British Museum

World Conservation and Exhibition Centre Activity Plan evaluation

Year 1 report

Object Journeys community partner examining a Masarafad or Food Mat for display

The Audience Agency

Report activity period: till end June 2016
Executive Summary

Object Journeys

Object Journeys has started to explore new approaches to collaboratively developed displays, public programmes and digital content at the British Museum.

Following successful recruitment of community partners, an active process of collaborative research and development took place. The first display, for which London-based Somali adults draw on their own experiences and knowledge to respond to collections, opens October 2016, followed by a programme of events in autumn.

The project’s Internal Steering Group, External Steering Group and Community Advisory Panel have met extensively since the start of the project.

There is a real appetite amongst staff for the project to be a success and to create an effective model for how the Museum approaches co-creation work with community partners in the future.

The External Steering Group is enthusiastic about developing a community of practice about this approach to collaborative working that shares learning with the wider sector.

Collections Skills Training

Challenges posed by organisational restructures and selection of UK loans into the future for training and filming opportunities have been overcome to achieve considerable planning work.

Summer and autumn 2016 will see the delivery of training and production of films which will enable UK museums to benefit from the Museum’s expertise.
**World History Lab**

*World History Lab’s online content, which shares the Museum’s work with a wider public audience through online channels, has exceeded targets, with around 250,000 views so far.*

4 films have been published and posted 5 times, receiving 245,572 views, 1,899 thumbs up and 15,623 comments & shares.

The website for World History Lab is now in development, due to be launched to the public in October 2016. Staff from Departments of Conservation and Scientific Research will share their work and research through a new blogging feature.

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**Volunteering Programme**

**Hands On desks**

Authentic objects and artefacts have been successfully identified to feature in 4 desks in the Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery so far - exceeding targets. The desks are offering visitors tactile experiences, and opening up interesting conversations about themes explored in the related special exhibition and permanent galleries. These experiences generate a high level of visitor satisfaction.

*99% of visitors said that they would recommend the Hands On desk to other visitors; 95% of visitors said that the desk had enhanced their visit.*

The desks are highly engaging for volunteers and visitors - most visitors stay more than 6 minutes and are fully engaged in the experience.

*There are a wide variety of motivations for engaging but the social element is especially important.*

Visitor encounters with the desks are spontaneous; they don’t actively seek them out, so this suggests there is scope to promote them even more effectively to the public. Visitor rating of volunteers’ knowledge is high and has increased as a result of improvements in training and learning resources.
Volunteering Programme

Behind the Scenes Tours

Volunteers have been recruited and trained on schedule from early 2015. Delivery of tours has been delayed by technical issues with WCEC lifts; however, this additional time has resulted in an extended preparation period, enabling volunteers to pilot tours with staff to improve content and confidence. Tours for the public will begin very soon.

The pilots demonstrated how effective the tours have been at supporting participants’ understanding of the Museum’s behind the scenes work.

   Opportunities to meet conservators and ask questions has been the most popular feature. Participants want more time to ask experts questions.

Object Moves

A team of volunteers have been recruited and trained to assist with the movement of collections into the WCEC. Object Moves volunteers said the experience was highly enjoyable and valuable - especially in supporting career aspirations. 75% would like to extend placements if they had the opportunity. Staff are positive about working with volunteers but would like more training around supporting volunteers.
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Introduction

Introduction to 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.

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

Aims of this evaluation

This report explores how effectively the Activity Plan is meeting 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 external evaluator to support data collection of the above strands and undertake a mainly qualitative evaluation Object Journeys. The findings will be brought together in three yearly 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 first report was has been created at a time when the Volunteers and Object Journeys strands have progressed more than Collections Skills Training and World History Lab. It offers a baseline view of the project so far - covering activity until June 2016, and has a stronger focus on aspirations for the programme. 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 and includes a conclusions section.
Object Journeys

Project partners exploring the Somali Bank Note collection with Tom Hockenhull, Curator, Coins and Medals department, British Museum

An introduction to Object Journeys

Object Journeys is a three year HLF funded programme, part of the WCEC Activity Plan, in which British Museum community partners will be supported to research and explore the collection and to work collaboratively with staff in response to those objects. Object Journeys is an exciting opportunity for community partners to work intimately with the collection and for the Museum to draw on the experiences and knowledge of individuals within different communities. It is about learning and exploring together and is designed to facilitate a genuine sharing and exchanging of knowledge. Object Journeys is also about trialling new and evolving engagement methodologies and embedding more collaborative community-led display development approaches across the British Museum. Over the three year programme three projects will be delivered at the British Museum and three at regional partner museums, where communities and staff are working in collaboration to generate displays, events and digital content in response to collections.
How is Object Journeys progressing against targets set out in the Activity Plan?

The following table details the key quantitative and qualitative targets from the project Activity Plan, as well as indicating progress against these. It includes information about measures which will be explored in later evaluation data collection, analysis and reporting.

Evaluation so far has enabled a strong understanding of staff and external steering groups’ baseline perceptions. The public displays and programmes for the first British Museum project had not started at time of reporting, so evaluation of these will feature in later reporting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Per project</th>
<th>Target per 3 years</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>% of target achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of projects</td>
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<td>3 in progress</td>
<td></td>
<td>On target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community participants</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>10 for 1st BM project Around 15 for MM project</td>
<td></td>
<td>On target</td>
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<td>Wider community involvement</td>
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<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td>Data to be collected and reported on in year 2 when displays and programmes are open</td>
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<td>3,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Object Journeys webpages measures</td>
<td>6 Process case studies available on the web</td>
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The qualitative evidence is equally important to project learning and is explored in greater detail below.

**Summary of activity**

Since 2015 the BM has been working with a group of 10 London-based Somali adults to explore the Somali collection at the Museum, develop a display which will open in autumn 2016, and a series of public events which will be delivered in autumn/winter 2016. The group comprises mainly young adults, all under 30 years of age, who have been recruited through social media and London-based Somali university societies.

The group have been working together, meeting up to 4 times a month and communicating between sessions online, since November 2015. These sessions were a mix of discussion based workshops, training and skills exchange sessions, talks from experts and study seminars in the Museum’s Somali collections and archives.

The project has loosely followed the usual stages of exhibition development - exploring and researching the collection, seeking advice from curatorial staff and other researchers, developing an interpretive approach and developing design ideas. Alongside this the group has also been working in collaboration with the Digital and Film teams at the BM to create digital content for the designated Object Journeys website such as 3D models of Somali objects, films and blogs.
Project partner conducting 3D photography of Somali handling object for display on Object Journeys website

Images of objects explored in project workshop
Group reviewing archives at the Powell-Cotton Museum, Kent
Partners working with British Museum exhibitions staff to develop an object display in Room 24 Living and Dying (The Wellcome Trust Gallery)
Workshop planning for Somali Object Journeys display case themes

Evaluation approach

The overall aim of the external evaluation is to develop insight into how effectively this research based project explores the potential for - and effect of - Community-led development working at the British Museum and in the sector. The evaluation will focus on:

- Impact on community partners
- Mapping attitudes towards - and impact of - collaborative working on internal BM staff
- Investigating views and experiences of the external advisory groups and steering groups.

The evaluation of responses from visitors and the broader community towards project outputs will be undertaken by Museum staff, but the analysis will be supported by the external evaluator and feed into this reporting. This will feature in the Year 2 report. This first year report presents some baseline perceptions, which will be reflected on in subsequent evaluation.
This evaluation will also explore experiences of staff at British Museum’s regional partners delivering Object Journey projects, which is currently Manchester Museum.

Key approaches utilised so far include in-depth interviews, workshop observations and e-surveys. Creative tools, in-depth interviews and discussion groups will be key approaches with community partners, but the exact methodologies will respond to the needs and interests of each group.

Successes, challenges and key learning

A) Impact on community partners

More in-depth evaluation with Year 1 British Museum community partners will take place in autumn 2016 when the project display has been open for a significant period and the public programme is being delivered. This feedback will be shared in the Year 2 report.

It will also be worth reflecting later in the project how the impact on community partners compares with aspirations for partners as identified by Museum staff and the external steering groups.

B) Mapping attitudes towards - and impact of - collaborative working on internal British Museum staff

This is being explored through charting the experiences of the staff who are part of the Object Journeys Internal Steering Group (ISG). This initial phase of this evaluation explores:

- Current understanding of co-creation
- Attitudes towards the practice
- Current understanding of community collaborations and co-creation within the BM setting generally and in display creation
- How the ISG think Object Journeys will build on other community based projects at the BM
- How the ISG think the project will bring value to the Museum
- What staff hope to gain professionally
- Challenges and fears
• Visions of what successful and unsuccessful outcomes for the Object Journeys project would be
• What would be most disappointing to see happen throughout the development process and in the final offer
• Vision of what would be a valuable experience of being part of the Steering Group.

The ISG has met 3 times so far and is made up of a wide range of staff involved in the project in different ways, from delivery roles to more strategic:

• Head of Learning and National Partnerships
• Head of Learning Programmes
• Head of Interpretation and Volunteers
• Head of National Partnerships
• Grants Manager, Development
• Head of Community Partnerships
• Head of Adult Programmes
• Head of Schools and Young Audiences Education
• Curator, Africa
• Head of Exhibitions

The following roles are HLF funded posts:

• Co-ordinator: Volunteering (Learning and National Partnerships)
• Object Journeys Partnership Manager (Learning and National Partnerships)
• WCEC Web Content Producer (Digital and Publishing)
• WCEC Activity Plan Conservator (Conservation & Scientific Research)

Some of the topics the ISG have been discussing so far include: internal advocacy, embedding the work, building momentum, the meaning of Community-led work, the realities of sharing decision making, flexibility around the process of working with community partners and successful outcomes for this project.

**Notes on the data**

• In depth semi-structured telephone interviews, early 2016, 13 completed
Current understanding of the terminology of co-creation

Summary

- Confusion around terminology
- Rhetoric over action?
- Need for terminology so the project has sector relevance and impact

- **Confusion around terminology:** Many staff recognised that terms could be confusing and misunderstood, for example ‘consultation’ is often misinterpreted for ‘co-creation’. There was also the acknowledgement that the terms mean very different things to different people. For example, those with more direct experience in participatory practice were more familiar with the different terms used by sector peers to describe different approaches. Ranging from, lighter-touch work which could involve ‘consulting’ with partners, to more long-term in-depth ‘co-creation’ work where partners generate and drive concepts. Some who were less familiar with co-creation work with community partners said they felt a little anxious about using the correct terminology.

- **Rhetoric over action?:** Overall staff thought that too much discussion around the ‘correct’ terminology gets in the way of the actual work, and that is was important to avoid jargon. Most want terminology both community partners and staff feel comfortable with; simpler terms such as ‘working together’ and ‘co-development’ are effective.

- **Need for terminology for sector relevance and impact:** Those with more expertise in co-creation work preferred to use a term that is recognised across the sector (such as ‘co-creation’ rather than ‘partnership-working’), so that the project can be recognised in the field as co-creation work, resulting in raised awareness and supporting better dissemination of learning and achievements.
Understanding of and attitudes towards co-creation

Summary

- Range in depth of understanding
- Perceptions that other staff may have concerns over control and ownership of intellectual property
- Many perceive that the sector is short on strong examples of co-creation
- Need for a co-creation practice that is transparent and meaningful for all

- Range in depth of understanding: The wide range of professional disciplines within the ISG are reflected in the different levels of understanding of co-creation work and terminology around it - from a basic understanding to high levels of specific expertise. Staff in fundraising or conservation roles, for example, may be less likely to have the experience of Learning and National Partnerships staff, where historically (across the sector) this work has been delivered. Programming, digital, curatorial and interpretation staff may sit somewhere in between, depending on experience. At this early stage some staff found it hard to fully articulate what co-creation was, but many said it was about working with community partners. Some thought co-creation practice automatically meant ‘equal’ partnerships, whilst others said this was not always the case - it couldn’t be or wasn’t realistic. A few expanded to say that within this work, ideas needed to stem from partners, which was challenging when working in a museum environment that can encourage partners to conform to the usual approach. A few staff also said that co-creation needed to be embedded as a way of working. Overall, at this stage, there was little spontaneous mention of broader audience relationships to co-creation.

- Perceptions that other staff may have concerns over control and ownership of intellectual property: Whilst no one said this was their own view, the topic of control did arise. There was the perception that other staff may have concerns about the impact of co-creation over ownership of intellectual property, ‘dumbing down’, and decision making around how and what is displayed. This was not a widespread point of discussion, but useful to present here and review later in the project. It is most interesting that no one acknowledged this to be their opinion, but thought it may relate to others’ views.
• **Perceptions that the sector is still short on strong examples:** Regardless of the museum type or size, there was the view from some more experienced in this work, that whilst there are examples where good process or practice exists, or strong final outputs, there have been few where both have been achieved effectively.

• **Need for a co-creation practice that is transparent and meaningful for all:** All members expressed a shared understanding that co-creation work should be an open process, even though this might sometimes be necessarily uncomfortable. In addition, most said it needed to be meaningful rather than be a ‘tick-box’ exercise for funders and senior staff.

Current understanding of community collaborations and co-creation within the British Museum setting, generally and in display creation

**Summary**

• Challenge of being a national museum - risk averse
• Consultation rather than co-creation
• Previous work has been focussed on creative responses and events
• Strong appetite for this work
• Rhetoric over reality? - Concerns that early positive attitudes may not last

• **Challenge of being a national museum - risk averse:** Many believe it is more challenging for a large national organisation like the BM to do co-creation work well, but they do think it can learn from the rest of the sector. Many thought that due to its nature, the BM has a strong editorial or institutional voice - which is even expected by visitors, is under the spotlight (especially in relation to political issues), and is therefore more risk averse. This was felt to have resulted in BM doing less co-creation development within an exhibition setting, despite considerable expertise in community collaboration work within certain teams.

• **Consultation rather than co-creation:** Whilst a small number of staff said the BM was already doing considerable collaborative work in current and previous exhibitions, such as Indigenous Australia (April - August 2015), it was clear that...
there were mixed attitudes about what constituted ‘actual’ co-creation. Most recognise that these existing examples, such as the Hajj - journey to the heart of Islam exhibition (January - April 2012) exhibition work with Muslim community groups, and Ming - 50 years that changed China (September - January 2015) exhibition work with the Chinese community, tended to be those where groups have been consulted and informed a museum-led narrative.

- **Previous work has been focussed on creative responses and events:** Most staff are aware of strong examples of collaborative work that has generated creative responses and artistic interventions in response to collections, including Talking Object outputs and Africa gallery interventions. There was less understanding of co-creation as a practice within adult programming, but a real interest in exploring the approaches gained from OJ so far.

- **Strong appetite for this work:** There is a definite appetite for working collaboratively with community partners in display creation; some staff think this is especially true for younger staff or those who have entered the museum profession through less traditional routes. One ISG member said the interpretation team was excited and felt the project had the potential to be a catalyst for new ways of working. Some staff, newer to the sector, said this way of working is something that happened as more standard practice in other sectors, and that it would be positive for it to be a standard approach in museums too.

- **Rhetoric over reality?** A few members did voice concerns at this early stage that that some of the positive discourse about this way of working may be not pan out as the projects actually happens, as the challenges that arise may overcome good intentions.
How staff think Object Journeys will build on other community based projects at British Museum

Summary

- More equal partnerships
- Outputs in the context of permanent displays
- New and more collaborative ways of working for staff

- More equal partnerships: The majority of staff think OJ is a new way of working that sees BM working on more of an equal footing with community partners. Many recognise that OJ builds on a tradition of collaborative working and extensive experience with community partners, but believe that it is the first time actual co-creation work will take place, rather than involving partners in a mainly consultative way. Some think that this will be the first time content, narratives and outputs will be led by community partners rather than the BM voice.

- Outputs in the context of permanent displays: Most also said this was the first time community partnerships were developed in the context of creating displays within the permanent galleries - with community led outputs displayed alongside curatorial outputs, rather than temporary displays or events. This was said to ‘raise the stakes’ as the work would be more publicly visible for longer periods of time. There was a lack of awareness about the extent to which collaborative processes have been communicated to visitors in previous BM displays as a small number of the ISG thought this project would be doing that for the first time.

- New and more collaborative ways of working for staff: Around a third of ISG members thought that the project would provide new opportunities for them to work with staff from other departments. Staff who don’t normally work with community partners were eager to do this for the first time, and those from other teams thought the project would offer the chance to work with curators in new ways. The creation of a steering group for this project also supported this recognition of a more collaborative way working around a community based project.
How staff think the project will bring value

Summary

- Bringing new ideas and knowledge from the groups into the Museum
- New engagement approaches
- Support the BM in being role model for other museums
- Placing the audience at the heart of the BM
- Understanding how audiences react to sensitive issues
- Learning and engagement outcomes for community partners, although there is an awareness of tokenism
- Better engagement of London’s diaspora communities

- **Bringing new ideas and knowledge from the groups:** Most staff said the project could bring new ideas about display creation, open up stories and unlock new knowledge about collections, which in turn would enable the BM to reassess relevance of collections and appeal to a more diverse range of visitors. The majority of ISG members also said this work was needed to bring a multiplicity of voices into the BM and draw connections between cultures and collections.

- **New engagement approaches:** Some thought that the project offered opportunities to test, take risks and trial user-led engagement approaches, which would develop new ideas.

- **Support BM being a role model for other museums:** To set a positive example to all partners, other museums, and larger/national institutions in particular.

- **Placing the audience at the heart of BM:** Encouraging BM to consider audiences more, in multiple ways. Firstly through the displays and programmes appealing to newer audiences and secondly through longer-term engagement of community partners.

- **Understanding how audiences react to sensitive issues:** and help mitigate the BM’s reputation by challenging perceptions around colonialism and how objects are acquired.
• **Learning and engagement outcomes for community partners**, although there is an awareness of tokenism: Staff thought the project could nurture the BM’s role as a local museum, offer learning opportunities for partners, and support local communities integrating into London. Whilst all staff value the project some voiced concerns around motivations of senior BM staff and worried about potential tokenism.

• **Better engagement of London’s diaspora communities**: wider engagement of these communities through attendance of the displays and participation in public programmes.

**What staff hope to gain professionally**

**Summary**

- **Understanding of - and experience working with - community partners**
- **Collections expertise**
- **Others**: experience in conflict resolution (over object acquisition), experience of co-creation work that is research-led and experience of collections work where there is more personal and emotional connection to objects

- **Understanding of - and experience working with - community partners**: This is most important across the group, mainly because this work is new for many. Even those with experience of working with community partners are very keen to develop greater insight into their expectations and perceptions of working with the BM on a co-created exhibition project.

- **Collections expertise**: This is a key area for development for some, as the project offers experience for staff who may not normally work directly with collections.

- Other aspirations include experience in conflict resolution - meaning working with partners who may have negative attitudes towards museums related to the acquisition of objects in the past - in ways that are now considered unethical or challenging; experience of co-creation work that is research-led; and experience of
collections work where there is more personal and emotional connection to objects.

**Key challenges staff think will need to be overcome**

**Summary**

- Buy-in and understanding from wider organisation and senior staff at BM
- Legacy
- Sustaining the interest from the community partners
- Access to collections and curatorial input due to capacity
- The large size of British Museum, which relates to many challenges articulated

Many relate to legacy, resources and the nature of BM being a large national museum. However, overall there was the sense that although this project is very challenging it is really important not to be afraid of trying, and to learn from mistakes.

- **Buy in and understanding from wider organisation and senior staff at BM:** A challenge for the wider organisation to understand a project which is more fluid and flexible than regular exhibition development, and the related challenges around this project meshing with the more rigid exhibition time schedules. Some members voiced concerns about ensuring there is a real understanding at a more senior level – they want to ensure senior staff are committed to the research agenda behind the project, seeing it as more than just an obligation that needs to be delivered to meet funding. There was the expressed need therefore for an investment in ongoing open communications early on. In addition, the project is new, so some hope the initial ‘bumpy’ stages don’t impede staff engagement.

- **Legacy:** That the project is not just a series of one-off case studies, but a project that leaves a lasting legacy by establishing an effective long-term model of community engagement and co-creation practice, especially around the development of displays and exhibitions.

- **Sustaining the interest from the community partners:** That community partners don’t see value in getting involved, struggle to find the relevance in collections they explore, or feeling that the outcomes and outputs from their work doesn’t
reflect the resources and time they feel they have contributed. Practical challenges relating to the young age of partners - meaning they may have busy lives with study, work, family, so can’t make the necessary commitment - were also raised.

- **Access to collections and curatorial input due to capacity:** Getting adequate access to collections is a key concern. This has clearly been a challenge that has already been met in the first project, due to delays to the object move schedule. The team used photographic collections or objects that are about to be moved to their new storage location to successfully overcome this challenge, but capacity is an ongoing concern. The challenge of curatorial staff capacity was also raised by many - their input was seen as vital to the success of the project, and many worried about the demands on curatorial time from other work.

- **The large size of British Museum:** Many of the challenges around internal collaboration, communications, resistance to change, workload of staff with multiple projects on the go, and access to collections were felt to relate to the unique challenge of BM being such a large national cultural institution.

What staff see as a successful outcome for the Object Journeys project

**Summary**

**For community partners**
- Community partners feel valued

**For British Museum**
- Sustainable model for co-creation
- Confidence in co-creation work - momentum to continue and advocacy around this practice
- More positive attitude to this alternative way of working and developing displays, especially positive views towards different voices and cultural knowledge partners can offer
- BM is more comfortable with community stakeholders
- Object Journeys is a learning process
• The displays are seen as a success, by visitors and by community partners

For the sector

• To pleasantly surprise the sector to achieve some recognition around participatory practice

For community partners

• Community partners feel valued: This would be achieved for a variety of reasons: More effective engagement approaches would generate real partnerships; partners demonstrate a strong sense of ownership and think that genuine co-creation has taken place. In addition, partners’ voices would be valued by the visitors and wider staff, which would result in partners wanting to work with the BM again, and recommend it to their wider networks.

For British Museum

• Sustainable model for co-creation: Many hope the project legacy offers a model for co-creation work with community partners which is an accepted and agreed approach that staff are comfortable with. In turn this would encourage the BM to replicate this on a larger scale and/or undertake more work like this.

• Confidence in co-creation: Staff hope for a greater confidence around this way of working and that there is more internal advocacy for it and momentum to continue.

• More positive attitude to this way of working: Staff also hope that through this approach a more engaging type of display - one that enriches and supplements current BM displays - can be developed, and this multiplicity of voices - and the additional and unique cultural knowledge they bring, is valued by staff and visitors. This in turn would encourage staff to want to work this way in the future. Also that staff enjoy this new way of working, and have a sense of ownership over it, whatever their discipline.

• BM is more comfortable with community stakeholders: and the related processes of working with these partners.
• **OJ is a learning process:** it stretches and challenges BM but wider staff also understand the benefits.

• **The displays are successful:** As above, as well as engaging visitors they are seen as successful by the community partners and BM staff.

**For the sector:**

• **To pleasantly surprise the sector:** and achieve some recognition for the project, as there was the view that sometimes there is scope for the Museum to enhance its reputation in the sector for work in this area.

What staff think would be disappointing to see happen, throughout the development process and in the final offer

**Summary**

• No legacy

• Damaging the relationships with community partners through rigid museum processes challenges or unrepresentative outputs

• **No legacy:** Staff think a lack of legacy would be the worst outcome from the project - they are keen to ensure the project learning is embedded and shared, that this way of working is taken forward into future projects.

• **Damaging the relationships with community partners through museum process challenges or unrepresentative outputs:** This was also a major concern; members identified that community partners might not feel valued, might not think are accurately represented in outputs, and might become disillusioned with the process or bureaucracy of exhibition development within a large museum.

• Some additional concerns included not achieving ‘full’ co-creation, that the project might not actually be a two way process, visitors not recognising the displays have been developed collaboratively - and therefore not initiating some kind of debate, positive or negative, and the Object Journeys Partnership Manager does not get appropriate support at a senior level.
The Internal Steering Group’s role in Object Journeys

**Summary**

- **Members think the ISG should be an active, useful forum that develops project advocates and proactively improve the quality of the project, but the commitment of the members is key to success.**
- **There is recognition that there is a huge amount of expertise within the ISG that can add value to the project.**

- **ISG should be an active, useful forum that develops advocates and proactively improves the quality of the project, but the commitment of members is key to success:** ISG members recognise that the meetings are a positive way to bring together a broad range of expertise and skills for rare face-to-face time to share ideas. Although being part of a steering group is new for a small number of members, many think that BM has a long tradition of such groups, and are eager that this group does not become just an updating session. Many commented that the Object Journeys Partnerships Manager (OJPM) is bringing a great deal of enthusiasm and energy to meetings and they have a more informal and less structured approach, which is welcomed. To work effectively, members think the group needs to be a forum for open dialogue and real decision making; the OJPM needs as much detailed information from members to manage the expectations of the community partners, and at the same time members need to push, challenge and question ideas around the project to really improve the quality of the work. In addition, the group needs to operate as a way to develop internal project champions to advocate for the project more widely across BM. The biggest challenge for OJPM is attendance - this group relies on reciprocal energy and willingness of the members.

- **There is a huge amount of expertise within the ISG that can add value to the project:** It will be useful to reflect on how these are utilised as the project progresses, but key areas as identified by members include: impatience, questions, content production, historical knowledge of the HLF application, community partnership working - especially at BM, conservation, audience needs within an
events and public programmes context, ability to think about legacy and see the bigger picture, co-creation, engagement approaches, training, motivations of community partners, fresh perspectives, project management - especially in the context of navigating systems of BM and practical exhibition and display development expertise.

C) Investigating views and experiences of the external advisory groups and steering groups.

i. External Steering Group

The ESG, made up of leading practitioners and academics in this field, meet every 3 months; some of the topics the group have been discussing so far include Intellectual Property Rights, quality, participant expectations - especially around input versus visible outputs, finding the ‘right’ partners to work with, internal advocacy, silo versus collaborative working, terminology within strategy, and freedom to experiment.

The aim of the evaluation initially is to understand:

- Value of having an external Steering Group attached to the project
- Value of the Object Journeys project to the field - for members, the BM and sector
- Challenges raised through this way of working
- Impact on advisory panellists.

Notes on the data

- Open question e-surveys, early 2016, completed by all 6 ESG members
- Reflective telephone interviews, June 2016, with 3 ESG members
What value does the External Steering Group think they bring to the project?

Summary

- ESG members bring extensive knowledge of co-creation as a way of working to the project
- ESG is ambitious and confident about the broad range of expertise and support they can bring the project

- **ESG members bring extensive knowledge of co-creation as a way of working to the project:** At the start of the project ESG members have defined their understanding of and attitude to co-creation work with community partners within museums. It will be useful to chart how this expertise informs the project and how the project may shape how members’ understanding develops.

The following list expresses ESG members’ views on co-creation:

*They perceive the following as good practice around co-creation:*

- Partners understand and know limits of their contributions.
- Partners are encouraged to question and challenge limitations.
- It enables questions around decision making and governance to be raised.
- Is necessary and should be standard practice, although there is no standard methodology.

*They expressed the following concerns about co-creation:*

- Too many museums only work this way to meet funder requirements.
- Complex and more resource heavy than funder and policy makers realise.
- Not enough best practices examples are documented and often this work lacks critical and academic rigour in the planning stages.
- Museum ways of working can prevent high quality collaboration, and many previous examples of this work do not fit within museum structures and standards.

*A necessary way of working for museums - engaging people's knowledge, passion and social networks to create meaningful and politically impactful accounts of our world. ESG member*

*Can be beneficial to both sides providing the agenda is developed in that way and more crucially that the partnership extends beyond delivering the thing that the*
museum wants to achieve for example, an audience for a 'culturally specific' exhibition. **ESG member**

- **ESG is ambitious and confident about the broad range of expertise and support they can bring the project:** They feel they can advocate, advise, support and question. Specifically they bring experience from delivery, strategic and research roles - so a good balance of on-the-ground practitioner knowledge, understanding of working within large cultural organisations, and access to UK research network & theoretical approaches. Overall the group think that the partnerships they forge between their organisations will also add great value.

  _I hope I can help make BM peers feel more confident about this way of working, and to better understand the benefits to collections knowledge. As a curator, I hope to bring a different perspective to the discussions._ **ESG Member**

**What value does the ESG think Object Journeys will add to the field?**

### Summary

- For members: Developing their own practice
- For BM: Develop better co-creation practice
- For BM: To be a reference point in debate of difficult issues, especially object acquisition and provenance
- For the sector: Dialogue and a successful model for how large national museums approach co-creation
- For the sector: A network of professionals interested in this subject

**Value for members**

- **Developing their own practice:** They are really enthusiastic about new ideas and approaches they can learn from other members to feed into their own work.

**Value for British Museum**
- **Develop better co-creation practice:** Through challenging standard BM approaches, creating a better process for co-creation work, resulting in a museum which is more relevant to its diverse communities.

- **To be a reference point in debate around difficult issues:**
  It was thought that co-creation is an approach that can be used to address any subject, but especially object acquisition and provenance.

  *The sense of a project changing shape and size at the beginning is part of gestation, but I'm keen that we root the project into core debates within BM. Co-creation is a way of addressing any issue, including difficult and contentious issues.*  
  *ESG member*

**Value for the sector**

- **Dialogue and a successful model for how large national museums approach co-creation for the sector:** Whilst some recognise its impact may be relatively modest because the sector overall is more experienced at this way of working, most believe that the greatest potential is for opening dialogue and debate, especially with other large and national museums, to establish a successful model for how the museums can be more relevant to their local communities.

  *The sector, and most specifically national museums, could learn a lot from the outcomes of the project - hopefully it will give others the confidence to open up to their communities and deliver meaningful co-creation work.*  
  *ESG member*

- **A network of professionals interested in this subject:** The group think the meetings have already nurtured a supportive community of practice, where they can not only share ideas about OJ, but also share challenges over other projects. In particular they welcome the research approach, which could support more ongoing reflection and learning. They are keen to develop a broader network and events to open up this dialogue.
What challenges does the ESG think will have to be overcome for Object Journeys to succeed?

**Summary**

- Managing a perceived threat to curatorial authority at the BM
- Working to museum dictated output
- Challenging perceptions around legitimacy over acquisition and ownership of collections

- **Managing a perceived threat to curatorial authority at the BM:** ESG members recognise that there are many real and perceived challenges to navigate including a threat to curatorial authority, with a lack of recognition about the value of lived and cultural experiences compared to scholarship. Members think BM could do more to support staff to value this way of working to ensure there is a real long term shift in working practice, rather than it being seen as a ‘fad’. Emphasising the research approach may provide this project with a higher status within BM, which could support a wider buy in.

- **Working to museum dictated output:** Some did also comment that the fact the Museum has already determined the output to a certain degree at the start of the project as a key challenge, but recognise that this project is a move forward for practice at BM. Sustaining the work was also cited, but more pressing for ESG was actually developing a successful approach in the first place.

- **Challenging perceptions around legitimacy over acquisition and ownership of collections:** Members said that negative perceptions around this topic, from groups, was more apparent than they thought it may be, but the group think the BM is correctly open and transparent in conversations around this, and this debate is a sign of wider engagement. One key challenge will be how these interesting issues are translated to a public display.
What does the ESG think Object Journeys needs to consider to succeed?

**Summary**

- Building networks and a shared understanding of different success measures for all stakeholders
- Activist rather than a beneficiary model
- Balance between achieving an engaging process and high quality output

- **Building networks and a shared understanding of different success measures for all stakeholders:** Is seen as key, as well as encouraging stakeholders to be open to reflection and transformation, however minor.

  *See it as a political project - that will need political skills of network building - is going to be essential. It’s brilliant we have a Trustee on the advisory board. Building those networks is something we, on the advisory board, can all play a role in. Good networks that crisscross the institutional boundaries so that OJ builds a strong base.* **ESG Member**

  *It will be important to generate a shared understanding of what success looks like within different museum departments as well as from a community perspective.* **ESG Member**

- **Consider an activist rather than a beneficiary model:** Whilst thinking about the benefits for community partners is key, can this be framed within an activist rather than beneficiary model? More discussion around what ‘activism’ is meant in this context should be explored - is it different from partners being ‘active agents’? Is it about engaging partners who see the potential for museums to support social justice issues?

  *Working with people who have a reason for working with the museum/collections and have something to say. More activist than beneficiaries’ model.* **ESG Member**

- **Find a balance between achieving an engaging process and high quality output:** So that the pressures of delivering displays and events do not compromise the quality of the engagement.
There is a danger that community engagement practice (relationship building, mutual benefit, empowerment, ownership...) can be compromised by the pressure of a concrete outcome specified by funders and the need for all internal stakeholders to feel that their reputations are not being compromised. There is a lack of understanding about how far a museum needs to go, how much control needs to be shared to achieve true co-curation. ESG Member

ii. Community Advisory Panel

The Community Advisory Panel (CAP) aims to act as a critical friend to BM supporting the project in how it engages community partners. Members come from a range of organisations including voluntary & charity organisations, Somali community groups, Somali arts organisations, community history organisations and local education centres. Members have met twice so far although different colleagues from the same organisation have attended different meetings, so the Object Journeys Project Manager is reviewing how to take it forward to ensure membership is not only valuable to BM but also those engaged. The evaluation approach may subsequently change.

Initial topics discussed included: themes and ideas explored in the project, how wider communities can be involved, exploration of negative perceptions of BM, perceived barriers to entry of BM and the opportunities for engagement the events programme could offer.

The evaluation aims to explore:

- Value of having a community Steering Group attached to a project
- Impact on advisory panellists

However, because of sporadic attendance of meetings and low response rate to surveys, this first report focuses only the first aim.

Notes on the data

- E-survey was sent to all members, early 2016, 4 completed
- Informal telephone interview may be an alternative approach going forward, but none were completed prior to the creation of this report
What value do the Community Advisory Panel think they bring to the project?

Summary

- Insight into partner perceptions of BM - mainly limited to experience with one department
- Insight into partners’ understanding of co-creation work - mainly unaware of museum co-creation practice
- Insight into partners’ perceived potential for the project - ambitious for museum and partner impact
- Expertise at engaging communities on a grassroots level
- Insight into partners’ concerns and perceived challenges about the project - especially true levels commitment

- **Insight into partner perceptions of BM - mainly limited to experience with one department:** All of those responding to the evaluation said they have a positive relationship with the BM, which may not be truly representative of the group, however their perceptions and experiences are still of value. CAP members have very different levels of experience with BM, but say their experiences until now have been mainly with one department, mainly the Community Partnerships team. One member also said the BM did not do enough to communicate all the work it does with communities.

- **Insight into partners’ understanding of co-creation work - mainly unaware of museum co-creation practice:** Members are not overly aware of the BM’s previous experience, or lack of, developing displays with community partners, which also suggests community partners are less aware of detailed co-creation practice in museums. Some thought the project was really innovative and new, whilst others were surprised it wasn’t already established practice.

- **Insight into partners’ perceived potential for the project - ambitious for museum and partner impact:** Overall members are very positive about the potential for the project. They think it could bridge culture and art, add knowledge to collections, increase awareness of Somali culture and heritage and empower participants.
• **Expertise at engaging communities on a grassroots level:** particularly sharing understanding around the real reasons people may not engage with museums. 

> *My involvement with communities has been at grass roots level rather than a strategic approach and I would hope that this experience might hold some importance at some stage.* **CAP Member**

• **Insight into partners concerns and perceived challenges about the project - especially true levels of commitment:** Members did also voice mild concerns about how serious the BM is about developing displays with community partners, the amount of time and commitment staff in voluntary organisations would need to commit and the time it will take to do the work properly.

> *I had thought this would be an opportunity to link with Somali communities at grass roots level to get a "bottom up" approach but I'm not sure this is the route being taken. At the very least Object Journeys will hopefully achieve a collection that isn't just defined by the experts but one that will be more holistic. Hopefully it will also achieve more people in the Museum working collaboratively and understanding the importance of diverse views in putting works together in a meaningful way.* **CAP member**

This particular member expressed a positive view of the Museum’s work with communities, and had a history of working with the Community Partnerships team. However, did not demonstrate an awareness of museum co-creation work and thought the BM was being very innovative in the sector. Further evaluation should explore what a ‘bottom up’ process means, and why it is not felt to be the current route.

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**D) Exploring the experiences of British Museum’s regional museum partners**

Manchester Museum (MM) are currently developing a major new South Asian gallery in partnership with the British Museum. As part of Object Journeys project MM is working with Community on Solid Ground, an umbrella organisation that they have worked with in various capacities in the past. A group that meets at the organisation comprises an intergenerational group of older and younger Asian women (mainly Pakistani) who have their own HLF funded project to explore and capture their traditional leisure and past
time pursuits. The group have some areas of interest which matches MM's focus for their new South Asian gallery content - cuisine, games, textile, and crafts.

The Object Journeys project will explore both the BM and MM collections related to Pakistani textiles, games, beauty and cooking, and see how this can be linked to their own project exploration. Having a strong interest in textiles and embroidery skills the group are also keen to create something together in response to the museum collections. The group will be involved in developing (researching, interpretation) the Object Journeys display and in the co-development of an event. The display is due to open in January 2017. They have started to explore collections at MM and the BM and will be using objects as starting points to develop the display.

Notes on the data

- In-depth semi-structured telephone interviews with two staff at Manchester Museum, May 2016.

The following conclusions have been made through the interviews with Manchester Museum staff involved in the first partnership Object Journeys project. These cover motivations, attitudes toward co-creation, engagement approaches, the partnership with the BM, and project aspirations.

- **MM** was motivated to participate to build its relationship with the BM, with a wide range of staff and the collection, and to link to the South Asia gallery development project.

- **MM** think they have a high level of expertise in co-creation work, and through this they believe avoiding jargon around terminology, transparency across the practice, investing time in relationship building and sustaining outcomes are vital to success.

- **MM** doesn’t think this project will generate new methodological approaches to engaging community partners for them; staff think the BM is newer to this work, and therefore the planned project approach will have more impact on the BM. It would be useful for BM to revisit the aims of the project with MM and explore what the ambition around trying new engagement approaches means to them, even if
these are different for the BM and MM. The research focus of this project perhaps needs to be emphasised more to museum partners. However, MM do think the project is a good opportunity for exposing partners to national cultural institutions outside of Manchester, which could inform how they engage partners in the future.

- MM value how the project supports the access to the collections of the BM; through supporting community partners’ access to these national collections they believe the project helps communicate the message that everyone has a right to access national collections and spaces.

- MM thinks challenges may arise over perceptions about the BM’s working timescales. For example, MM think exhibition planning and design processes at BM may have long planning and lead in times and have less flexibility, than community partners who work with regional museums are used to.

- MM staff hope that the museums can develop a ‘critical friendship’ - they are both ‘equally idiosyncratic’ and could push, challenge and learn from each other.

- For the sector more broadly MM say that this way of working is a reality and necessity to be relevant - so if the BM can work this way it can demonstrate all museums can - co-creation is not just the domain of regional and local museums.

- Overall MM hope the project can support them to develop long-term relationships with community partners who will want to work with them in the future.

Conclusions
These conclusions have been presented as a series of questions or considerations for the project going forward.

Co-creation model of engagement

- If the project aims to trial new engagement methodologies there needs to be a shared understanding about what current methodologies the BM uses, possibly sector wide too, and what these actually mean or look like. Apart from a few staff there is not a shared understanding or language of the baseline around this. Staff not experienced in this field may need some support understanding what is meant
by an engagement methodology in relation to co-creation of exhibition development and public programmes.

- There is a real appetite amongst staff for a co-creation model that has some structure and can be applied with confidence to a range of work - including larger projects, displays, programming and interpretation.

- There were a lot of responses around ‘embedding’ the practice of co-creation work. This needs more unpicking and exploration as the project progresses. It may be shorthand for becoming standard practice for approaching exhibitions and programming, but do all stakeholders have this view, and will they as time goes by?

- Transparency and meaningfulness were emerging themes - it would be valuable for stakeholder groups to unpick what this means for them in relation to the project, and how this informs engagement methodologies that start to emerge from the project.

- Being a national museum was identified as a major challenge - by staff, external steering groups, and museums partners. However, it also holds the greatest opportunity for the project. The BM is in the unique position of being the largest national museum in the UK so if this project successfully develops an approach for co-creation, it can really support the BM’s position as a role model - and show that other large museums/nationals can also do this work well.

- For the majority of the BM staff and even the Community Advisory Panel, the long-term aspirations of Object Journeys are currently focussed more around audience development and how co-creation can make programmes more relevant to newer audiences. Whilst important, some staff and the External Steering Group are keen to also consider the potential this work has on informing the BM’s collections knowledge.
• Despite the welcome matrix-working approach of the project, staff and the ESG believe curatorial input is especially key to success, so how can capacity concerns be effectively managed?

**Research focus of the project**

• Does the research focus of the project need to be better emphasised, internally and externally? Awareness of the experimental, testing, risk, research nature of the project did not come out strongly in evaluation responses. Is there a need to articulate this more and support staff and stakeholders to consider how they can take risks and try new ideas? Does this ‘research focus’ have potential to elevate the status of this project with more staff?

• Staff are excited about the project, but do identify significant challenges. How can they be supported to embrace the challenges; to bring about learning by working through the inevitable tensions and problems they will encounter, to succeed in creating a high quality project?

• The ESG already consider themselves to be a ‘community of practice’ which offers lots of lots of potential for project learning dissemination.

• If this project is meant to develop innovative and new engagement approaches for the BM and other museum partners, the BM needs to find a way to encourage these partners to find their own baseline and challenge themselves to explore what new/innovative means for them.

**Terminology**

• Terminology was only very important to those with a practitioner and academic interest in this work (i.e. community partnerships & learning staff plus the ESG). For these it is vital to make sure the terminology describing the project is recognisable across the sector as it will mean successes and learning can be celebrated and shared widely.
Considerations for evaluation of Object Journeys going forward

- Need to monitor how the project is a catalyst to inspire new ideas.

- Explore how other gallery projects involving local communities happening at the BM inform OJ and vice versa.

- Need to explore and communicate to the wider team what senior staff’s motivations are for the BM committing to delivering this project.

Working with community partners

- Gaining experience with community partners is really important to all staff; how can these opportunities be communicated and opened up to more colleagues?

- Staff are very keen to understand community partner expectations, so could this be explored and shared early on in projects?

- How can community partners be better supported to understand the museum exhibition and display development process so that organisational processes do not put them off and they know what to expect?

- Consider if or how interesting but sensitive topics that originate from display development with community partners, such as object acquisition, be included within engaging display content for wider visitors.
Collections Skills Training

An introduction to Collections Skills Training

Through this strand the British Museum is able to utilise the collections, staff and facilities of the WCEC to provide collections skills training and experience to other museum professionals. There are two parts to the programme; a series of short training films and face-to-face Skills Sharing sessions.

Project Team:

- Senior Collections Manager/ Project Sponsor
- Learning and 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

How is Collections Skills Training progressing against targets set out in the Activity Plan?

Year 1 has involved considerable planning in preparation for summer and autumn delivery of training opportunities and production of films.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Target per year</th>
<th>Target per 3 years</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>% of Target achieved</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner training opportunities delivered</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>To be delivered from September 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short training films produced</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>All will be produced by April 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Films are downloaded as or more often than other comparable films on Collections Link

| Increase in UK loans including training opportunities | n/a | 12% | n/a |
| Increase in loans to participant museums over a five-year period | Analysis of loan data to be collected and reported on in final report |

As the project progresses the evaluation of the programme will explore satisfaction levels from both films and face to face training, whether there has been increases in loans, and longer term impact such as learning around making borrowing easier and sharing of good practice.

**Evaluation approach**

Museum staff will be using questionnaires to get feedback after training sessions, as well as interviewing staff at participating museums. Other approaches will include discussion groups or online consultation to explore the impact of online films. Data will also be collected from Collections Link on training film access levels and response.

**Summary of activity**

**A) Short films**

The focus for each of the ten short films has been outlined and two filming sessions have taken place, with more to follow in the coming months.

- The first three films are scheduled to be delivered by August 2016: Textiles, Heavy Objects, and Framed Works Collections Care case studies.
- Three more will be completed by November: Getting ‘Loan Ready’, Condition Reporting, and Environmental Monitoring.
- The remaining four to be shot by April 2017: Couriering, Packing for Loan, Display, and Getting the Most Out of Your Object.
B) Collections Skills Sharing Sessions

Work on the development of the Collections Skills Sharing Sessions has progressed well with five to take place from September 2016. These are:

- Integrated Pest Management
- Heavy Object Handling
- Textiles
- Getting ‘Loan Ready’
- Money and Medals Collections Care

Outlines have been written which explain what participants can expect to gain by attending the sessions - the aspiration has been to try and advertise these at least three months prior so participants have enough time to plan their journeys.

Several future sessions may take place in Manchester, due to a need identified by the Collections Trust for increased partnership and connections between the North West and national museums.

Successes, challenges, and key learning

The main challenge for this strand has been coordinating the involvement of all collections management teams across the Museum during a major organisational restructure, as well as selecting UK loans into the future for training and filming opportunities. This is a big task but it has been alleviated by the appointment of a Project Co-ordinator, not a project specific HLF funded role, to this strand, who is working closely with the Training Project Co-ordinator and National Programmes team to identify training and filming opportunities.

Plans for year 2

An online booking system for the Collections Skills Sharing Sessions is currently being developed. More sessions will be developed enabling the sharing of a wide variety of collections management and loans administration skills. All films are scheduled to be completed by April 2017.
World History Lab

An introduction to World History Lab

The project was originally titled Conservation Live, but has been changed to World History Lab. The change in nomenclature was prompted by the feeling amongst staff from Departments of Conservation and Science Research (CSR), that the title Conservation Live wasn’t reflective of the range of work and made the project sound quite conservation-centric. Science related content is also very popular on platforms such as YouTube, and it was felt that the inclusion of something more science focussed would attract a larger audience. The name World History Lab was agreed on after a period of consultation with CSR staff, as well as members from the BM communications team and colleagues in Learning & National Partnerships and Development.

The original activity plan highlighted the need to give a wider public platform to the conservation and science work at the Museum. This ties in closely with 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 by a wider audience.

Four content themes within which the work will be presented have been identified:

1. **Conservation projects** - films that capture conservation projects in their entirety, e.g. Conservation of a crocodile mummy.
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, e.g. Dark side of the room: a Curator’s Corner British Science Week special.
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 will be used to engage the community. Potential opportunities include having an ‘open house’, taking audiences on a behind the scenes tour of the facilities.
By applying the Museum’s expertise to content creation, a greater variety of conservation and research activities can be shared, allowing wide public access to facilities, people, knowledge and objects at the Museum.

**How is World History Lab progressing against targets set out in the Activity Plan?**

These tables provide a snapshot, which is explored in more depth in the detailed findings that follow, including more details of web statistics for different platforms.

The content is already exceeding the quantitative measures set out for the programme. 4 films have been published and posted 5 times, receiving 245,572 views, 1,899 thumbs up and 15,623 comments & shares. Statistics on each of the videos to continue informing future content planning and publishing schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Target per year</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>% of Target achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of web visits across all platforms</td>
<td>Year 1: 72,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 2: 96,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 3: 360,000.</td>
<td>528,000</td>
<td>245,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>341% year target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46.5% of total target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of views of web videos (during project duration)</td>
<td>500 per post</td>
<td>Average 49,114 per post</td>
<td>9,823%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comparison of similar films by a similar museum = average 6476</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. public comments per post</td>
<td>3 per post</td>
<td>265 in total</td>
<td>2,220%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average 66 per post</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comparison of similar films by a similar museum = around 2 - 10 comments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation will also explore level and depth of engagement with posts, as well as what staff engaging with the project gained from the experience.
**Evaluation approach**

Website statistics and digital feedback are the key evaluation approaches for this strand. Other approaches include interviews with staff and online surveys.

**Summary of activity**

Towards the end of 2015, four short films were published as test content for the World History Lab. All statistics are till end June 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film &amp; web link</th>
<th>YouTube statistics</th>
<th>Facebook statistics</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Making a traditional Chinese hanging scroll</strong></td>
<td>Published 10(^{th}) November 2015 7,977 views 147 thumbs up 3 comments</td>
<td>Published 11(^{th}) November 2015 80,415 views 67 comments 6,527 shares</td>
<td>88,392 views 147 thumbs up 74 comments 6,527 shares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behind the scenes: from marbles to mummies</strong></td>
<td>Published 23(^{rd}) November 2015 12,579 views 1,438 thumbs up 27 comments</td>
<td>Published 17(^{th}) December 2015 20,899 views to date 25 comments 2,985 shares</td>
<td>46,057 1,438 thumbs up 52 comments 2,985 shares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conservation of a crocodile mummy</strong></td>
<td>Published 8(^{th}) January 2016 9,524 views 189 thumbs up 13 comments</td>
<td>First published 8(^{th}) January 2015 60,818 views to date 85 comments 4405 shares</td>
<td>70,342 189 thumbs up 98 comments 4,405 shares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dark side of the room: a Curator’s Corner British Science Week special</strong></td>
<td>Published 16(^{th}) March 2016 3,477 views 125 thumbs up 11 comments</td>
<td>Published 16(^{th}) March 2016 37,304 views to date 30 comments 1.2K reactions 329 shares</td>
<td>40,781 125 thumbs up 41 comments 1.2K reactions 329 shares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 films published 5 times 245,572 views 265 comments 1,899 thumbs up 1.2k reactions 14,256 shares</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Successes, challenges, and key learning**

The project originally outlined in the Activity Plan, had a heavy reliance on the ‘live’ element, and consequently implied a need to identify objects that have sufficient ‘pulling power’ to reach a non-specialist audience. This was also identified as one of the major risks to the successful execution of the project.

During the first year the project team were not able to identify a suitable object to feature in this way, and therefore amended the approach to the project to better suit the types of Conservation and Scientific Research work being undertaken. This amended approach was approved by HLF.

The resulting content so far has engaged high numbers and is proving popular with online audiences. Films are receiving higher numbers of comments in comparison to similar film content created by other museums. Audience feedback on all four films has been very positive. Some comments included below:

**Behind the scenes: from marbles to mummies**

*‘Oh wow, this is really good.’*

*‘This could be interesting but I want so much more detail.’*
Making of a traditional Chinese hanging scroll

‘As Qu Lellei (whom I met once before in person) said in the video, 30% painting, 70% mounting. It cannot be skimped.’

‘So enjoyable to watch, a truly skilled lady.’

The conservation of a crocodile mummy

‘Thank you, this is exactly the kind of behind the scenes video I love..’

‘This movie is so interesting and unique..’
Dark side of the room: A Science week special

‘I love this channel, it gives us a window into so interesting jobs and procedures.. ’

Plans for Year 2

Website

The website for World History Lab is now in development with delivery to the Museum scheduled for the end of July 2016. The team will then spend August and September
populating the site for the launch to the public in October 2016. The team will be working with the Museum’s marketing department to publicise the site, and engage audiences with the content.

**Content production**

Production of new content will continue under the four strands as detailed above. The overall objective with production is to find new and innovative ways to present the content to audiences, whilst at the same time making the most of media that already exists. Example: When filming the conservation of the crocodile mummy for a Room 3 exhibition the team covered a number of basic conservation processes and techniques. With minimal editing some of this content can be repurposed to create short clips for the Tools and processes section.

**Content generation**

Once the website is up and running, the team will also be looking at ways to engage colleagues from the Departments of Conservation and Scientific Research in creating content themselves. The blogging feature that will be incorporated in the website will form the ideal platform for conservators and scientists to share their work and their research.
WCEC Volunteering programme

An introduction to the WCEC Volunteering programme

The WCEC Activity Plan has enabled the Museum to expand its volunteering opportunities, allowing more members of the public to get involved at the Museum, including some new areas of volunteer activity. Significant progress has been made to date with each of the main volunteering strands. These include volunteers facilitating Hands On desks to accompany special exhibitions and related permanent galleries, delivering Behind the Scenes tours, and working on Object Moves and Object Journeys’ projects.

Hands On

The WCEC Activity Plan enabled the Museum to extend its Hands On programme beyond the six pre-existing desks. The Hands On desks allow members of the public to handle original artefacts and to engage with a knowledgeable volunteer. The addition of a desk in the WCEC has allowed the Hands On programme to support five different special exhibitions in the Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery (SEG) to date.

Behind the Scenes Tours

A new Behind the Scenes tour of the WCEC has been created and a team of volunteers recruited and trained. The start of the tours has been delayed but they will commence in August 2016.

Object Moves and Object Journeys

Significant progress has been made with Object Moves volunteering where volunteers are supporting the movement of AOA (Africa Oceania Americas) collections into the WCEC. Additionally, volunteers have become involved in community programmes, providing support for the Object Journeys programme.

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. Staff departures created some disruption but other team members ensured the volunteering programmes continued to run smoothly. The WCEC Activity Programme Conservator, left the Museum in August 2015. Her replacement started in November 2015. The WCEC Activity Plan Volunteer Co-ordinator, left the Museum in June 2016. Her replacement has been recruited and will start work 1st August 2016.
Some of the questions used to evaluate these activities have been updated since data was first collected. These changes will be reflected in subsequent evaluation reports. Specific evaluation approaches are detailed in the individual volunteering activity sections below.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Target per session or/and year</th>
<th>Target per 3 years</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>% of Target achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall volunteering programme</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. volunteer slots for Hands On desks</td>
<td>180 half day shifts per exhibition</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>Potential slots March 14 to July 16: 1064 Slots used (due to gaps and absences):1015</td>
<td>Target exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. volunteer slots for Object Moves</td>
<td>80 (days) per year</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>120 days</td>
<td>Target exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. volunteer slots for Behind the Scenes tours for public</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>N/a only pilot sessions so far</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Object Journeys volunteers</td>
<td>12 volunteers days (8 at BM and 4 at partner museum)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>To be reported in next report as 1st year project still underway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days of volunteer time created</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1168</td>
<td></td>
<td>Target exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers recruited and trained on schedule</td>
<td>On target</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Vikings Hands On desk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Target per session and year</th>
<th>Target per 3 years</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>% of Target achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hands On desk:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of desks available for 3 exhibitions in the SEG over the 3 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 (there is a commitment to delivering desks each year of the activity plan)</td>
<td>On target (A number of desks were delivered prior to Activity Plan delivery period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor numbers match those of desks across the Museum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>On target - numbers are comparable with other desks across the Museum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of activity

Vikings: life and legend exhibition (6 March - 22 June 2014) was the first exhibition to open in the SEG and the first show in the new building to be accompanied by a Hands On desk. The Hands On desk is located in the foyer area where it can be freely accessed by members of the public as well as exhibition ticket holders.

A handling collection of historic artefacts and replica items was assembled to support the exhibition and related permanent galleries with guidance from curatorial, conservation and interpretation staff. A team of volunteers was recruited and trained by the Volunteer Co-ordinator with support from other colleagues.

Visitor and volunteer experience of the desk was thoroughly evaluated, indicating high levels of visitor usage and satisfaction. Lessons were learned that have informed the development of the handling collections for each of the four subsequent exhibitions:

- 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 curatorial teams for each exhibition have responded enthusiastically to the Hands On concept. That said, finding authentic Ming objects (1400-1450) that met curatorial and conservation’s requirements for handling proved particularly challenging, and a number of modern objects and handling materials were used on this particular desk.

It has been possible to identify a number of authentic objects and artefacts for each exhibition which meet the desired criteria, offering visitors an interesting tactile experience, and opening up an interesting conversation about a theme explored in the related displays. However, evaluation indicates that carefully chosen replicas do not negatively impact on visitor or volunteer satisfaction.

The Museum has over fifteen years’ experience of managing Hands On desks in busy permanent galleries so it is not surprising that the development of the WCEC Hands On desk progressed without any significant problems and that it has run smoothly to date in the SEG.

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 - 15 objects. Typically only a small number of objects are used at any one time; the selection is at the volunteer’s discretion.
Prior to the exhibition opening Hands On desk volunteers receive 2 training sessions and a tour of the exhibition led by the curator. The training sessions involve input from conservation and curatorial staff, the interpretation and volunteers’ teams. Each Hands On desk is supported by a team of around 28 volunteers. Each volunteer usually delivers one half day (two and a half hour session) every other week.

**Vikings Hands On Desk**

**Evaluation approach**

Evaluation of the first four Hands On desks has been completed, and the evaluation of the *Sunken Cities* Hands On desk is underway. The evaluation tools consist of the following:

- Questionnaires completed by volunteers about their experience on the desk
- 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

Additionally, questions about the Hands On desk were included in the summative exhibition evaluation for *Vikings* undertaken on the British Museum’s behalf by Morris.
Hargreaves McIntyre. This evaluation indicated 88% of visitors who used the Hands On desk were either ‘quite’ or ‘very’ satisfied, a considerable endorsement of its success.

Volunteer feedback has been anecdotal and fed into improving the experience where a common issue has emerged. Responses to the questionnaires have been relatively short and have highlighted issues that are often not actionable, like the desk’s location (see below for further discussion). Evaluation methodologies will be reviewed and revised going-forward to ensure that useful, actionable feedback is collected. Methodologies will be revised so that new insight is generated, rather than continuing to ask the same questions.

Notes on the data

- Base: (not including MHM evaluation) Around 100 interviews with visitors were completed for each desk (slightly less achieved for Ming). Exact samples were not provided so the charts only express %. Data collection going forward will mean future reports chart will show the bases.

- Most of the responses are cohesive across the different exhibition desks, apart from Vikings. This exhibition was very busy so may account for the lower dwell times represented below.

Around 7% of visitors are visiting the Hands on Desks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibition</th>
<th>Hands On visitors</th>
<th>Total visitors to WCEC exhibition</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vikings</td>
<td>20,570</td>
<td>279,257</td>
<td>7.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>6,886</td>
<td>109,532</td>
<td>6.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Beauty</td>
<td>7961</td>
<td>100,614</td>
<td>7.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celts</td>
<td>11,127</td>
<td>153,991</td>
<td>7.22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Successes, challenges and key learning

Vikings Hands On desk

Hands On desk experiences in the WCEC generate a high level of visitor satisfaction. As the charts below demonstrate, 99% of visitors said that they would recommend the Hands On desk to other visitors, and 95% of visitors said that the desk had enhanced their visit. The evaluation demonstrates a high level of satisfaction from both the public and the volunteers who facilitate it. Additionally, the evaluation generally demonstrates iterative increases in satisfaction, probably attributable to the interpretation and volunteers team identifying and applying learning from previous desks to those that have followed them.

Visitor questions

Would you recommend the Hands On desks to others?
Do you think the Hands On desk enhanced your visit to the Museum?

Is this your first time visiting a Hands on desk?
The temporary exhibitions tend to attract a lower proportion of first time visitors than the Museum overall, so the above finding suggests that the people who visit the WCEC desks have been to the Museum before but they haven’t used one of the other six desks in the Museum.

**How did you find out about the Hands on desks?**

- Upon visiting the gallery: 71%
- Staff on door: 17%
- Other: 5%
- Signage: 4%
- Recommendation from a friend: 2%
- British Museum Website: 1%
- External website or newspaper/article: 0%
- Social Media: 0%
- Screens in Great court: 0%
- What’s on leaflet: 0%
- British Museum e-newsletter: 0%

How did you find out about the Hands On desks?
This chart on the previous page indicates that most users of the Hand On desk come across it coincidentally, rather than making a conscious decision to visit it. This suggests that there is scope for raising awareness of the Hands On desk.

![Image of people interacting with a Hands On desk]

**Vikings Hands On desk**

**What have you gained from the Hands On desk?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Vikings</th>
<th>Ming</th>
<th>Defining Beauty</th>
<th>Celts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to the museums collections</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting encounter with person/Objects</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was able to ask a question</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop understanding of specific area or topic</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings here indicate that visitors gain a wider variety of outcomes than might be assumed. The social aspect of the Hands On is an important element for many visitors.
Evaluation questions will be revised to explore understanding of motivations in a more nuanced way. Questions will be revised to gather new data.

How would you rate the knowledge of the volunteer?

![Knowledge Rating Chart]

There has been a steady increase overall in visitors’ rating of volunteer knowledge, which the team attribute to iterative improvements in training and learning resources. Object notes, for example, are now more extensive and are edited by an Interpretation Officer to help the volunteer make stronger connections with exhibits.

Does it matter to you if some objects in the handling collection are replicas?

![Replica Preference Chart]
The general principle with Hands On desks at the British Museum is to provide visitors with opportunities to handle authentic objects. However, occasionally it is necessary or desirable to use a replica and the project team wanted to explore how this impacted on the visitor experience. Despite mixed responses for each exhibition, and the different ways in which replicas have been used, overall 38% of visitors sampled say it does not matter and 48% say it does. The question will be explored in the future by the inclusion of a 3D printed object for the Sunken Cities Hands on desk.

*Vikings Hands On desk*
Where do you currently live?

The Hands On desks are more successful at attracting London and UK visitors, like the special exhibition programme generally. Overall the Hands on desk visitors profile is 44% UK other, 39% London and 17% outside the UK, compared with 12%, 11% and 77% for general visitors respectively. The exhibitions attract primarily UK visitors. This is expected, considering the language barriers some visitors may encounter, although ways to support engagement with visitors whose English is not a first language could be considered.

What age bracket do you fall into?

The Hands On desk attracts older visitors on average than the Museum in general. Only 13% of general visitors are aged 55 above, compared with 59% of Hands on desk visitors.
who are a similar age. This reflects the audience for specific special exhibitions which are predominantly 55+. Future evaluation data could explore engagement across visitor age to understand how this relates to satisfaction levels.
Observation questions

Notes on the data

- **Base:** For Celts 122 observations were completed. Exact numbers for the other exhibition desks are unknown but were around the same.

**How long did visitors spend at the desk?**

![Time spent at desk chart]

**Would you describe their behaviour as:**

![Behaviour chart]

Overall visitors appear to have been engaging deeply with the WCEC Hands On desks, the exception being **Vikings**. This anomaly is probably explained by exceptionally high visitor...
numbers for **Vikings**, resulting in a much busier exhibition and less time and space for this activity.

**Did they ask a question?**

![Bar chart showing percentages of people who asked a question in different exhibitions.]

The location of the desk has been questioned by some of the volunteers. The placement of the Hands On desk in the WCEC foyer inevitably means that it attracts a high proportion of visitors who are visiting the special exhibition, compared with other Hands On desks which attract a more typical BM audience. Some Hands On volunteers feel that the desk’s location limits the number of visitors who engage with it.

Volunteer Comments (Ming):

> It (the desk) is quite a bit out of the way of the beaten path to the exhibition itself and in a blind spot behind the entrance door.

> During my slots not one person who entered through the Members’ entrance at the other end of the inner lobby turned left and came to the handling desk…

> The location of the desk is definitely wrong as you have to turn left when you come in and the exhibition is to the right. Furthermore, some visitors came in the door at the far end, missing out the desk altogether.

> Some of them entered the space through the door at the opposite end and so missed the desk completely. Others did not notice it at all when they entered in the door next to it.

Volunteer Comments (Defining Beauty):

> Better position within the exhibition, maybe at the end of the exhibition or closer to the audio guide desk. Majority of visitors would walk in to the exhibition and go
directly to the ticket entrance. If the desk was after the ticket entrance people would feel like they wouldn’t miss their time slot if they stopped.

Try to make the desk a bit more visible?

Put the desk into the main body of the exhibition.

Making [the desk] more visible to the visitors as I really think it enhances their experience when they visit the exhibitions.

The table below shows visitor questionnaire feedback rather than observation, but has been included here to demonstrate that a significant proportion of visitors who responded to evaluation also thought the desks should be in a different location. Visitors commented that it was difficult to find, or that they would have preferred to see it inside the exhibition.

How could the Hands On desk be improved? (Visitor question - Celts only)

Despite this, tracking and observation of visitors in other areas of the Museum indicates that there is a significant proportion of visitors who choose not to engage with a Hands On desk. In the context of the WCEC it is inevitable that a high proportion of visitors passing through the SEG foyer enter the special exhibition directly because that is their main
focus. It is debateable that the number of visitors using the desk would increase if it were relocated. Visitor numbers are still high - for example, visitor statistics show that Celts Hand On desk received more visitors than four of the other desks in other permanent galleries across the Museum.

There does seem to be potentially a stronger case for arguing that locating the Hands On desk within the special exhibition would encourage an even higher proportion of exhibition visitors to engage with it. This approach would have support from the volunteers. However, locating the desk within the exhibition space itself would restrict access to exhibition ticket holders only, and run counter to the Museum’s commitment to provide free access to the Hands On desks. Considering even more effective signage and making the desk more visible could support visitor engagement with the desks.

B) Behind the scenes tours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Target per session and year</th>
<th>Target per 3 years</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>% of Target achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behind the Scenes tours:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers recruited and trained in time for tours to commence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>On target</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>15 per tour 720 per year</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| % public tour places booked | 80% of places to be booked | n/a |

Summary of activity

The first public Behind the Scenes Tours were due to begin in May 2015. However, due to on-going works to bring the lifts back into service, it is hoped that the first tours will run in August 2016. Despite the lengthy delay significant progress has been made.

The Head of Interpretation & Volunteers, WCEC Volunteer Co-ordinator, and WCEC Activity Programme Conservator) worked collaboratively to deliver the tour concept, route and script in conjunction with colleagues in the Departments of Conservation and Scientific Research from late 2014 onwards. Over the course of the last twelve months the script has gone through a series of iterative revisions based on the experience of delivering
pilots. A team of volunteer guides was recruited in early 2015 and a series of training sessions were organised and held. Following an initial period where volunteers were familiarising themselves with the script, a series of practice tours were scheduled and took place in the Stone, Wall Painting and Mosaics and Facsimile, and Organic Artefacts studios.

After several months of delays in the lift engineering works programme, it was hoped that public tours would begin on Tuesday 29th March 2016. In fact, the tours will now commence in August 2016. Inevitably, the delays have caused some frustration, but the volunteers have been very understanding and sympathetic to the situation. Since March 2016, the WCEC Volunteer Coordinator and the WCEC Activity Programme Conservator have continued to provide volunteer guides with an opportunity to practise their tours on a monthly basis.

In order to maintain motivation and enthusiasm, and to help maintain levels of engagement with the volunteer programme, the Behind the Scenes volunteers were invited on a tour of Western Art on Paper (WAP) on Tuesday 31st May, to meet the conservators and hear about current projects in the studio. This was really well received by the volunteers who were able to attend, with one volunteer commenting that they felt reinvigorated by the visit and was once again looking forward to leading the public tours.

Feedback from a volunteer following tour of WAP:

_Sincere thanks for giving us the privilege of taking a glimpse into your work at Western Art on Paper. I found it most interesting to see the variety of your tasks, the enormous skill, attention to detail and patience that is required to preserve these precious pieces for our generation and for the future._

**Evaluation approach**

Existing evaluation of these tours shows feedback from staff participating in the practice tours, rather than visitor responses, however this provides useful insight to improve the future tour experience.

Questionnaires have been developed to evaluate visitor and volunteer satisfaction. These will be used from August onwards. This data will be monitored carefully and used to refine the tour throughout the course of the year.

**Notes on the data**

*Base: Approximately 65*
Successes, challenges and learning so far

The tour had the greatest impact at demonstrating the purpose of the WCEC:

Did you think the tour demonstrated the purpose of the WCEC? - 100% answered ‘Yes’

What did you hope to get from attending the tour today? And what did you actually get from visiting the tour?

Tour attendees’ expectations were largely met. Slightly more thought they had had an interesting encounter with an interesting person, than had expected to. However, many of the staff taking part in these practice tours said it was a surprise event so the whole experience was largely unexpected. Slightly fewer gained an understanding of conservation and scientific work, however this could be explained by a real appetite for spending longer talking to conservator than the tours had allowed.
Do you feel you have gained a deeper understanding of the Museum’s work as a result of the tour?

94% Yes
6% No

Would you recommend this tour to a friend?

94% Yes
5% No
1% Maybe
Did you find the tour length...

Compared with your expectations, was your tour today...

The opportunity to meet conservators and ask them questions was by far the most common reason why the tour was better than expected.

*Meeting the staff in the Conservation department was very interesting. They were all very friendly and made us interested in their work because they had enthusiasm.*

*Never had a chance to talk to people from the Conservation Department. It was great to be able to ask them questions and learn what they do.*
Attendees thought that the tours could have a shorter introduction, allowing more time spent with conservators. In addition, some felt the terminology could be a little more accessible and they’d welcome more time to ask conservators questions.

Tours will commence from August onwards, initially following the agreed pattern (four tours per day, one day per month). These will be evaluated by participants and staff. It is likely that additional tours will be scheduled to make up for the back-log that has built up. These will need to be done sensitively to avoid placing staff in the Departments of Conservation & Scientific Research under increased pressure, impacting on the work they need to complete. The WCEC Activity Steering Group will continue to review progress and to look at strategies for ensuring that the targets are met within the timeframe.

Selected images from PowerPoint presentation delivered by the volunteer guides ahead of the studio/ lab visits:

Ceramics, Glass and Metals conservation
Organic Artefacts Conservation

Stone, Wall Paintings and Mosaics Conservation and Facsimile

© The Audience Agency 2016
Western Art on Paper Conservation
C) Object Moves

Summary of activity

Volunteers practise creating plastazote cut outs used to protect objects during moves, at Blythe House with David Beck, Collections Storage Assistant

The involvement of volunteers in 2015 in the WCEC Storage Move project was the first time volunteers have been involved in supporting activity related to collections care and management.

The Storage Move project is committed to recruiting 12 volunteers annually (2015 - 2018), who each complete 40 days of volunteering. The volunteers are accommodated within the Storage Move Team (Collections Services) and by working with the Collections Manager, Assistant Collections Managers and Curators within the Africa, Oceania and Americas (AOA) department.

Notes on the data

Base: 8 volunteers from Year 1 completed questionnaires, however exact samples were not known for each question, so the base illustrated in all charts is shown as %. Interviews with from the staff involved

Evaluation also aims to explore how positive the experience is for volunteers and staff.
Evaluation overview

The key evaluation tool with volunteers is a questionnaire, which is completed at three different stages during their intake:

1. After their recruitment and mandatory training
2. After the completion of supplementary training
3. Towards the end of their training

Feedback from staff working with volunteers has been collated through interviews.

Successes, Challenges, and key learning

Intake 2 volunteers working on storage solutions at Blythe House

Planning and recruitment for the 2015 intake of volunteers did not begin until March when the second Storage Project Officer was in post. This meant that there was only six months to reach the yearly target, including time for planning and recruitment. This had an impact on the formats devised for intakes of volunteers.

The department of AOA had already recruited five volunteers for 2015. This left seven volunteers to be recruited to work with the Storage Move Team, completing 280 days of volunteering.
Within the timeframe of six months it was decided that two intakes could be accommodated in the following formats:

Intake one:
- Five volunteers carrying out one day per week, for 29 weeks. One volunteer per day.
- This intake started in the first week of June 2015 and ended the week ending 18th December 2015.
- Intake one was planned to complete a total of 29 days volunteering each, 145 days in total.

Intake two:
- Four volunteers carrying out five days per week, for 8 weeks.
- This intake began on the 6th July 2015 and ended on 28th August 2015.
- Intake two was planned to complete 40 days of volunteering each, 160 days in total.

The new format involved two intakes, two start dates and two end dates instead of multiple start / end dates and different lengths of intakes. This also made it easier to plan and schedule training.

**Overall the Object Moves volunteering experience was highly enjoyable and valued by volunteers**

Overall volunteer described the experience:

* A valuable and worthwhile experience.
* A breadth of skills gained, with valuable insight and experience into the industry.

A volunteer from the first intake has since gone on to be selected for an Assistant Collections Manager role within the Registrars department.

All volunteers who completed the evaluation agreed that:

* Training sessions were useful in supporting you to do this role
* The training was enjoyable
* The placement helped them achieve their learning outcomes
* Helped their personal development
* It was a valuable and enjoyable experience for them
* Would recommend volunteering with the British Museum
Would recommend volunteering with the WCEC storage moves project
The length of the placement and the amount of days per week was suitable

The application form was the only area where there was some area for improvement, however the negative response only represents one volunteer.

Application form: Was the form clear to understand and easy to complete?

This volunteer said:

The content of the form was good and relevant, however the form itself was difficult to navigate, the layout cumbersome and not very logical, and I would expect would be very difficult to fill in for people with limited computer skills.
Selection process: Do you think the selection session was?

Training

How would you rate the following training sessions?

- Hazards in collection: 29% Excellent, 43% Good, 14% Average, 14% Poor
- IPM: 100% Excellent
- Best practice in storage: 29% Excellent, 71% Good
- Cut outs & storage solutions: 38% Excellent, 71% Good, 29% Average
- Conservators talk/tour: 38% Excellent, 50% Good, 13% Average, 14% Poor
- Curators talk/tour: 57% Excellent, 43% Good

I found both (Africa tour and CSR talk) to be excellent, and useful, as they help to put the project and collection into greater context, and see how the project and the work we are doing contributes to the work of the museum as a whole.

Lots of thought and effort has been put into the training sessions, where some might not be directly relevant to the job role at volunteer level, they have been worthwhile and valuable experience to be able to put on my CV.
A thoughtful training program that sometimes went above and beyond what was required for the role for an 8 week volunteer placement. This has supplemented my experience and will be worthwhile for my future applications.

The Moves Manual (a training resource)

How much have you used the Moves Manual?

Frequently read the manual and I will be referring to it throughout my training and beyond. The manual is a very helpful and informative tool.

A very detailed, a useful resource, also actually relevant to the tasks and common questions. It has been carefully and thoughtfully collated.

I’ve used it more for the computer related tasks like Odin, than for the other jobs like unpacking, etc.

Only a couple of times so far but it was great to have a read of it in advance and being able to digest the information / ask for clarifications where needed. It made the training more valuable and useful.
Would you volunteer again/like to extend your placement with the project?

Some volunteers suggested alternative lengths/days per week of placements if they participate again:

- Due to work commitments, 4 days a week would possibly have been more suitable.
- However, the project has been very accommodating and flexible to encompass this.
- Two months for three-four times a week.
- Maybe twice a week.
- For two months, it worked perfect for me volunteering 5 days a week.

Staff are positive about working with volunteers but say there are challenges around time for quality checking and lack of volunteer management experience

Key feedback from staff included:

- It was challenging to manage induction for volunteers and interns at the same time.
- The time required to check the quality of volunteers' work, such as photoshopping images or uploading photographs to Odin and Merlin, placed staff under pressure. This raises questions around how volunteers can be supported long-term.

I’m keen to ensure that volunteers do not work unsupervised at any time (including collecting and returning boxes to the floor). Again, I know this is a problem when you have so few staff (and I don’t think it has happened often) but I think we need to enforce this.
Overall, I thought you did a splendid job in creating tasks and managing the inundation this summer! It was extremely difficult to put this together at short notice and with few staff.

- Staff newer to working with volunteers would like more support and training around how to be the ‘trainer.’ However they found it a beneficial and invigorating experience.

Overall we felt the volunteers were enthusiastic and interested in learning more, which made working with them enjoyable. For next year, if we have enough notice of when the volunteers will be working, we would hope to be able to have some projects that we can work on together with the volunteers. We would also like to be involved in the induction, so that we can introduce ourselves and briefly explain our role early on, and we could then do further, more in depth training with them later on.
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