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DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF THE HSBC MONEY GALLERY AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

edited by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

As The British Museum enters the 21st century it is undergoing one of the most radical transformations in its history. The move of the British Library to its own building at St Pancras has allowed the Museum's inner courtyard, hidden for 150 years, to be transformed into the Great Court, a two-acre space spanned by a spectacular glass roof. At the same time the Department of Ethnography, housed at the Museum of Mankind since 1970, is returning to Bloomsbury and its collection is being displayed in a new suite of galleries. Plans are also well under way for a new Study Centre that will allow increased and innovative public access to the collections.

At such a time of change, evaluation of existing services is essential so that the new developments can be approached in an informed manner and their success or otherwise measured in an objective way. The British Museum has therefore undertaken a range of new visitor surveys, emphasising visitor satisfaction, or dissatisfaction, rather than simply recording visitor type. It has also looked closely at visitor response to the Museum's main 'product', its galleries. One aspect of this work has been an evaluation of one of the Museum's newest galleries, the HSBC Money Gallery. This report describes the findings of that evaluation as well as the process of gallery development.

There are historical reasons for the choice of money as a subject for a permanent Museum gallery. More than 20,000 coins and medals were included in Sir Hans Sloane's bequest which formed the basis of the Museum's collections in 1753, and there has been a Department of Coins and Medals in The British Museum since 1861. The principal motivation for the development of a new gallery, however, was simply that money is an accessible and interesting subject for a permanent exhibition. We are all used to handling money, and understand something about its importance and the ways it can be used. The Museum's hope was that this familiarity would allow visitors to access the subject with ease and then, through it, explore cultures from every part of the world that have used money over the last 5,000 years.

The fact that the gallery is thematic, rather than being based upon a particular period of history or region of the world is unusual in the context of The British Museum. Plans for other thematic galleries are currently being considered, making it particularly important to investigate the successes and problems of the HSBC Money Gallery.

The aims of the gallery evaluation, stated in Section 2, are unusually broad for such a study. Formal evaluation of galleries in the Museum has so far been limited, and it was felt important to obtain as holistic a picture of visitor use of, and satisfaction with, the gallery as possible. To this end, and bearing in mind the time, money and personnel available for the evaluation, a combination of observation, interviews and questionnaires were considered to be most effective means of obtaining this broad range of information.

In an institution the size of The British Museum change can sometimes be a slow process. The former head of the Museum's Design Department put it this way: 'If The British Museum wants to change direction it is rather like trying to stop a tanker in mid-ocean. Any suggestions... may take 10 or more years before one sees them.'[1] In this light, the present time is a particularly satisfying one to be conducting a gallery evaluation in the Museum. The prospect of wholesale new developments of facilities and galleries allows the possibility of significant changes in considerably less than 10 years.

The development and evaluation of major new galleries is rarely recorded adequately. It is hoped that the following description of the creation and evaluation of the HSBC Money Gallery, with its successes and failures, will be of use to large museums undertaking gallery development projects on a variety of subjects as well as assisting the many banks and other institutions around the world currently engaged in setting up displays of money.

[1] M. Hall in J. Cherry and S. Walker (eds), *Delight in Diversity*, British Museum Occasional Paper 118, London, 1995.

2. CREATING THE HSBC MONEY GALLERY

Joe Cribb

2.1. Background and Gallery Description

The process of creating the gallery began in 1985 with the organising of a major exhibition, Money: from Cowrie Shells to Credit Cards. Rather than presenting a purely numismatic display the Museum's Department of Coins and Medals chose to focus the exhibition on money, thereby placing coins, banknotes, ingots, coin weights etc. in a broader monetary and cultural context. By the end of the exhibition it was clear that the right choice had been made. It drew large crowds, and at the same time the admiration of the numismatic community. Since then the exhibition and its catalogue have inspired museum curators around the world to present their collections in a similar way.

The success of this exhibition encouraged the Department to push forward its objective of having a permanent display of its collections in the Museum and to develop it on the basis of the 1986 exhibition. The Department secured the promise of a room if the necessary funds for refurbishment could be found, and in 1995 found a suitable donor to provide the backing it needed.

The room, Gallery 68 on the Museum's upper floor, provided a framework within which to redevelop the successful ideas of the 1986 exhibition. Its long rectangular shape and location on a major route around the Museum were important factors in the shaping of the display. The gallery can be entered from both ends so the material in it had to be presented in a way which made sense from both directions. This helped the Department decide to use a chronological framework for the arrangement, so that visitors could start from one end with the familiar money of today and progress back in time; or start from the other end and begin with the earliest evidence of money and move forward.

The architecture divides the room into three areas, and this feature had to be part of the design. The Museum now ensures that new displays respect the heritage of the architecture created in the 1840s when the present Museum structure was built (during reconstruction work cast-iron beams supporting the roof were found to bear the date 1842). The design uses the divisions of the room as the means of expressing a chronological framework, creating three spaces representing periods of time: (1) c.2500 BC-AD 600; (2) AD 600-1700; and (3) 1700 to the present day. These divisions allow a clear and yet simple idea of historical development to be seen, while the precise divisions between each section reflect actual watersheds of monetary development: AD 600 corresponds approximately with the end of the Roman Empire, the rise of Islam, the end of Gupta rule in India, and the origin of the Tang Dynasty in China, while AD 1700 corresponds approximately to the beginning of paper money in Europe and America.

Within this framework a world-wide coverage of monetary history is achieved by presenting the major developments in the story of money as a series of thematic units. There are four of these themes in each of the three chronological sections. A wall case is devoted to each theme. Within the case the theme is subdivided into three or four smaller parts each addressing an aspect of the theme. For example, in the middle space (AD 600-1700) there is a display case which focuses on the inter-relationship between metal supplies and the development of currency systems. This case is itself divided into three sections: Gold, Silver and Copper. 'Gold' traces the role of African gold in the development of early Islamic coinage and the re-emergence of gold coinage in medieval Europe. It also shows evidence of the place of gold in Indian Ocean trade. 'Silver' focuses on the Viking, Indian and Chinese exploitation of silver from the Hindu Kush, the emergence of major sources of silver in Central Europe during the Middle Ages and the impact on South East Asia of Burmese silver sources. 'Copper' looks at the role of copper as coined money in the Far East and as uncoined currency in Africa. And the consideration of copper-based currencies leads to that of the development of paper money in China and the use of non-metallic money in Africa.

At the same time the way that these 12 main cases were placed along the two main side walls of the gallery suggested a second division: the six cases on the south wall are all devoted to the nature and shape of money throughout time, while the six on the north wall look at its political and social use.

The aim of this new gallery was to introduce the general public to the collections by presenting them in a context which all visitors will recognise. Whatever their country of origin, whatever their age, every person coming to The British Museum is part of the continuing history of money. By setting examples of the money they are familiar with today in the context of more than 4,000 years of history, we hope to enable them to reach an understanding of why money takes the form of coins, paper money and bank money and how those forms have developed since the earliest records of payments, using weighed amounts of silver and baskets of grain, in the cuneiform inscriptions of ancient Mesopotamia.

The gallery places only a part of the Museum's collections on display, but we are confident that the selection of material and the way in which it is presented will serve as an introduction to and appetiser for the collection. We hope it will satisfy and provoke the curiosity of the casual visitor and reveal the immense breadth and depth of our holdings to the specialist, whether numismatist, historian or economist.

2.2. Management and Organisation

Setting objectives

From the beginning of the project the concept of assessment was a constant factor in the process of creating the HSBC Money Gallery. One of the first steps was securing funding. The Department of Coins and Medals prepared a prospectus which described the project to potential donors. By describing the finished product in this prospectus, the objectives of the project were already established. As soon as funding was secured a single page 'mission statement' (see Appendix 1) was also created, describing the key elements of the project, in order to communicate to all involved what the main targets were and to provide a set of aims against which to test our decisions.

An important part of the process of setting the objectives of the project was a period of reflection on the requirements of a successful and effective new gallery project. A group of curators from the Department of Coins and Medals visited both new and old galleries around The British Museum and the other national museums in London, looking at how they set out to display material to the public, how they sought to engage their public, and how their design elements and text delivery worked in support of or against their objectives. The findings of a peer review on permanent galleries in The British Museum *(Delight in Diversity: Display in the British Museum* Seminar March 1995, British Museum Occasional Paper 118, J. Cherry and S. Walker (eds), London 1996) also played an important part in the consideration of the nature of the project. In this review five museum specialists from other institutions who had examined The British Museum's permanent galleries discussed their findings with a large panel of British Museum curators, designers, educators and administrators.

The setting of objectives for the HSBC Money Gallery paid particular attention to the following points made in the review:

1. the need to address the whole of The British Museum's audience;
2. the importance of being completely clear about the purpose of the gallery;
3. the visitors' need to know where they are within the gallery;
4. the visitors' physical comfort within the gallery space;
5. the harmonisation of the architectural space with the requirements of the display;
6. the validity of placing objects as the focus of the display;
7. the need to balance the requirements of different types of visitor, particularly with regard to text.

There were also issues raised by the review which seemed important, but were beyond the scope of our project or beyond its budget. These included seating, the location of the gallery within the Museum and the needs of non-English speaking visitors. The question of seating within the Museum is one that requires a 'whole museum' solution. Within the project the issue was discussed, but the original costings had not included provision for seating, so no seating area was provided. The location of the gallery in relation to the other galleries could only be addressed in terms of the orientation of the displays. Should, for example, its ancient end be placed at the entrance nearest the Museum's front hall or nearest the Greek and Roman Life Room? Both options presented logical reasons in terms of the views expressed in the peer review. It was decided to place the ancient end of the gallery away from the Greek and Roman Life Room, even though there were many connections available by such a juxtaposition, because it was decided that it was more important to make it clear to visitors that they were entering a new space, with a different purpose, rather than moving into another part of the Greek and Roman Life Room display.

During the planning process the use of video and computer-based information within galleries, another issue raised by the peer review, was also considered. There is no defined policy on this within the Museum. Within this project the possibility was discussed and a CD-ROM was created as part of the project, but not with the original intention of using it in the gallery. Both video and computers are beginning to play an important and constructive role in many permanent displays in national museums, but for this project a decision was made not to include such facilities within the display for three main reasons. Firstly, the expected density of visitors using the gallery would have meant that these facilities would have created bottlenecks, while at the same time leaving many visitors frustrated that they could not get close to the features. Secondly, there was no budget provision for its installation, and finally there was insufficient time to produce a quality product while staff were busy preparing the gallery.

Accepting objectives

The project also had some unwritten objectives. These were of a general nature, dictated by the general circumstances, rather than the specific requirements of a Money Gallery. Some of these were obvious and didn't need stating, such as the need to complete the project on time, once the opening date had been set, and the requirement that the Museum only spent the money allocated from the donation given by HSBC Holdings plc on the project and no more. The British Museum covered the costs of its normal salaried staff who worked on the project and covered the costs of the office space and routine equipment, but all other costs had to come from the donation.

The other unwritten objectives related to the fact that the Gallery was in The British Museum and would continue to be there for at least 15 years. This meant that a 'timeless' concept and design was needed which would not go out of fashion or become irrelevant. Both design and concept could be original and innovative, but had to 'fit' within the general appearance and ambience of The British Museum. Some of these requirements exist as a code written into a British Museum house-style created by the Museum's Design Office and approved by the Trustees. At various stages the concept and design were presented to the Director and a Trustees subcommittee for approval.

There was also an unstated requirement that the concept and its delivery should continue the Museum's long-established tradition of curatorial and academic excellence.

Project management

Once funding was secure a management structure for the whole project was established to ensure that the timetable and financial objectives were kept under close scrutiny and control.

A financial committee, chaired by the Museum's Head of Administration took overall responsibility for making policy decisions about the whole project (gallery, publications, related buildings work, staff and equipment), keeping it on budget and on time. The main working committee was answerable to the financial committee. It was chaired by the Keeper of Coins and Medals and consisted of the Head of Administration, the gallery curator, his full-time assistant (funded by the project), the lead designer, the project architect, a representative of The British Museum Development Trust and representatives of the Museum's Press Office, Education Service, Security Office and Greek and Roman Antiquities Department (the gallery was adjacent to its office and gallery space). Members of the Design Office and Department of Coins and Medals were invited to attend committee meetings as required.

This committee met regularly throughout the project to control the aspects of the project directly related to the construction work and the fitting out of the gallery and to maintain a timetable. It made decisions about all aspects of the gallery part of the project which related to timetable and budget, within the parameters set by the financial committee. A balanced budget was established each time the committee met, based on reports made by those managing the design and architectural aspects of the project. An important move by the design team was its renegotiation of the cost of show cases being ordered from Germany which brought about a significant reduction of costs, back within budget. The working committee, with the support of the Museum's contract office, also oversaw the issue of tenders and chose the contractors.

Budget and timetable

The overall budget and timetable aspects of the project were established through the process of achieving funding. In preparation for this, notional costings were made for the various aspects of the project, in consultation with the sections of the Museum that would deliver these aspects. The overall request to the donor was made on the basis of these costings. The completion of the project on budget indicates the accuracy of these estimates. The costings did, however, create limitations. For example there were some areas of expenditure of which the Museum had limited experience, such as the publicity and promotional costs associated with having a corporate donor for a long-term gallery project. The donor generously met some of the additional costs which arose, while other desirable aspects were omitted as too expensive within the fixed budget. The donation also came at a time when the Museum was beginning to enter a period of severe restrictions in its own funding. Aspects of expenditure which traditionally had been met by the Museum from its own resources were no longer available.

The process of setting the overall budget before developing the displays also had a limiting effect on creativity. Once the process has begun new ideas emerged about the presentation of the material, but only those which did not involve extra expenditure could be exploited. With hindsight, it is clear that a larger contingency element should have been built into the funding before the donation was secured.

An estimate of how long the project would take was also made before the approach to potential donors began. In the event, the donor had a different agenda and requested a shorter timetable for the project. In order to secure the funding this timetable was agreed. The Museum was able to meet the timetable, but was not at liberty to achieve this through additional expenditure. The main effects of this change were on the curatorial and design teams. Additional staff (beyond the two support posts originally planned) were not recruited, but those involved dedicated more of their individual time to the project than was originally expected. As with the budgetary restraints, the shorter timetable reduced the team's ability to react to the creativity emerging during the project. This was a particular burden for the curatorial team who were also working on the associated publications at the same time as the gallery part of the project.

The curatorial team

Although many teams were involved in the project from different parts of the Museum, the curatorial team needed an organisational structure specific to the project. The other teams become involved in new gallery projects on a routine basis, and it is their expertise which successfully carries these projects through to completion. Departmental curatorial teams do not always have that level of experience and the random and infrequent nature of the development of new galleries means that they are invariably brought together and structured anew for each such project. It is therefore useful to describe the process adopted for this gallery.

Before the project began there was an awareness of the demands that would be placed on the time of the leader of the curatorial team and therefore funding for two members of staff was included in the budget to deal with the extra work load. One post served to cover the regular curatorial responsibilities of the team leader, whose work in this area became supervisory and occupied a very small part of his time during the project. The other post was a key one for the project. A full-time assistant was recruited to work alongside the team leader throughout the process of creating the gallery. The appointed assistant had previous experience working on another new British Museum gallery project and was therefore equipped to provide support in many practical ways. She was able to deal with all the routine aspects of the management of the curatorial team, to help with the presentation of the overall concept and to participate in the work of the curatorial team, choosing objects and writing labels. She also supported the team leader at all meetings and took on an important role in liaising with the publicity agents of the donor.

Reducing the routine workload of the curatorial team leader and providing him with a full-time assistant were important factors in enabling him to lead the curatorial work on the gallery. It also helped to define his role. All communication between the design team and other non-departmental staff involved was therefore clearly routed through him (and his assistant), and all the curatorial team were answerable to him for their work within the project. Decision making within the process was simplified in this way. This arrangement was essential for delivering the project on time and within budget and maintaining the coherence of the gallery concept and the expected standards of excellence. The non-departmental teams and staff involved in the project also found this arrangement enabled them to meet their objectives.

Most members of the curatorial staff of the Department of Coins and Medals were involved in the project, but within a structure which kept decision-making under control. Three curators took responsibility under the team leader to manage work on a third part of the gallery each. The division into three parts was based on the time spans covered. The three curators were responsible for the contents of the cases in the ancient, medieval and modern sections of the gallery respectively. They were freed from some of their routine curatorial work in order to devote their time to working on the displays. Each of them either chose the objects, arranged them and wrote the relevant texts and selected accompanying images, or commissioned another colleague to do part of this work. The head of department, team leader and his assistant were also commissioned to do work by these three curators. The team leader's main role was to oversee the work of the three curators and to liaise with them while they were doing the work to ensure that the whole remained within the overall concept of the gallery. He also paid close attention to ensuring that the selected material, arrangements and text were accessible to the expected audience.

Material was borrowed from other departments within the Museum and institutions outside. The team leader and his assistant co-ordinated this. They also controlled the relationship between the individual curators and the design office. This involved three-dimensional display, text editing and text and picture display. As part of this process the team leader was present at all phases of agreeing the content and arrangement of the displays to ensure the coherence of the concept.

The Gallery and the objects

The decision about the location of the HSBC Money Gallery within the Museum was made long before the process of creating the displays began. The room selected is ideally suited for achieving a high number of visits because of its location on a busy route close to the front entrance of the Museum. Its shape is part of the original architectural design of the Museum and it is the policy of the Museum to preserve the general aspects of that architecture in their original form. The room is open at both ends and for security and fire safety reasons has to have a clear through route available at all times. These were very important considerations at all times throughout the project and in the use of the room once open to the public.

The decision to present the collections in terms of a thematic display about Money was already taken before the room was chosen, but as soon as the room was identified, its length immediately enabled the decision to present the display in a chronological structure to be made. The role of the room as a through route also had an effect on the form of the displays. The main displays were set back from the centre of the room in order to allow through traffic without disturbing those who chose to stop and look. Occasional cases were placed closer to the centre of the room to encourage the through traffic to stop and become engaged. The overall presentation was intended to be easily understood, enabling visitors to follow the display systematically if they chose to do so. It was also important that the displays were comprehensible when encountered at random, so that those who pause on their way through can also engage with the exhibition.

The expected density of through traffic also had implications for the style of display. The decision was made to create a level of uniformity and simplicity in the style of presentation to enable immediate engagement at any point in the display with a reasonable likelihood that the visitor would be able to move on and still maintain their engagement. With this in mind the displays are structured into a hierarchy. The whole gallery is divided into two sides (North the uses of money and South the forms of money), each divided into three chronological sections (by the architecture: East ancient, Centre medieval and West modern), indicated by dates on the cases. Each section has two main cases covering different themes which are broken within the cases into three or four sub-themes. Each of these themes and sub-themes is clearly signalled by a title. Within each sub-theme there are a selection of topics which are indicated by the groupings of the objects and titles within the label text.

Careful thought was given to the effect of the small size of the majority of the objects in the display. Their display within the room was devised with a similar approach to that derived from the form and function of the room. The small size of the objects requires them to be looked at as closely as possible and with the maximum amount of light. The objects are therefore presented as close to the glass as possible with strong lighting from above. The panels on which the objects are mounted normally slope away from the viewer to maximise the amount of light falling on the face of the object presented to the viewer. The angle of the slope and its distance from the glass and the position of the light were all carefully worked out to maximise their visibility. A decision was also made to keep all the objects within a very narrow height band to maintain them within the sight range of most visitors. The top of the displays was set at about 1600mm above floor level and the base at about 450mm. The view from low down was kept clear from the base of the display so that the view of seated visitors and small children was not impeded. It was clear that the top of the display, particularly as it sloped away from the viewer was less accessible from a seated position, but the compromise had to be accepted in order to maintain a sufficiently large display area within the room while keeping objects within the viewing range of the majority of visitors. During the planning of this part of the design process a mock-up case was constructed to test the visibility and arrangement of objects and text.

A variety of colours for the panels were also tested in the same way. It was a firm intention to keep the room as light as possible to maintain the open feel and to avoid the discomfort of claustrophobia in what would be a busy room, so the objects were mounted on light coloured fabrics wherever possible. It was clear, however, that this light colour caused a closing of the viewers' pupils to limit light levels, which had the effect of making the smaller objects more difficult to see. Accordingly darker coloured cloths were used wherever smaller objects dominated in order to increase the pupil aperture and ensure the visibility of the objects, retaining the lighter coloured cloth for the parts of the displays featuring larger objects.

The need for close viewing of many of the objects also indicated that many visitors would be close to the cases thereby obscuring the contents of the case from other visitors closer to the centre of the room. It was therefore decided to raise a banner display at the top of each case to make its theme clear from a more distant perspective. The banner in each case gives a title for the theme, a date and a twenty word explanation. Because the level of the objects had been set at a relatively low upper limit it was decided to use the space between the banner and the object panels to display the title and introduction to each sub-theme, accompanied by an indicative graphic image. The text sizes of both the banner and the sub-theme titles were enlarged so that they could be read at a distance from the case by most visitors.

The small size of many of the objects to be displayed was also seen as a potential impediment to the engagement of casual visitors to the gallery. Visitors passing down the centre of the gallery would not be able to see any detail on the smaller objects, so a significant number of larger objects which would invite closer examination were added to the displays, thereby bringing the smaller objects within the visual range of casual observers. It was also felt that the larger objects could serve to provide a context for the smaller objects and add insight to the themes.

Another consequence of displaying small objects was the sheer number of objects required for a successful exhibition. A gallery of large sculpture would work well with a handful of objects, but to make a satisfactory display based on a coin and banknote collection hundreds of objects are required. Two aspects of display are dramatically affected by the large number of objects. Firstly a lot more text was required simply to describe so many objects. The descriptive text then needed to be keyed to the objects. Strips of descriptive text were located as close to the objects as possible and then the objects and the relevant parts of the text were numbered for easy cross-referencing. This had the potential to distract viewers from looking at the objects, so an arrangement of the descriptive text was created which fitted the geometry of the cases and which did not draw the eye away from the objects. Small plastic numbers were placed by the objects, of a similar colour to the background colour, again so that they did not distract from the objects. For a minority of viewers this style of presentation might be difficult to see and follow, but the intention was to suit the requirements of the majority and to maximise the impact of the objects, the presentation of which is one of the main purposes of the display.

The monetary nature of the objects being displayed also had an impact on the nature of the displays. Coins and banknotes are readily understood by all as representations of wealth and have always presented a temptation to thieves. It was therefore important for the display to make the objects as accessible as possible whilst maintaining their security. This was an impediment to the display of such objects in a way that allows handling as is sometimes done with larger museum objects. It also meant that extremely sturdy cases were needed. The cost implications of this had an impact on the possible forms of display. The strength of the cases also imposed limitations. For example, the immense weight of the glass fronts of the cases dictated the shape of the bases of the cases and necessitated their attachment to the wall.

Commitment to access

The establishment of the HSBC Money Gallery derived directly from the commitment of The British Museum and the Department of Coins and Medals to making its collections and curatorial expertise accessible to the public. The coin and banknote collections of The British Museum are extensive and would not usefully be displayed in their entirety. The size of the collections is necessary for the study of the subject and for their role as a reference collection, but a selection from them much better serves to make them accessible to the public. The whole collection is accessible to the public through the Department's Students Room by request and through its publications. The purpose of the display is to make the collection accessible in another way which better suits most visitors to the Museum.

The selection of objects for display in the HSBC Money Gallery draws from the strengths of the collection and from the expertise of its curators. At the beginning of the process of establishing the gallery the department chose to select objects to present the concept of Money, rather than to stick to the traditional methods of displaying coin collections. The temporary exhibition Money from Cowrie Shells to Credit Cards, which was put on in the Museum in 1986, showed that the public found it easier and more enjoyable to view this material in a context they were familiar with rather than to introduce the public to the more academic context of coins as evidence of history and artistic traditions, which dominated more traditional coin displays. The physical structure of the gallery led to the presentation of the concept of Money in an historical context. That history is brought right down to the present day to ensure that easily recognisable and familiar objects used by all visitors to the gallery would be present. The familiar objects were intended to provide a starting point for visitors less familiar with the conventions of museum display.

At the same time as creating the HSBC Money Gallery, the project also included publications which would open up further points of access to the displays and the collections and expertise they represented. When the gallery opened to the public two of the accompanying publications, one for adults, Money: a History, edited by J. Williams, and one for children, The Story of Money by J. Orna-Ornstein, were also available for purchase in the Museum and elsewhere. The third publication, a Teachers' Pack, devised by R. Woff of the Museum's Education Service, appeared later the same year, after a period of assessing how teachers could use the gallery and preparing teaching materials for them based on the displays. The process of access through publication continued into the following year with the publication of The World of Money, edited by G. Williams, an interactive CD-ROM with a linked website. The costs of producing these were included in the funding for the project donated by HSBC Holdings plc.

Alongside these publications, the Department also organised, through the Museum's Education Service, public lectures, gallery talks and school visits to increase access to the Gallery for visitors to the Museum. Lectures were also given outside the Museum to encourage further visits.

Right from its inception there was also a consciousness of the need to maintain a programme of work on the Gallery to maintain its topicality and to develop a full range of means of access. The funding secured included the employment of a Development Curator for the HSBC Money Gallery throughout its expected lifetime to achieve those objectives. One role of this post is to assess and monitor the success of the Gallery and its associated publications and activities in meeting the objectives set out in the original prospectus.

Improvements

At the end of such a large project, there are inevitably aspects which, in hindsight, might have been improved. Some relate to the pressures created by working too fast. The timetable was shorter than initially hoped and this impaired the thinking process involved in executing the concept as displays. For example, some objects which were included as likely to appeal to a younger audience are placed too high in the cases. If more time had been available then the concept into which they fitted could have been restructured so that their location could have been changed to match their role. Unfortunately, once it became apparent that their positioning did not work, it was already too late to change it.

There is also room for improvement in the text presented in the Gallery. The main pieces of text introducing the Gallery, the cases and their subthemes were worked on at length to achieve a level of language and ideas which would be accessible to a majority of the visitors to the Gallery. The text describing the objects and groups of objects will need further work, during the process of updating by the Development Curator. Some visitors find it difficult to follow the structure of this text and sometimes the ideas involved are too complicated.

The centre case in the Gallery is proving to be a very useful tool for putting on display new discoveries, particularly treasures. The flexibility of this case to deal with changing displays needs to be enhanced. It seems sensible to introduce similar flexibility into other cases to cater for other needs, such as tuning the displays for teaching and for special events. A useful resource to achieve this flexibility would be spare display and text panels, which could be substituted for the permanent panels when required.

During its first year a process of correcting spelling errors and numbering which had previously escaped attention was undertaken. A few curatorial mistakes and changes of opinion were also corrected. There can be no doubt that such mistakes and revisions will continue to be corrected during the life of the Gallery.

The views of those participating in the process of assessment also suggest areas where improvements can be made, particularly those relating to access. Some of these changes are already in hand, such as those needed to improve access for visitors with limited access to the textual elements of the display.

Improvements are also in hand to keep the displays up to date. The displays on electronic money are already in need of revision to reflect developments in this aspect of handling money. The use of reducing machines like the one prominently displayed in an island case is now being phased out by the Royal Mint and a display on the electronic engraving of coin designs will be added to the display in due course.

The managerial process was also impaired by the short timetable. If time had been available, the separation of the writing of books from the work on the Gallery would have been very desirable, particularly if the books could be done first. This would have benefited the curatorial team by giving them more time to think through the subject matter and thereby enhance their work on the display. It would also have been better if the curatorial team leader had been less involved in providing material for the displays and related text. The timetable made this a necessity, but this involvement was at times a distraction from the managerial role.

2.3. Key Recommendations

1. Where possible, the provision of an excess on an overall gallery development budget allows the potential for greater creativity as the development proceeds.

2. Funding for cover staff is highly desirable. In this case, the project manager was freed from all of his day-to-day curatorial activities and was also given a dedicated project assistant.

3. Funding for associated publications and staff for long-term development should be part of most gallery project funding bids.