by the experience of being part of the Group.

Partner Museums

It was an interesting and positive experience for curatorial staff at Brighton Museum and Art Gallery. Working with the community curators was rewarding and they reported that the experience deepened knowledge in a way working with staff curators couldn't. Brighton Museum staff valued the more in-depth partnership working with the British

Museum that the Object Journey model offered. Staff were impressed with the quality of the displays. The community curator (which is the title Brighton Museum gave to community partners) valued the opportunity to explore and share culture with a wider audience.

‘My boss was impressed and said ‘this is not dumbing down, it’s more. It’s better, it’s quality.’ (Brighton Museum staff)

‘Helped broaden my understanding I’d not gain working with other curators or books.’ (Brighton Museum staff)

Visitor responses to the Kiribati display

Visitors looked at the display for an average of 1 minute and 13 seconds. The film of a dance performance, showing an object being used, is extremely popular. The main narrative of the display, which is about Kiribati resourcefulness, their resilient spirit, their deep sense of community and the traditional skills of living off the sea and land as part of their national character was recognised by 48% interviewed visitors. Most visitors didn’t notice that the display was developed collaboratively, but when this was pointed out to them they clearly valued the collaborative nature of the display development.

They reported that this aspect added value and importance for them, due to the sense of authenticity and culturally relevant content being chosen for display.

Visitor evaluation of the Year 3 Family Objects display, which trials a more visible presentation of community partners and the process in the interpretation, is underway.

Collections Skills Training



Participants during a training session

An introduction to Collections Skills Training

Through this strand the British Museum has utilised the collections, staff and facilities of the WCEC to provide collections skills training and experience to other museum professionals across the UK. There have been two parts to the programme; face-to-face Skills Sharing sessions and a series of short training films.

Project Team:

- Senior Collections Manager / Project Sponsor
- Learning and National Partnerships Co-ordinator
- Training Project Co-ordinator
- Assistant Collections Manager / CST Project Co-ordinator

The following roles are HLF funded posts:

- Conservation Mounter
- WCEC Web Content Producer

Steering Group:

- Registrar
- Head of National Programmes
- Head of Conservation



Participants during a training session

How has Collections Skills Training progressed against targets set out in the Activity Plan?

Measure	Target per year	Target per 3 years	Current	% of Target achieved
Partner training opportunities delivered	20	60	61	100%
Short training films produced	n/a	10	10	100%

As the project progressed the evaluation of the programme explored satisfaction levels from both films and face to face training. Beyond this funded activity, it may be useful to consider the longer-term impact, exploring whether there have been increases in loans, learning around making borrowing easier and sharing of good practice.

Summary of activity

A) Short films

Ten films have been produced and published online:

- Framing prints and drawings
- Loans Part 1: An introduction to loans
- Loans Part 2: Researching your loan request
- Loans Part 3: Writing a loan request and The British Museum loans process
- Mounting prints and drawings
- Heavy object handling
- Exhibition Delivery Part 1: Project management and interpretation
- Exhibition Delivery Part 2: Design, accessibility and production
- Textiles Collections Care
- Object handling with and without gloves

The films have been created to help museums become 'loan-ready'. Part of the British Museum's Collections Skills Training resources, the films offer guidance on many aspects of the loans process; from researching collections before an initial request, through to how objects will be moved and stored after being on loan.

The films aim to increase the skills and confidence that museums need in order to request loans of objects for exhibition more frequently. These skills would be relevant to museums wanting to borrow from the British Museum, and potentially from other national museums as well.

The Mendoza Review in 2017 reinforced the commitment of national museums to ensuring that people across the country have access to their collections, by working in partnership to share their objects and expertise more widely.

All films have been uploaded to the World History Lab website under the Skills Sharing category: <https://worldhistorylab.britishmuseum.org/archive-training/>

B) Collections Skills Sharing Sessions

Year 3 has seen three additional individual Skills Sharing sessions developed and 27 sessions delivered across all the British Museum sites and at partner museums to exceed the target total of 60 sessions.

19 Collections Management Skills Sharing Sessions were delivered at the British Museum and eight were held at partner museums. One held at Bishop Auckland Museum looked at how to schedule an exhibition installation and six ‘Getting Loan Ready’ sessions were combined to create a four-day British Museum Residential Programme for 12 delegates from across the UK. Around 450 participants attended the courses in total.

The three newly developed Skills Sharing Sessions in Year 3 were:

- Dealing with firearms collections
- Exhibition installation scheduling
- Pinning

Skills Sharing Session	Location	No. of times held
Exhibition Installation Scheduling	Bloomsbury/Bishop Auckland Museum	3
IPM	Bloomsbury	3
Dealing with firearms collections	Bloomsbury	1
Getting loan ready Part 1: Introduction	Bloomsbury	1
Getting loan ready Part 2: Making a loan request and the time line of a loan	Bloomsbury	1
Getting loan ready Part 3: Budgeting and costs	Bristol/Bloomsbury	2
Getting loan ready Part 4: Display and environment, facilities and security	Poole/Bloomsbury	2
Getting loan ready Part 5: Agreements and insurance	Bristol/Bloomsbury	2
Getting loan ready Part 6: Making the loan happen	Exeter/Bloomsbury	2
Heavy objects collections care	Bloomsbury	1
Skills sharing case study: ceramics + strong room storage	Bloomsbury	1
Eastern pictorial art handling	Bloomsbury	1
Collection moves	Bloomsbury/National Army Museum	2
Pinning	Bloomsbury	1
Skills sharing case study: European glass care + storage	Bloomsbury	1
Prints and drawings: mounting and storage	Bloomsbury	1
Eastern pictorial art handling	Bloomsbury	1
Skills sharing case study: ethnographic care and storage	Bloomsbury	1
Total		27



Participants during a training session

Successes, challenges and key learning

A) Short films

The target of 10 films has been achieved. The films have been made available to regional partners and distributed further afield by being linked to the Collections Trust website. The films have proved to be a valuable follow-up resource for those who attended the Skills Sharing sessions in those areas and as an institution the British Museum is able to make use of the films for internal training purposes.

The main challenge in developing the films was limited digital staff resource available to assist with the production of the films. The final digital outputs exceeded the original ambitions envisaged when the Activity Plan was first written. The WCEC Content Producer was responsible for all digital elements of each Activity Plan strand and inevitably capacity was an issue. They found it challenging to allocate time on the collections management films due to the time taken to produce the content for World History Lab and Object Journeys.

B) Collections Skills Sharing Sessions



Participants during a training session

The sessions have been very successful - 98% of participants rated them good or very good. However, a number of delegates did not show up on the day of the Skills Sharing session that they were booked onto. This was particularly frustrating as the sessions had long waiting lists, and if notice had been given the vacant places would have been filled. As a result, the Museum decided to overbook each session by one delegate which has proved to be efficacious.

Hosting Skills Sharing session has also been time consuming. This responsibility has been primarily undertaken by the Training Project Coordinator with the assistance of Visitor Operations when available.

Evaluation

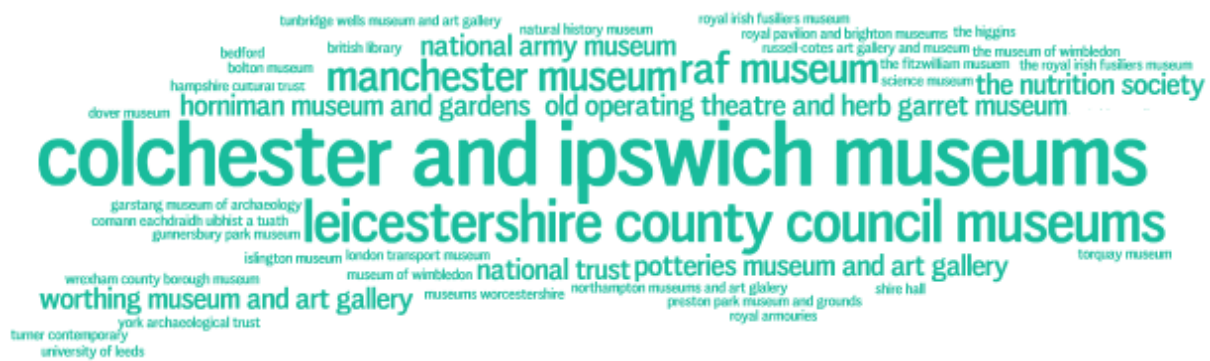
Participants were emailed a link to an e-survey to obtain feedback after they attended a Skills Sharing Session. 79 participant feedback forms were completed over the period (out of an estimated 450 total participants); this gives a margin of error of c. $\pm 10\%$ at the 95% confidence. This means that we can be 95% sure that if we had asked any of the questions shown to the entire population, a proportion of no more than between 10% higher and 10% lower than the one given would have also picked that answer.

Participant feedback

Who took part?

Participants were asked to state which museum they work for and what their role is. The results have been presented below as word clouds - the larger the word, the more often it was used.

Museums:



Base: all respondents - 59

Roles:



Base: all respondents - 76

Whilst more collections and curatorial staff attend the training sessions, they have also attracted exhibitions staff, volunteers and front of house professionals.

The sessions attended by respondents were as follows:



Base: all respondents - 79

Similar to Year 2, participants were generally motivated to attend a Skills Sharing session for professional development, for guidance on how to approach a specific upcoming project within their own organisation and for the opportunity to introduce practices used at the British Museum to their own organisations.

'Gallery redisplay including firearms which we haven't displayed for a long time. Getting up to date information from a museum with a similar collection.' (Dealing with firearms collections participant)

'New role in a new museum and wanted to borrow from larger institutions as part of the exhibitions program. We do not have any in house collections, so this seemed a good way to progress.' (Getting loan ready participant)

'To improve my practical skills so that I can carry out some basic work on our unframed prints and drawings. To improve my knowledge of current materials used to conservation standards. To see how the British Museum store their collections and find out if there are storage solutions/ideas that I can bring back to Worthing Museum.' (Prints and drawings participant)



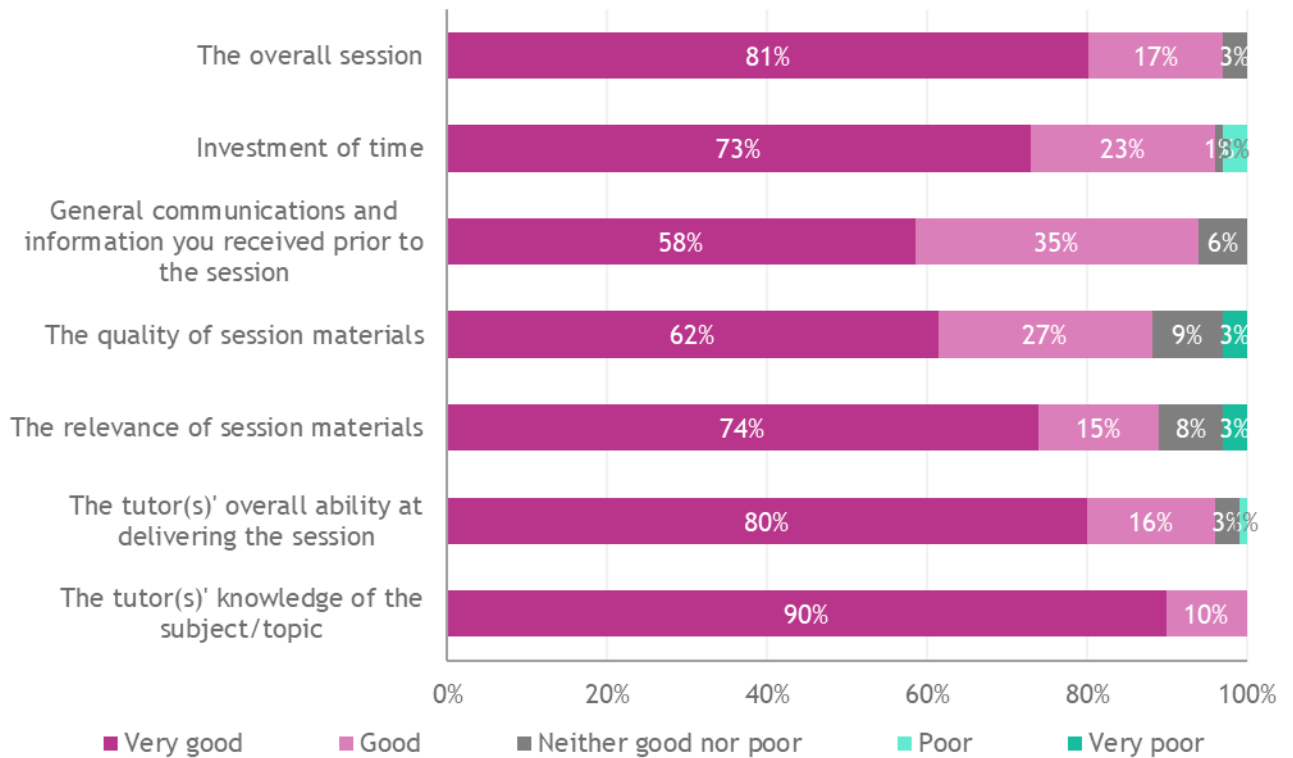
Participants during a training session in the Hiriyama Studio

What did they think?

Overall, all elements of the sessions were rated highly, from the materials and information provided to the knowledge of the tutors. Encouragingly, nearly all participants (98%) rated

the overall session as ‘very good’ or ‘good’ and a similar proportion (96%) saw it as a good investment of their time.

How would you rate the following?



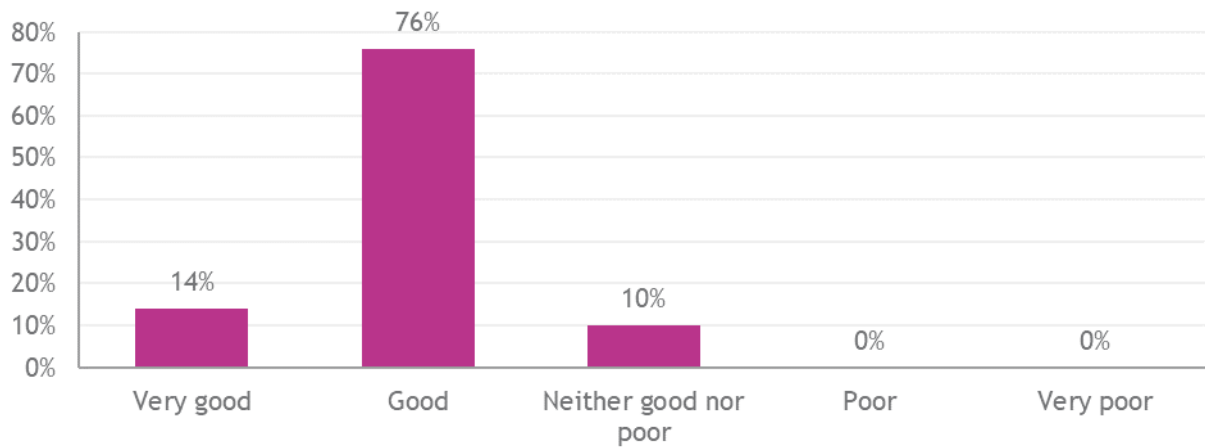
Base: all respondents - 78 ~ 79

Margin of error: ±7% ~ ±11%

Whilst no areas were rated poorly, the quality and relevance of session materials had the least good rating, so could be reviewed to see where improvements may be made.

As a result of their participation in a session, participants rated their ability in the topic positively - 90% good or very good.

How would you rate your ability in this area now?



Base: all respondents - 78

Margin of error: ±11%



Participants during a training session

Feedback for future sessions

All participants said they would be interested in participating in future sessions. The preferred style of learning cited was a combination of practical and presentation, which includes both demonstrations and discussions. Three quarters of participants found the length of the session just right, with a similar proportion finding it either too short (13%) or too long (10%).

The most useful aspects of the session were the practical parts, and areas which were directly relatable to the issues which participants faced in their own roles. Additionally, many participants found it reassuring to learn that large national museums faced similar problems to their own organisations and found it useful to learn how these were tackled.

'Hearing that even the experts have to adjust their methodology as they proceed. Learning how to safely enclose delicate items in tissue 'cushions' rather than wrapping tissue around them. Realising that small organisations can model their processes on those used by a national institution.' (Collection moves participant)

'What was useful was that the trainer used their own experience of dealing with their museum firearms. I also found it helpful that it was pitched at a level which didn't require any previous knowledge of firearms.' (Dealing with firearms collections participant)

'The practical aspect of the session was particularly useful, and I was not expecting to get the opportunity to have this hands-on experience. It was useful to learn of the challenges the project faced and how these were overcome.' (Skills sharing case study participant)



Participants during a training session

Some respondents reported that aspects of the content were unrelatable to their organisation's size and budget.



Participants during a training session

World History Lab

An introduction to World History Lab (WHL)

This strand of activity has aimed to provide a wider digital public platform to showcase the conservation and science work at the Museum in the WCEC. It supports the Museum's strategic objective of deepening engagement with the collection and increasing virtual access to the Museum's work. The expertise within the Museum's departments of Conservation and Scientific Research is sector-leading, and by creating better online resources using video, audio, images and text this expertise can be shared and used more effectively by a wider audience.

The four content themes within which the work is presented are:

1. **Conservation projects:** Films that capture conservation projects in their entirety.
2. **The people of the World History Lab:** Profiles of various colleagues within the Conservation and Scientific Research teams, highlighting the fascinating roles people have within the field.
3. **Tools and processes:** A series of short films or animations which highlight some of the tools, processes and terms used in the field.
4. **Live events:** When suitable opportunities arrive across these themes, live streaming apps are used to engage a large global audience.

By applying the Museum's expertise to creating digital content, a greater variety of conservation and research activities were shared, allowing wider public access to facilities, people, knowledge and objects at the Museum.

During Year 3 (2017-18) work progressed on populating and promoting the World History Lab website. A series of new films were published on You Tube and promoted via Social Media platforms.

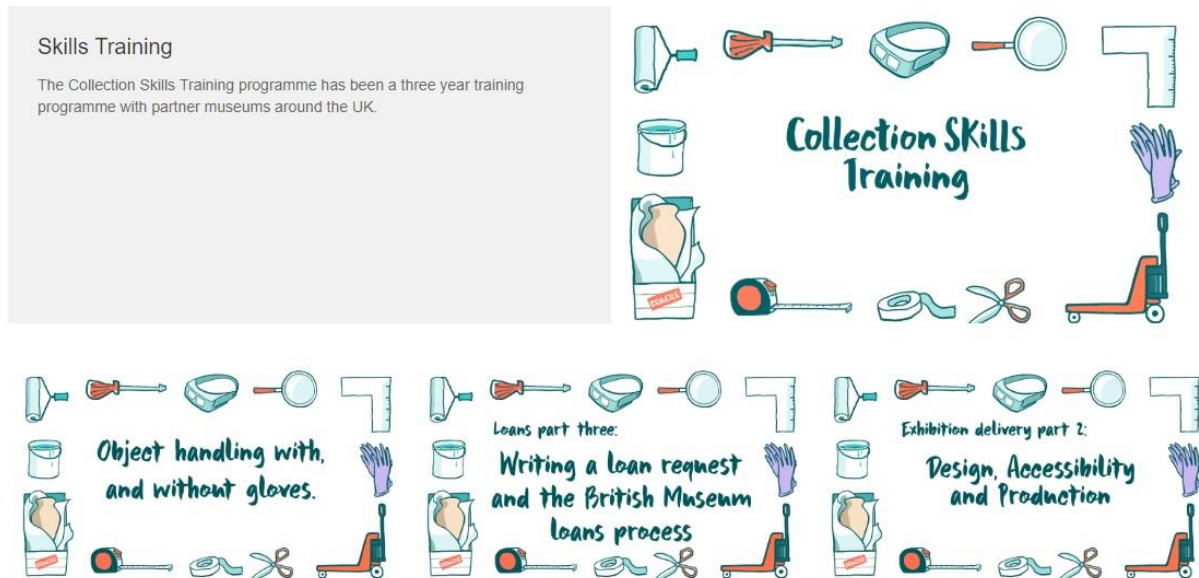
The Content Producer worked with colleagues in Conservation and Scientific Research (CSR) to create three short animations to highlight some of the most used terms in the field. A scriptwriter was employed to shape the outline of these resources and an animation company will be commissioned to work on the production of the films. A single film was also produced looking at why, and when conservators wear gloves when handling museum objects.

Between June and September 2017 an eleven-part series on the conservation of the Vulture Peak embroidery was published on YouTube and Facebook. Two stand-alone films

were also produced. One focussed on Lucia Pereira-Pardo’s work on laser cleaning objects, and the other on scientific research into the Oxus treasure for the Scythians exhibition

Additionally, during Year 3 the WCEC Content Producer produced 10 films related to the Collections Skills Training strand. These films can be viewed here:

<https://worldhistorylab.britishmuseum.org/archive-training/>



Collections Skills Training

How has World History Lab progressed against targets set out in the Activity Plan?

This table provides an overview, which is explored in more depth in the detailed findings that follow. Overall the content produced has continued to enormously exceed the measures set out for the programme in the Activity Plan. By the end of Year 3 (2017-18), WHL exceeded the total three-year project’s target for web visits by 483%. This reflects - in part - significant changes in the way digital content is consumed since the Activity Plan was originally written. Despite this engagement has grown from year to year showing the success of this activity.

Measure	Target per year	Target per 3 years	Current	% of target achieved
No. of web visits across all platforms	Year 1: 72,000 Year 2: 96,000 Year 3: 360,000	528,000	Year 1: 245,572 Year 2: 1,052,036 Year 3: 1,255,211 Total: 2,552,819	483% of total target
No. of views of		500	Year 1: 49,114 per post	Year 3: 13,946%

web videos during project duration (per post)			Year 2: 61,884 Year 3: 69,734 Yearly average: 60,244	Overall average: 12,049%
No. of public comments per post (across platforms)		3	Year 1: 265 in total; average 66 per post Year 2: 2,621 in total; average 154 per post Year 3: 3,816 in total; average 212 per post Yearly average: 2,234 total posts; 144 per post	Year 3: 7,067% Overall average: 4,800%

The statistics on each of the videos will be used to inform future content planning and publishing schedules. Some headline successes include:

- Year 3 exceeded its target web visits by 349% (1,255,211 views in Year 3).
- There has been an average of 13,946 views per post across Year 3, massively exceeding the original targets of 500 per post.

Evaluation

Website statistics and digital feedback were the key evaluation approaches for World History Lab activity during Year 3 (2017-18).

Summary of activity

This table expands on the data presented above and provides a more detailed summary about not only views, but also comments, reactions and shares.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
4 films published 5 times	17 films, 2 as individual films, 2 as series containing multiple episodes, and 3 live streams	18 films, which includes the 11-part Vulture Peak series	29 films
245,572 views	1,052,036 views (80,254 of which are live views)	1,255,211 views	2,552,819 views
265 comments	2,621 comments	930 comments	3,816 comments
3,099 thumbs up/reactions/likes	34,246 thumbs up/reactions/likes	7,755 thumbs up/reactions/likes	45,100 thumbs up/ reactions/ likes

14,256 shares	18,925 shares	14,249 shares	47,430 shares
---------------	---------------	---------------	---------------

This table details the statistics by film, or series of films. There is more in-depth information about each film following this.

Film	YouTube statistics	Facebook statistics	Total
Gloves and handling museum objects May 2018	37,134 views 1,600 thumbs up 82 comments	59,000 views 1,200 reactions 32 comments 915 shares	96,134 views 2,800 thumbs up/reactions 114 comments 915 shares
Laser cleaning of a Byzantine wall painting March 2018	6,763 views 369 thumbs up 16 comments	71,000 views 2,100 reactions 50 comments 1,400 shares	77,763 views 2,469 thumbs up/reactions 66 comments 1,400 shares
Care of Collection: Glossary of terms February 2018	1,961 views 123 thumbs up 9 comments	Not on Facebook	1,961 views 123 thumbs up 9 comments
Conservation: Glossary of terms January 2018	2,938 views 163 thumbs up 8 comments	Not on Facebook	2,938 views 163 thumbs up 8 comments
Scientific research: Glossary of terms January 2018	3,793 views 171 thumbs up 8 comments	Not on Facebook	3,793 views 171 thumbs up 8 comments
Scythians: scientific analysis of the Oxus Treasure November 2017	14,819 views 489 thumbs up 44 comments	32,000 views 871 reactions 20 comments 334 shares	46,819 views 1,360 thumbs up/reactions 64 comments 334 shares
Conserving Vulture Peak series	93,803 views 2,524 thumbs up 151 comments	932,000 views 23,600 reactions 518 comments 11,600 shares	1,025,803 views 26,124 thumbs up/reactions 669 comments 11,600 shares
Year 3 Total			1,255,211 views 7,755 thumbs up/reactions/likes 930 comments 14,249 shares

Successes, challenges and key learning

Year 3 (2017-18) saw the content produced for the World History Lab growing in quantity, frequency and popularity with the Museum's digital audience, especially building on the popular series format used for some of the films.

Audience feedback continues to be very positive. Comments on Facebook and YouTube are generally very positive, with viewers expressing their eagerness to see more of this type of behind-the-scenes content.

Below is a list of all the content created and published throughout the year. Where relevant, statistics per episode/broadcast are detailed in this section of the report. More comment-based feedback relating to each post is also shown below.

Films

Gloves and handling museum objects

This film that looks at why, and when conservators wear gloves when handling museum objects. It has been single most popular film. Published May 2018.



Gloves and handling museum objects

'I really like that this channel doesn't just show "old objects" and their history, (though they are certainly amazing and already worth it), but also gives fascinating insights into its techniques, and is so connected to their audience. It makes them so much more relatable, and understandable for non-professionals.' (Online visitor comment)

'I greatly enjoy the content provided by the British Museum online. Thank you for another very informative video. Much more interesting than I originally thought when I read the title. So much care goes into even such seemingly small decisions. It shows the passion all the conservators have for their job.' (Online visitor comment)

Laser cleaning of a Byzantine wall painting

The laser cleaning film with Lucia Periera-Pardo and the Stone Conservation team was published on YouTube and has received an astonishing 10k views over the first two weeks. Published March 2018.



Laser cleaning of a Byzantine wall painting

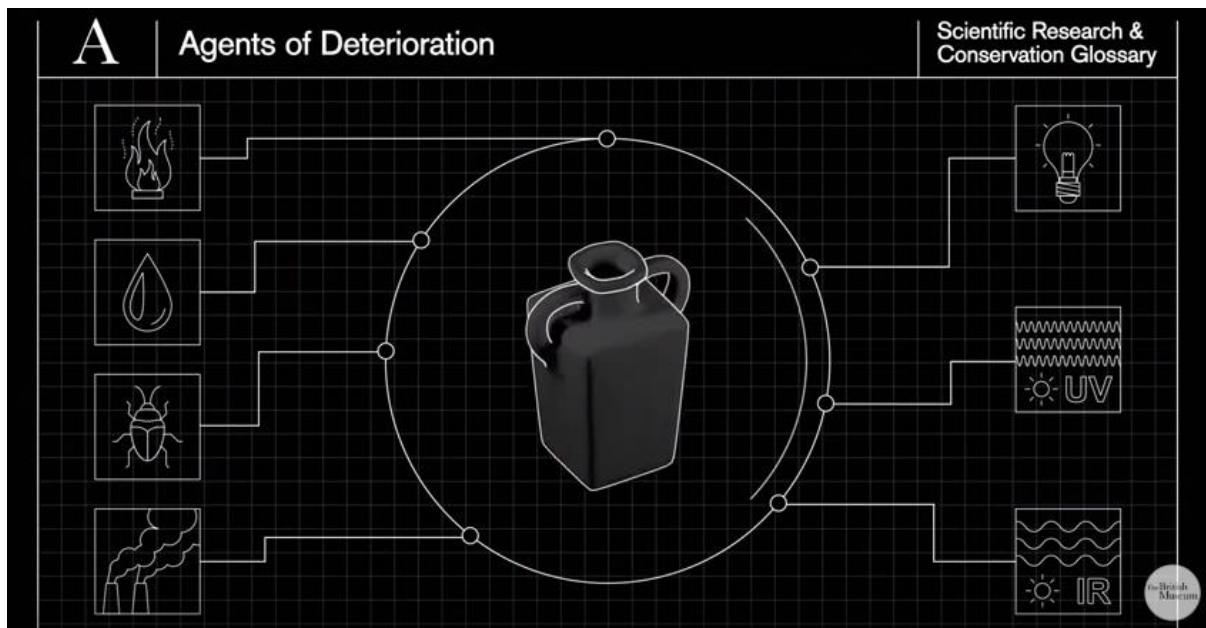
'These videos are terrific! I always love the intersections of art and science. Please keep posting them!' (Online visitor comment)

'Very interesting! Now I want to go back to school and learn conservation! :).'
(Online visitor comment)

'Great to see how processes are thoroughly tested before being used.' (Online visitor comment)

Care of Collection: Glossary of terms

A brief introduction to some of the specialist terms and procedures used at the British Museum. Published February 2018.



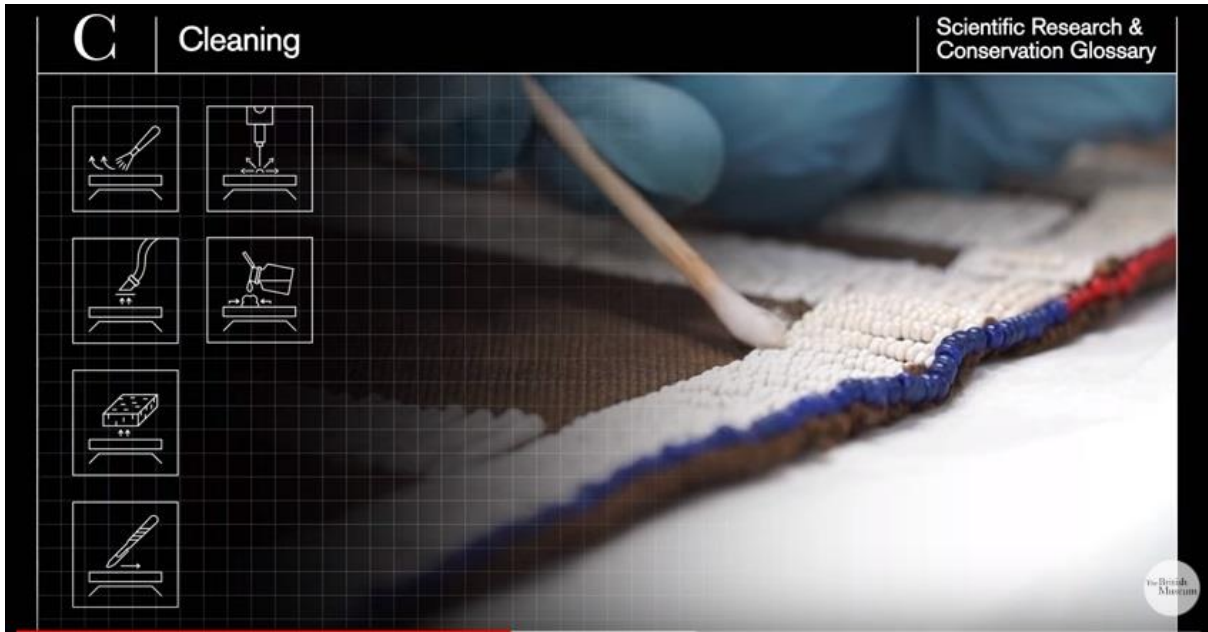
Care of Collection: Glossary of terms

'I've never thought about the micro-environments inside of museum cases. That's neat,' (Online visitor comment)

'Thank you, BM. Videos, like this one make me feel more optimism about the future and the world. They give me solace in the knowledge of the existence of people who care about these things and their efforts to comprehend and share important things about the human race and the world.' (Online visitor comment)

Conservation: Glossary of terms

A brief introduction to some of the terms commonly used by conservators at the British Museum. Published January 2018.



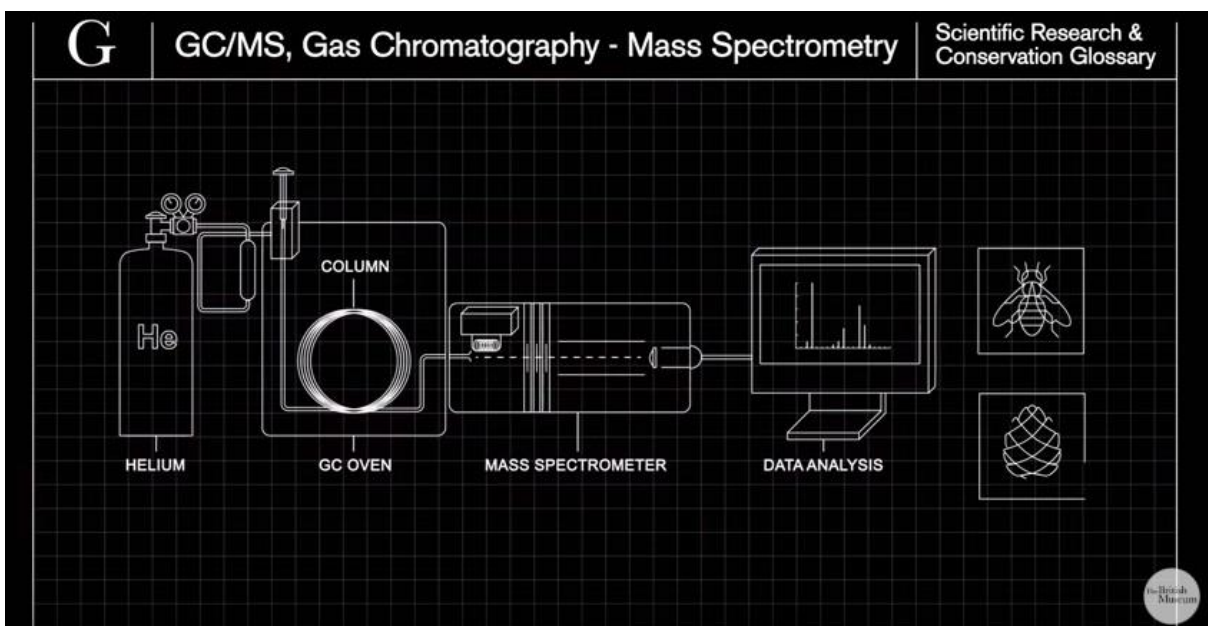
Conservation: Glossary of terms

'I like the infographics; they really complement the explanations.' (Online visitor comment)

'Much appreciated as always, British Museum folks <3.' (Online visitor comment)

Scientific research: Glossary of terms

A brief introduction to some of the scientific terms and procedures used by scientists at the British Museum. Published January 2018.



Scientific research: Glossary of terms

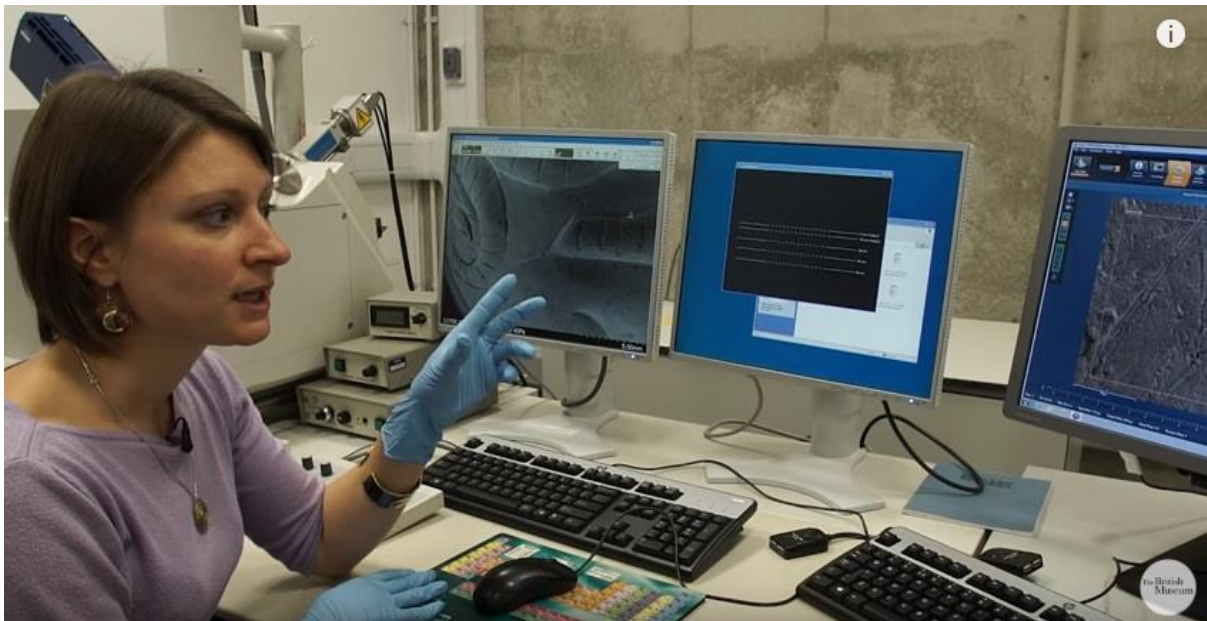
'A link the World History Lab in the description would be helpful. Great information!' (Online visitor comment)

'Oh heck yes! I love me some conservation lessons!' (Online visitor comment)

Scythians: scientific analysis of the Oxus Treasure

British Museum Scientist Aude Mongiatti shares some of her research on the Oxus treasure, a selection of beautiful gold and silver objects from the 5th and 4th centuries BC.

Published November 2017.



Scythians: scientific analysis of the Oxus Treasure

'More! Love finally seeing the benefits of the scanning microscope!' (Online visitor comment)

'What is the effect of surface finish on the quantification? Have you ever been able to cut open a piece to examine the interior?' (Online visitor comment)

'Love that these videos are getting longer and more detailed.' (Online visitor comment)

Conserving Vulture Peak series

This film focussed on textile conservators Monique Pullan and Hannah Vickers as they embarked on the intricate conservation journey of this object over the course of 11 weeks. Published June 2017.



Conserving Vulture Peak - Episode 1

'Excited to see the rest of this series. Thanks for sharing!' (Online visitor comment)

'This series is really informative and enjoyable. It is of great interest to see the combination of traditional textile work and high-tech scientific investigation. It's lovely to see the clever use of netting to press the degraded fibers against a backing without having to stitch through them, and to be shown that a scaffold was built to allow the conservators to work above the piece.' (Online visitor comment)

In the final episode of the series, Hannah and Monique discuss their thoughts on the effectiveness of the conservation project as a whole. Dr Diego Tamburini also shares some of the findings from the dye analysis.



Conserving Vulture Peak - Episode 11

'Deeply impressed. Both from the conservation perspective, and the science research perspective. The chemicals/plants used to dye the threads is as much a part of the story as the imagery and technique. As a social scientist working with the application of IT artefacts in organisations this process has given me inspiration for my own work. Many thanks.' (Online visitor comment)

'This was a fantastic series and I hope you do more like this in the future. I would have loved to see a side by side of the before and after, but aside from that you all did an amazing job. Thank you so much for sharing with us!' (Online visitor comment)

'I've been following the whole conservation process since it began. I'm overwhelmed with the love and care placed on this embroidery by the museum staff, so much respect to you all.' (Online visitor comment)

YouTube statistics by episode

As with earlier series, the introductory episode has more views, which is to be expected, but beyond that the number of views per episode remains fairly consistent, demonstrating the content has sustained audience engagement throughout. Thumbs up and comments increase towards the end, indicating this ongoing interest. In addition, there has been around ten times the number of views in Facebook, resulting in over 1 million views across platforms altogether.

Conserving Vulture Peak	Views	Comments	Thumbs up
Ep1 - Introduction	17,694	16	390
Ep2 - Curatorial Introduction	9,472	13	195
Ep3 - Conservation assessment	7,407	6	171
Ep4 - Liquid Chromatography Mass Spectrometry	7,280	9	194
Ep5 - Surface cleaning	7,594	9	204
Ep6 - Backing fabric	7,047	15	196
Ep7 - Removing the old restoration	6,426	10	188
Ep8 - Examining the back of the embroidery	9,145	17	236
Ep9 - Turning the embroidery	7,195	8	246
Ep10 - Stitching the support fabric	7,059	20	235
Ep11 - The results	7,484	28	269
Facebook			
Total	93,803	151	2,524
Facebook totals	932,000	518	23,600
Total across platforms	1,025,211	669	26,124

Legacy

The WCEC Content Producer devised a training guide for conservators and scientists that will enable them to continue to upload content to the World History Lab website after the WCEC activity programme has come to an end. They also ran a training session with the communications group on 23 April 2018. Finally, they consolidated the video data that has been collected for the project over the past three years. Some footage was deleted in line with the Museum's Data storage policy.

WCEC Volunteering programme

The WCEC Activity Plan has continued to enable the Museum to expand volunteering opportunities, allowing more members of the public to get involved at the Museum, including new areas of activity. A great deal has been achieved during 2017-18 with each of the main volunteering strands. Following the completion of the Activity Plan on 31 May 2018, and the end of the contract for the HLF-funded Volunteer co-ordinator post, some strands of activity have now ceased.

Hands On

The Hands On desks allow members of the public to handle original artefacts and to engage with a knowledgeable volunteer. The WCEC Activity Plan enabled the Museum to extend its Hands On programme beyond the six pre-existing desks. The addition of a desk in the WCEC has allowed the Hands On programme to support eight different special exhibitions to date in the Sainsbury Exhibition Gallery (SEG), most recently *The American Dream: pop to the present* (9 March - 18 June 2017), *Scythians: warriors of ancient Siberia* (14 September 2017 - 14 January 2018) and *Rodin and the art of ancient Greece* (26 April - 29 July 2018).



Visitor and volunteer exploring handling objects at the Hands On desk

Behind the Scenes tours

The first volunteer-facilitated Behind the Scenes tours took place on Tuesday 30th August 2016. The tours have taken place at regular monthly intervals subsequently throughout Year 2 (2016-17) and Year 3 (2017-18), with levels of satisfaction generally increasing over time. The last tours ran during May 2018. Significant delay to the commencement of the tours meant that original targets for the number of tours to be run, and the numbers of attendees, could not be met. These tours have required a significant amount of staff time to support, and as a result of the end of the HLF-funded Volunteer co-ordinator post, the Museum has had reluctantly to stop running these tours.



Behind the Scenes tour

Object Moves and Object Journeys

Significant progress has been made with Object Moves volunteering as the Africa, Oceania and Americas (AOA) collection and other collection material moves in to the new WCEC building. Volunteers have continued to support community programmes, in particular providing significant support for the Object Journeys programme.



Object Moves volunteers

Each of these strands is explored in more detail below. The WCEC Activity Plan Volunteer Co-ordinator and Programme Conservator have both been central in coordinating these volunteering strands. The contract for the WCEC Activity Plan Volunteer Co-ordinator came to an end on 31 May 2018.

How is the Volunteering strand progressing against targets set out in the Activity Plan?

Measure	Target per session or/and year	Target per 3 years	Current	% of target achieved
<i>Overall volunteering programme</i>				
No. volunteer slots for Hands On desks	180 half day shifts per exhibition	540	Potential slots March 14 to May 18: 1,856 Slots used (due to gaps and absences): 1,722	Target exceeded 319% of target reached
No. volunteer slots for Object Moves	80 days per year	240	March 14 to May 18: Total 947.5	Target exceeded 395% of target reached

No. volunteer slots for Behind the Scenes tours for public		99	Volunteer slots June 2016-May 18: 44	Target exceeded 44% of target reached
No. Object Journeys volunteers	12 volunteer days	36	March 14 to May 18: 65	Target exceeded 181% of target reached
Days of volunteer time created		1,900	March 14 to May 18: 1,995	Target exceeded 105% of target reached
Volunteers recruited and trained on schedule			On target	

A) Hands On desks

Background

Hands On desks have been developed for eight exhibitions: *Vikings: life and legend* (6 March - 22 June 2014); *Ming: 50 years that changed China* (18 September 2014 - 5 January 2015); *Defining beauty: the body in ancient Greek art* (26 March - 5 July 2015); *Celts: art and identity* (24 September 2015 - 31 January 2016); *Sunken cities: Egypt's lost worlds* (19 May - 27 November 2016); *The American Dream: pop to the present* (9 March - 18 June 2017); *Scythians: warriors of ancient Siberia* (14 September 2017 - 14 January 2018); and *Rodin and the art of ancient Greece* (26 April - 29 July 2018).

For the first seven exhibitions the location of the SEG Hands On desk has been unchanged; it was located in the SEG foyer area where it can be freely accessed by members of the public as well as exhibition ticket holders. For the most recent exhibition *Rodin and the art of ancient Greece* (26 April - 29 July 2018), the Museum has experimented with a new location outside of the foyer to see if this encourages wider used by members of the general public (not exhibition ticket holders).

The last two exhibitions in this list, *Scythians* and *Rodin*, fall within the period of reporting covered by this document. As with previous desks, the handling collections for both of these exhibitions were assembled with guidance from curatorial, conservation and interpretation staff. A team of volunteers was recruited and trained by the WCEC

Volunteer Co-ordinator with support from other colleagues. Detailed objects notes were prepared for the volunteers by the curator and the interpretation team. Visitor and volunteer experience of the desk was thoroughly evaluated, indicating high levels of visitor usage and satisfaction.

The development of each handling collection has been relatively straightforward. The exhibition curatorial teams for each exhibition show have responded enthusiastically to the Hands On concept. The development of the WCEC Hands On desks during 2017-18 progressed smoothly, building on the previous years' experience and evaluation.

The volunteers' key role is to facilitate visitor engagement with the handling objects at the desk. There is a content guide for the volunteers which covers all of the 10 or so objects. The notes are provided by the relevant curator and edited by the interpretation team. Typically, only a small number of objects are used at any one time; the selection is at the volunteer's discretion, although at any one time around three to four are on display - chosen by the volunteer.

Prior to *Scythians* and *Rodin* opening, volunteers delivering the Hands On desk received a training session and a tour of the exhibition led by the curatorial team.

Each Hands On desk is supported by a team of 28 volunteers. Each volunteer usually delivers one half-day (two and a half hour session) every other week.

Hands On desks visitors

Exhibition	Hands On visitors	Total visitors to WCEC exhibition	Percentage
Rodin and the art of ancient Greece (figures are for the whole run, so up to 29 July 2018)	17,484	118,877	14.7%
Scythians: warriors of ancient Siberia	6,008	132,185	4.5%
The American Dream: pop to present	6,475	72,544	8.9%
Sunken cities: Egypt's lost worlds	17,314	290,500	5.9%
Celts: art and identity	11,127	153,991	7.22%
Defining beauty: the body in ancient Greek art	7,961	100,614	7.91%
Ming: 50 years that changed China	6,886	109,532	6.29%
Vikings: life and legend	20,570	279,257	7.37%

Success against Activity Plan targets

Measure	Target per session or/and year	Target per 3 years	Current	% of target achieved
Hands On desk				
No. of desks available for 3 exhibitions in the SEG over the 3 years	1	3	8	Exceeded target
Visitor numbers match those of desks across the Museum	On target: Visitor numbers for each SEG desk have been comparable to other desks at the Museum. The current Scythians exhibition Hands On desk will mean that the obligation to develop one desk in each of the three years of the Activity Plan has been fulfilled.			
Volunteers recruited and trained on schedule	On target: A team of volunteers has been recruited and trained on schedule for each of the Hands On desks.			

Successes, challenges and key learning

The evaluation continues to demonstrate a high level of satisfaction from both the public and the volunteers who facilitate desk experiences. 95% of visitors said that they would recommend the Hands On desk to other visitors, which is an increase from 87% in Year 2. 97% of visitors said that the desk had enhanced their visit, also an increase from 91% in Year 2.

Knowledge of the volunteer was rated most highly by visitors - 100% rated them good or very good. 95% of visitors said they learnt about a specific area or topic. An increase from 93% in Year 2. Dwell time at the desks remains high - 63% of visitors engaged for 5+ minutes. 87% (20 out of 23) of volunteers agreed their experience had been valuable and enjoyable overall, which is an increase from 72% last year.

Evidence from the Rodin desk shows that relocating it outside the foyer results in more people engaging, although not necessarily deeper engagement.

Evaluation

The evaluation tools consist of the following:

- Questionnaires/interviews with members of the public completed by the WCEC Volunteer Co-ordinator
- Observations of visitor behaviour undertaken by the WCEC Volunteer Co-ordinator

- Questionnaires completed by volunteers about their experience on the desk

68 participant surveys including volunteer observations were collected for Scythians. This provides a margin of error of $\pm 12\%$ so results should be used indicatively only. 19 responses were collected for Rodin, due to the small sample size, this has not been included in this report. Beyond the number visits to the desk, learning about the new location of Rodin desk is therefore limited to volunteer observations within this report. The Museum is gathering additional data about the Rodin desk which is beyond the scope of this report.

40 volunteer surveys were collected. Due to the small sample size, these results have been provided in counts rather than percentages and should be used indicatively only.

Participant feedback

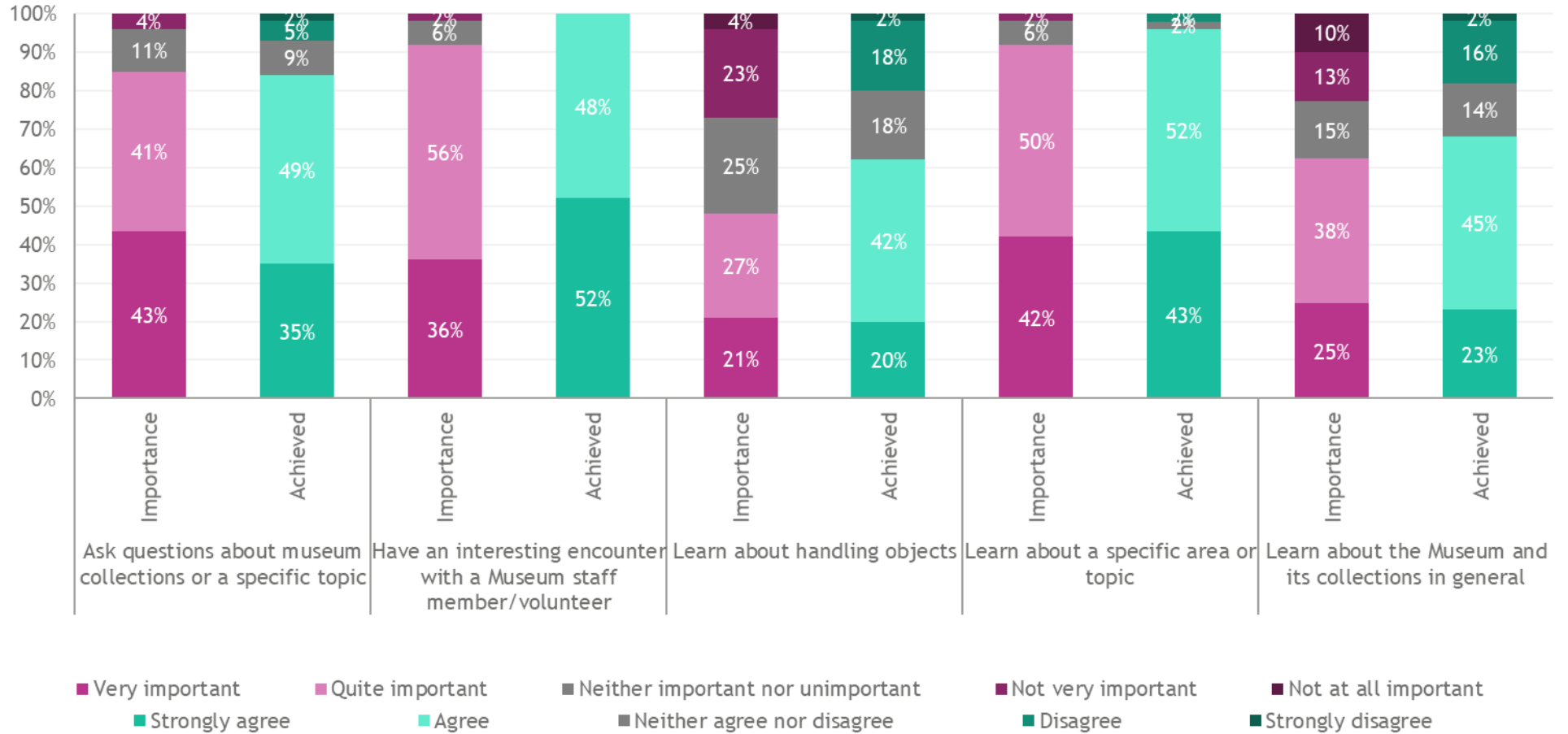
86% of the Scythians Hands On desk participants were first time attenders to a Hands On desk at a WCEC special exhibition. Most participants did not plan to visit the desk before their visit to the British Museum. This lack of pre-planning is reflected in the way they heard about the desk; half (50%) saw that something was going on at the special exhibition upon visiting the gallery and a further 43% heard about the desk through Museum staff members.

The age range of the participants was slightly older, 69% were aged 55 or older, 18% aged between 35 and 54 and 12% aged under 34. 84% of participants were from the UK, and 16% overseas visitors. In line with this geographical spread, 38% of participants were members of the British Museum, 4% were lapsed members and 58% had never been members of the British Museum.

Importance against achievement

The most important outcomes participants were hoping to gain from the desk were to have an interesting encounter with a Museum staff member/volunteer, to learn about a specific area or topic and to ask questions about museum collections or a specific topic. Participants agreed that these were all achieved through their participation.

How important were the following factors in your decision to visit the Hands On Desk today? / And to what extent do you agree or disagree that you achieved the following?



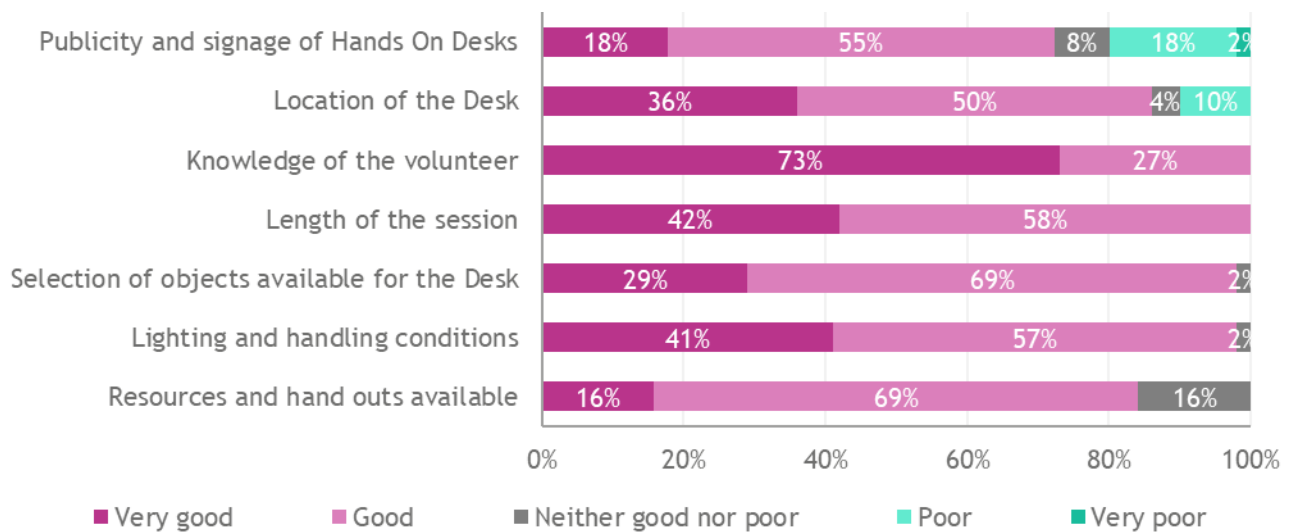
Base: all respondents - 43 ~ 50
Margin of error: ±13% ~ ±15%

Rating the Hands On desk

The favourite objects amongst Scythians participants were the coin; 46% chose this, and 20% chose the arrow heads.

All elements of the Hands On desk were rated positively. The knowledge of the volunteer was rated most highly; all respondents rated this as ‘very good’ (73%) or ‘good’ (27%). On the other end of the scale, the publicity and signage of the Hands On desk received most negative ratings; 18% rated this ‘poor’ and 2% ‘very poor’. Reflecting this, comments about how to improve were centred around improving the signage.

How would you rate the following elements of the Hands On Desk?



Base: all respondents - 45 ~ 51

Margin of error: ±12% ~ ±14%

Nearly all Scythians participants thought the Hands On desk enhanced their visit to the museum (97%) and were likely to recommend a visit to the Hands On desk to a friend, family member or colleague (95%).

Volunteer observations

Volunteers estimated that nearly two thirds of participants (63%) spent over 5 minutes at the desk and were engaged with it; 29% rated the participant’s level of engagement as ‘very engaged’ and 68% ‘quite engaged’. Two thirds (63%) also asked a question which indicates a high level of engagement too.

Volunteers rated the participants’ response to the selection of objects available positively; 76% ‘good’ and 21% ‘very good’, largely due to the enthusiasm expressed.

How would you rate the visitor’s response to the selection of objects available on the Desk? Please explain your answer.

‘Very engaged. Visitor asked lots of questions. Especially with the coin and spade money.’ (Volunteer)

‘Previous knowledge due to dig, etc. Been to lots of desks. Said it bridges the gap between people and treasures.’ (Volunteer)

‘Really excited and enthusiastic about the desk, had never seen one before.’ (Volunteer)

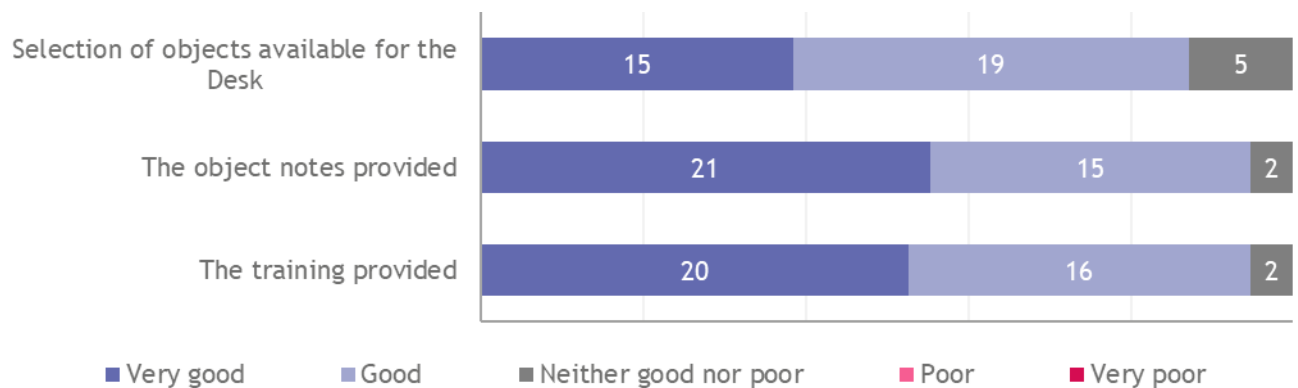
‘She said it was a lovely taster and very interesting.’ (Volunteer)

Volunteer feedback

Rating the Hands On desk

Overall, volunteers rated the notes and training provided for the Hands On desk positively, with nearly half saying that these were ‘very good’. The selection of objects available for the Desk was rated slightly less positively although it gained a positive rating overall. The object used most commonly was the tetradrachm of Alexander.

How would you rate the following?



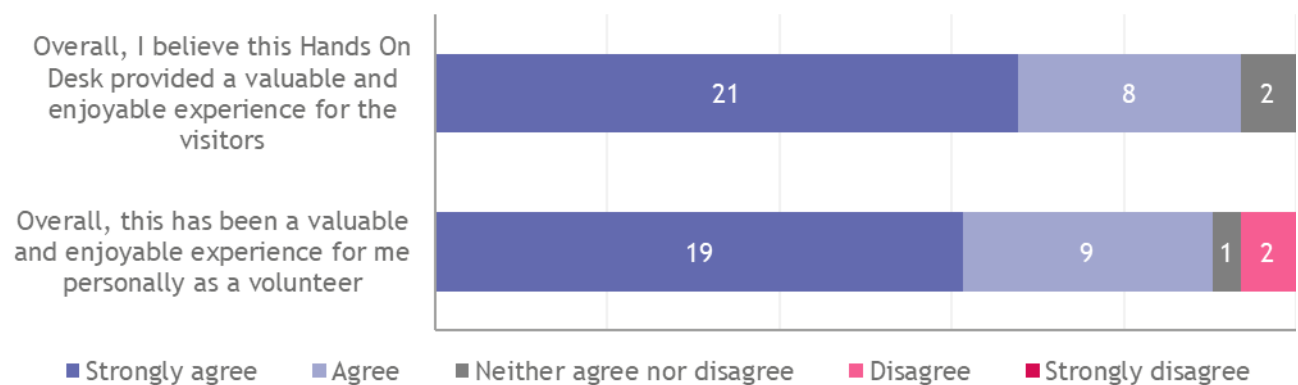
Base: all respondents - 38 ~ 39

Margin of error: ±16%

Value of the experience

Nearly all volunteers found the experience to be valuable and enjoyable; when asked to expand on the reasons why, most volunteers cited the opportunity to learn about the subject area and to engage with members of the public. A similar proportion of volunteers believe the experience was also valuable and enjoyable for the visitors too. This is largely based on reactions from visitors and levels of perceived engagement.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?



Base: all respondents - 31

Margin of error: ±18%

Please explain why:

‘Object based learning through the handling of authentic artefacts (or copies) holds a very strong interest for me. Therefore, the opportunity to engage with visitors through object handling and to witness their enthusiasm prior to entering an exhibition is particularly satisfying.’ (Volunteer)

‘According to the visitors I speak to they are amazed and very pleased that the British Museum gives them the opportunity to handle original objects and find out about them rather than just look at objects in a case. Visitors say it is a more personal approach to history and gives them a chance to connect to the past and the people of that time.’ (Volunteer)

Improvements

In line with previous years, many volunteers felt that the desk could benefit from better signage and a more prominent location, although the latter has been explored with the Rodin desk.

If you could make one change to the Hands On experience for the next exhibition, what would it be?

‘It’s the same old problem. Perhaps a change of signage or the desk in a slightly different position. People don’t seem to make the connection between the handling desk and the exhibition.’ (Volunteer)

‘This is always a difficult question to answer! Changing the location of the desk (for Rodin) has been successful, as considerably more visitors are approaching and asking questions. However, a sizable chunk of these do ask general questions relating to other galleries or museum facilities (I’ve done two sessions at the desk, so this may

change). That said, it's a fabulous opportunity to really 'sell' the subject matter to passing visitors, who may otherwise be unaware of the exhibition, and it's also important to pass on general information. I've found that those visitors who do express an interest spend a lot of time at the desk, so it's a great opportunity for further engagement.' (Volunteer)

Although the WCEC Activity Plan has finished the Interpretation & Volunteers teams are continuing to run volunteer facilitated Hands On desks for future exhibitions in the SEG/WCEC.

B) Behind the scenes tours

As reported previously, Behind the Scenes tours had a delayed beginning on Tuesday 30 August 2016 following the completion of works on the WCEC lifts. The lifts caused only minor disruption subsequently during Year 2 (2016-17). During Year 3 (2017-18) everything has run smoothly. These tours have required a significant amount of staff time to support, and as a result of the end of the HLF-funded Volunteer co-ordinator post on 31 May 2018, these have reluctantly had to stop being run. There is a possibility that the tours will run again in some format in the future, drawing on the learning that has accumulated over the last three years.



Behind the Scenes tour

Experiences to date

These tours are led by volunteers from the Information Desk in the Great Court. On arrival in the conservation studios, staff take the lead. The larger group is usually then split into three groups who rotate between three different conservators who talk about their work. This has, on the whole, worked well for the conservation studios and the participants, with visitors being able to hear from conservators about a range of objects.

Visitor feedback has been extremely positive and volunteers have been generally very complimentary about their experience. Tours seem to have been more positively received by staff the more they were run, as staff got more used to the practicalities of the day. Most staff see the wider benefits of this kind of engagement activity even if there is not a significant direct benefit to their work.

Success against Activity Plan targets

Measure	Target per session or/and year	Target per 3 years	Current	% of target achieved
Behind the scenes tours				
Volunteers recruited and trained in time for tours to commence	Target achieved: The team has been in place for a long time now.			
Participants	15 per tour/720 per year	2,160	568 (out of 660 available slots)	26% of original target (but 86% based on slots available following Year 1 delays)
% public tour places booked	80%	80%	86%	86%

Successes, challenges and learning so far

Visitor feedback has continued to be very positive - 99% of visitors rated the tours good or very good. As with previous years, visitors said their desire to improve understanding of the Museum's conservation and scientific work and to have an introduction to behind the scenes, were the top factors in deciding to attend. Again, these were achieved to a very high extent (99%). 94% of visitors agreed that the tours demonstrated the purpose of the WCEC effectively (similar to Year 2's 96%) and 98% of visitors agreed their understanding of the Museum's work had improved (same rating as for Year 2). 97% would recommend the experience (similar to Year 2's 99%).

Also consistent with previous feedback is that some visitors would prefer a longer tour - 42% said they were too short. Whilst staff acknowledged this, most felt that it would be challenging to make them any longer, but said delivering fewer and longer tours, or tours spent for slightly longer with two instead of three conservators could be a solution.

Volunteers rated their experience highly - 100% (up from 93% in Year 2) agreed it was a valuable and enjoyable experience. Only 60% said the experience supported their personal aspirations, however, some said that this was because their main motivation for taking part was not directly linked to personal aspirations, or that they wanted to volunteer for longer and there was not the opportunity for this.

Staff feedback has improved since earlier in the project with nearly all staff rating the experience 'very good' or 'good'. Staff have increasingly valued the Meet and Greet sessions with volunteers and have been clearer about the volunteers' role.

Most staff think that the tours have had wider benefits for their own work, however, some think that the tours have still taken them away from the core purpose of their work as conservators or scientists, which could suggest that engagement is viewed as an add on by some.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the Behind the scenes tours consisted of the following:

- Questionnaires/interviews with members of the public
- Questionnaires completed by volunteers about their experience of the tours
- Questionnaires completed by staff about their experience of the tours.

526 participant feedback forms were completed over the period; this gives a margin of error of c. $\pm 4\%$ at the 95% confidence level.

In addition, 13 volunteer feedback forms and 20 staff feedback forms were completed. Due to the small sample sizes, these results have been provided in counts rather than percentages and should be used indicatively only.

Participant feedback

Participants included in the analysis took part in the following studios/labs: Ceramics, Glass, Metals (6%), Organic Artefacts (15%), Preventive Conservation (9%), Scientific Research (33%), Stone, Wall Paintings, Mosaics (18%) and Western Art on Paper (19%).

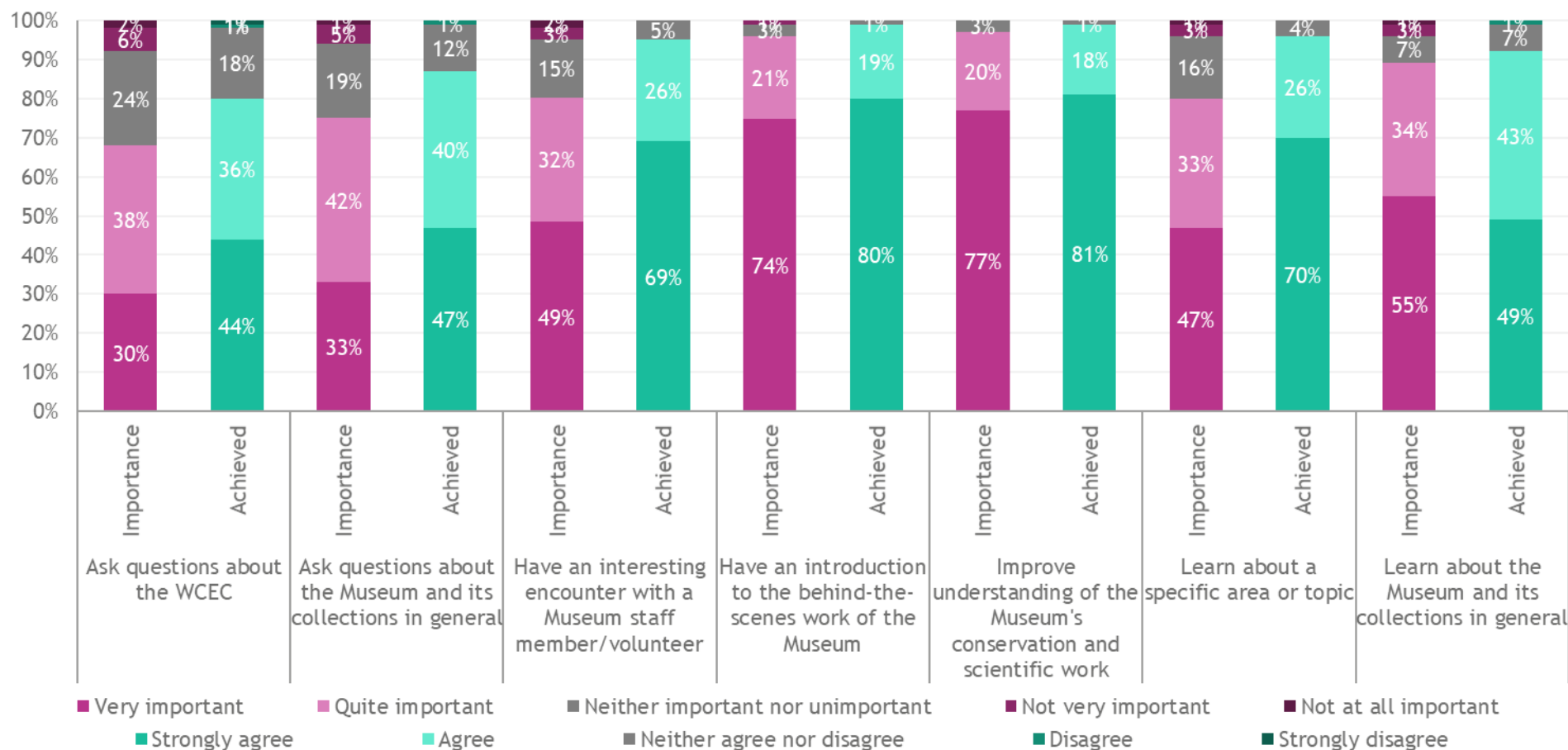
89% of participants were from the UK, of which 39% were from Inner London and 34% Outer London. Of those visiting from overseas, most were from the US, Canada and Australia.

Importance against achievement

The most important outcomes participants were hoping to gain from the tour were to improve their understanding of the Museum's conservation and scientific work and to have an introduction to the behind-the-scenes work of the Museum. Participants agreed that these were met by the level of achievement they felt they had gained in these areas. Factors which exceeded this balance were learning about a specific area or topic and

having an interesting encounter with a Museum staff member or volunteer. Both these factors were attributed with a lower level of importance compared to the level in which they were achieved.

How important were the following factors in your decision to attend the tour today? And to what extent do you agree or disagree that you achieved the following?



Base: all respondents - 494 ~ 520

Margin of error: ±3% ~ ±4%

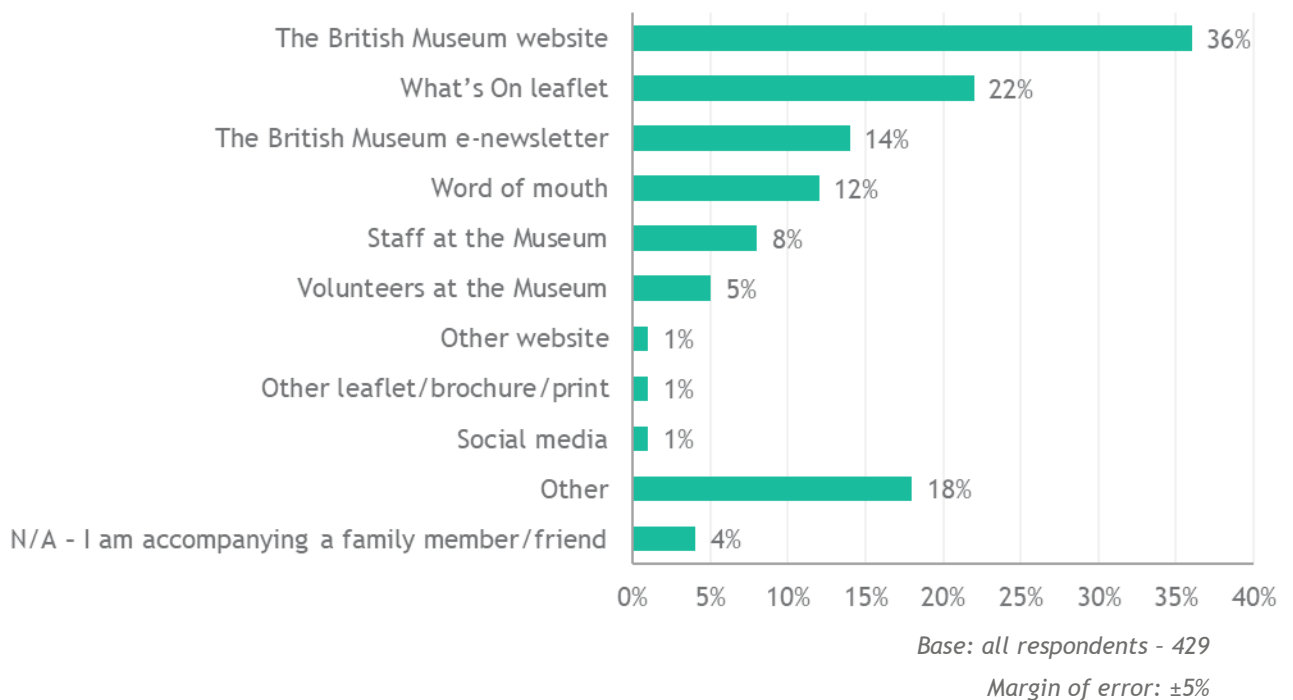
Information source

One in three participants (29%) had attended a Behind the Scenes tour at the WCEC before.

Two fifths of participants (40%) were members of the British Museum, a further 9% were lapsed members and half (50%) had never been members of the British Museum.

Over a third of participants heard about the tour through the British Museum website (36%), followed by the 'What's On' leaflet (22%). A fifth (18%) cited 'other' sources, of which just under half specified National Trust.

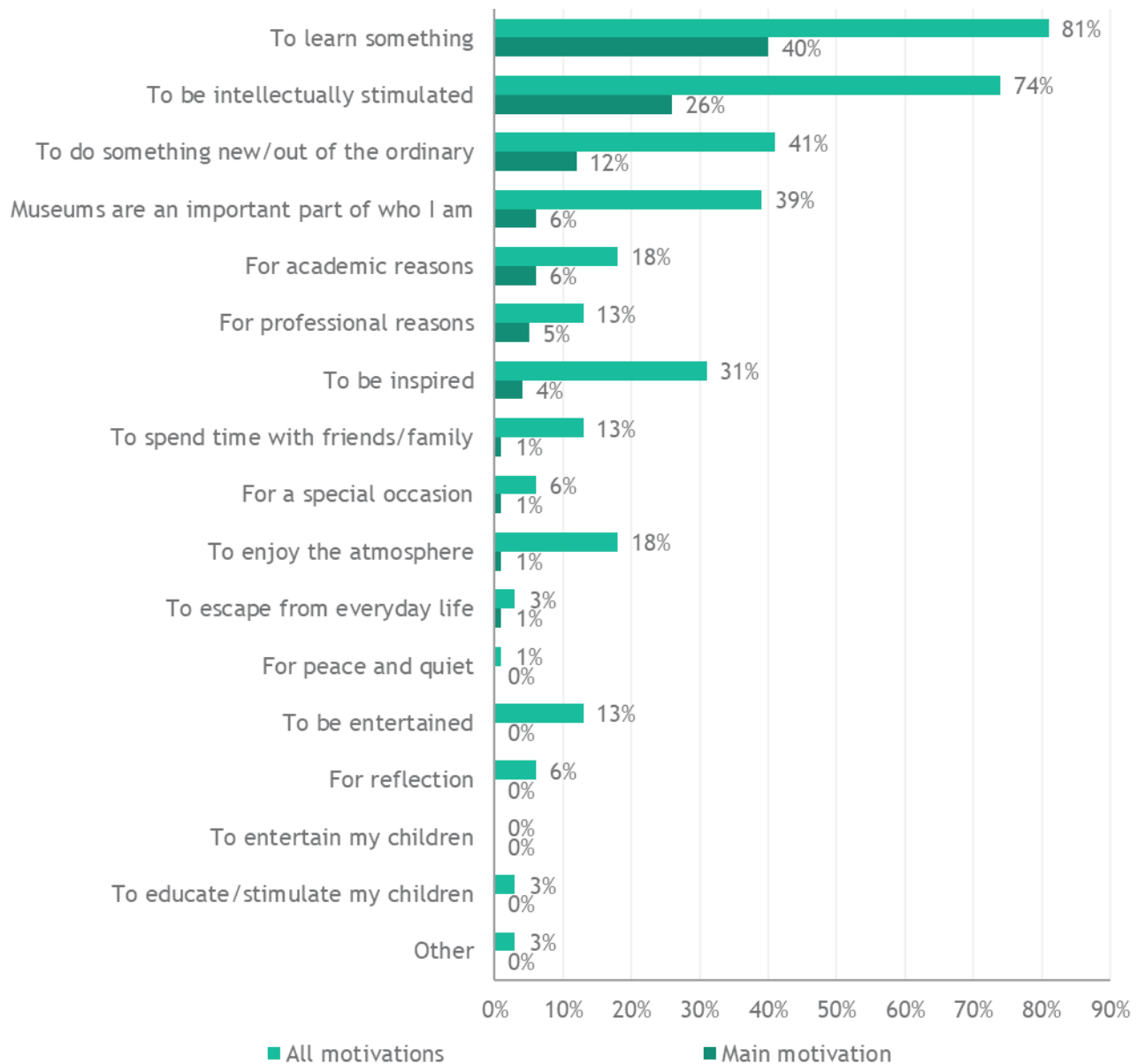
How did you hear about our Behind the Scenes Tours?



Motivating factors

Intellectual stimulation was the main motivating factor for most participants, with 81% citing 'to learn something' and 74% citing 'to be intellectually stimulated' as one of their motivations for attending the tour. These were also the main motivation to visit.

Which of the following describe your motivations for visiting today? And which of these was your main motivation?



Base: all respondents - 503 / 171

Margin of error: ±4% / ±7%

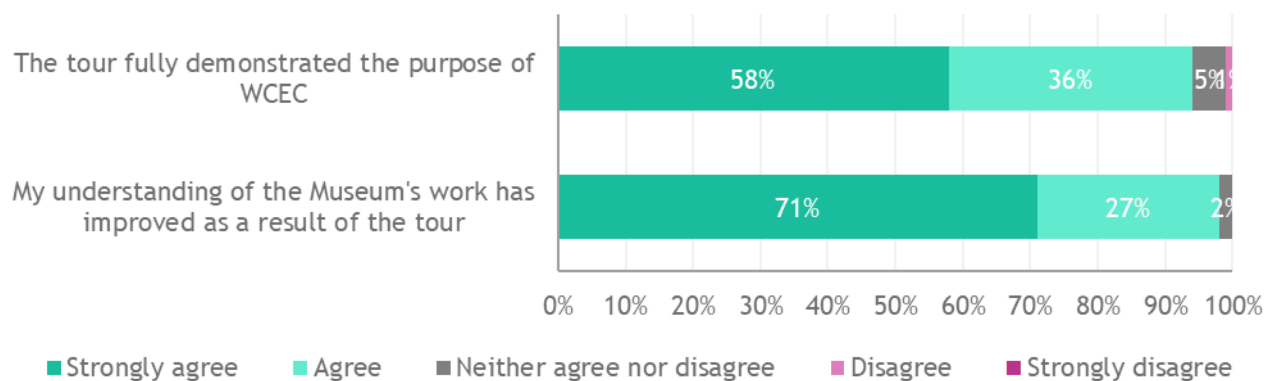
Rating the tour

Overall, participants rated the tour positively; 82% rated it 'very good' and 17% 'good'. 1% rated the tour as neutral. The areas which participants most enjoyed included specific conservation areas (28%) and the labs (17%). 19% of respondents said they enjoyed every part of the tour.

Participants were split when it came to the length of the tour (90 minutes); 54% found it to be just right, however 42% found it to be too short.

Participants agreed that the tour demonstrated the WCEC's purpose (94%) and that their knowledge of the Museum's work had improved as a result (98%).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base: all respondents - 500 / 497

Margin of error: ±4%

97% of participants would recommend a tour to a friend or family member.

Generally, participants were complimentary about the tours and the staff leading them, comments suggested that the volunteer-delivered introduction could have been shorter and should have been held in an area which was quieter. Additionally, participants were keen to spend longer with the conservators, however were understanding that practically, this may not be feasible.

Is there anything else you would like to say about the tour?

'The conservators were very enthusiastic and positive about their work.' (Ceramics, Glass, Metals participant)

'Fantastic. Probably prefer more time with the conservators & less on the more general stuff.' (Organic Artefacts participant)

'More time looking at the labs and talking to staff and a shorter PowerPoint presentation about the WCEC.' (Scientific Research participant)

'The tour was super interesting, but very rushed- it would've been nice if there was time to ask questions.' (Preventative Conservation participant)

'Would have enjoyed longer in/ with each conservator although understand that making time to explain/ demonstrate is time not being spent on conservation work.' (Stone, Wall Paintings, Mosaics participant)

Volunteer feedback

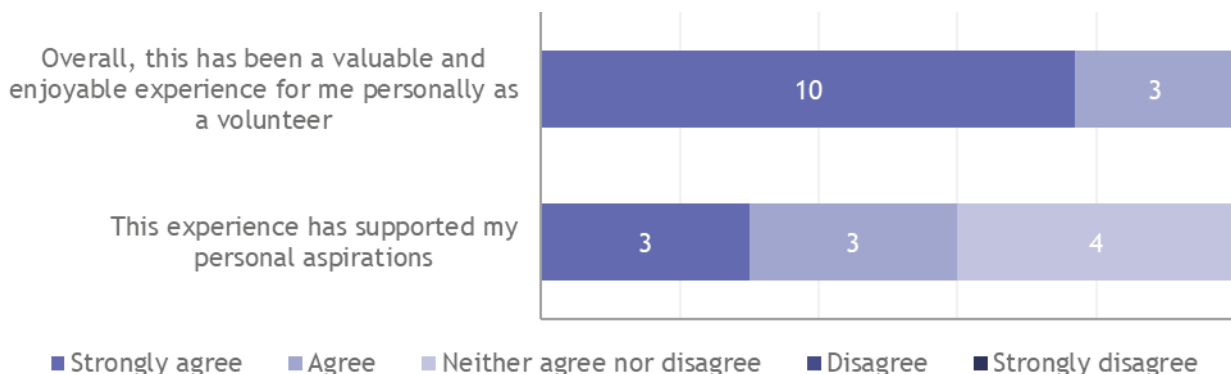
Of the 13 volunteers who provided feedback, most were motivated to take part in the tours in order to learn something and to find out more about the Museum itself by gaining access to the inner workings of it.

Value of the experience

All volunteers rated their experience of being a Behind the Scenes Tour volunteer positively; 8 respondents rated it 'very good' and 5 rated it 'good'.

All volunteers also agreed the role was a valuable and enjoyable experience for them personally as volunteers, 6 out of 10 also agreed the experience supported their personal aspirations.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base: all respondents - 13 / 10

Margin of error: ±27% ~ ±31%

Please explain your answer.

'I've really enjoyed seeing the studios and the science department and hearing the conservators/scientists discuss their work and also the interaction with the public who seem to enjoy the tours immensely and engage with the conservators/scientists. For my own personal aspirations, it probably hasn't supported those, but that was not my expectation or reason for volunteering for the programme.'

(Volunteer)

'I have personally learned so much from visiting all the various "Behind the Scenes" locations in the WCEC; the conservation staff are top of their field, so very knowledgeable; always willing to share, and pleasant in approach to visitors. But I'm uncertain how to answer about aspirations, although if there were further opportunities to volunteer in the WCEC I would jump at the chance!' (Volunteer)

Rating the tours

The meet and greet sessions between staff and volunteers in the studios, before each tour and the training provided were both rated as 'very good' or 'good' by all volunteers.

Additionally, the time in the studios were found to be engaging and informative by all 13 volunteers. All but one volunteer also found the tour script and PowerPoint to be well scripted and engaging.

Suggestions for improvement

No strong themes emerged as to how their experience as volunteers could be enhanced, however some suggestions included more flexibility in the script, especially if the group contains repeat visitors. Also meeting curators was suggested as a way to help improve their knowledge.

The volunteers suggested that the experience could be enhanced for visitors by extending the length of the session, especially the section with the conservators / scientists, and to allow time for questions.

Staff feedback

In the lead up to the tours

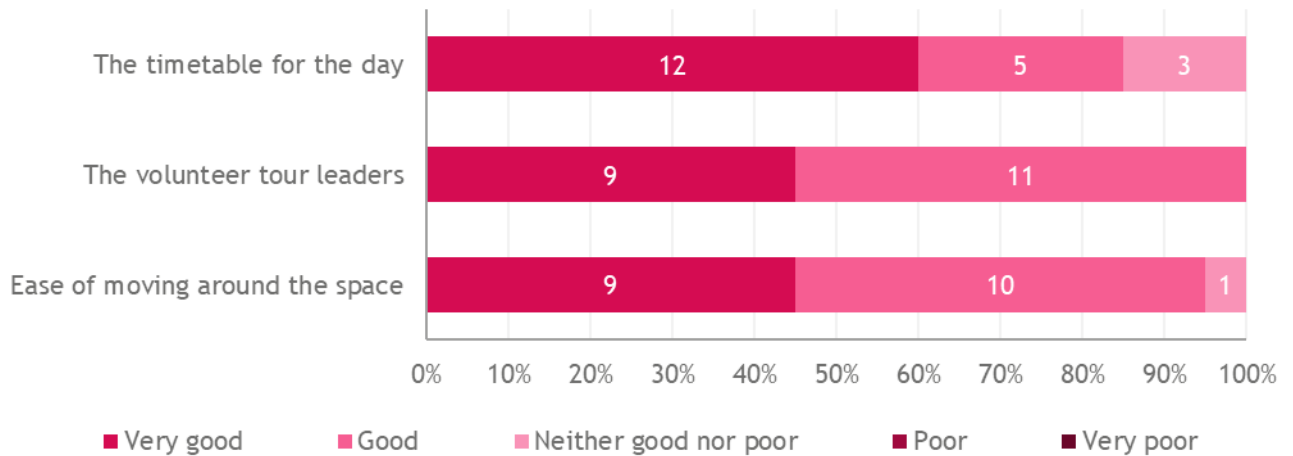
Overall, staff who were aware of the CSR staff guide and those who attended the volunteer Meet and Greet found these to be useful. All staff members felt prepared for the tour; 16 were 'fully prepared' and 4 'quite prepared', and generally did not have any suggestions for improvements for the lead up to the tour.

How the tours went

Overall, all staff members rated the tour as 'very good' (15 respondents) or 'good' (4 respondents). Individual elements of the day were also rated positively; in particular the timetable for the day was rated 'very good' by 12 out of 20 respondents.

Reflecting comments made by volunteers and participants, 7 out of 19 staff members felt that the tours could have been slightly longer, 12 staff members found it to be just right. There was also mixed feedback on how well the volunteers performed their role.

How would you rate the following?



Base: all respondents - 20

Margin of error: ±22%

Please explain your answer. / Is there anything else you would like to say about how the tours went?

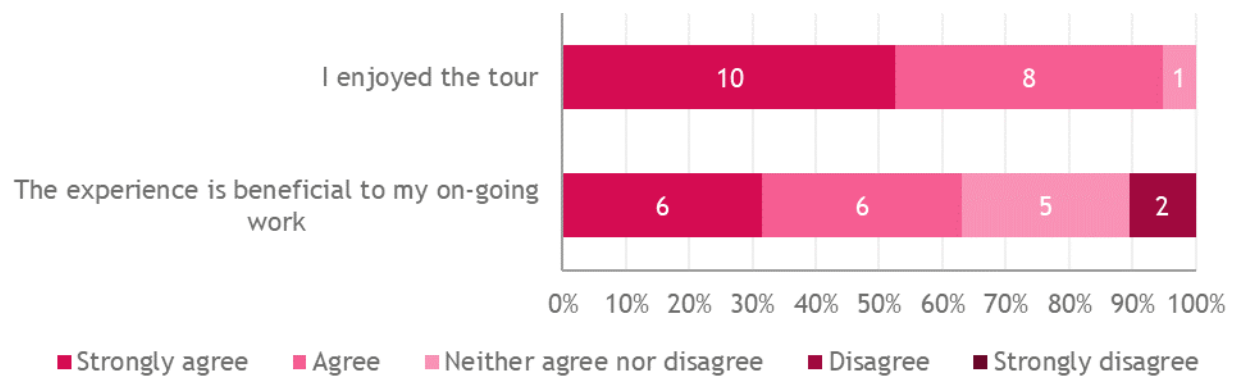
‘A little longer for each object might be useful, literally just another 5 minutes - 12 minutes is a very short time to introduce the object and explain / get across the complex decision-making process that went into the treatment.’ (Staff)

‘The volunteer tour leaders were great, however, some of the volunteers did not encourage rotation of the groups which meant it got confusing which groups were swapping.’ (Staff)

‘When they do 10 mins with each conservator, they almost always overrun the time. Usually because the groups want to ask a lot of questions. If these tours are to continue, particularly if they become a paid for event post HLF funding, it may be good to re-assess the programme. Maybe they could speak to fewer conservators but for a longer time.’ (Staff)

Comments suggest that whilst CSR staff understand the benefits of the tours in engaging members of the public, it can be disruptive and so they would appreciate a limit to the number of tours run.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base: all respondents - 19

Margin of error: ±22%

Please explain your answer.

'It doesn't benefit my work at all - it probably just takes me away from my work, BUT I see the tours as an opportunity to talk about my work and spread the word about conservation. It takes me away from my objects, but I see this outreach as a part of my job and as I like talking I am happy to speak to an interested audience.' (Staff)

'I enjoy the tours based on the fact they are not too often, but their frequency is about right over the year. This is an excellent platform to talk to the public about the work of conservation and its benefits to collection care and the museum. It is also enjoyable to discuss the work of conservation to an audience that would not normally be privy to this behind the scenes work.' (Staff)

'I did three lots of three talks. As the same information is being repeated three times for each tour, I think it would be best to do only two sets of three talks each, if staff numbers allow for this.' (Staff)

'We have enough opportunities to present and discuss our work, so an HLF tour to non-Museum people is not particularly beneficial to my work, in fact it takes up a full day and half of my time with I would argue no return.' (Staff)

'It is always important to engage with the public to show them what we are working on. I think public engagement should be more prominent within our department.' (Staff)

Concurring with volunteer and participant feedback, the main change suggestion by most staff was the length of the tour - that it should be longer.

If you could make one change to the Behind the Scenes Tours that would enhance the tour attendees' experience, what would it be?

'The only criticism there seems to be of the tours from the public perception is that they are too short. It would be difficult to make the tours as they stand longer as this would be too tiring for the conservator. It's surprising how exhausting talking can be! In addition, I think would have an adverse effect on the audience experience especially the final tour of the day. Perhaps a longer tour could be given if one of the four tours was to be omitted thereby offering three tours instead of the four.' (Staff)

'The most frequently repeated comment was "I wish these tours were longer". In future, increasing the time spent within the department would enhance the attendees experience greatly.' (Staff)

C) Object moves

The Storage Moves Team was committed to recruiting 12 volunteers annually who would together complete 80 days per year. The volunteers have been accommodated within the Storage Moves Team (Collections Services) and work with the Collections Project Manager (Christina Murphy) and Curators within the Africa, Oceania and Americas (AOA) department. The use of volunteers in direct collections care/collections management roles at the Museum has been a new area of activity which only started in 2015.



Object Moves volunteer

Successes, challenges and key learning

Significant progress has been made with Object Moves volunteering as the Africa, Oceania and Americas (AOA) collection and other collection material moves in to the new WCEC building. Volunteers have contributed 947 days towards Object Moves, exceeding the original target of 240 days by 395%.

Volunteers especially enjoyed the object handling training and rated the supplementary training opportunities highly. Overall the experience supported them to achieve personal development and learning goals.



Object Moves volunteer

Evaluation

Evaluation of the Object moves consisted of the following:

- Three-stage questionnaire completed by volunteers at the start, middle and end of their programme. This was to cover the recruitment process, the training and final thoughts and feedback.

5 volunteers took part in the evaluation survey, however the completion rate dropped to just 3 volunteers for the final stage of the survey. Due to the low sample size, these

results have been provided in counts rather than percentages and should be used indicatively only.

Volunteer feedback

The recruitment process

All 5 volunteers who offered feedback found the application form clear to understand and easy to complete. They described the selection process with words such as ‘enjoyable’, ‘interesting’ and ‘relaxed’. They also rated the general communications and information they received prior to their first day highly and when asked to comment on what else could have been provided, 3 of the volunteers who responded suggested that they had everything they needed at that stage.

The handouts were also rated highly, although both the Moves manual and other handouts were rated as neutral by 1 volunteer.



Object Moves volunteer

The training

All elements of the training were rated positively and were found to strike the right balance between theory and practical activities. The elements rated included the project introduction, the presentations, Object Handling session, Health & Safety session and Object Processing session. In particular, the Object Handling session was rated ‘very good’ by all 5 volunteers. The training left 4 out of the 5 volunteers ‘fully prepared’ and the other volunteer ‘quite prepared’ for their roles. The overall training facilities were also rated ‘very good’ by 4 out of 5.

The supplementary training was also rated highly. This included the curators talk/tour, conservators talk/tour, Cut Outs & Storage Solutions session, Best Practice in Storage session, IPM session and Hazards in Collection session. In particular, the IPM session and Hazards in Collection session were rated ‘very good’ by all 5 volunteers. These supplementary training sessions also left 4 out of the 5 ‘fully’ prepared’ and 1 ‘quite prepared’ for their role.

Final thoughts and feedback

For the three volunteers who offered feedback at the end of the placement, all agreed that it helped them achieve their learning outcomes, helped with their personal development and was overall a valuable and enjoyable experience for them personally. They were also likely to recommend volunteering with the British Museum and with the WCEC Storage Moves, however just 1 volunteer suggested that they would like to do this again themselves, or extend their placement with the project.

This strand of activity has been popular with both the volunteers and Collections Management staff. There is an appetite to continue running volunteering in this area on the same model for the foreseeable future. This is currently being discussed by senior stakeholders at the Museum.



Object Moves volunteer

Object Journeys



Family Object Journeys community partners and visitors at the launch event

An introduction to Object Journeys

Object Journeys is a three-year programme, where community partners have been supported to research and explore the British Museum's AOA collections. They have been working collaboratively with staff to produce displays in permanent galleries, programmes of events, and new information/knowledge in response to the exploration of the collection. Object Journeys has been a unique opportunity for community partners to work intimately with the British Museum's collection and its staff, and for the Museum to draw on the experiences and knowledge of individuals within different communities. It has been about learning and exploring together, and is intended to facilitate a genuine sharing and exchanging of knowledge. Object Journeys is also about trialling - and evolving - new engagement methodologies and exploring how more collaborative community-led display development might be embedded at the British Museum.

How is Object Journeys progressing against targets set out in the Activity Plan?

The following table details the key quantitative targets from the project Activity Plan, as well as indicating progress against these.

Measure	Per project	Target per 3 years	Current	% of target achieved
No. of projects		6	6 complete	Target met
Community participants	10	60	10 for 1st BM project 6 for 2nd BM project 8 for 3 rd BM project Around 15 for Manchester project Around 10 for Leicester project 2 for Brighton project who then consulted with the wider BAME Panel at Brighton Museum, totalling 10 = 59	Target met
Wider community involvement	30	180	The wider community has engaged through involvement in project activities, attendance to events and via social media. Whilst numbers cannot be recorded, they will have exceeded the targets.	Exceeded target
No. British Museum visitors	1,000,000	3,000,000	It is likely that a minimum of over 1,800,000 passed through Room 24 over the course of a year. Tracking studies suggest that only a smaller proportion of this figure is likely to have stopped at the Object Journeys case. The target is likely to have been exceeded. NB. A very conservative estimate based on existing studies of visitor behaviour would be an estimated 153,000 per year stopping for a meaningful engagement (based on knowledge that 1,800,000 visitors enter Room 24; 900,000 stop and look at displays - although mainly the central art installation; 17% of these look at wall displays = 153,000)	Firm data is lacking but the target is likely to have been met
No. Partner museum visitors	90,000	270,000	230,266 (data provided by Manchester) 61,971 (data provided by Brighton, which covers April - June 18) Data from Leicester not provided	Exceeded target

			= 292,237 (exc. Data from Leicester)	
No. Public programme participants	800	2,400	<p>Total = 1,692</p> <p>The above figures represent those recorded by evaluation at events only. There is no way of knowing the exact numbers of those who engaged in some capacity, although real numbers have exceeded the target.</p> <p>BM 1st project (Somali) - 625 (Launch 250 Family event 700 Somali week event 320 Little feet 25)</p> <p>BM 2nd project (Kiribati) - 960 (Late night event 405, Family event 525, Little feet event 30)</p> <p>BM 3rd project (Family) - 107 (may be more event beyond the timeframe of reporting)</p>	Exceeded target
No. Object records amended	At least 1	At least 3	<p>1st BM project - 7 records amended</p> <p>2nd BM project - 8 objects, 2 new donations, commissions of 5 new objects, 1 new object film</p>	Exceeded target

The qualitative data is equally important to project learning and is explored in greater detail below.

Summary of activity

Year 3 (2017-18), the final year of Object Journeys, saw the opening of the Kiribati display (27 July 2017) at the British Museum (Room 24) and the delivery of the related public events (autumn and winter 2017). The display, titled *Kiribati: between sea and land*, opened in the Wellcome Gallery on 17 July 2017. The group agreed on the theme of ‘between sea and land’ to emphasise how I-Kiribati people are physically reliant on, and spiritually connected to both realms. I-Kiribati are also proud of the knowledge and skills they have developed in order to thrive in an environment with limited resources.

The third and final Object Journeys project at the British Museum commenced in November 2017. This project has been a partnership between the British Museum and a group of 8 London-based community partners exploring the theme of family. A varied and experimental approach to engagement methodologies and ways of working with community partners was built into the initial ambitions of the Object Journeys project. Instead of a direct cultural stakeholder group working with a connected collection, the third project decided to work with a multi-cultural group of people to see what the outcome of this might be. The new Museum Director is also interested in an inter-sectional, thematic approach to displaying the collection and it was felt to be a good opportunity to experiment with this way of working with and interpreting the collection.

The project group were recruited from members of community organisations who were already connected to the Museum through the Community Partnerships team either having done a project with the Museum in the past, or having taken part in outreach, community previews or facilitated visits to the Museum. It was thought due to the experimental nature of the project it would be wise to work with people somewhat familiar to the Museum and already interested in working with it. The group was made of 8 individuals with cultural heritages from Peru, Benin, Barbados, Basque country and Venezuela. They were all adults, 3 pensioners and 5 working people, currently living in London but have all had experiences of being brought up and living in another country. Their varied backgrounds was felt to enable a wider set of experiences, perspectives and world views to be represented in the project group.

The broad theme of 'Family' was identified by the Community Partnerships Team as a universal theme that many of their communities could identify with and something they had mentioned to the Team as being incredibly important to them. This was especially true for those in the diaspora who were far from where they were born. The theme was also identified as one Museum visitors would be able to connect with and hopefully find relevance and resonance to their own lives.

While the group considered multiple locations for their display, it was decided by the Museum to once again place the display in the Wellcome Trust Gallery in the two wall bays south of the Kiribati cases. This was felt to be the most appropriate space for both the objects and the theme the group were exploring.

The group met twice a month on alternative Saturdays, (sometimes more) and communicated between sessions online. These meetings were a mix of discussion-based workshops, training and skills exchange sessions, talks from experts, and study seminars in the Museum's collections and archive. The group explored the similarities and differences

inherent between families across time and across cultural boundaries. They chose objects from the AOA collections to celebrate the idea of how families support and depend upon each other for love, care, and guidance.

The Museum took a slightly more facilitated approach to the display development this time. Museum staff [curatorial and community partnerships staff] aided the project group much more in the object research and long-list object selection than in previous projects. This was mainly due to the use of the entire AOA collection (many thousands of objects) and the fact that the collections databases are not categorised thematically [e.g. collections are categorised by region, material or cultural association rather than theme] and was as such much more complicated to find ‘family’ relevant objects. The group was presented with long-lists of suggested family related objects at first [identified by Museum staff] and then informed by the discussions of each project session, more objects were identified based on the conversations, direction and wants of the community partners. The partners focused mainly on theme and narrative development, rather than generating new knowledge about the objects. The group were responsible for the final object decisions, the final narrative and messaging structure of the display and in writing the interpretation supported by relevant Museum staff.

The display, *Object Journeys: celebrating the work of families*, opened on Thursday 24 May 2018 in Room 24. The display explores the idea of how families, across cultures and through time have supported and cared for each other and enabled cultural traditions to be passed through families even when people are away from their original homes. The group have also been co-producing a series of public events, which will be delivered in the first six months of the display cases opening.

The pressures of being an externally-funded project with delivery deadlines, combined with the slower start to the first project, meant that Year 3 started later and had to be completed in a much shorter time-frame than earlier Object Journeys iterations.



Object Journeys Family display

Evaluation

The overall aim of the external evaluation is to develop insight into how effectively this research-based project has explored the potential for - and effect of - community-led display development in the British Museum and how it might benefit the wider sector. The evaluation of all Object Journeys projects at the British Museum focuses on:

- Impact on community partners.
- Mapping attitudes towards - and impact of - collaborative working on internal BM staff and stakeholders.

- Investigating views and experiences of the external advisory groups and Steering Groups.

Both data collection and analysis of responses from visitors and the broader community towards the project outputs has been undertaken by trained Museum volunteers, usually post-graduate students, managed by Museum staff involved in the project. The analysis and summary reporting undertaken by the British Museum has been presented in this report.

This evaluation also explores experiences of staff at the British Museum's national partners who have delivered their own Object Journeys projects. These were Manchester Museum (Year 1, 2015-16), New Walk Museum and Art Gallery in Leicester (Year 2, 2016-17) and Brighton Museum and Art Gallery in Year 3 (2017-18).

Key evaluation methodologies utilised include: in-depth interviews, observations, e-surveys and discussion groups. Specific approaches used have been described in each section of the report.

Successes, challenges and key learning

A summary of Object Journeys findings

The following sections provides an overview of findings from the Object Journeys strand, which are then explored in greater depth later in the report.

Impact on Object Journeys community partners

Kiribati Partners

‘Listening to us, like actually listening to our ideas. We shaped it, we chose the objects, we chose the theme.’ (Kiribati community partner)

‘Proud of the work we’ve all put together to try and show the strong main points, that are important to Kiribati people, like the dancing.’ (Kiribati community partner)

What did partners enjoy and gain from the experience?

- Learning about and sharing Kiribati heritage and culture
- Increased pride and confidence in talking about Kiribati culture
- Connection with other people of Kiribati heritage
- Capturing Kiribati culture at a crucial point in time
- Access to objects
- Taking on the responsibility of Kiribati heritage
- Professional development.

How did partners feel about the final display case and the events?

- Some initial disappointment about the number of objects, but they understood the limitations
- Strong appreciation of British Museum support and facilitation
- Pride in the display.

Did partners feel the project established an equal partnership?

- Strong sense of ownership and control, with community partners making key decisions
- Recognition of the support of the British Museum
- Partners felt responsible for information
- Feeling valued by the Museum supported a sense of equal partnership.

Relationship with and attitudes towards the British Museum

- An informal and relaxed relationship
- Increased appreciation of the Museum
- Valued the British Museum ‘stamp of approval’ when sharing their culture.

Challenges felt by the partners

- A wish to secure greater involvement from community elders
- Would have liked more time to develop the display
- Cultural practices and conventions within their wider community which limited support
- British Museum processes and policy.

Ownership

- Strong sense of ownership in the project
- Felt very much in control of the display and associated activities from the project's inception.

Family project partners

'When I talk about it to friends and family I sort of say it's probably one of the most exciting things that's happened in my life.' (Family Community Partner)

What did partners enjoy and gain from the experience?

- Access to objects
- Learning - the process of learning from each other, about other cultures, how museums are run and a range of skills
- Friendship.

How did partners feel about the final display case and the events?

- Pride
- Valuing the opportunity to showcase the to showcase their culture and country.

Did partners feel the project established an equal partnership, and what are their views on supporting a more equal partnership?

- Mixed views about equality of partnership
- Thematic approach resulted in the need for the Museum to lead, although many were comfortable with this
- Felt that their ideas were sometimes dismissed and a suggested staff training around how to support working with community partners
- Time the greatest barrier

- Believe benefits can support equality of partnership - for example, training, exhibition tickets, and social experiences rather than any kind of monetary remuneration.

Relationship with the British Museum

- Very grateful and highly valued the level of support
- Valued the role of the Object Journeys Partnerships Manager
- Saw the project as being as mutually beneficial to them and the Museum
- Keen to work with the British Museum in future.

Attitudes towards the British Museum

- All partners expressed a lot of appreciation generally for the Museum
- Valuing the Museum for undertaking this participatory practice
- Recognition of the work that goes on behind the scenes, especially in preserving culture, although some awareness of colonial tensions
- Belief that the Museum is too concerned with being politically correct.

Expectations versus reality

- Overall partners had a much more positive experience than they expected.

Challenges for the partners

- Thematic approach combined with a tight timeframe, resulted in a lack of empowerment for some
- Partners sometimes wanted to be led more by the Museum
- Partner felt their views were not always valued.

Ownership

- For them, ownership seems linked to their level of happiness with final display, but timing pressures are the main issue.

Responses from visitors to the display

- As an average a visitor spends 01:13 looking at the display.
- 48 % of visitors were able to recognise the main theme and an additional 41% pulled out other messages and themes developed by community partners in the display.
- The film was the most attractive element of the display. Objects themselves have good attracting power in the display. Visitors seem to find the objects interesting.

- As with the Year 1 Somali display, the majority of visitors did not explicitly notice the collaborative nature of the display but when this was pointed out to them they reported that this aspect added value and importance, due to a sense of authenticity and culturally relevant content being chosen for display. The Year 3 Family Objects display, which deliberately trials a more visible presentation of community partners and the process in the interpretation, will be evaluated to allow a direct comparison to be made.

Mapping attitudes towards - and impact of - collaborative working on internal British Museum staff (who are all stakeholders in the Object Journeys project)

Experiences of the project

Key factors contributing to positive experiences:

- Deepening understanding about how to work with community partners
- Achievement relating to creating the display
- Genuinely pleased about the concept of creating displays with community partners.

Key factors contributing to negative or less positive experiences:

- Thematic approach (even though this was seen to bring opportunities and benefits)
- Condensed timeframe of Year 3 project
- Concerns for some about whether other staff recognise the value and purpose of this work.

Thoughts on the project outputs - display and events

- Many positive about the thematic approach of the Year 3 Family display
- Impressed by the production quality, design and look
- Most think the greater visibility of community partners in the Family case makes the co-creative process clearer to visitors, but there are mixed views about whether this is a positive thing.

What ISG members perceived to be successes of the project - both for the Museum and other stakeholders

- Organisational learning and shifts in approach to community co-creation
- Community partners 'having a voice' with British Museum
- The thematic approach of the Family display.

Challenges and frustrations for the Internal Steering Group

- Tight timescale of Year 3 display and resulting capacity challenges
- Lack of flexibility around display spaces
- Working culture
- Lack of clarity about the level of control community partners should have.

How have understanding of and views towards community co-creation changed?

- Prompted thinking about what this practice looks like for a large international museum
- Reframing this practice as research and changing its value
- Developed more understanding of what community-led means
- Confidence in co-creation practice
- No change for around half because they felt they have done lots of this work before.
- However, there is a question about what co-creation or participatory practice means to staff individually. For some it was clear it was about working in collaboration and even sharing knowledge about collections, but the extent to which this would be community-led is where there is less agreement.

Learning from involvement with the project - individually and organisationally

Individually:

- Developing learning around working with community partners
- Specific skills development
- How to apply this practice to core rather than project-based work.

Organisational learning:

- Felt to be limited to those involved in the project, but evidence of deep learning for those teams involved
- Limited by lack of Directorate support or engagement
- Recognition of the time and resources needed for this work.
- Deep down, a lack of learning for some about what participatory practice and co-creation is about?

How, if at all, will Object Journeys make a difference to practice at British Museum?

- Establishment of a successful model for co-creation with community partners
- Sense of fear around this work has diminished
- Shorter lead-in teams for object loan for partners

- Going forward, embedding change is reliant on work being led from a senior level, greater flexibility around working with community partners (such as times of day) and changing working culture (for example, support to approach experimental work and less focus on numbers-based performance measures).

Access to collections - what has been learned?

- How important access to collections is for community partners
- Challenges of groups wanting to access collections at the weekends and staff not being always willing or able to facilitate this
- Greater need to manage expectations and share issues about collections access at the start
- Identified need to define what quality of access is for community partners.

Do ISG members think differently about how knowledge is generated with community partners? Do they value collections-based research with non-traditional groups?

This focusses on exploring community driven knowledge outside the existing work that Museum curators undertake with source communities

- Majority of staff did say they think differently and value this knowledge.

Examples of value toward this work include:

- Knowledge from external groups can have the most useful insights and this ‘unexpected’ knowledge has great value
- New knowledge has opened up conversations and provided new information
- Makes the Museum more relevant in the long term
- New relationships and connections between collections staff and UK based community partners.

However, the acceptance of community driven knowledge-making feels limited for some staff:

- Many staff feel there is still limited buy-in to this way of working
- The collection database as a system is perceived as wider barrier to the knowledge being captured
- Reframing this practice as research or even ethnography has been identified as a way of encouraging buy-in, but it is possibly too early to see the effects of this
- This project was seen by some as a ‘step’ toward valuing community driven knowledge for those working on the project, but would not result in major organisational change

- Potentially limited if the new knowledge generated is not shared in a way that engages people who haven't been directly involved.

Has internal advocacy and buy-in now changed, and how does 'buy-in' articulate itself?

It is less a question of whether there is buy-in, but more about buy-in to what? There is buy-in to collaborative working on collections with community partners but less clarity about who or how this should be led, specifically what 'community led' means, how much 'control' staff have in the process, and which staff should be involved.

Staff evidence of this buy-in included:

- They 'worked hard', were 'committed,' thought this work was 'rewarding,' 'interesting,' and 'valuable,' and wanted to be 'involved in similar projects in the future.'

Despite this, most were cautious:

- Many unsure about senior level buy-in, and earlier responses from a senior staff member's challenges about advocating up seem to confirm this
- Some curatorial staff thought their own experience and expertise around community engagement wasn't valued
- Whilst successful creation of three Object Journeys displays is an indicator of certain degree of buy-in, overcoming the challenges of working culture, such as capacity, systems, structures, the greatest barriers remain internal advocacy and buy-in.

What do ISG members want the legacy to be?

Staff had lots of suggestions for the desired legacy of Object Journeys, including:

- Continued cross-departmental working
- Greater connection to the sector
- This way of working to be embedded across all kinds of work: including larger displays, other channels & platforms, and regional and national partnerships work
- More and a wider range of people to have greater access to collections
- Involve collections beyond the AOA collections
- The permanent participation and collections role will hopefully mean the Museum can be more responsive to opportunities for community partners involvement as they arrive
- For key staff at senior level in the Museum to advocate for this work in future
- Future similar work to have more time

- Better understanding of the right balance of authorship between the Museum and community partners, and visibility of process between the Museum and community partners. This would need some discussion and exploration
- Sustained relationships with partners.

Inspiration and new ideas

Most staff involved have been inspired by community-led practice, and many were able to specify clear examples of how they plan to apply the process or methodologies into their own area of work.

Working with community partners:

- More interest in community-led projects
- Increased appetite to understand if or how participants and audiences from community-led projects transition into BM's mainstream programming
- Inspired by the longer-term relationships that have been built both with community partners and partner museums
- Considering how learning can inform work in other galleries
- Utilising the Object Journeys model of partnership work and object loan work to have a greater impact on an audience through a film project that was developed
- Considering how to bring community-based knowledge to the Museum, not only through displays but in other kinds of work such as a collections research projects.

Other ideas included:

- Considering the thematic approach
- Informing development of strategy - how to be more responsive, how participatory practice fits into the existing work with community partners.

Experiences of being part of the Internal Steering Group

Whilst most staff were positive about being part of the ISG and did say it was a useful forum for sharing ideas and issues, some felt it had been limited. For example:

- Members were not fully opening up and being honest during meetings
- It was too large a group for active decision making
- Would prefer the dates much further in advance to secure attendance
- Success relied on members being proactive, bringing ideas and making the time, which didn't always happen.

Investigating views and experiences of the External Steering Group

What has been the most valuable part of being part of the ESG?

- Collaborative learning: reflective space; time to learn from others and connection to the sector; networking and new contacts; the research project (*Making Meaning in Museums - How/Is Community Participation Research?*) and the way this developed a network of museum professionals who are interested in participatory action research techniques.
- Learning: Different ways of engaging people who don't normally engage with museums; the amount of time and money this work costs to do properly; learning about the British Museum, how it operates, and its organisational structure
- Seeing the change in thinking at the British Museum.

If and how did ESG members expectations for the project changed?

Where expectations were met:

- It was successful (due to the resources and people working on the project)
- Research was kept at the forefront, despite operational challenges.

Where expectations differed from the outcome:

- Reframing the ESG as a collaborative learning opportunity was unexpected but it was needed and valued as being a more mutually beneficial way of working.
- Thought they would have been more involved in the delivery, such as being part of workshops or meeting participants, as well as having more opportunity to 'steer' the project.

Has anything surprised ESG members?

- The success of the research element
- Issues raised by some of the outcomes such as the thematic approach and how visible the community voice is in the display: Perceived views on the quality of the Family display how this impacts on curatorial reputation
- The success of the project, and the persistence and hard work of the Object Journeys Partnerships Manager to ensure this, especially considering how ambitious the project was perceived to be and the museum structures than needed to be navigated to deliver the project successfully
- Large scale and high production quality of the displays.

Did ESG members' understanding of and attitude towards co-creation with community

partners within museums change since joining the project?

- Questioning of own practice, including being more reflective, considered, and strategic
- Considering how to apply participative research methods and action research in future projects
- Better understanding of what co-creation means within a large, national museum
- Interest in different approaches, especially the thematic approach.

How has participation in the steering group has affected members' own practice?

- Share learning earlier
- Be more reflective
- Engage more with academic practice
- Consider how conditions for change can be created.

Has Object Journeys has been creating new learning or knowledge for the British Museum, and the sector?

For the British Museum:

- Most thought it was too early to tell
- Creation of the OJPM into a permanent role.

For the sector:

- Interest in how projects like this create organisational change
- Reframing community engagement as research

How, if at all, has Object Journeys been creating opportunities for *sharing* this learning?

- The *Making Meaning in Museums - How/Is Community Participation Research*
- Sharing at sector events.

Have ESG members recognised any challenges that still need to be overcome?

- Process of opening up decision making
- Sustaining long-term engagement
- Different value to diaspora and source communities.

Does the ESG think any new opportunities have arisen so far?

- Dissemination of learning was recognised as the greatest opportunity. Many members thought that the messaging should focus on the work being delivered

effectively by a national museum; large scale of displays; how challenges were overcome; many different ways people can engage with collections, for example the thematic approach; including positive visitor feedback; involving staff from a wide range of disciplines to share this practice with their peers.

How do ESG members think the British Museum could take the learning from the project further?

- Greater advocacy and dissemination
- Space and time for staff to engage and understand
- Recognise who has expertise in engagement, but ensure all roles are involved.

Considerations

- Defining quality of access to collections for non-formal researchers
- Classification of experts
- More trialling of thematic approaches; value of this to community partners and visitors
- Defining what community-led really means
- How to embed this work
- How to ensure senior buy-in and advocacy
- How to share the learning and be a more active voice in the sector
- How to expand on the work done to explore this practice as research
- Training to support staff across disciplines to work with community partners.

A) Impact on Object Journeys community partners

i. Kiribati Partners

Background: a summary of the display, *Kiribati: between sea and land*

Kiribati Object Journeys was the second Object Journeys project at the British Museum and the result of a year-long partnership between the Museum and the members of the Kiribati Tungaru Association (KTA), a group of Kiribati identifying people based in Britain and elsewhere in Europe who have family, social, cultural or employment links to the islands.

The display, titled *Kiribati: between sea and land*, opened in the Wellcome Gallery on 17 July 2017. The group agreed on the theme of ‘between sea and land’ to emphasise how I-Kiribati people are physically reliant on, and spiritually connected to both realms. I-Kiribati are also proud of the knowledge and skills they have developed in order to thrive in an environment with limited resources. To illustrate these connections and resourcefulness in the display the group chose a shark-tooth covered sword, a beautiful hand-woven pandanus leaf mat and hollowed-out coconut used to carry liquid.

The group were also keen to make dance a key element of the display and as this is best understood by seeing it ‘in action’ the Museum commissioned Victoria Burn, one of the project partners, to create a short-film for the showcase. The display featured a mix of British Museum objects, specially-commissioned pieces made in Tarawa, Kiribati (parts of the new complete dance costume) and newly-donated objects from members of the UK Kiribati diaspora.

Visitors spent on average 1 minutes and 13 seconds looking at the display. The film was the most attractive element of the display. In this case, the film showing the dancers performing a traditional dance, offered an opportunity to see the dance costume ‘in action.’

‘The canoe is so interesting and I like the explanation of how this practice is still used it today although there are motor-powered boats.’ (Independent adult visitor, male 45-55yrs)

‘Learning about other people’s materials, how they work with these materials that they find on the islands. It shows their resourcefulness.’ (Independent adult visitor, female, 25-35 yrs)

Summary of community partners' experiences

Kiribati community partners were enthusiastic and positive about the project. Partners felt valued and trusted by the Museum. They felt in control and had ownership of the project, believing they had final say over decisions and being responsible for the information that represented their culture. They also found the Museum supportive and facilitative. The project clearly had a strong lasting impact on them personally, from the social connections developed, to greater understanding of and connection to their culture. Whilst partners had little critical feedback, some areas in which they thought the Museum could change how it works for subsequent partnerships did emerge. This included recruiting more diverse project teams, and making sure internal Museum processes (such as payment of expenses) are 'fit-for-purpose' when working with communities and external partners.

Notes on the data

- 90 minute focus group discussion, January 2018, attended by 4 community partners, facilitated and analysed by the external evaluator

What did partners enjoy and gain from the experience?

Kiribati partners talked at length about what they had enjoyed about and gained from the project.

Learning about and sharing Kiribati heritage and culture

'We were...just able to talk about our culture and what objects meant. And a way to learn...about all the historic features of things that are within the objects.'

(Community partner)

Partners, mainly younger members of the community, talked about how their involvement in the project had provided the opportunity for them to start learning about their own heritage and culture, both through the process and the museum resources.

'I feel like this project was kind of a catalyst.'

'The support and the resources that we got, that was really good to help us. (in reference to staff expertise and support).'

Increased pride and confidence in talking about Kiribati culture

The learning described above led to greater confidence talking about their culture and heritage.

'Now I feel like I have a concise way to talk about Kiribati and round it up in an interesting conversation piece.'

Their pride was heightened by the 'official stamp' of recognition that they felt a display in the British Museum conferred on their culture and they took pleasure in having their heritage on prominent display.

'Seven million people a year might walk past those cases and know about Kiribati. Because I suppose it was a bit different with Somalia; everybody has heard of that place. With Kiribati, it's completely blank. People don't even know how to say it.'

'Like they're so happy to like work with them, so proud that you tell people to go and see what you've been working with British Museum on; Yeah, they're such a recognised destination, a recognised platform.'

'There's like so much obviously to the culture and just so good just to have a little snippet of it in the British Museum, very lucky to have a display there.'

'All my friends always take selfies and like 'Oh, I was in the museum and I saw your thing' so it's cool.'

Connection with other people of Kiribati heritage

The personal connections and friendships developed throughout the process were highly valued by the group, especially for how it enabled them to see other members of the Kiribati community more frequently.

'I was delighted to meet these Kiribati people, it's ages since I lived in Kiribati.'

'I guess also just on a personal level, fostering like strong friendships within the community, because like I wouldn't typically see all of us this often, so that's been really nice.'

Capturing Kiribati culture at a crucial point in time

Partners were very aware of the rapid changes taking place in Kiribati, due to global technological developments and the threat that climate change poses to the islands. It was viewed that the project and display helped present this and put the issues into historical and contemporary context.

'The islands are changing shape, literally. So, for me, it was very interesting to put all of that into perspective. The historical journey, this is a part of Kiribati culture that hopefully won't disappear.'

Access to objects

'I learnt a lot...especially seeing the older objects I guess that are typically fragile, and I think most people in Kiribati wouldn't have access to objects that were that old. It was amazing, just to touch stuff with the curators.'

Participants felt a sense of privilege; in that they had access to and were working with objects that people living in Kiribati might not, due to the age or fragility of the objects. This group felt that there were limitations to sharing access to the Kiribati collection via social media platforms, and that they would want to explore and share the objects face to face. They discussed sharing object information with their immediate families, but did say there were challenges about getting the wider communities involved. There were a few face-to-face outreach sessions with elder community members but the partners would have liked these elders to be more engaged in exploring and accessing the collections. Partners did think the Museum offered opportunities, but they were not taken up by their wider community.

Taking on the responsibility of Kiribati heritage

The partners spoke at some length about their age, and how they had far less knowledge of Kiribati heritage than their elders. They felt this impacted on the project and their experience of working on the display in different way; one outcome for the participants personally was the sense of taking on the responsibility of Kiribati heritage from older community members. This was something they had been less willing or interested in doing before, but now were proud of.

'I feel like a lot of our mums and older generation have kind of been the pallbearers in the past for raising awareness about Kiribati and I feel this project was kind of a catalyst; it was kind of like stepping up to the mark and kind of taking it on. We had to grow up a bit and not just go and hang out at the Kiribati celebrations and get a bit tipsy, like we need to really, genuinely engage with our culture.'

Learning about museums and how to do curation

The majority of partners described learning how to do curatorial work. They reported technical learning (for, example, learning about conservation techniques), but also learning how to understand audiences and creating impact, write interpretation, and how displays can support learning.

‘Putting the audience first and then also learning about your culture.’

Other learning and skills development

Partners also reported learning about giving presentations, how to share information, and team work skills.

Professional development

It was noted that although the project wasn't *‘a work thing’* it would enhance their CVs. One member of the Kiribati team was a film-maker and had been commissioned to create the film about Kiribati dance.

‘I really enjoyed it as well because by the way of being involved in the Museum, they found out that I do films so they commissioned a side piece which Chloe was in.’

A sense of achievement and satisfaction

The project has also resulted in a strong sense of personal achievement for the participants, especially around raising awareness of their culture.

‘Our names are on there.’

‘It was just an achievement to pull something off, see something through to the end.’

Personal connection

The project had brought about sense of connection and friendship to the team. One partner said the thing they had enjoyed most was the social aspect. Others talked about having formed close friendships through their involvement in the project.

How did partners feel about the final display case and the events?



Kiribati Object Journeys launch event; large crowds of visitors watch the dance performance in the Great Court

Overall, participants felt proud of the final display and associated events. However, there were some minor disappointments in the process of creating the display.

Some initial disappointment about the number of objects

There had been some early disappointments when partners learnt that they would have to select a limited number of artefacts to display. One partner described feeling

‘Disappointed like everybody else in the fact that so few objects could actually be displayed.’

They did, however, understand why they had to reduce the number of artefacts, and this was part of the learning previously described.

‘I understand the reasons for that, the display having an impact on the visitors, that’s the only reason we had to cut back.’

Nevertheless, aspects of this process were difficult. Even having narrowed down the number of objects for display they were then asked to take out an additional two objects.

‘Because of just the way things worked once they were in the case.’

Whilst most team members understood this one had also felt sad.

'We put a lot of thought into them. And then we did the labels for them, so when it was 'We're getting rid of them' it was a bit like 'oh.'

Working from digital images was challenging at times. In one case, a mat was chosen for display that the group thought may not be Kiribati, so they chose an alternative one. According to partners, this had happened because the computer image was not representative, and the object ideally needed to have been seen as part of the selection process.

Strong appreciation of British Museum support and facilitation

This disappointment was mitigated by a strong sense of appreciation of the support and facilitative approach of the British Museum. Where team members had made suggestions, they found The OJPM and others responsive and keen to support. A dance costume, for example, was sourced from Kiribati and a film of Kiribati dancing commissioned.

Pride in the display

Overall, Kiribati partners were proud of their display and the work that they'd put into it. They enjoyed the impact it had on their community and wider visitors.

'Showing friends or family, like 'Look, this is what we did.'

'Proud of the work we've all put together to try and show the strong main points, that are important to Kiribati people, like the dancing.'

'You know those people you only write to once a year for Christmas, to everybody I said 'Go and see the display'.'

Did partners feel the project established an equal partnership?



Young visitor exploring objects at the Kiribati Object Journeys family event

Kiribati community partners were very positive about the partnership with the Museum.

Strong sense of ownership and control, with community partners making key decisions

Kiribati partners clearly felt they were in the driving seat. They described how the British Museum repeatedly checked details with them and deferred to their knowledge. One team member, when talked about decision-making, said that

'If anything, I felt like we were given more precedence.'

Another talked about how impressed they were that the Museum actively listened to their ideas and thoughts about the display.'

'Listening to us, like actually listening to our ideas. We shaped it, we chose the objects, we chose the theme.'

Significantly, team members talked about how the Museum enabled them to make key decisions about the display and events. Whilst the quote below indicates that partners felt a strong sense of control, it does somewhat contradict the reality - for example the fact that the Museum had had to remove some objects from the case against the preference of

the partners (due to the design layout of the case). Most partners believed they had the final decision on most elements of the project.

‘They always deferred to us and it was always our final decision on things.’

Recognition of the support of the British Museum

Partners also described how British Museum staff had supported the project by acting on their (Kiribati Community Partners) ideas and suggestions, and supported with the practical elements of the work.

‘They did all the hard work behind the scenes.’

‘They did all the groundwork.’

Partners felt responsible for information

Partners talked at some length about the process of gathering information about the objects and their cultural significance. Team members felt a strong sense of responsibility for this aspect of the project and clearly went to some lengths to gather accurate information from older members of their community. Although they didn’t talk about this as a direct response to the question of partnership and equality, it suggests equality between partners, in that the Museum was willing to treat the Kiribati community as reliable and important sources of information.

Feeling valued by the British Museum

It was clear from the discussion that community partners felt valued by the British Museum. They cited the fact that the OJPM wanted to work with them on some more events as evidence, as well as an event in Cambridge run by another organisation where the OJPM had invited the team to attend. They also talked about how the OJPM and other British Museum staff had come to the Kiribati Independence Day celebrations.

What could support a more equal partnership?

When asked what would have made a more equal partnership the community partners had no suggestions or ideas. Unlike Somali partners, the issue of remuneration for their time and work didn’t come up; when asked directly about this Kiribati partners felt it wasn’t necessary.

‘I think sharing our culture is payment.’

Relationship with British Museum

An informal and relaxed relationship

The partners were very positive about the relationship they had with the British Museum, primarily via the Object Journeys Partner Manager but also other staff. It was clearly a comfortable relationship.

'It's not just a work relationship it's a friendship as well.'

Recognition of the Object Journeys Partnerships Manager's skills

When partners talked about their relationship with the Museum they referred mostly to the OJPM and her skills.

'She did a good job, she was great at like keeping us in the loop of what we needed to be doing and dates and stuff without being too pushy.'

Attitudes towards the British Museum



Kiribati Object Journeys community partners delivering a talk at the launch event

Team members recognised that their community may have had some negative or neutral attitudes towards the Museum; they acknowledged contentious issues such as colonialism and previous collecting practices. They also acknowledged that the relationship could

have been unbalanced, with the British Museum having first taken Kiribati objects then taking Kiribati knowledge in a one-side way.

However, they found that once they talked to the community about the ownership and control they had in producing the display they found that people became more positive about this relationship.

'I think obviously it's quite loaded, like lots of old colonial ties and particularly, as well Kiribati being an old colony and stuff, there's a lot of contentious issues about the museum and some of the collections. But...once you tell people what you were doing and you're shaping it, people are a bit surprised.'

One partner said that in Kiribati culture there are some positive attitudes towards white people that may have contributed to a generally more positive attitude than other communities they Museum may work or want to work with.

'What's different is in Kiribati the history of the white man has always been very positive in our folklore, our first God, it was predicted, it was a white man. So I feel, it's not as loaded maybe as in some histories with other countries.'

Increased appreciation of the Museum

The project had brought about an increased appreciation of the Museum in a number of ways. Firstly, the team had learnt a great deal about the workings of the Museum and this had left them with a new-found appreciation.

'The amount of work that goes on behind it, to preserve and put them all up, and just there's a lot more people involved than I thought. I appreciate this place now.'

'(The Object Journeys Partnerships Manager) took us on a journey. She took us behind the scenes where they preserve all the artefacts, and then also talking to different members of the British Museum, so like people who host the events. They were really welcoming in here, like really supportive.'

Secondly, they were impressed by the Museum's support and resources, and their determination to get the details right. Although this is reported on elsewhere, it's worth repeating that the team members appreciated the way that the Museum acted on their ideas and suggestions by making budget and information available.

'They commissioned a dance costume all the way from Kiribati.'

'They were always willing to put on other workshops if we were interested.'

British Museum stamp of approval

An important element of this project was the fact that - in the community partners' eyes - a display in the British Museum conferred some kind of value and importance on their culture. The fact that this was, apparently, the first display on Kiribati heritage at the Bloomsbury site, made the project even more significant.

'Makes you feel valued. It's been a big moment.'

'You're so proud that you tell people to go and see what you've been working with the British Museum on.'

'They're such a recognised destination, a recognised platform.'

Expectations versus reality

Kiribati partners said they hadn't known what to expect at the start of the project. However, they also referred to seeing the Somali partners' display and meeting some of the Somali partners to find out how the co-production project had worked the previous year. Therefore, it is likely there was some sense of what the project might involve.

Mostly positive experience of the project

When probed, they offered some thoughts. Several partners initially thought the motivation for the project was climate change, another team member hadn't really understood the forward-facing stance of the Museum and hadn't realised that the project would focus as much as it did on considering the relationship between past and present.

'To be honest I had a sort of prejudice about what the Museum does. I thought it was more to do with the past rather than now and the future.'

A number of the partners talked about what they had personally gained from taking part in the project and how they hadn't anticipated this. One member described starting the project thinking she was *'doing the OJPM a favour'* whereas now, having taken part in the project.

'I want to come more often; it's now my Facebook friend.'

'I didn't realise there would be so much learning and engagement, and it has definitely exceeded my expectations in terms of sharing Kiribati culture.'

Another team member had thought the project would be more limited than it was; their initial thought was that the Museum wanted some information about some objects and their role was purely to give that information. They hadn't realised the scope of the

project and the extent of control community partners would have. In contrast, another member of the group evidently had clearer expectations at the project start.

'It's lived up to my expectations. I think I knew that it would be a lot of consultation and that they really wanted us to get dirty and elbow deep.'

Disappointment about number of objects for display

This has been previously mentioned, but one area where all partners' expectations were somewhat disappointed was that of the process of selecting objects for display; they had all thought they would be able to showcase a larger number of objects and were disappointed to be limited in this. They did, however, show an understanding of the reasons for the limited number of objects and didn't question the size of display case in Room 24, as some Somali partners had.

Challenges felt by the partners

Although the partners' descriptions of the process of producing the display in very positive terms there were some challenges along the way.

A wish to secure greater involvement from community elders

As mentioned above, the team took the process of collecting accurate and reliable information about the objects and cultural practices very seriously. The community partners were all fairly young which meant they felt they had less experience and knowledge of their culture. Whilst they went to great efforts to gather information from elders and to check back with their community, partners reflected on this and suggested that it would have been better if some older team members had been recruited.

'We didn't get like one of the older ladies who would have known a lot more. So, it was a bit harder for us to try and, probably there could have been more input I think.'

'We were sort of saying as much as we knew, but I think the elders probably would have known more.'

There was some discussion of how greater community knowledge and involvement could have been realised, and a session in Hackney was mentioned as a positive example of this. Reference to the wider Kiribati community in Wales was made, and how perhaps travelling to where the elders were could have been beneficial to the project.

'If we went to Wales for one session.'

'Maybe having one session outside the Museum, somewhere nearer the biggest group.'

Facebook was used as a means of gathering wider community knowledge, but this was not believed to be as useful as face to face discussions.

'I felt like to get the real information would actually be face-to-face with someone in front of us.'

Make-up and size of the team

The community partners reflected further on the make-up of their group, and whether anything else could have been done to secure a more diverse group. They felt that the British Museum could have done no more in this respect.

'They did everything right, it was more our community.'

The small size of group was also mentioned as having a negative impact, in that it meant there were fewer people to take on the work of the project. It appeared from the feedback that at some point there had been the possibility of recruiting more group members as the project progressed, but the British Museum had said this wouldn't be practical. The group appeared, on the surface, to have agreed with this position.

Limited time to develop the display

Lack of time to spend on recruiting older community members was mentioned as a restriction and it appeared that some oral history work had been planned but then was not possible due to the timescale of the project. It is useful to note that considerable time had been spent trying to recruit older members, and one member recruited earlier left after a few sessions. In addition, oral history training and equipment was offered but not pursued by partners. It is therefore useful to consider their responses, which suggest they may have thought the project was too rushed. As above, the group appeared to understand why the Museum had defined the timescale of the project.

Cultural practices and conventions

Some interesting cultural conventions were reported by community members, which had had some impact on their work. For example, the fact that in Kiribati culture some stories can only be told by older people. Similarly, a superstition around a specific song title (used in the display) meant that elders were reluctant to translate this for the project. Furthermore, there were some stories which only certain storytellers would tell which also inhibited translation. Whilst this issue was raised in a discussion around challenges, the partners did not say that the Museum had in any way wanted them to disregard these

practices, which suggests they believed the Museum respected and worked within these conventions.

'At one point we toyed with the idea of all having translations of the lyrics, but then we, in Kiribati culture only certain storytellers traditionally in villages are allowed to, so I think the community, no one really wanted to translate it...we decided to park it.'

British Museum processes and policy

It appeared that aspects of the Museum's financial processes didn't support the commissioning of the Kiribati Tungaru Association UK who were performing at the two events. They needed to become an approved provider in order for the Museum to pay the dancers. This resulted in a delay.

'It just meant that the dancers who performed at the first one were sort of not getting any money, so maybe it put people off to come to the second one.'

The team member who created the film had a similar experience, which she was more accustomed to as a freelancer. Internal processes left a team member and the OJPM struggling to get the commissions paid for. Whilst this was frustrating for partners it is not an issue that is specific to Object Journeys.

'No one was really chasing it, I was sort of the middleman, and then me and the OJPM were like fighting our way to get that money.'

Another aspect of the Museum's processes and policy conflicting with the interests of the community was the issue of flags. One partner had wanted to include the Kiribati flag in the display as she felt it was attractive and significant.

'The most beautiful flag in the world. All the symbols were being displayed because of the symbolic nature of them.'

It is British Museum policy to not display flags, meaning this was not possible which was a disappointment to partners. However, an image of the flag was put in the case as it was deemed important to the group and the narrative of the display. The group were clear about the political rationale behind the flag not being in the case, but nevertheless there was still some minor disappointment.

Ownership

Kiribati partners reported feeling a strong sense of ownership in the project; as reported previously they felt very much in control of the display and associated activities from the project's inception.

'We all knew that we were, from the get-go, were kind of going to be making this exhibition and be very much informed by our decisions. My understanding from the get-go was it was the community itself rather than the Museum and the curators deciding what goes on display or how your culture is going to be preserved. So they did a good job of explaining it.'

'They always deferred to us and it was always our final decision on things.'

Activities that contributed to this level of control they believed they had, included suggesting and choosing the objects for inclusion in the display, being asked about the design and colours of the display, the colour of the mannequin and writing the interpretation and labels.

Positive views about the impact of the project on their wider community

The discussion focused on the strong personal impact of the project on partners. It was clear their wider community had been involved in the project to some degree. For example, checking back details with their elders and the more formal mechanisms for consultation and involvement such as the community-based sessions to gather their views and thoughts about the items for inclusion. There were also celebration events after the display was installed which the wider Kiribati community took part in.

ii. Family project partners



Family Object Journeys launch event, object handling activity led by community partners

Background: a summary of the display, Object Journeys: celebrating the work of families

The third and final British Museum project Object Journeys: celebrating the work of families, opened on Thursday 24 May 2018 in Room 24. The display took a thematic approach to working with the Africa, Oceania and Americas collection to explore the idea of how families, across cultures and through time have supported and cared for each other and enabled cultural traditions to be passed through families even when people are away from their original homes. They wanted to emphasise that family often includes the significant people we go to for guidance, support, care and love, as well as to share moments of great joy or sadness. The group chose 10 objects from across the AOA collection to represent their narrative. For example: a Brazilian ceramic statue of a mother breastfeeding her child showcased the beginnings of life nurtured and cared for by a family, six pairs of henna hands on a Tanzanian kanga representing the relatives, as well as the bride and groom, uniting in marriage, a Zimbabwean statue of a family serene and strong in their unity and a children book written in Quechua [a language widely spoken in the highlands of South America] which is a new way of using indigenous languages to help

people protect and keep their language and oral traditions alive, especially when far away from 'home'. A silent film is also included in the display, showcasing the development of the display in collaboration with the community partners.

Summary of community partners' experiences

'It's been a fantastic experience, one that I wouldn't have missed for anything.'
(community partner)

'When I talk about it to friends and family I sort of say it's probably one of the most exciting things that's happened in my life.'

'I found it absolutely amazing.'

The group overall had a very positive experience. They had an extremely enjoyable experience and felt that they gained a large amount - especially new learning, friendships and valued the exclusive access to collections. However, it was clear there were mixed responses about the level of ownership and equality of partnership achieved, even though these did not appear to have a negative impact partners' experiences.

There were real challenges experienced by the group by both the thematic approach and short timescale. Whilst it is referenced later, it is important to note that this thematic approach was intentional to trial different approaches to co-creating displays with community partners. The partners agreed there was too much to do, further compounded by a project theme (chosen by the Museum) which the group themselves said was too broad, and collection choice that was too wide. Whilst the group did have more control of the narrative and theme of the display, the perception was that the overall project theme was so broad it was challenging to narrow the focus. The group thought that they lacked collections expertise, which meant they did not always feel empowered to lead or feel like they were experts. Partners were not expected to be collections experts by the Museum, but this does indicate that when adopting a thematic approach, perhaps more could be done to build confidence around thematic expertise. Whilst these community partners were comfortable not leading or being seen as experts - they did generally feel engaged and supported - for the British Museum, this thematic approach may be a limitation to considering alternative forms of knowledge and expertise.

If the Year 3 Object Journeys had the same timeframe as earlier iterations, it would be easier to compare. However, the tight timeframe added an additional challenge which may have made it hard to assess whether it was the thematic approach or just lack of time that was the barrier to this being truly community led. The community partners

themselves err toward time being the overall challenge, although there really isn't any compelling data to substantiate this.

Potentially this thematic approach needs further trialling in future work where time is less of a constraint. Interestingly, it could also be worth comparing challenges reported here with some staff feedback - where a few staff appear to have had less regard from the expertise of community partners within this thematic framework than for previous projects.

Notes on the data

- 90 minute focus group discussion, 9th June 2018, 8 participants, facilitated and analysed by the external evaluator

What did partners enjoy and gain from the experience?

Overall partners experienced the project as a learning and skills development opportunity rather than a chance to contribute their knowledge, opinions and perspectives.

'We volunteered for do this, look at the enjoyment we got out of it, the friendship and the community and the help from people.'

Access to objects

This was one of the top things the partners enjoyed. It was clear that for many, access behind the scenes of the Museum and time spent with the collections was overwhelming in a positive way. Going to the stores to see collections was not something the group had expected.

'I just thought it can't really be true, I can't really be all the things it's supposed to be. Like they say you will talk to experts and visit the...what's it called? The place we visited in Hackney (Stores).' (Community Partner)

'Actually, seeing the objects and being able to touch them and it was just so exciting.'

'When I sat there and I knew it was so old and it was right there in front of me, I just couldn't believe it.'

'I said to one of the ladies 'How many artefacts or relics have you got in here' and she said something like nearly 10,000, and I thought 10,000. I was overwhelmed, I didn't speak to anyone.'

'The emotion and nostalgia, it will stay in my memory forever, it's meeting the objects.'

Learning - the process of learning from each other, about other cultures, how museums are run and a range of skills

Most said they felt they had learnt a lot generally, and many mentioned learning about different cultures in particular, which would have been facilitated by the inclusion of objects from varied traditions. They also really valued learning from each other in the group.

'I'm really enjoying all the things I learn, I learnt a lot.'

'We are sharing everything together and it was nice to realise that how other people survive and what they do for a living and how they look after their children and different cultures and things like that.'

'I enjoyed especially the interaction and listening to this team because we learnt from each other a hell of a lot. For me that's been the major bit because it opens up your mind and how they communicate and what they want to say, I think for me that's been the greatest gift.'

Learning about how museums are run - from its strategic aims to the creation of an exhibition, was valued.

'Learning about how the museum runs and wants to run with community partners.'

'Yeah, I'm amazed, I'm very pleased, yes, to see the direction that the British Museum is taking.'

'I learnt quite a lot about what is behind how to run the British Museum, what different people do, how many people, how much is involved in a display, to put a display or exhibition.'

One partner said that being in a creative environment benefitted their creative thinking skills.

'Because in my work I don't really do creative things at all, and so I was kind of surprised that how in this environment I was able to say creative things or think more creatively and was thrilling to talk to people who were creative in their professions within the museum. So I think I benefited from that.'

Improving communication and language skills was mentioned by almost half the group; for most English was not their first language.

'I was thinking about the label writing as well, because I found it hard, like once I said to the OJPM 'Can't we just go on and on and on?' She said 'No, you've got to keep it short but you've got to make it with impact,' So all of that was interesting as well, you know your writing skills and your thinking skills and your listening skills all came into play.'

In the context of discussion around skills, one partner suggested the process has supported them to be more open-minded. A partner said that every session reminded them to challenge themselves to be more open.

'Openness I think, try and be as open minded during the sessions. Yeah, that was still something that was in every session a reminder.'



Family Object Journey community partners and Museum staff during a workshop

Friendship

The majority of partners explicitly mentioned new friendships, adding they wished these to continue long term.

'I'm so excited and happy and meeting with our group who is so lovely and so friendly and we get on quite well and we work together.'

How did partners feel about the final display case and the events?



Object Journeys Family display



Family Object Journeys community partners looking at the display with Museum staff

Whilst partners were extremely proud of the display, the events programme had not yet been delivered at the time of the focus group, so it was difficult for them to comment fully. There were some challenges around the perceived responsibility of delivering the events, so feedback has been included in the challenges section.

Pride

The partners demonstrate a strong sense of pride about the project and the resulting display.

'I feel very proud and I brought my grandchildren to see it and they are also excited. Both my granddaughters from Liverpool and Manchester came down with their friends to see it and I'm really proud and grateful.'

'When I talk about it to friends and family I sort of say it's probably one of the most exciting things that's happened in my life.'

Valuing the opportunity to showcase the to showcase their culture and country

'Because this remind my country. Like I said before my heart is in in it, it's very important.'

Challenging negative perceptions of immigrants

One partner talked in depth about how the display has given them the opportunity to challenge negative perceptions of immigrants.

'When people are talking about... against the immigrants, this project is very nice because it is helping us to put that aside. There is a lot of stuff in the media about immigrants, but in here we are like a family, we do something nice to see, we put a lot of effort and I think people have enjoyed.'

Did partners feel the project established an equal partnership, and what are their views on supporting a more equal partnership?

Mixed views about equality of partnership

Overall partners were mixed about the partnership being equal, and this fluctuated throughout for some.

'Well for me, because of the community partners, for me it's like we are on an equal level, you know. So I didn't see the British Museum as higher than me now, that's an equal match.'

'At some points yes and some points no.'

'No, not 100%, no.'

One partner mentioned at various points during the discussion that the project was a two-way learning process, in reference to the Museum learning how to work with community partners.

'It's good for the British Museum to be involved in community because they learn from the community as well. So as much as we learn from them they are learning from us. Hopefully for future projects they will have more experience about, you know, talking to or running with community partners.'

Factors that affected partners views on equality of partnership:

Thematic approach resulted in the need for the Museum to lead

Most partners agreed that as a result of working within a broad subject and tight timeframe they needed to be led by the Museum to an extent, meaning that the partnership couldn't be equal. However, many were happy to be led and didn't expect an equal partnership.

'Because like you have already heard from some of the members is that they were okay with being led. So it was obviously evident that we were being led and that perhaps due to the time constraint, due to the vast subject, due to many other reasons. So that's...and during the little sessions and things that happened I didn't feel it was a 100% partnership.'

The point below expands on this more:

Ideas sometimes dismissed and a need for training around how to support community voice

The group agreed that sometimes they felt their ideas were dismissed by some Museum staff. Partners did not specify specific staff, but said this took place during the object selection stage. They were keen not to appear critical here, and suggested a way to support staff to work more effectively with community partners. They proposed having more training about how to communicate with community partners by being more encouraging and probing, especially in the context of philosophical or complex topics.

'It depends on the actual session or on the actual topic or when we had to make a decision. So it depends because it was for us and because we were going through such an exploration at the beginning, the process, I think maybe for the British Museum it would be good to include or have a training of what is it like to work with community people or community partners, what is it like? It's not just about you working with a community, partners concept wise, but you need to know how do you work with community, how do you bring the best out of everyone. How are you not inclusive, how are you, you know, more kind of not like...like she was using the word dismissive, but kind of when and when not to be led or kind of more of a dialogue.'

'Training should involve communication, of listening to community people, how they work, how they work creatively, how they present themselves in their own expertise, what they bring in, what they can contribute.'

'I would say more of encouraging confidence. So when somebody is talking to kind of give that more kind of yes, you know, the appreciation, where they are coming from... If they mention something why is it that they are bringing that in, so kind of go deeper.'

'Deeper, dig deeper, rather than dismiss it and then move onto the next one. You know what I mean? That approach doesn't work with the community level.'

They were also keen to emphasize that language barriers are particularly important to consider.

'I'm also thinking that for many of us English is not our first language so in this project when your work touches so very deep philosophical issues one word that can be synonym it is not the right word for the moment or for the exhibition or for that label. So if somebody tell you one word but that's not the correct one and you say 'No it's not the one', and you have to think 'Okay, that person, English is not his or her first language but this person wanted to say', maybe I know the synonym that is attached to that word that can explain. But it takes a little bit of time when you are not English speaker as a native to find and dig the exact precise word that you need for this... Well for everyday life it's easier, but not for these very philosophical issues.'

Time the greatest barrier

Overall, there was still the belief that all of the above may have not been such an issue if they had more time.

'I think as people have said, time was the thing. If they had more time it would have been a lot better and you know.'

'Yeah, and we had such a huge topic and three continents and not enough time. You did get the feeling that we were working under pressure and there wasn't sort of time to do things just how they should really have been done.'

'You cannot do it in four months.'

Benefits can support equality of partnership - keen for training, exhibition tickets, and the social experiences rather than any kind of monetary remuneration

Reflecting on previous Object Journeys projects, the subject of benefits and remuneration was discussed. The majority of this group used the word 'volunteer' to describe their involvement and had not considered any kind of monetary benefits for their work.

Partners said that if the subjects of the projects are something they are passionate about that is a great enough benefit. Many also agreed that the friendship and social element are key benefits. They were keen on memberships, training and preview tickets. Unpicking the difference between a member and a long term community partner may be useful.

'I think we should have been allowed to be honorary members of the museum. I think that would have been a very nice gesture.'

In regards to the training, most of the group said that training was promised at the start of the process, but that time pressure had meant this was not actually offered in the end. It is useful to note that some of this training was delivered in the sessions, but partners evidently did not perceive this, and perhaps expected a different kind of additional, or more structured training.

'That we'd have training in writing skills, in technical things and technology wasn't it?'

Although the topic of remuneration did not come up during discussion until prompted, one partner did reflect on it in more depth, and felt that on a broader level the topic of volunteering and exploitation was something to consider carefully for this type of project in future.

'It's a very good question in the sense that you are dealing with the volunteer sector here and not focusing on the monetary issues. But nevertheless I think, if the staff members from the British Museum are getting paid and they are benefiting from involvement with the community I think there needs to be some level of balance there, regardless of each member, they'd rather pay for themselves but you are kind of lending yourself to a kind of in a word exploitation. So it could fall into that dangerous path, so maybe something that for the British Museum to think about.'

Relationship with British Museum



Family Object Journeys community partners and staff during a workshop

Very grateful and highly valued the level of support

It was clear throughout the discussion with partners that they were extremely grateful to the Museum for the opportunity and believed they had received lots of support.

'I'm grateful for all the help from the other people in the Museum who help us, it's so important. Especially to the OJPM who is so loving and caring and so much interest she put in us and all of the staff that help us. I would miss the people at the Museum now because everybody was so helpful to us.'

'Well the support that the British Museum has given us, it's just nothing has been too much, it's been absolutely amazing.'

'I will end up and I will say I'm grateful to the OJPM and all the people that helped us and now is the point that we see how hard it is and realise that with the opening and everything the guidance from them has put us on to the map and we have to be grateful for that.'

Valued the role of the Object Journeys Partnerships Manager

There was a lot of support for the work of the OJPM; they group recognised that this person was their main contact in the Museum and was key to supporting their positive

experiences. It is clear they valued working with other staff, but overall the organisation felt somewhat 'distant' which is similar to earlier Somali group feedback.

'I think the OJPM gave a human face to the project, so that we will be a little attached now to the British Museum because she was working very hard to change the face of the British Museum. Because sometimes you feel a little distant from the British Museum, but this project is helping us to be working together, it changes the view of how the British Museum is working.'

Seen as mutually beneficial

The majority of partners saw the project as benefitting both sides.

'Hopefully for future projects they will have more experience about, you know, talking to or running with community partners.'

Keen to work with the British Museum in future

The partners would like to sustain their relationship with the Museum and hope for on-going support. One partner had mentioned they had already had the opportunity to collaborate further by writing a blog.

'Maybe if there is an offer for something else that they might remember us.'

'I'm grateful for the encouragement actually and I'm still getting that encouragement because I'm still writing a blog and the OJPM is behind me 100% on that.'

'I would be grateful if I could do something else and be happy.'

'We suggest to the British Museum that the next thing would be global warming which is very important.'

Attitudes towards the British Museum

All partners expressed a lot of appreciation generally for the Museum.

'When I moved to London I just go to the British Museum, it was like you know when you have a dream and you don't realise that you can really do it now. And just now living in London I can go if I wish every weekend to the British Museum, it's just great.'

Valuing the Museum undertaking this participatory practice

Within the scope of the discussion it was hard to gauge the extent to which partners are aware of or understand the nature of the Museum's previous work with communities. However, they really value the work that generates new community knowledge about collections.

'I got interested in museums because of my kids... I'm looking to find something where the black community is and then I couldn't see anything about West Indians. And I always thought 'Oh, we have come, but we don't have these things, like these big things to offer the museum because coming from a poor country.' So that was great for me when I heard about the project and I got there now. I'm thinking 'Oh well at least I can do something and put all of my effort in to get there and get on the map from Barbados', you know?''

'It's a good idea for the Museum to involve us, the community, to do these kind of things.'

'I think the British Museum has a huge potential to work with more communities across the UK but across all communities. So the British Museum has a huge responsibility from my perspective to bring those objects to life, you know, what they have.'

Recognition of the work that goes on behind the scenes, especially in preserving culture, although some awareness of colonial tensions

The biggest change was around recognising the level of work that went in behind the scenes.

'It's a lot a lot of work that you know, sometimes I joke a little bit, say 'I found some of the exhibition very pricey, but now I understand why.''

'I think I was really impressed with all the experts that were involved, how they take care and how they preserve and conserve the items and what preparation needs to go before an exhibition takes place.'

Around half the group referred to issues relating to how objects may have been acquired illegally in the past. However, there was also a lot of discussion which indicated the group were approaching the topic differently as a result of this project. Some said they now thought that the Museum has been able conserve objects in a way some countries couldn't. This is a very big issue and wasn't the main subject for one focus group, but it

does indicate the project has encouraged the group to consider the Museum's colonial history and challenge their preconceptions about this.

'What I also learned is that the amount of work that the British Museum could do preservation. I was more critical... maybe at that time that they took items from other countries, the countries were not prepared to take the care they do now, as they do, the British Museum. And what I love is that every person working there, they love the job, they are so passion and the people who do the preservation especially, they have to think about so many different details before they start to actually touch the object. Yes, they have so much in their mind for the future of this object, preserving as the humankind history, you know.'

'I saw how these people care about artefacts, which is we never know about it, it's very important that they look after properly, so that's very nice.'

'At the same time I'm very critical, when you study the history, how the British Museum acquired the majority of the collection you say 'Wow, that wasn't right', the way they did it. This is probably why they are not allowed to charge because this has been looted from other countries.'

'I've got a certain kind of respect actually for museums, that they do go out there and they get these things in order that people can see. And you know they maintain them.'

'So I saw on the news that the British Museum is going to give back to the Native Americans, which is good, because obviously they took without consent on them.'

Belief that the Museum is too concerned with being politically correct

All of the partners felt there was a lot of time and energy spent during the text writing period being too careful about offending visitors - so much so that the messages may be lost.

'And everybody is going to see it but they all come from different parts of the world and different cultures, so obviously the British Museum has to be careful not to offend people, not to offend communities. But how...? My key question would be how could the British Museum still offer the pure sincerity of the object without having that fear that they may offend.'

They also believed that they had a much harder task in terms of not offending potential audiences whose multiple collections their thematic display represented; they felt, rightly

or wrongly, that this was much harder than the Somali or Kiribati partners who had a tighter cultural focus.



Family Object Journeys community partners and the Object Journeys Partnerships Manager (OJPM) (far left) at the launch event

Expectations versus reality

Overall partners had a much more positive experience than they expected

There was lack of expectations across the groups and some partners even had quite low expectations and thought they probably wouldn't attend beyond the first session.

However, they were very positive about the project actually turned out.

'I didn't know what it was going to entail, the OJPM did explain at the beginning but obviously we didn't know how it was going to run and...so it was all very interesting but also quite mysterious at the same time.'

'I sort of expected it to not be very good.'

'So I sat there the first day and I thought 'Well, if I don't like this I'll be gone.' But by the end of that first session I was just taken.'

'I never expect the end to be like what it turned out to be. I just couldn't believe that we work together as a team and produced such a project like what was already in the museum, you know, that history.'

Challenges for the partners

The greatest challenge was delivering the project within the timeframe and within what they perceived to be a wide brief - theme and collections-wise. This has been presented already in relation to how this impacted on the level of equality of partnership, but more detailed partner feedback is presented here.

Thematic approach combined with and tight timeframe, resulting in a lack of empowerment for some

'There were too many objects. Too many subjects, too many themes.'

The partners thought that the tight timeframe was the main restriction, but they were clear that delivering a display which needed to represent one theme and multiple countries' collections through a limited number of objects was a huge challenge. They thought this was far too ambitious and said if they had had longer it may have been achieved more effectively. Whilst limitations of time may be experienced by anyone working on a display, the tight timeframe was greatly emphasised during the partner focus group, so was clearly felt to be a greater challenge in Year 3.

Leading the project, as discussed earlier, was not actually important for many in the group, but a small number expressed a lack of empowerment from not being able to be the 'expert' in the same way Somali or Kiribati partners could be on much more specific collections. Whilst some recognised they were potentially experts on the 'family' theme, this was such a universally accessible subject (rather than a culturally specific one), they weren't really experts because there was nothing, they felt, they could offer that any other person couldn't. Note, the benefits from the project, as outlined earlier, such as the learning and social experiences clearly counter-balanced these challenges, but they are still important to present.

'I mean we were given a brief that was almost impossible to complete... I think everything is right but we had a huge brief of work to do and not enough time and this sort of problem, even just from the point of view of dealing with the whole world that we have to please, whereas obviously in those other exhibitions (referring to other Object Journey displays) it was much, much narrower, so we were just trying to do too much.'

'I think in the other exhibitions I suppose that the people who were leading or the people, the community people who were working with they had more power because they've got the knowledge, the people have the knowledge. Somali, Kiribati, but we went from so different and a big subject.... You don't feel empowered.'

This lack of expertise referenced above was in relation to lacking the collections knowledge, and compounded by working on the thematic display which had to cover multiple collections.

'Because perhaps because our project, because it was Americas, the Africa and is unique it was quite ambitious from my perspective, it was very ambitious for the time that we had. Maybe more specific with things, like you know, something specific about Africa for example or the indigenous languages across the world, the environment, connecting real issues that matter to nations in the world. Not that we've done...not that I'm complaining about it, it's just that the timing.'

Partners wanted to be led more by the Museum

Many agreed that some of the earlier conceptualising elements of the project were very abstract, and one partner suggested that having more specific theme would have supported a clearer focus. However, perhaps this would have gone against the community-led ethos of the project. Perhaps this may have been mitigated by greater involvement of partners in choosing the 'family' theme. Overall, many in this group were motivated by creating a display, not by it being community-led.

'At some point I thought I was doing a philosophy course because it was so in the air, you know what I mean?'

'In the end we choose 'seen and unseen', you know, what you've seen in your family, what you didn't see. But it should be from the beginning they said look 'We want to this', so we may be supported more. So maybe at the beginning if we know the subject maybe we are helping more.'

'If we were going to do it again we started small and worked out, rather than we started sort of macro and tried to then reduce it.'

'I for one are grateful for the people that take their time to help us, because I didn't have any experience in what's going on and it was great for them who knows what the project would be like or what they wanted to direct us.'

'I didn't have any problem to be led, because as they said they have experience, they have working days, they have the expertise, but we have to define what we want for this project first. Is it going to be a cooperative or is it going to be led by the community?'

Partner views not always valued

The matters of being community-led and equal partnership are challenging to unpick - it is clear that most of the group were happy to be led in terms of the overarching content/focus of the display, but at the same time some felt their views were sometimes dismissed without clear reasons (this is explored more in equality of partnership section earlier in the report, and furthermore below). They were happy to work within boundaries, but felt they sometimes lacked explanations about why they couldn't do something. Based on earlier feedback this is most mainly due to communications - as suggested earlier they would prefer a more encouraging approach.

'Sometimes I felt that when we had a point of view, because we are not experts, we were kind of dismissed, but we were not explained why. When we try to narrow down the subject, so the items connected to the subject or to the theme, we sometimes we were dismissed but without saying why.'

It was evident that the broad thematic scope of the project impacted on their levels of confidence and / or knowledge, resulting in a lack of inclination to take a leadership role.

'The thing is that I found it challenging but I didn't have a problem of being of being led, because I feel that they have been doing this thing for years and years and years and they know what they are talking about. And then to ask us to precis and get it down to a little amount that's truly hard really because we really don't know. I agree with you totally but I think that we had to be led because I think if it was left to us we'd probably be writing sheets and sheets, because everybody wants to express themselves.'

'At the end of the day we are amateurs.'

Partners responding that their views were not always valued by Museum staff was also expressed in relation to captions and panel writing. Some partners said they wanted to have the written interpretation express more emotion, whereas some were happy to be guided by Museum 'standards.'

'It would be the label writing, perhaps more connecting with the emotions, the human emotion, because these artefacts are so historical, so in my opinion bringing up that human emotion would really enrich for future projects. I know it can be

quite challenging perhaps from the British Museum point of view, in terms of the standards that they have.'

'We all did the labels according to how we think it should be and then the expert (not specified by partner) put it in the right procedure, you know what I mean? Everybody has got a different feeling about it. So we all have different experience, but it leave to the people that's the expert to say.'

From feedback with staff working on Object Journeys, it is clear that at a more senior level there was an expectation or desire that working with community partners would bring new approaches and different ways of doing written interpretation from the Museum 'standards'. Whether the community partners want to create new approaches or follow Museum standard is one question, but perhaps staff working on the ground feel that community partner content needs to meet these standards. It is useful to note that whilst the labels in the Family display were not exactly as the community partners initially wanted - for example with the level of emotion - they did have a different tone and approach from standard museum labels. Was this different enough for partners? Was it too different for some staff (but not others)? Should outputs led by community partners be encouraged to be different somehow but work within existing Museum frameworks, or should they be encouraged - where it is possible to do so - to break these frameworks apart?

In relation to museum 'standards' there may be additional challenges of working with AOA / ethnographic collections. These collections usually relate to living traditions so there could be more sensitivities than would be the case if the same subjects are explored in the ancient world collections.

The timeframe had a particular impact on object selection

All partners agreed that tight timeframes reduced their potential for involvement in object selection.

'I think at the very first one (session) when the OJPM asked us to go online and look on the website and look, that was a bit difficult ...and I think the next time we came she had already come with some objects, which in a way was good because she was sort of helping us, to start us off, you know, to start us off.'

'We had to go from a big list to a small one. At the same time we were not explained how. I didn't think guided how to do the narrowing.'

Ownership

The topic of ownership links closely to the discussion around the decision-making and whether the project was community-led or not; and indeed partners' desire or not for it to be.

Lack of decision about the sub-theme of the display

'I didn't feel that we led the project completely; I felt we were guided to one subject.'

Partners accepted that the Museum would have had to decide the overall theme. However, they also felt the sub-theme was guided to a degree and had mixed views about this. As mentioned earlier, some recognised that this guidance was because they needed support to narrow down what was thought to be too broad a theme, whereas some thought they were guided too much at times. Overall though, this did not seem to affect their experience.

'In many cases sometimes maybe because we didn't have expertise and we were a little bit lost, so we were wasting time, so we needed to be pushed and guided, but sometimes I felt that pushing and guiding was a little bit too much.'

For them ownership seems linked to their level of happiness with final display, but timing pressures are the main issue

Many agreed that they have been asked a lot whether they are happy with the display, and this seemed to impact a lot on their responses to 'ownership', because the conversation in response to this question was dominated by this topic.

'You know we were asked over and over again 'Are you happy with it?'

'In general we be happy, we feel very happy with the exhibition.'

Again, the challenges of the short timeframe were evident. They felt they did not meet frequently enough at the start, then had to rush toward the end.

'Like I say it was the mismanagement of the time. We waste for a month I think we met not very often at the beginning when we should really...the pressure was huge.'

B) Responses from visitors to the display and events programme

This section is based on evaluation data and feedback to the Kiribati display and events gathered by volunteers at the British Museum. The Kiribati Object Journeys display, like all Object Journeys displays, is located in the Wellcome Trust Gallery: Living and Dying (Room 24). The display occupies two wall bay cases on the west side of the gallery.

In addition to the display, the Kiribati partners also co-produced some events for the Museum's public programme. Note, whilst a programme of Family project events are being delivered, only the initial launch event had taken place at time of reporting, so evaluation of these are not featured in this report.

i. Display

Notes on the data

- The display was evaluated by trained and supervised BM volunteers during July and early August 2017, across weekends and weekdays to ensure a range and diversity of visitor responses.
- Evaluation approach: Tracking, observation and intercept interviews (51 tracking and 32 interviews).
 - Tracking and observation: Visitors' moment-to-moment interactions with the Kiribati Object Journeys display case were studied and documented through use of a bespoke tracking map, as well as their engagement with other nearby display cases within the pre-selected section of the gallery space.
 - Intercept interviews: Visitors who were observed engaging with the Kiribati Object Journeys display case were stopped and interviewed briefly (two to five minutes), using an interview questionnaire.
 - Of the observations:
 - 26 = female, 25 = male
 - 32 = independent adults, 18 = family group, 1 = school group
 - 2 = aged <18, 14 = 19 - 24, 9 = 24 - 34, 9 = 35 - 44, 12 = 45 - 54, 5 = >55
 - Of the intercept interviews:

- 16 families (children all approximately 7 - 16 years of age)
- 15 independent adults (mainly singles and couples)'

Summary

Dwell time

- As an average a visitor spends 01:13 looking at the display. Families spend 01:16 at the display while Independent adults spend 01:13. The average time for a female visitor is 01:23 while for a male visitor is 01:05.
- 48 % of visitors were able to recognise the main theme and an additional 41% pulled out other messages and themes developed by community partners in the display.
- The film was the most attractive element of the display. In this case, the film showing the dancers performing a traditional dance, offered an opportunity to see the dance costume [one of the most engaged with objects in the display] 'in action.'
- Objects themselves have good attracting power in the display. Visitors seem to find the objects interesting.
- As with the Year 1 Somali display, the majority of visitors did not explicitly notice the collaborative nature of the display but when this was pointed out to them they reported that this aspect added value and importance, due to a sense of authenticity and culturally relevant content being chosen for display. The Year 3 Family Objects display, which deliberately trials a more visible presentation of community partners and the process in the interpretation, will be evaluated to allow a direct comparison to be made.

Visitors' engagement with the objects



Kiribati Object Journeys display

Most visitors (68%) spent the majority of their time engaging with the objects on the right-hand side of the display. They particularly paid attention to the sword and the helmet (some 53% of visitors were seen engaging with them specifically).

'Interesting, the helmet and the sword catch your attention. I looked at the helmet and it seemed to me that it was made from a pufferfish and when I read that it was, I was really surprised!' (Visitor, Independent adult, male 35-45yrs)

The dance costume was also incredibly engaging for visitors and most often looked at in connection with its accompanying film.

The objects displayed hanging at height were the least engaged with elements of the display - the Mat and Sarong.

Visitors' engagement with the film - Ana Kanenei Teraaka O - The Voyage of Teraaka.

The most looked at element of the case was the film: *Ana Kanenei Teraaka O - The Voyage of Teraaka*. It showcases a traditional song and dance as performed by members of the UK I-Kiribati diaspora. Digital media interpretation of objects is often welcomed by visitors, and, particularly in this case, the film showing the dancers performing a traditional dance, offered an opportunity to see the dress costume [one of the most engaged with objects in the display] 'in action' and to add additional information, which could have not been available otherwise (e.g. the accompanying male costume).

During the observation study 83% of the families and 68% of the Independent adults looked at it. In 67% of the cases, visitors engaged with both the film and the costume - alternating their attention between the two.

All of the interviewed families and almost all the independent adults (87%) confirmed that they looked at the film and they described it as a 'cultural' and 'traditional' dance. 55% explicitly mentioned their appreciation of seeing the live dance and of the great benefit of its proximity with the dress costume - they claimed they complemented each other.

'It shows how the dress is used and you know from the video that the man costume is different. The video makes the costume real, it gives it a purpose' (Visitor, Independent adult, female 25-35yrs)

'The outfit is fashionable and even contemporary! I really like the video because with the other objects we have to imagine how they were used' (Visitor, Family, female, 18yrs)

However, 68% of the interviewed visitors reported not being able to hear the sound attached to the film because the volume was too low for them to hear adequately.

Interpretation approach

Labels and panel

From the observations:

- 20 out of 51 visitors read the main display panel: 16 of them were Independent adults.
- 56% of the visitors were observed specifically engaging with one or more objects and then reading the relevant information in the panels underneath.
- 64% of the interviewed visitors described the content and object information in the written interpretation as informative, accessible and well-balanced. A small minority mentioned that there was a lot of text to read and that some of it was difficult to read (either too high or having to bend to read the object panel labels)
‘It is enough but not too much: it’s a perfect balance. It is enough to get invested but not too much to feel overwhelmed by it’ (Visitors, Independent adults, female 25-35yrs)

Photographs within the labels

- 87 % of interviewed visitors (15 out of 16 families and 12 out of 15 Independent adults) confirmed to have looked at the photographs accompanying some of the object labels and they all agreed that they were useful to better understand the display because photographs, both ancient and recent ones, provide contextual interpretation for the objects. They reported the photographs giving an insight into how the objects were made or used e.g. the image of the Kiribati man wearing the traditional armour.
‘They are good, for example you can see the man wearing the helmet and the sword and you can better understand the objects and it works well with the information’ (Visitors, Independent adults, female 25-35yrs)

Map

The importance of the map of Kiribati and its surrounding Pacific location came up during the interviews. 18 % (2 Independent adults and 3 families) of the interviewed visitors particularly appreciate the presence of the map because it allowed them to understand where the islands are and their remoteness.

Design

23 out of 31 interviewed visitors responded positively to the design of the display. They described the display as ‘modern’, ‘eye-catching’, ‘easy to follow’, ‘clear’, ‘colourful’ and ‘not too crowded’.

‘There are not so many objects but this is good. This is one of those cases were less is more!’ (Visitor, Family, father)

'Everything seems at eye-level and it is really good, especially the green background for the helmet and the sword is really eye-catching' (Visitor, Independent adult, male 25-35yrs)

Visitor responses to the content - Main narrative and messages

The main narrative of the display, which is the connections I-Kiribati feel with the land and the sea and their resourcefulness as part of their national character was recognised by 48% interviewed visitors.

'Learning about other people's materials, how they work with these materials that they find on the islands. It shows their resourcefulness' (Visitor, Independent adult, female, 25-35 yrs)

'It is about Kiribati, I wish I could study them at school!' (Visitor, Family, male <18)

Additionally, 41% of the interviewed visitors were able to pull out one of the minor themes and messages related to the display. The minority, in the attempt to outline the main message, remained too vague or gave an incorrect answer.

'It seems about a voyage and the continuity of culture. And this is a collaboration, because the video shows people of this millennium and they are in the UK, so that creates also a new connection between the two cultures' (Visitor, independent adult, male 25-35yrs)

'Their culture and their resilience in a globalised world, how they try to carry on with their traditions and I think that because of the excessive use of natural materials' (Visitor, independent adult, male 19-25yrs)

The value of the community partnerships for visitors

23 out of 31 interviewed visitors did not notice that the display was developed in partnership with the community group until it was pointed out to them. However, creating displays in partnership with communities was unanimously considered a positive thing for the Museum to be doing by them upon questioning.

Visitors reported that knowing about the collaborative nature of the displays production added to its value and importance for them - this was about the sense of authenticity and culturally relevant content being chosen for display.

'It's a great idea - it makes me think more about what I am looking at and if you see that real people have worked with the Museum staff, you immediately feel more involved. There should be more displays like this one' (Visitor, independent adult, female 18-25yrs)

'Fantastic, they can definitely tell the story in a more genuine and personal way' (Visitor, family group, father)

Of the 8 interviewed visitors who stated they were aware of the community collaborative nature of the display, they reported having found this out from the green-coloured project and background information label.

From the observation study, it was difficult to determine just how many people engaged with the project and background information label as it was really close to some of the most driven elements of engagement on display - the video and the dress.

ii. Public programmes

The Kiribati events included:

- Late night event for the opening of the display, which took place on the evening of 25th August 2017, during the BM's later opening hours 18.00-21.00. It included dance performances in the Great Court, as well as a talk and object handling near the display. This was attended by around 405 visitors.
- A family friendly day event on 5th November 2017, which included object handling, a storytelling performance and a talk. This was attended by around 525 visitors.
- A Little Feet event under-fives workshop, on 1st December 2017, which was a two-hour drop-in session showcasing a range of toddler specific activities. This was attended by around 15 families (approximately 30 visitors).

Notes on the data

- The data for event evaluation was gathered by Museum volunteers under careful supervision, and key findings and reflections based on this have been presented within this report.
- Evaluation approach:
 - Launch night event: observations across the whole event.
 - Family event: Interviews: Five interviews were undertaken and observations across the whole evening.

Evening launch event

- The first performance attracted around 200 visitors, including families. Many visitors stayed for the whole performance. Visitors also stopped by as they came into the Museum, or as they came across the Great Court. There are around 100 by the end. People engage by clapping their hands along with the music. Many take videos and photographs. The later performance attracted around 150 visitors, most of which are adults. Visitors tend to observe on their way out of the Museum and watch for just a few minutes, much shorter than the earlier performance. There are around 70 visitors watching till the end. The talk attracts around 55 visitors; most appear to know the community partners.
- Visitors responded that the events were enjoyable and interesting.

Family friendly event

- The storytelling attracted around 30 children across both sessions (3 - 8 year olds); the parents/ carers accompanying them are mostly aged 25 -35 years old. Children engaged with most with the singing, but slightly less so with the opportunity to participate as 'actors' or 'dancers'.
- The dance performances attract visitors who were at earlier activities, such as the storytelling. A total of around 200 visitors watch each main performance. Visitors clap and cheer for the performers.
- Around 30 visitors attend, including 7-8 children. There are many young adults present. A few visitors stay after the talk to ask questions.

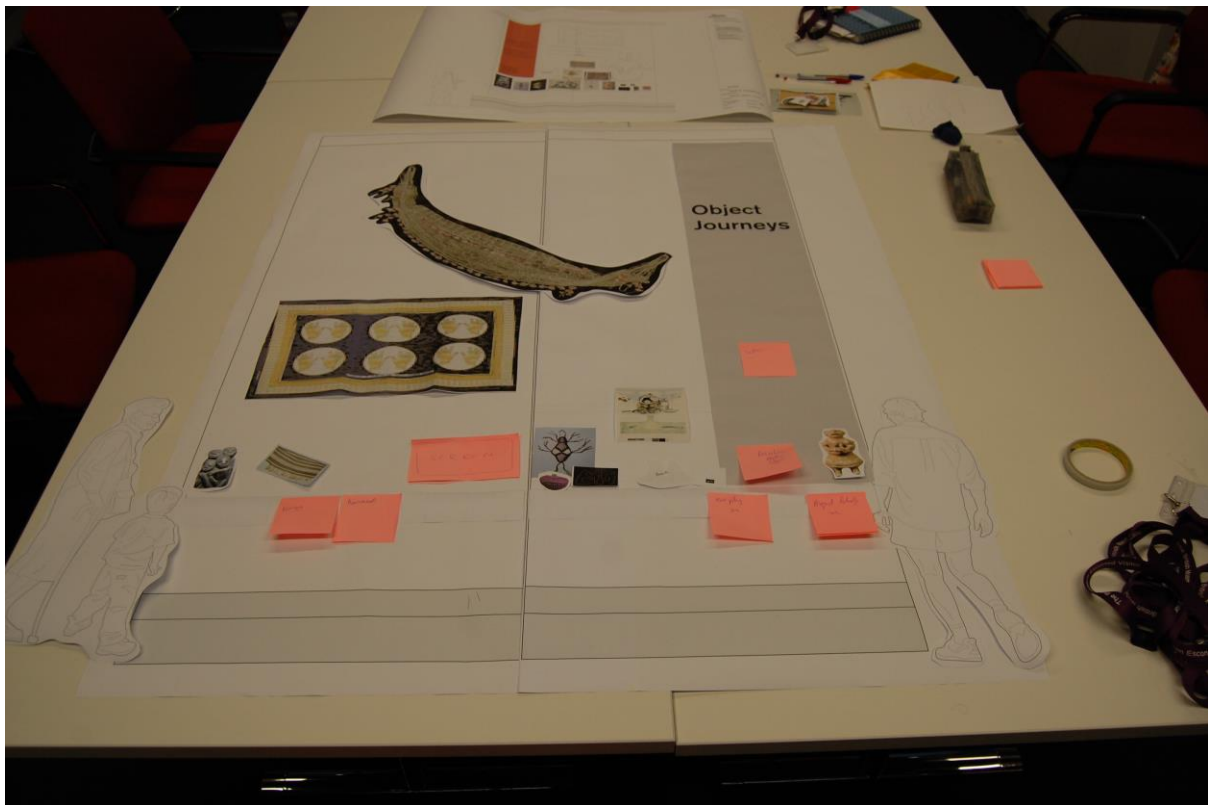
- Around 15 children their parents attend the crafts workshop. Again, many had attended other events that day.

C) Mapping attitudes towards - and impact of - collaborative working on internal British Museum staff (who are all stakeholders in the Object Journeys project)

This area has been explored through charting the experiences of the staff who are part of the Object Journeys Internal Steering Group (ISG).

Notes on the data

- Ten in-depth semi-structured interviews in June - July 2018. These included staff who have been a part of the project throughout, one who has left the Museum and some who only took part in Year 3 Object Journeys.



Family Object Journeys case layout workshop activity

Experiences of the project

Summary

- Experiences were mainly positive. As with Year 2 (2016-17) feedback, a lot of this related to a sense of achievement around creating a display with community partners. However, the most common factor contributing to a positive experience for staff was deepening their understanding about how to work with community partners. Many valued having the opportunity to work with community partners on collections and to create displays, and conceptually believed this is what the British Museum should be doing more of. Despite this, it was clear there were different understandings of what community led practice is, which is explored further below in the report.
- Other factors contributing to a positive experience included: successful cross-departmental working, the thematic approach of the Family display having potential to engage a broader audience, and the hard work and persistence of the Object Journeys Partnerships Manager to overcome challenges.
- Whilst factors contributing to a negative experience were limited, they were felt more strongly by a small number of respondents. A few said the thematic approach was too broad, meaning community partners could not contribute to new knowledge to collections. Some practical issues about installation in permanent galleries persisted.
- Despite overall consensus that the project resulted in high quality displays, there are different opinions amongst staff around the value and nature of working on collections with community partners. There are also some concerns around whether there will be a lasting legacy of this work without the influence of an external funder.

Many of the points raised when ISG members were asked to share their overall experiences are explored in more depth later in the report, but these responses are useful to reflect experiences in an unprompted way.

Key factors contributing to positive experiences:

- **Deepening understanding about how to work with community partners,** achieved cumulatively by the different iterations of Object Journeys.
 - **Practical learning:** The new thematic approach of the Year 3 project was explicitly mentioned by around a third of the staff interviewed in relation to deepening this understanding. One Interpretation staff member said they were able to deliver workshops more effectively by Year 3; another observed that

the exhibition team was more flexible with the process of developing displays with community partners. They added it helped that there were existing high-quality displays developed through Years 1 and 2 to help continue for advocating for working with community partners.

- **Conceptual learning:** For example, some reflected that the project had been positive because the wider CPT (community partnerships team) had developed an understanding of participatory practice and could now see how it related to their work. Another example is that the project had really challenged existing ways of working and generated new ideas. Finally, respondents felt the project initiated organisational learning.
- **Achievement relating to creating the display** was cited by most staff, for example being pleased with the achievement of developing a display through a thematic approach. Some thought that the Family display had an explicit community voice which previous displays hadn't. Some staff also commented that the practical process of putting together a display was more streamlined by this final year, that there is more awareness around where the challenges will be, and that the installation process is embedded.
- Just under half of the staff interviewed mentioned a positive experience of working with the Family group. It is important to note that this was not a specific question about staff relationships with the group, only about experiences overall, and it was clear from responses in total, that the relationship with the group had been positive for all staff. Comments included that they were a friendly and caring group, had a 'good group dynamic', and it had been rewarding to work with them. One mentioned they were happy that community partners have been proud of their displays. Another believed the project will have resulted in strong working relationships with community partners (across all three years).
- Many staff (newer to OJ this year) were **genuinely pleased about the concept of creating displays with community partners**; they said it was important for the Museum to invite new perspectives so were happy to have the opportunity to be involved in a project that did this.
- Two staff said that Object Journeys had achieved **cross-departmental working** in a way that - based on their experience - no other project had before at the Museum.
- Two mentioned the use of the **thematic approach** in the Family display, because they thought it had potential to engage a broader audience through an accessible theme.

- Two staff said that the persistence and hard work of the Object Journeys Partnerships Manager had helped overcome challenges around logistics, cross-departmental working and how willing the Museum may have been to relax control.

Key factors contributing to negative or less positive experiences:

- A small number of members of staff, primarily curatorial, said the **thematic approach** was challenging due to having more curatorial departments and therefore more stakeholders. There was a feeling that there was a lack of tight focus in the Year 3 Family project, i.e. time period, region, broad theme, meaning that the community partners struggled to find their expertise /raison d’etre, there was no knowledge to enhance the collection understanding and there wouldn’t be any experts they could work with long term. This suggests there was - perhaps - a potential lack of shared understanding or clarity about the rationale behind the third project amongst staff - that it was intended to be experimental and challenging to fulfil the funding requirements around trialling new ways of working with the collections thematically and diverse community partnership groups.
- The **condensed timescale** for Year 3 was specifically mentioned by around a third of staff. For example, it was thought to have impacted on the Museum being able to ‘pull out the best from the community partners.’ It is useful to note that permission was not granted by the Museum Project Board to expand the time parameters of the project.
- Some challenges around the **value and purpose of this work** contributed to a negative experience for one, who believed they were still having to advocate and argue the value of community partners having access to collections; that there is still a lack of clear buy-in to the benefits and the ethos of participation, despite recognition of quality of displays. There was also some concern about the legacy of this work without the having the ‘stick’ of ‘kudos’ of external funding behind it going forward.
- Having all the Object Journey **displays in a permanent gallery** was said to contribute to negative experience for a couple number of staff, both of whom said there were practical issues around updating Room 24 and integrating new content in a gallery designed to tell a different story.

Thoughts on the project outputs - display and events



Young visitor looking at the Family Object Journeys display

Positive about the thematic approach of the Year 3 Family display

The majority of staff interviewed were appreciative and positive about the thematic approach in relation to the final output. Many agreed that the universal theme of 'family' would encourage a wide range of visitors to connect to the content, and one even commented that they had personally connected to this display. Many felt that this was a new approach for the British Museum and that this was a good thing as it enabled different parts of the collections and different time-periods to be highlighted. Note, there are a few previous examples of the Museum taking a thematic approach, so staff responses indicate a lack of awareness about this. Many felt the group managed to showcase different collections in a coherent way with a strong engaging narrative. One staff member said they were impressed by the way the group had developed commonality across the objects and commented that 'the commonality I saw was fascinating, very different, complementary to each other.' A few staff commented that they were pleasantly surprised by the objects that were chosen, finding their selection interesting. There was definitely the sense amongst many staff in the group that the community partners had approached the display in a different way than staff may have done, and this was a

positive thing. It was also noted by some that the new potential new re-display of permanent galleries could be an opportunity to consider this thematic approach more.

Impressed by the production quality, design and look

Most staff explicitly commented that the look and design of the Kiribati and Family displays was good, with comments included ‘impressive,’ ‘slick’ ‘well produced’ ‘aesthetically pleasing’ ‘elegant’ and ‘interesting complementary colour choice.’ The staff member who commented on the colour choice was pleasantly surprised how well the colours worked in the Family display. It was believed that the selection of objects in the Family display contributed to the strong look.

Kiribati display considered to be best quality by some who worked on whole project

Whilst some in the group of staff interviewed in Year 3 had only been directly involved in the Family case, three staff who had worked across the whole project felt the Kiribati display was the strongest overall. All three said that the use of film as an object and contemporary interpretation was the reason, whilst one also commented that the combination of it looking beautiful, having content which delivered a cohesive story and having the most positive feedback from staff and visitors were reasons. Visitor evaluation will be undertaken for the Family display but because of the reporting timeline in cannot be included here.

Most think the greater visibility of community partners in the Family case makes the co-creative process clearer to visitors, but there are mixed views about whether this is a positive thing

There considerable feedback around whether it is clearer to audiences that the Family display has a stronger sense of being co-created with community partners and whether this is good thing. Within the Family display interpretation there is an introduction to the community partners and additional background information about the process of producing a co-developed display.

Around a third were welcoming of this explicit explanation of the partners’ role in the process of the display creation, it was said to result in:

‘A perceived clarity of community partner voice.’

There was also a comment about the display having a different look because of this - the film and the use of language feeling distinctive, and this being a positive thing.

Some staff have mixed views about how visible the collaborative process with community partners is in the display and are keen to wait until visitor feedback has been collated.

Other question-based comments about this topic included:

- Whilst the film about the making of the case does embed the group strongly in the case, what was the purpose?
- Is it authorizing the case?
- Does this lead it to be seen as a separate ‘community case’ so it feels less curated than earlier Object Journeys?
- Is this a positive or negative thing?

There was limited awareness that trying this different explicit approach was part of testing different methodologies. It was about trialing different approaches to presenting the visibility of the group in the interpretation to see how visitors respond.

On the topic of the visibility and authorship of community voices, there was also feedback about possible conflicting agendas between the Museum, who may want community partners to create something different, and partners who may want their display to look the same as standard displays so they are given equal status. This does assume that partners may think visitors place more value on the museum-authored curatorial voice than the community partners voice, even if visitor feedback indicates community curated interpretation is highly regarded.

Another possible conflicting view from staff interviewed was that they assumed - and thought it right - that community partners would want a display that was different and stood out as being created in a different way. An added complication is that all three Object Journeys displays were essentially interventions within the large Living and Dying Gallery (Room 24), which has an established design, narrative structure, look and feel. It is important to note that, outside of the Somali display, that there weren’t really any viable alternatives for the other projects. Have the variations around the visibility of the community partners and their involvement in the creation of the Object Journeys displays been different enough within the constraints of all being in one pre-existing permanent gallery?

A small number of staff from a range of disciplines commented that having all three displays in this gallery was a missed opportunity for learning but they were aware that there were very few alternatives available across the whole British Museum space. Whilst Object Journeys has developed some key learning and evidence around this complex topic, it is an area for further exploration.

Kiribati events were valued

When interviewing staff, a lot of time had passed since the Kiribati programmes, and the Year 2 staff interviews had taken place before they had happened; the Year 3 Family

events were yet to be delivered, so there were very few comments about these. However, there were some comments that the Kiribati events had been:

'Very joyful and well attended - the group were engaged and engaged museum visitors,'

This concurs with observations of the events and visitor feedback from them.



Young visitor enjoying Kiribati Object Journeys activities

What ISG members perceived to be successes of the project - both for the Museum and other stakeholders

Organisational learning and shifts in approach to community co-creation

Reflecting responses to overall experiences, many considered organisational learning to be the main success of the project. There has been a shift in the views of some staff about who can provide knowledge of the collections, for example local London Somalis helping identify an object's real purpose.

Around a third of respondents said Object Journeys had created a dialogue around community co-creation, for example:

- Facilitating a greater understanding what participatory practice means.
- Enabling greater confidence in their own expertise.
- Moving the Museum's thinking around participatory practice to a place where it will be more able to respond to community partner led ideas.
- Broadening how community partners are defined and identified.
- Supporting the development of different ways of working by seeing how community partners approach objects in different ways.

More about learning is explored later in the report.

There was also a suggestion that this learning has come at the right time with a relatively new Director; discussion about the Museum's new research strategy and the Research Group discussion will enable those involved in Object Journeys to link into this conversation.

Community partners 'having a voice' with British Museum

A key success mentioned by around a third of the staff was community partners 'having a voice' with British Museum. This does reflect feedback from earlier years, and in this evaluation it was especially highlighted by staff new to the project in Year 3. Some comments included:

'Ordinary people are creating a display.'

'Communities are engaging and having a voice.'

These are not specific about the nature of involvement, and in some ways could refer to a kind of work that the Community Partnerships team, and other teams in the Museum, may do anyway.

In addition, it was suggested that it was a success that the British Museum actually did a project like this, although with an awareness of the value of HLF funding as a ‘stick’ to support or enforce delivery.

The thematic approach of the Family display

Whilst this is discussed in other areas, a small number of respondents mentioned it explicitly in relation to successes, including:

- Many displays (generally, not specifically Object Journeys displays) try to do too much, whereas the Family display is very simple - it is about celebrating family and gives audiences a *‘pointed moment to think about how people around the world celebrate family.’*
- It was a success that a display - which had to link content to a broad theme and wide set of collections - was actually created.

Across the feedback, the same staff often had both positive and negative things to say about the thematic approach: covered elsewhere, but comments included:

- It was harder for staff logistically
- Community partners were not considered to bring any expert knowledge to collections
- It may possibly lead to a more engaging display for visitors due to its accessible universal theme.

Here is it useful to consider what was important for Object Journeys. Was the project about better audience engagement, developing new processes and way of working, or developing newer or different knowledge about collections? Ultimately, the same things may be at odds in the short term, but long term the latter is needed to ensure sustained audience engagement.

Other successes include:

- The relationship with the between community partners, and between the partners and the Museum staff.
- Changing the way the British Museum is perceived by some of its peers, particularly because the Object Journeys Partnership Manager is proactive at sharing practice.

Challenges and frustrations for the Internal Steering Group

Researcher’s note: Consistent with previous reports, overall it is useful to note that within the research context of Object Journeys, challenges potentially present greater

opportunities for exploring how this way of working can be evolved at the BM; i.e. the project is working to identify issues within BM systems and processes, thereby building internal learning around engagement methodologies.

Key challenges or frustrations were:

Tight timescale of Year 3 display and resulting capacity challenges

This was the greatest challenge, mentioned by over half of respondents. Comments included:

- There were real limits to what could be expected of non-paid community partners to do in such a pressured timeframe. Whilst the same could be said for staff, the key difference is that partners were not being paid.
- The challenging timeframes and resulting capacity pressure may have contributed to a slightly difficult relationship between some staff members, for example those working on the project full-time and those managing other priorities. There was a suggestion that there was a need for clearer boundaries around what could be expected of staff in terms of when they would have to work unsociable hours and providing lead in times. Many of these factors are inevitable and hard to plan when working with community partners, so perhaps the issue here is communications.
- The short timeframe resulted in the final project being rushed, not stretching thinking and practice as much as it could have, and therefore meaning the desired deepening relationships and challenging of practice did not happen as fully as possible.
- The best work with community partners happened when there was the time to develop relationships over the very long term, and there was no opportunity to do this in the third year of Object Journeys.

Lack of flexibility around display spaces

This has also been reflected in general experience responses earlier in this report, but the constraints of the gallery space to display Object Journeys was mentioned specifically in relation to key challenges by a number of staff; comments included:

- It was a shame that the Museum lacked a bigger blanker space to allow people to be experimental.
- Most gallery space at the Museum tended to be booked two to three years in advance so it was hard to be responsive, spontaneous, and respond to topical issues.
- It was noted that a potential future re-display of the permanent collection may be a chance to address some of these constraints.

Working culture

It was felt by one staff member that the Museum is almost like a ‘big machine’ that places too much focus on churning out outputs - such as displays, publications, and numbers. This is why Object Journey had displays as part of its focus, even though work with community partners and collections didn’t necessarily need to result in a display. This therefore meant that whilst staff were committed overall to the concept of exploring collections with community partners, everyone was so busy that when they were asked to do something different it could almost create an emotionally-resistant response. This was challenging for those tasked with managing these projects because they were also doing their job and don’t want to ‘put people out’. Whilst this was the feeling on one member, feedback from across staff responses does indicate this is an accurate observation. However, it would need further exploration.

Lack of clarity about the level of control community partners should have

Examples cited included:

- Lack of clarity at the start of the project whether community partners were meant to have more control over decisions, or whether it was meant to be compromise. A staff member felt they would have liked clearer guidance from the outset.
- Unsure about the level of compromise and where this should stem from - for example the Museum or partner side. An example shared was about the tone of the captions. The group wanted a more emotional tone in the interpretation than is usually used in standard British Museum captions. Whilst there was recognition that any kind of internal or external curator - whether a community partner or academic - would have to go through a similar editing process, there was an uncertainty about how the extent to which Object Journeys could, or should, divert from these.
- A senior staff member said that the community partners were meant do things in their way, even if this was totally different to the usual BM approach, and they thought community partners rejected this approach because they wanted to conform to the British Museum way to give them a sense of equal status.

If some staff want community partners to ‘shake it up’ but others are unsure about whether and how, then does there need to be clearer guidance from Directorate level? This issue of how to encourage community partners to be more experimental has come up in the Year 2 evaluation, but perhaps the Museum needs to clearer amongst staff first around the boundaries (or otherwise) of this experimentation.

Lack of control was a definite theme in feedback from some staff. Examples included:

- No choice about doing the project - they had to because it was HLF funded.
- Lack of involvement in choosing the community partners they would work with - certain expectations around which roles would select communities to work on collections, based on more historical ways of working at the Museum.
- The Year 3 project chose to work across the whole AOA collection, and not just focus on the Americas. It was thought that a wider cultural selection might make the thematic approach easier. There was a query about whether the challenges (extra work etc.) of this may have been avoided if staff who had historically selected communities to explore collections at the Museum selected the partners.

Note: if a more traditional approach had happened, would this be an example of taking the decision making about the direction of the project away from community partners, which may not be the ethos of participatory practice?

How has understanding of community co-creation changed?

Over half of staff responded that their understanding had changed. On reflection, it was quite challenging to explore this question with some who were not involved in the project at the start, and thus hadn't been asked to consider the meaning earlier on. However, perhaps the length of one Object Journeys project is enough exposure to assess this.

Prompting thinking about what this practice looks like for a large international museum

Staff had been prompted to consider what community means for the British Museum, especially as a large international museum. 'Which communities do we decide to work with? What does co-curation look like at BM?' They were also interested to find out what will emerge from the project and whether any guiding principles or established methodology will be developed and shared. Other factors considered included how this work can involve curatorial departments and collections beyond AOA. How it can be embedded into permanent galleries and temporary exhibitions - and what kinds of projects should involve this approach?

Reframing this practice as research and changing its value

Some staff have started to re-frame the work as research, learning from beyond the museum sector, and seeing how this re-framing changes how it is valued, especially by the academic and curatorial community in museums.

Developing more understanding of what community-led means

The Content Producer said they had learnt this by observing how the OJPM worked with the community partners. For example, putting their views and preferences first before the Museum agenda and championing their voice, not their perceived voice. One respondent said that working with partners required them to challenge themselves a couple of times and hold back their opinions of how something could be improved or made better according to their own style preferences:

'You have to step away and recognise it is their voice and represented as it is and not edited.'

Confidence

Staff said more confidence around this work had stemmed from the project having effectively delivered this way of working as a national museum - that if the British Museum could do it any museum can. Some also felt that project had demonstrated how far the British Museum could be challenged. A few respondents also felt they were more confident to be forthright about the importance of this practice, about their existing good practice and work in partnership with communities and their engagement methodologies; especially an understanding that what works with one community partners may not work for another.

No change

Just under half the staff respondents said their understanding of this practice had not changed because they had done lots of this work before.

However, there is a question about what co-creation or participatory practice meant to them individually. For some it was clear it was about working in collaboration and even sharing knowledge about collections, but the extent to which this would be community led is where there is less agreement.

Learning from involvement with the project - individually and organisationally

Individually

Developing learning around working with community partners

- How to support community partners to make film and create some great content, which they would be really proud of.

- How important it was to give community partners time to reflect on their decisions.

Specific skills development

- The project has enabled two staff to develop some very specific new skills including two new mounting techniques for basketry mats and installation of objects at height using a special electric machine.

Applying this practice to core rather than project-based work

- That this work was being successfully achieved at a large national museum, leading to considerations about how it can be applied with core teams working on permanent galleries, i.e. not project based work.

Organisational learning

Limited to those involved in the project

Overall most agreed that learning has been limited to teams working on Object Journeys but that the Museum is so big there will have been less learning on a broader organisational level.

Limited by lack of Directorate support or engagement

Some staff commented that they were unsure how 'far up the chain' learning went because there was a lack of participation from the Directorate. For example:

- The Museum was described as a *'Disparate and massive beast'* and there was a real struggle to get senior buy-in.
- A senior staff member commented on the challenges of this and believed they could have done a better job in advocating for the project upwards: *'Fell on deaf ears. I'll take the blame.'*
- It wasn't thought that: *'The powers that be (meaning the Directorate) communicate with those doing'.*

However, there was evidence of deep learning for teams involved

Some viewed that teams which faced the most challenges will have learnt the most.

Examples of learning included:

- Learning to plan interpretation workshops that were active with shorter bite-size activities.

- Development of a new interpretation framework to support community partners considering how visitors may want to feel, learn, and think.
- Greater recognition of the distinction between the work of Object Journeys and the wider community partnerships work - that the former has involved researching the collections that can result in scholarly benefit; that it involved greater long-term collaborative work in partnership with community partners; that there is real onus on the Museum to respond to and act on the participation work.
- Realisation from within the Learning & National Partnerships team they are a core part of the Museum - not the 'soft face' on the periphery.
- Deeper connection to sector conversations about this work - before the Museum was less involved, for example the debate about colonial history.

Recognition of the time and resources needed for this work

Whilst not learning as such, many staff commented that they recognised more time and resources were needed to do this work effectively. Thoughts included:

- Community partners need appropriate remuneration or benefits for their involvement.
- Those required to work on the project should have appropriate time dedicated to it in their job descriptions or work plans, although recognition that this project's Activity Plan was written many years before delivery, by which time the scope had somewhat changed.

Deep down, a lack of learning from some about what participatory practice and co-creation is about?

As previously mentioned it was clear across the feedback that even some directly involved in the project did not understand that this work was about supporting community partners to make the decisions; that is was the Museum's role to facilitate these. For example, there was an observation that some staff couldn't understand why they couldn't do things the same way and have staff make decisions.

How, if at all, will Object Journeys make a difference to practice at British Museum?



Object Journeys workshop with community partners and staff

Staff were able to cite examples, but it was thought that changes would be somewhat limited to the teams and departments directly involved in the project. They also suggested how practice should be embedded.

Changes to practice:

Establishment of a successful model for co-creation with community partners

- Many staff mentioned that the key evidence for this was that a permanent role specifically focusing participation and collections was created at the British Museum (the OJPM was appointed to this role).
- Acknowledging the model should be applied to future exhibitions:
‘Every exhibition could benefit from this approach.’
‘It’s a valid way of working.’
- Valuing bringing different voices and perspectives into the Museum.
- Developing a way of communicating what interpretation is to community partners.

- Creating different interpretation tools.

Improved approaches to running workshops with community partners.

Sense of fear around this work has diminished

- New permanent participation and collections role for OJPM can bring in the expertise around partnerships and facilitation to support the collection expertise.

Shorter lead in teams for object loan for partners

- Negotiated around this throughout the project, so it was reduced from a year.

Going forward, embedding change is reliant on:

- Being led from senior manager, keeper and directorate level.
- Sufficient money and long lead in time.
- All staff need to be flexible about working times, such as weekends, and managers need to support flexible ways of working.
- Greater focus on changing the working culture at Museum and success measures; enabling more flexible approach to experimental work, with more of a focus on the process rather than outputs. Staff measures for success include numbers-based metrics such as numbers of displays, research publications, etc., which don't give staff the motivation to take part in opportunities that, whilst may interest them, won't contribute to their performance.
- Continued dissemination of the learning.

Note, many ISG members were able to share suggestions for how the project has inspired new ideas, which are explored later in the report.

Access to collections - what has been learned?

Most staff said that they had learnt how important access to collections was for partners, and that it had not been possible to give as much access they wanted - across all three projects. Factors contributing to this cited by staff included:

- Challenges of groups wanting to access to collections at the weekends and staff not being always willing or able to facilitate this.
- Some issues around perception; there was a greater need to manage expectations and share issues about collections access at the start; letting partners know that staff don't have access either.

- Major barrier of access during collection moves. This is still a challenge for staff accessing collections, and it was believed that ethnographic collections are least accessible.

There was also some evidence that Object Journeys has helped the Museum learn what were the ‘qualities of space’ community partners need when accessing collections. There was the suggestion that the Museum is only good at supporting a formal (e.g. academic or PhD students) researchers and with very specific requests, but not a broad group who need more support to explore the collection. There was a view that it is not that the Museum values formal researchers more, but that an unconscious bias exists:

‘A lack of will not capacity. But perhaps as an organisation we don’t see the direct value to a community group looking at collections, whereas with a PhD researcher we do.’

Challenges that have arisen from Object Journeys do suggest this view is true, so greater exploration of quality of space around access is needed.

Do ISG members think differently about how knowledge is generated with community partners? Do they value collections-based research with non-traditional groups?

Note, this question focusses on exploring community driven knowledge outside the existing work that Museum curators undertake with source communities. The majority of staff interviewed did say they think differently and value this knowledge, however many staff feel there is still limited buy-in to this way of working. Examples of value toward this work include:

- Positive comparison of Object Journeys to another exhibition seen.

‘The recent exhibition I saw Rodin; the sculpture was great but the labels were so academic, it made me think it would have been better to have an actual sculptor telling whole story.’
- Knowledge from external groups can have the most useful insights and this ‘unexpected’ knowledge has great value.
- New knowledge has opened up conversations and provided new information that the Museum didn’t know; for example, the Kiribati project was felt to have been especially valuable for developing new collections knowledge.
- Makes the Museum more relevant in the long term.

- New relationships and connections between collection staff and UK based community partners.

Some specific examples shared by staff included:

- A Somali partner identified a person on a banknote that Museum staff didn't know about, or had been catalogued incorrectly.
- Kiribati partners knowledge enabled the correct staging of the mannequin.

However, the acceptance of community driven knowledge-making feels limited for some staff.

- Reframing this as research or even ethnography has been identified as a way of encouraging buy-in, but it is possibly too early to see the effects of this.
- The collection database as a system is perceived as wider barrier to the knowledge being captured. Some staff questioned how or if community knowledge would be recorded, whereas others seemed to think the system would not even allow for this:

'the database is structurally flawed; community partner responses have to go in the curatorial response box; systems and structures do not allow for experimentation so they need to change.'

It was thought that changing systems would be much more of a shift than staff are ready for because it can be challenging enough capacity-wise just to keep the systems running. Changes to which staff members can access the database would have to be part of the shift.

- This project was seen by some as a 'first step' toward valuing community driven knowledge for those working on the project but would not result in major organisational change. Note, there may be previous examples of this practice at the Museum, but some staff may not be aware of these, or believe Object Journeys is a stronger example.
- Potentially limited if the new knowledge generated is not shared in a way that engages people who haven't been directly involved..

Has internal advocacy and buy-in now changed, and how does 'buy-in' articulate itself?

The issue about internal buy-in and advocacy is threaded throughout the findings. Many staff thought there had always been buy-in, whereas other doubted this or thought it was limited - and even varied within disciplines.

Staff evidence of this buy-in included:

- They ‘worked hard’, were ‘committed,’ thought this work was ‘rewarding,’ ‘interesting,’ and ‘valuable,’ and wanted to be ‘involved in similar projects in the future.
- A small number of staff specifically commented that they believed the greatest level of buy-in was with the Kiribati project, so it would be interesting to unpick why this may be.

Despite this, most were cautious:

- Many unsure about senior level buy-in, and earlier responses from a senior staff member’s challenges about advocating up seem to confirm this.
- Some curatorial staff thought their own experience and expertise around community engagement wasn’t valued. This may have resulted in a lack of clarity about how they could contribute, which resulted in a lack of engagement with the project. This process may need more unpicking.
- Whilst successful creation of three Object Journeys displays is an indicator of certain degree of buy-in, overcoming the challenges of working culture, such as capacity, systems, structures, the greatest barriers remain internal advocacy and buy-in.

It is less a question of whether there is buy-in, but more about buy-in to what.

There is buy-in to collaborative working on collections with community partners but less clarity about who or how this should be led, specifically what ‘community led’ means, how much ‘control’ staff have in the process, and which staff should be involved.

What do ISG members want the legacy to be?

Staff had lots of suggestions for the desired legacy of Object Journeys, including:

- Continued cross-departmental working.
- Greater connection to the sector.
- This way of working to be embedded across all kinds of work: including larger displays, other channels & platforms, and regional and national partnerships work.
- More and a wider range of people to have greater access to collections.
- Involve collections beyond the AOA collections.

- The permanent participation and collections role will hopefully mean the Museum can be more responsive to opportunities for community partners involvement as they arrive.
- For key staff at senior level in the Museum to advocate for this work in future.
- Future similar work to have more time.
- Better understanding of the right balance of authorship between the Museum and community partners, and visibility of process between the Museum and community partners. This would need some discussion and exploration.
- Sustained relationship with partners: (some examples below are already happening)
 - A network of people and skills from community partners that collections staff can work with again.
 - A family partner has sent some songs that correspond to objects in the collections.
 - A Somali partner has been commissioned to do some facilitation work.
 - A filmmaking research bid has been developed with a Kiribati partner in mind if successful.
 - Hope that partners will want to develop a longer-term relationship, for example coming back to previews, being part of display consultation groups, and sharing the project with newer community partners.

Inspiration and new ideas

Most staff involved have been inspired by community-led practice, and many were able to specify clear examples of how they plan to apply the process or methodologies into their own area of work.

Working with community partners

- More interest in community-led projects, especially when exploring other museums. Some staff said they were actively seeking out this kind of work for ideas.
- Increased appetite to understand if or how participants and audiences from community-led projects transition into Museum's mainstream programming.
- Inspired by the longer-term relationships that have been built both with community partners and partner museums.

- Considering how learning can inform work in the African galleries - mainly about how to respond to potential audiences more effectively. Attending an event to talk to real community partners, provided inspiration to provoke this thinking.
- Utilising the Object Journeys model of partnership work and object loan work to have a greater impact on an audience through a film project that was developed.
- Considering how to bring community-based knowledge to the Museum, not only through displays but in other kinds of work such as a collections research project, or work with other communities of interest such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ).

Other ideas included:

- Considering the thematic approach - bringing different people from different communities and backgrounds together around a certain theme for future exhibition projects.
- Informing development of strategy - how to be more responsive, how participatory practice fits into the existing work with community partners.
- Digital engagement ideas stemmed from the Family project, for example, an Instagram campaign to engage families with own objects.
- New mounting techniques.
- A partner sending the songs relating to a collection:

‘Made us think about how to store audio files.’

Experiences of being part of the Internal Steering Group

Whilst most staff were positive about being part of the ISG and did say it was a useful forum for sharing ideas and issues, some felt it had been limited. For example:

- Members were not fully opening up and being honest during meetings.
- It was too large a group for active decision making.
- Would prefer the dates much further in advance to secure attendance.
- Success relied on members being proactive, bringing ideas and making the time, which didn’t always happen.

It was thought that the OJPM was doing as much as possible to make the meetings work, and at the time of these final interviews, a few staff observed that the group was starting to become more active.

D) Investigating views and experiences of the External Steering Group

How has the experience of being part of Object Journeys External Steering Group been?

Summary

All members were overwhelmingly positive about their experience and happy to have been part of the Object Journeys project. The most valuable elements of their experience were the networking and collaborative learning opportunity, and that the members felt the project was a real success. The additional research work that had been initiated was thought to be a great achievement and contributed to enriching their practice. Each of these elements is explored in further detail below:

Valuing the collaborative learning: members valued the opportunity to share experiences and learn from others in the group. This included:

- Sharing learning about participative practice around world collections.
- Hearing about other organisations' experiences.
- Learning from members who work in different roles (such as more practitioner or academic roles) and thinking about how it could influence their own work.
- General networking and reflective time.
- Belief that OJPM's transparency with the group about Object Journey's challenges and successes supported this collaborative learning.

Members viewed Object Journeys as a success: The results were said to be 'quite spectacular' even though there was recognition of challenges along the way. Reasons for success cited by members included (note, successes are explored more specifically later in this section of the report - these are factors mentioned without prompting):

- Recognition that it was a big achievement for the British Museum to do this kind of work, considering the 'protocols' at this large, national museum.
- Internal staff recognition of the benefits to this way of working.
- Displays were not a designated 'community space' but integrated into permanent galleries; there was dedicated time in the process for community partners to explore collections, 'not being patronised.'

The additional research work - *Making Meaning in Museums - How/Is Community Participation Research?* project seen to be a great achievement

- For some members this was an area of practice they didn't know about and it had enriched their own work.

'To find out there are disciplines out there that have frameworks for thinking about this work.'

What has been the most valuable part of being part of the ESG?

Collaborative learning: The peer learning and networking that developed within the group. All members valued:

- Reflective space
- Time to learn from others and connection to the sector
- Networking and new contacts
- The research project and the way this developed a network of museum professionals who are interested in participatory action research techniques

'Good to sit with peers and have the time to do it. I couldn't allow myself the time to do much of this without feeling guilty about daily work. I felt like I was contributing to something wider, which feel good; I felt a connection to the section.'

Learning: Many members valued learning a lot from the experience, including:

- Different ways of engaging people who don't normally engage with museums.
- The amount of time and money this work costs to do properly.

'To commit to doing a long-term strategic engagement programme that attempts to change institutional behaviour is a challenge and require commitment and time and money.'

- Learning about the British Museum, how it operates, and its organisational structure.
- Reflecting on a different aspects of their own daily work; for example a member working in a strategy role said it has reminded them about the challenges of the operational side of work and

'Reminded me about working with people.'

Partnership working: The project provided a member with the opportunity for their own museum to become a partner on the project, thereby filling a lot of their organisational objectives and adding value to an existing HLF project. The member's museum valued the

opportunity for their community partners to work with British Museum as well as being able to arrange an object loan.

Seeing the change in thinking at the British Museum: This included seeing the gradual evolution of thinking once one of the projects had happened; how the OJPM was subsequently able to embark on the ensuing projects more effectively.

If and how did ESG members expectations for the project changed?

There were mixed responses to whether expectations had changed, but the majority of reasons for both were positive.

Where expectations were met:

- With the resource and the people working on the project. They expected it to go well and it did.
- With the thoughtful process and discussion expected at ESG meetings.

‘Every meeting attended we have some thoughtful discussion based on learning from the project.’

- With research being kept at the forefront, despite operational challenges.
‘Very impressed that the OJPM kept research at the forefront of the project despite challenging operational demands and navigating the politics of the Museum. A successful practitioner whilst being able to be reflective and critical - very admiring of. The project could have got caught up in the outputs... could have got steamroller by practical demands. The OJPM keeps research present.’

Where expectations differed from the outcome:

- Reframing the ESG as a collaborative learning opportunity was unexpected but it was needed and valued as being a more mutually beneficial way of working.
- Thought they would have been more involved in the delivery, such as being part of workshops or meeting participants, as well as having more opportunity to ‘steer’ the project.

‘I understand we can’t meet really regularly, but having more opportunity in project to be able to workshop stuff more or to work directly with participants would have been great. I was lucky to deliver training for the Kiribati group. I’d be interested to hear how useful the OJPM found the steering group. It was enjoyable to understand how project developed but I’m not sure how much value I

added as so much was having updates and presentations on where project was up to and commenting. It was more reflective than active and looking forward. Not able to advise on key moments. All the Steering Groups I am on are the same. Feels useful at the start, but from then on you are just kept up to date than actually steering the project forward.'

Has anything surprised ESG members?

Most members felt surprise was slightly strong a word, but the following were points that they had found particularly interesting.

The success of the research element: Both how the research remained at the forefront of the project and the funding secured for the extra research work.

'And the money secured for research element. Very impressive. So well received, the event booked out immediately. Showed the extent to which the project had tapped into an area of critical interest and need in the sector. Valued going to these.'

Issues raised by some of the outcomes such as the thematic approach and how visible the community voice is in the display:

- Perceived views on the quality of the Family display how this impacts on their curatorial reputation.

'Some of the curators' feelings about being attached to something that didn't professionally meet their expectations; curators might say this doesn't look good or suit our branding, but their comments seem to allude they were worried about personal reputation.'

- Visibility of community voice has been very interesting, especially in regards to different approaches.

'The issue about whether the Museum says this is a community exhibition explicitly and doesn't relate to us or not; these issues very interesting to talk about, but there will always be some staff, SMT, public who won't take kindly to exhibitions that don't fit in what they see as their space.'

The success of the project, and the persistence and hard work of the OJPM to ensure this:

- The project was ambitious, but things happened and changed and a

‘Community group curated a display in a permanent gallery at the British Museum.’

- How the OJPM managed to overcome organisational culture and museum structures to deliver this success. An example shared by one member including the PAR workshops they were involved in organising. This member did not work in a museum and said they were ‘struck’ by the systems they had to navigate and level of advance planning just to deliver an event, that to see the level of scaling up the OJPM had to do to create exhibitions with accessions objects in a similar participative process

‘My mind was blown. This event put all these realities into perspective in a visceral way.’

- Scale and production quality of the displays.

‘That fact the OJPM managed to effect so much positive change and make a big impact on the experience of these gallery spaces. Everything to same standard in terms of production at BM; same quality. Even though process was more experimental.’

Did ESG members’ understanding of and attitude towards co-creation with community partners within museums change since joining the project?

Whilst members’ understanding and attitudes had not changed drastically, all shared examples of how the project had contributed to their thinking.

Questioning of own practice, including:

- Being more reflective, considered, and strategic.
 - Thinking about why they work in certain ways within their own organisations, instead of doing things based on intuition or habit. For example, one member said their museum tries to pay community partners when they solicit their advice and input, whereas British Museum don’t so this brought up debate.
 - Planning in more time for reflection; place less focus on physical outputs (than Object Journeys did), more on process.
- Considering how to apply participative research methods and action research in future projects.

Better understanding of what co-creation means within a large, national museum

- Such as the challenges which are specific to them, such as the greater level of buy-in needed.

'It is a sharp context for exploring the tensions and structural dilemmas that happen in museums doing co-production.'

Interest in different approaches, especially the thematic approach of the Family project

- In which community partners did not have the first-hand experience of a collection, and how this impacted on the experience for all involved. For example, one member said they felt this encouraged curators to step outside ways of working they were comfortable with. Some referenced how they felt that the display may be more accessible for visitors.

How has participation in the steering group has affected members' own practice?

All members agreed participation had impacted their own practice to some degree, and many had already cited this in response to earlier questions. Some additional reflections on how their own practice may change included:

- **Share learning earlier:** A partner working within another museum thought that Object Journeys was very successful and brave at communicating its work from an early stage, whereas they tended to wait until the end of the project. Now they are thinking about how to share learning earlier.
- **Be more reflective:** A partner valued the conversation and peer reflection, so aimed to continue the reflection, including through more publishing.

'The OJPM and I have already published one book so we are thinking about a second one. The Steering Group kept some momentum about this - the OJPM's thinking fed into my own thinking.'

- **Engage more with academic practice**
- **Consider how conditions for change can be created:** For one, questions were raised by the experience of supervising a PhD student. The researcher has been based in the British Museum, as part of Object Journeys, and has been exploring how different conceptual approaches open up some persistent and stuck issues. This member believes the researcher has drawn attention to the different value systems and language systems that exist within the Museum, and has responded by creating lots of small adjustments. This has been about creating systems for change

to take place. Instead of making big changes, it is more about creating conditions for change and then learning what kinds of actions can create these.

Has Object Journeys has been creating new learning or knowledge for the British Museum, and the sector?

For the British Museum: Most thought it was too early to tell, but some positive indications that the Museum has developed new learning as cited by members include:

- Creation of the OJPM into a permanent role.
- Some questions about institutional memory.
‘Will be good to revisit the BM in several year to see if BM org has changed attitudes or if limited only to individuals. Will anything be lost if key people leave.’

For the sector:

- Interest in how projects like this create organisational change, not by the people that are employed by the museum, but
‘Insight is most powerful if the people involved in generating the change and can apply it elsewhere - the change has to be reinvented. The people are the transfer of knowledge.’
- Reframing community engagement as research, changing how community work is valued, when it has been perceived as less intellectually rigorous than traditional curatorial work. This has the added benefit of making engagement work more intelligible to other parts of the Museum and sector.
‘It is important to shift this work to a research agenda and very interesting to see what the implications of this are.’

How, if at all, has Object Journeys been creating opportunities for *sharing* this learning?

Whilst some members were unsure how sharing would be happening and thought it was too early to comment, most said sharing had been taking place throughout, including:

- The participatory action research workshop was seen to have provided additional space and funding to share learning.
- Sharing at sector events. One member referred to an event where the OJPM and a Somali community partner.

'It was interesting to see them talk about the real time project and challenge. I think there was surprise from people in the sector because a lot of the other presentations were polished success stories and learning is limited; it was so great to hear about a project mid-way and hear about challenges.'

Have ESG members recognised any challenges that still need to be overcome?

Process of opening up decision making

- Is not something the museum sector is used to.
- Institutional fear at the British Museum of engaging with external partners, although some partners said there had been a shift in attitude over who is an expert.
- Recognition that museums are not set up on participatory logic - they are set under representational concepts - 'representing other people elsewhere' meaning the 'politics of museums are not friendly to participation.' A member questions how can you encourage museums to be participatory?

Sustaining long-term engagement

- Most partners want to sustain group engagement beyond the project scope. This was thought to be an ongoing sector issue; how do museums support partners with new confidence and social relationships that have been developed?

Different value to diaspora and source communities

- An example of the Somali project wanting to form a new collection and it being taken to collection panel was mentioned. It was observed that the panel did not see value in this collection. This member questioned how the British Museum would reconcile this important issue.
- Another example referred the difference in language; that within the context of work with diaspora communities, staff refer to those participants as the 'community' whereas curators doing fieldwork work source communities refer to them as 'people.' A member questioned whether the word 'community' may provoke a 'lovey-dovey' feeling that acts as a barrier to them being seen as experts.

Other challenges included

- Even with a willingness to do this work, logistics are a challenge - especially the limitations on time, resources, and capacity.

- Sustaining the change that one project can make to an organisation.

Does the ESG think any new opportunities have arisen so far?

Dissemination of learning was recognised as the greatest opportunity. Many members thought that the messaging should focus on:

- The work being delivered effectively by a national museum.
- The scale of the displays are large.
- How challenges were overcome.
- The many different ways people can engage with collections, for example the thematic approach.
- Maximising impact by including positive visitor feedback, as well as involving staff from a wide range of disciplines to share this practice with their peers.

How do ESG members think the British Museum could take the learning from the project further?

Greater advocacy and dissemination

Whilst members recognised the project was very good at disseminating learning, ensuring this legacy continues and promoting greater advocacy were highlighted as further opportunities.

- Debrief with both staff involved and not involved with the project to reflect on successes and challenges to come up with solutions. One member felt this was extremely important, especially involvement of senior staff in committing staff to engage in the process to encourage reflection and moving learning forward.
- Greater advocacy at a senior British Museum level

'More to support to champion work up the tree of BMN hierarchy of committees and panels... greater advocacy.'

- As mentioned in earlier sections, getting curators to talk to other curators.
- Some members suggested producing resources such as a toolkit and case studies. Another thought it was important that learning was collated in a short, clear, accessible top-level document. Another suggested that it would be important to create opportunities for people involved in the project to talk about their own work. This member also thought that the British Museum should not necessarily see itself as a leader, but an active contributor to sector networks.

Space and time for staff to engage and understand

‘The staff need space and understanding for the to engage more with this kind of work. Opportunities for them to understand what the work is trying to do and how they can engaged. People get excited once that stop feeling threatened. The project was doing this well so continuing to do the same kinds of activities.’

Recognise who has expertise in engagement, but ensure all roles are involved

- Perception that it is important to recognize that not all museum staff are suited to working with people, so engagement experts are needed to support others. However, it should be in all role’s job description and this ‘instruction/guidance’ needs to come from directorate level.

E) Exploring the experiences of British Museum's regional museum partners

Brighton Museum and Art Gallery

Notes on the data

- In-depth semi-structured telephone interviews with one staff member at Brighton Museum and Art Gallery
- In-depth semi-structured telephone interviews with one of the two lead community partners at Brighton Museum and Art Gallery

Background to this project: The Brighton project was an opportunity to extend the life of the HLF funded Fashioning Africa Project from 2015. There was a desire to display some of the newly collected pieces from this project and by collaborating with the British Museum and accessing their collections Brighton Museum could showcase these new objects in a community-led way. Working with two members of the Collection Panel Brighton Museum & Art Gallery created two new displays: Aso-oke, a Celebration of Style & Townships Journeys Displays. Co-curated with researchers from the African diaspora who live in Sussex, they highlight the rich and evolving fashion and identity practices in Africa. These displays are part of Object Journeys Fashioning Africa project and supported by the British Museum.

It is useful to note the responses are from just one staff member and one community partner (called community curators in their project), although there was only a small staff team and two community curators, so it is valuable feedback to include.

Overall experience

Museum perspective

- Really interesting and positive.
- Rewarding to work with the community partners.
- Especially valued the partners being able to go to the British Museum and meet staff there. It was thought to be welcoming and an opportunity they wouldn't normally have. Valued having a curatorial partner who they felt respected by, and viewed this to being a key factor in the success of the project. Staff thought that

by having a curatorial partner demonstrated they were valued by the British Museum as a partner.

- Believed this is a good model - working in a more in-depth way with regional museums, not just a loan but more involved way - working with community partners and treating them the same as staff, getting to meet the curators in the stores, and seeing behind the scenes.

Community curator perspective

- Great experience 'Amazing, enjoyed it.'
- Valued the opportunity to look at cultural practices and share that with Brighton and hopefully communities beyond.

Views on the display, and what was the level of involvement from the group?

Museum

- Really interesting to work with people from outside the Museum, especially those who have African heritage.
- Very happy, positive and proud of the displays and thought they were coherent.
- Wider staff were impressed:

'Other staff, some more initially dubious, were impressed with the output - so may persuaded to take this approach. My boss was impressed and said 'this is not dumbing down, it's more. It's better, it's quality.'

- Display has received positive stakeholder feedback; the regional Relationship Manager from Arts Council England was impressed and has been supportive toward one of the community partners in applying for funding for a BAME young men's project. The other collecting panel members for Fashioning Africa have been very positive.
- Hoping the films will be taken up as an approach in future displays.
- Thought that the community partners were very involved. They spent a lot of the budget paying the community partners a freelancer day rate 'so they felt valued' and had set days they came in. The British Museum are learning from this model and may explore whether it can be successfully applied in the future.
- Normally there would be curatorial and learning staff working together, but due to the tight timeframe that wasn't possible, so there was less staff support than they would have liked.

'I wanted to give them a positive experience and not have to do some of the grotty leg work type tasks.'

They thought this way of working should be embedded in curatorial work but they need the expertise of learning and engagement staff too.

Community curator

- Very pleased and think the displays look 'amazing.'
- Pleased to showcase their culture.

'These opportunities to display new world stories don't come by in Brighton very often; to see something like this happening in Brighton is amazing.'

- Thinks the feedback they have had so far has been mostly positive.
- Felt very much involved because the relationships at BMAG were already developed from the HLF project. '

'We had right level of involvement and support where needed; it was well mapped out. We were invited to take part in Object Journeys; British Museum was new to me but felt well planned and positive. It was lovely working with everyone and BM.'

Challenges

Museum

- It was thought to be a 'bit of a rush' once the British Museum had asked them to partner, which resulted in stress about how to make it positive and fun rather than stressful experience the community partners.
- Related to the timeframe was that the staff working on the project had not worked on many displays, meaning there were no established relationship with the exhibition staff. This was thought to be 'nerve wracking as not much time for research'. They would have liked to spend more time with collection staff at the British Museum to do research.
- Whilst working with community partners that were equals was highly valued, trying to create a positive process for them whilst getting everything done resulted in a much greater workload.

Community curator

- Managing relationships between 3rd party overseas suppliers, such as the weavers; but they knew what to expect and doesn't think anything could have been

changed. However, the partner did think time and hard work spent on this was not overly visible to the wider Brighton Museum. At times they felt isolated and thought the Museum was less aware of the work they were doing. They did enjoy this, but thought it would have been easier with a larger group to support.

Views on whether co-creation is a manageable way the museum to work on displays and exhibitions in the future

Museum

- Resulted in greater confidence with the collections:
‘Found it empowering. Pooling skills with people who had different things to contribute.’
- Recognised that whilst many colleagues respect and value this work from a far, some may be less willing about undertaking this approach personally.
- Tension exists about where co-creation work fits in the organisation at Brighton. Some may think it sits in learning work rather than collections.
- It’s time intensive and needs to be shared across disciplines, but some may view it as:
‘An add-on to what we do, not what we do.’

Community curator

- Whilst the partner does not work directly inside a Museum they did reference a period of change BMAG is going through and questioned whether funding challenges would limit possibilities of working in this way. From their perspective this way of working was thought to:
‘Strengthen relationships between museum and their stakeholders, artists, and communities, to allow the organisation to be more porous and let different perspectives and people in. They are publicly funded so need to be seen to be doing this to be more democratic. It allows for expertise sharing and levelling the ground; it makes the relationships equal and its beneficial to both partners.’

Challenges and benefits to partnering with the British Museum

Museum

Benefits

- Valued the OJPM role, especially in liaising with curators and conservation staff

'They were a good buffer and support which made life easier and made us and community partners feel supported.'

- Also said the OJPM as good at asking questions to keep the project moving forward and made loan process easier.

Challenges

- But lack of understanding from conservation staff at the British Museum as to what small organisation have in terms of funding. It was thought to be hard to get information about what was and wasn't acceptable from a conservation perspective, for example they did not have case monitors and did not have the budget to buy them. In the end the OJPM helped them get funding and conservators at each museum liaised directly, which worked better.
- Had to choose objects quickly which was stressful.

Community curator

Benefits

- The funding - it would not have happened without the British Museum.
- Having the objects and expertise from the Museum - both the collections expertise and the support with interpretation and advocating for the project with the British Museum.

(no challenges mentioned).

What has been gained personally as a professional

Museum

- Learning how to work with different people and recognising as staff they don't have to know everything.
- New cultural and historical knowledge. For example, learning more about Africa what surrounds different cultures such as themes of race relations.
- A sense of opening up collections and the Museum.

'Helped broaden my understanding I'd not gain working with other curators or books. The project has shown the power of relationships and importance of us having difference bodies. And for colleagues and me having it confirmed this is the right model of working - it has helped opened up the collections.'

Community curator

- Positive first curatorial experience.
- Good networking opportunity.

Other comments

Museum

The subject of paying the community partners was discussed in more depth because it is a different approach to the British Museum. Overall it was felt that there was not really any objection from staff because they either accept it or are unaware. However, there were minor tensions within the wider BAME community panel these two partners are part of. Some had commented that it was an opportunity that only two of the group were able to access, however the Museum has worked with many in the group over a long period and there have been other opportunities, such as some funding once for a member to go to Kenya. This group comprises ten people from the African diaspora who are academic and professional specialists. These issues are useful to be aware of when considering how to classify people as experts.

F) Considerations

Quality of access to collections for non-formal researchers?

Classification of experts?

More trialing of thematic approaches?
Value to community partners and visitors?

Defining what community-led really means?

How to embed this work?

How to ensure senior buy-in and advocacy?

How to share the learning and be a more active voice in the sector?

How to expand on the work done to explore this practice as research?

Training to support staff across disciplines to work with community partners?

Contacts

London Office

2nd Floor, Rich Mix
35-47 Bethnal Green Road
London E1 6LA
T 020 7407 4625

Manchester Office

Green Fish Resource Centre
46-50 Oldham Street
Northern Quarter
Manchester M4 1LE
T 0161 234 2955

hello@theaudienceagency.org

www.theaudienceagency.org

Registered in England & Wales 8117915
Registered Charity No. 1149979